

The items below represent areas of agreement that emerged across all six Regional Forum 1 meetings (held the week of November 14, 2011). The first section includes themes from the regional assets and challenges discussions in each meeting. Here each theme is followed by selected comments from the meetings that highlight different facets of the theme. The comments are the words of participants (collected by meeting notetakers) and have been edited only to correct spelling or grammatical errors. The second section includes themes drawn from the community assets and challenges discussions, organized by county.

ECONOMY & WORKFORCE

Major regional economic assets: ORNL, UT, and medical centers

- DOE facilities with large employment that draws from surrounding area
- Stable economy based on government employment
- Robust scientific community (federal and universities)

Strategic location for economic development: excellent transportation accessibility

- Situation of region at major interstates provides economic opportunities
- Economy . . . enhanced by central access to multiple eastern markets
- Can get services here easier than in large, congested cities

Mild climate is an asset

- Mild climate and four seasons
- Weather--attractive to corporations and retirees

Low cost of living relative to other parts of the country is attractive

- No income tax
- Low housing cost
- Minimal regulations and fees

More quality jobs are needed throughout the region, not just in Knoxville

- Limited access to jobs (further away from Knoxville, more difficult to get jobs)
- Limited professional job opportunities
- Need . . . not just any jobs, but good, diverse jobs

Tourism is important: economic and recreational value of mountains, rivers, and lakes

- Good area for tourism based on environmental assets
- Balance between economic development and preservation of natural resources (lakes, ridges, streams, air)

ENVIRONMENT

Natural beauty of mountains, rivers, and lakes

- Scenic beauty of East Tennessee
- Natural beauty, mountains, rivers, tourism, and access to it all
- Natural beauty of rivers and mountains provide[s] a regional identity

Need to improve air and water quality

- Protect our watershed; running out of reliable clean water
- Lack of attainment of air quality standards
- Pollution in lakes and dumping on public lands . . . lack of appreciation of natural resources

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Good highway access within region and to other metro areas

- *Very accessible--great roadway network, interstate crossroads, proximity to other major hubs/ population centers*
- *From Knoxville you can be in very rural places outside in an hour or less*
- *Connectivity of the transportation system (highway system)*

Need for more transportation options (transit, air, pedestrian facilities, rail)

- *Public transportation between Knoxville, Oak Ridge, and the airport and within major cities*
- *Limited transportation options poses a problem for low-income residents to gain access to community services*
- *Aging in place, eldercare problem: neighborhoods cut off from public transportation*
- *Lack of air transportation access and options*
- *Lack of walkability in not all, but many parts throughout the region*

HOUSING

Distance between jobs and housing is a problem (lengthy commutes)

- *Decent jobs are far away and it requires long travel times*
- *Transportation challenges resulting from reliance on automobiles and proximity to jobs*
- *Not enough housing close to jobs*
- *Combined housing and transportation costs in relation to work locations*

HEALTH

Significant community health issues exist: drug use, asthma, obesity, tobacco use

- *Obesity and its health impacts; links with poverty and education*
- *Pockets of poverty, drugs, and dependency*
- *Pollution effects on health*
- *Asthma, obesity, diabetes, lack of facilities in rural areas*

OTHER THEMES

Qualities of people: friendly, hospitable, volunteer ethic

- *Sense of community, friendly, southern hospitality*
- *People care about the area; strong sense of volunteerism, personal interest in the area*

Importance of Appalachian heritage

- *Unique Appalachian cultur[e] and celebration of heritage (independence, temperament, music, food)*

Combination of urban/suburban/rural settings offers something for everyone

- *Urban to rural to agricultural to wilderness; diverse landscapes and places*

Good regional amenities: Downtown Knoxville, arts/music scene, museums, farmers markets, sports events, greenways

- *All of your needs within the region*
- *Availability of resources--things people like to do, what people need (healthcare and jobs) and within an hour drive*

Resistance to change is strong in the region

- *Don't want to be made to do things--culture holds a deep-seated distrust of government*
- *Individualism, suspicion of outsiders, resistance to change, stubbornness, distrust*

REGIONAL FORUM 1 MEETINGS

COMMON THEMES FOR EACH COUNTY

ANDERSON COUNTY

- ORNL is a major economic asset; helps create a stable economy
- Good local school systems, but educational disparities exist between different parts of the county (quality, accessibility)
- Low cost of living is attractive
- Need to attract diverse retail offerings
- Need to provide amenities that will appeal to a younger demographic

BLOUNT COUNTY

- Tourism is very important; promoting Blount County as “The Quiet Side of the Smokies”
- Availability of high-quality health care is attractive
- Good public schools and Maryville College help economic development
- Need for more jobs/economic development in Blount County, especially professional jobs (Blount County should be more than a bedroom community for Knox County)
- More workforce/vocational training is needed, especially for those not going to college

