



## **ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP Meeting #2**

**Wednesday, June 14, 2012  
1:00PM – 3:00PM  
Cansler YMCA, Community Room  
616 Jessamine Street, Knoxville, TN 37917**

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### **Welcome and Introductory Remarks**

Berny Ilgner, Environment Working Group Chair and Principal Scientist with ARCADIS, introduced himself, thanked meeting attendees and asked the group to introduce themselves.

### **Parties Present**

Leslee T. Alexander (Walland, TN Resident and Leslee T. Alexander Consulting), David Brace (City of Knoxville Public Service Department), Keri Brill (Knoxville Utilities Board), Patrice Cole, Ben Epperson (Knox County Health Department), Carol Evans (Legacy Parks Foundation), Parc Gibson (Knox County Stormwater), Chad Hellwinckel (University of Tennessee Agricultural Policy Analysis Center), Al Iannacone (Knox County Health Department), Neva Kitts (Union County Chamber of Commerce), John Lamb (Blount County Planning Department), John Mike, Niki Ooten (Knox County Health Department), Kim Raia, Ellen Smith (City of Oak Ridge City Council and ORNL), Donna Stokes, Sean Vasington (Carol R. Johnson Associates), Emily Woodle (City of Knoxville Community Development), Berny Ilgner (ARCADIS-Chair), Liz Albertson (MPC-PlanET Staff), Amy Brooks (MPC/TPO-PlanET Staff), Sherith Culverson (City of Knoxville-PlanET Staff), Mark Donaldson (MPC-PlanET Staff), Rob Kerns (WRT- PlanET Consulting Team), Ann Coulter (PlanET-Consulting Team, A. Coulter Consulting-Facilitator)

### **Where we are now?**

MPC Executive Director Mark Donaldson provided an update on recent PlanET activities and accomplishments:

- Work accomplished and activities conducted to date: Existing Conditions Report completed, Livability Report Card completed, dozens of Meeting In A Box sessions held throughout the region, online town-hall tool, MindMixer, launched and used extensively, social media outreach underway, Community Forums I and II completed, and UT's Community Survey completed/results reported

- Identification of regional strengths and challenges has been a core goal to this point in planning process
- There is general agreement on regional issues, verified by Community Forums, UT survey and MindMixer
- Regional dialogue priorities identified for economy and workforce development, transportation and infrastructure, housing and neighborhoods, healthy communities, and environment

## **Regional Drivers**

Ann Coulter, PlanET Facilitator explained the purpose of Round 2 Working Group meetings. Participants will review regional drivers as described in the Livability Report Card and make any additional comments relative to the focus area of the Working Group. It will be important to consider the relative impact of each driver on the focus area in order to determine how to focus policy based discussions in later meetings. If a driver is considered to have a high impact on the focus area, in this case the environment, then policy recommendations will more intensely consider how to change or influence that driver. In the second part of the meeting participants will consider and comment on regional input about desired visions for the future.

The group was asked to identify any missing drivers of importance to the environment, or to elaborate or edit any existing ones. Numbered drivers 1-8 were identified by the Livability Report Card. Drivers 9 and 10 were added by the group. The bulleted points below are comments from the group regarding each of the drivers.

### **1. Demographic Shifts**

### **2. Dispersed development and separation of land uses**

- *Unmitigated concentration of impervious surface development in the urban areas has an impact.*
- *Mixed use can lead to more impervious surfaces. Mitigation must also be increased.*

### **3. Loss of agricultural land**

- *Loss of agricultural land could be seen as both a positive and negative because of the impact of agriculture on water quality.*
- *This also adds another type of open space. Change in land use, moving away from traditional uses, such as forest land, mining, open space, etc...that change/shift adds other types of open space.*
- *Profitability of agriculture is down and is a cause of agricultural land loss.*
- *Poor engineering practices in rural areas impact the environment.*

### **4. Few transportation options**

- *Should be rephrased to note there are actually few “smart transportation options,” need the right transportation options to make good transportation decisions.*

### **5. Locations decisions**

### **6. Rising energy costs**

- *Rising energy costs is huge. Can be beneficial in encouraging alternatives*
- *Is this limited to transportation or all kinds of energy costs?*

**7. Low educational attainment, low wages, and limited job advancement opportunities**

**8. Food, activity and lifestyle**

- *Where do consumables fit in? This driver?*

**9. Regulation/Activism (added by the group)**

- *Air and Water Quality- One of the biggest drivers impacting clean air and water is regulation/enforcement. They are relevant to agriculture also, particularly food safety laws.*
- *Community activity and activism – have had a positive impact on the water quality.*
- *Balance business and the environment*

**10. Political Leadership/Will (added by the group)**

- *Water quality – lack of top down political support to implement regulatory efforts. Top-down leadership has been helpful in improving water quality in other regions*
- *Political will and leadership, needs to be motivated by an educated public.*

Using a dot voting exercise, meeting participants evaluated how the drivers ranked in their impact on the environment. Results are below.