KNOX COUNTY

- Downtown Knoxville is a local and regional asset: unique businesses, arts/cultural scene, community gathering place, welcoming scale
- Diverse economy; UT is a major asset and helps stabilize the economy
- Good medical facilities
- Educational opportunities are not distributed equitably throughout the county
- Should redevelop abandoned/underutilized properties within Knoxville
- Need to balance economic development with development standards to improve community appearance

LOUDON COUNTY

- Diverse economy with excellent transportation access
- TVA adds stability to the local economy and attracts new industry
- Good health care facilities and services
- Quality school system, despite need for more funding
- Need more local retail and services—too much money goes out of the county to Knox County
- Need more jobs in the county
- Competition between local governments for resources can hinder economic development

UNION COUNTY

- Tourism is important to the local economy
- Need more job opportunities in the county; residents now have long commutes to Knox County
- Need more services, retail, and restaurants in the county
- Need to improve education and attitudes toward value of education

ENVIRONMENT

ANDERSON COUNTY

- Beauty of mountains, valleys, and lakes is a major asset for the county

BLOUNT COUNTY

- Natural beauty helps define the county and support tourism: mountains, river, open space
- Good water supply
- Need to improve air and water quality

KNOX COUNTY

- Natural beauty is a major asset for the county: aesthetic, environmental, and recreational
- Need to improve air and water quality

LOUDON COUNTY

- County is full of natural beauty: mountains, lakes, farms, hills, open space

UNION COUNTY

- Natural beauty/rural character is a major part of the county's identity

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

ANDERSON COUNTY

- Need transportation options other than cars
- Should better maintain existing infrastructure
- Lack of adequate infrastructure in certain parts of the county

BLOUNT COUNTY

- Traffic congestion on major roadways (Alcoa Highway, U.S. 321, and U.S. 411) is a problem
- Limited transportation options; this makes commuting more difficult
- Greenways are major assets, but more greenways and sidewalks are needed to improve walkability

KNOX COUNTY

- Transit access is good in older parts of the city
- Lack of transportation choices in many parts of the county
- Poor connectivity between neighborhoods and different parts of the city
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure
- Need more transportation accessibility throughout the county for seniors and persons with disabilities

LOUDON COUNTY

- Easy access to Knoxville and Chattanooga for urban amenities
- Need transportation options, especially transit and pedestrian trails
- Need to improve infrastructure maintenance

UNION COUNTY

- More transportation options are needed; limited options make it difficult for lower-income residents and seniors to access services (especially if services are outside the county)
- Insufficient infrastructure leads to isolation in some parts of the county: roads, water, sewer, Internet

HOUSING

ANDERSON COUNTY

- County has a lot of older and not well-maintained housing stock
- Need to attract diverse and high-quality residential growth
- Need to provide housing that will appeal to a younger demographic

BLOUNT COUNTY

No local housing themes emerged

KNOX COUNTY

- Homelessness is a growing issue

LOUDON COUNTY

No local housing themes emerged

UNION COUNTY

No local housing themes emerged

HEALTH

ANDERSON COUNTY

- Drug abuse is a major health issue in the county

BLOUNT COUNTY

- Drug abuse is a major health issue in the county

KNOX COUNTY

- The county has a number of public health issues: asthma, obesity, poor nutrition, drug use

LOUDON COUNTY

- Drug abuse and obesity are health issues in the county

UNION COUNTY

- Alcohol and drug abuse are major health issues in the county



**Loudon County Regional Forum 1 Meeting
November 17, 2011**



**Knox County Regional Forum 1 Meeting
November 14, 2011**



*Blount County Regional Forum 1 Meeting
November 14, 2011*



*Anderson County Regional Forum 1 Meeting
November 15, 2011*



*Union County Regional Forum 1 Meeting
November 15, 2011*

OTHER COUNTY THEMES

ANDERSON COUNTY

- Diverse population is an asset; people are more open to new ideas
- Pride in unique history of Anderson County communities
- Communities have small-town feel with urban amenities close by
- Strong sense of community and volunteer spirit
- Conveniently located for outdoor recreation
- Arts and cultural amenities in the county are assets

BLOUNT COUNTY

- Communities have strong characters: rural/agricultural or small-town feel
- Strong respect for community heritage
- Friendly, welcoming people
- Close to mountains and recreational opportunities
- Interjurisdictional cooperation has been successful
- Preserve autonomy of local governments
- Need to balance protecting community character with protecting property rights

KNOX COUNTY

- County contains diverse neighborhoods and communities with strong individual identities
- Knoxville has a small-town feel with urban amenities
- Proximity to recreational opportunities
- Parks and greenways are assets
- Need for improved communication/coordination between the County and the City

LOUDON COUNTY

- Strong community character: rural and small-town feel; need to protect this character
- Diverse population: mix of natives and transplants, different ages and ethnicities
- People respect local culture and heritage
- Proximity to recreational opportunities
- Good place to retire
- Need more civic engagement

UNION COUNTY

- Strong sense of heritage; many residents have deep, multi-generational roots in the county
- Pride in agricultural heritage and desire to preserve this heritage
- Rural feel and friendly people
- Residents enjoy the quiet of Union County and its proximity to Knox County amenities