<b>RATING</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Total Score</b>	<b>Number of Dots</b>
<b>Number of Points</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>		
1. Demographic shifts	0	3	16	1	22	20
2. Dispersed development patterns	14	4	0	1	50	19
3. Loss of agricultural land	7	3	6	0	33	16
4. Few transportation options	6	8	5	0	39	19
5. Location decisions	0	10	7	2	27	19
6. Rising energy costs	5	5	7	4	32	21
7. Low educational attainment, low wages, and limited job advancement opportunities	6	5	5	1	33	17
8. Food, activity, & lifestyle	3	10	4	1	33	18
9. Regulation/Activism	13	3	3	0	48	19
10. Political Leadership/Will	12	4	4	0	48	20

The results of the exercise noted that the top three drivers were:

1. #2 - Dispersed development and separation of land uses
2. #9 and #10 - Regulation and Activism Political Will/Leadership (tied)
3. #4 - Few transportation options.

## Review of Forum 2 Themes Summary

Participants reviewed the overall results of input from the Regional Forum Series 2 handout and vision/themes about the environment in particular. ([PlanET Regional Forum Series Handout](#)) The environment vision/themes are shown below and the sub-themes are numbered. The bulleted/italicized points are the comments from the group regarding each of the themes or sub-themes.

### **Improved air and water quality as a result of public and private efforts**

1. Water and air quality need continued improvement; recruit “clean” industries to the region
  - *Industry isn’t the only problem, because we are the problem, de-link the “clean” industries*
  - *There are many reasons to improve air quality*
2. Improve air quality for outdoor recreation
  - *...outdoor recreation, there are other fundamental reasons for improving air quality*
3. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions; reduce car use or [use] lower emission vehicles
4. Decrease the amount of impaired streams
  - *Very few have actually been assessed*
  - *This goes hand-in-hand with #5*
5. Clean up streams and waterways (rivers and lakes included): stream buffers, reduce erosion, remove bacteria
  - *This goes hand-in-hand with #4*
  - *Green infrastructure: more open space, wildlife corridors, low-impact development, stormwater retention/infiltration*
6. Keep private party innovations involved in solutions

### **Productive farmland**

7. Agricultural land is seen as a resource to protect and use, not a nuisance
  - *Productive farming/watershed linked*
8. Protect agricultural land from development
  - *Need a whole local food system, better policy standards are needed. Maintain better practices.*
9. Attract a new generation of workers interested in farming
  - *There’s been a resurgence of local farmers markets.*
  - *Maintain momentum in locally grown foods*

### **Resource protection that provides economic, health, and recreational benefits**

10. People will appreciate our region’s beauty and take better care of the environment
11. Natural resources bring people into the area; bring tourism growth for the region
12. Ensure that we protect the rural areas that attract people to the region
13. Legacy of parks and natural areas that are destinations will be provided for the next generation

14. Preserve enjoyment of access to mountains, camping (public parks)

15. Recreation opportunities ... promote health

### **Overall Comments, Equity, and Policy Comments from Participants:**

- *Responsibilities of local government - they have to lead a lot of this process. Local government is also responsible and should be more involved.*
- *Better policy standards at the local level – maintain best practices*
- *Other local governments need “Offices of Sustainability” like the City of Knoxville’s*
- *Acknowledge people who don’t have access to environmental systems. End disenfranchisement.*
  - *There should be an element in the vision statement for people without access to these systems to address the disenfranchised, so everyone has access to the opportunity to do these things.*
  - *Government should facilitate change*
- *Statement such as “Improved air and water quality” and “Resource protection that provides benefits” should include “for all” and/or “for all populations.” There needs to be an equity component.*
- *Adopt current building standards in local building codes (adopt ICC) – that will help create equity.*
- *A region where opportunities are publicized. Community groups should exchange ideas.*
- *A system of conservation practices that are accessible to all (e.g. curbside recycling)*
- *High level of environmental stewardship at all levels of government and community*
  - *Personal-Household-Corporate/Business-Civic/Community-Government.*
- *A region with resilience*

### **Outreach Methods and Next Steps**

Chair, Berny Ilgner closed the meeting, noting that “We need to identify folks in our community who can be champions for this process. We need more Meetings-in-a-Box conducted in your in the communities. Please contact Sherith Culverson if you want more information and would like to set one up”. Meetings-in-a-Box need to be wrapped up before mid-August. Homework for Working Group members: commit to holding at least one MIB before mid August, identify community projects in line with PlanET goals, and try to identify PlanET champions.

The next Environment Working Group meeting will probably be the week of the 20th of August.