



## **ECONOMY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP Meeting #3**

**Tuesday, August 21, 2012**

**7:30 – 9:30AM**

**Knoxville Chamber**

**17 Market Square, Knoxville, TN 37902**

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### **Welcome and Introductory Remarks**

Mark Donaldson welcomed participants and reminded them of the context of where the Economy and Workforce Development Working Group falls within the PlanET project as a whole. All participants introduced themselves.

### **Parties Present**

David Barclay (Suntrust), Jennifer Evans (Knoxville Chamber), Maribel Koella (NAI Knoxville), John Lamb (Blount County), Todd Napier (The Development Corporation of Knox County), Laura Ogle-Graham (CBER – University of Tennessee), Travis Patterson (Union County Chamber), Vaughn Smith (Workforce Solutions), Janet Testerman (Scripps Networks), Windie Wilson (Workforce Solutions), Emily Woodle (City of Knoxville), Bryan Berry (MPC-PlanET Staff), Amy Brooks (TPO-PlanET Staff), Sherith Culverson (City of Knoxville-PlanET Staff), Mark Donaldson (MPC-PlanET Staff), Terry Gilhula (MPC-PlanET Staff), Buz Johnson (MPC-PlanET Staff), Ron Kelly (CREC-PlanET Consulting Team), Rob Kerns (WRT-PlanET Consulting Team), Kevin Tilbury (Gresham, Smith and Partners-PlanET Consulting Team), Ken Poole (CREC-PlanET Consulting Team-Facilitator).

### **Presentation of Trend Scenario for the Region**

Kevin Tilbury provided a general overview of scenario development and specific scenarios already in development for the Knoxville region. The presentation included maps illustrating how future scenarios may be spatially represented. Many examples were shown from recent work in Austin, Texas.

Tilbury provided population and employment projections by county for the Knoxville region for 2040. The change in both was positive. A survey of key local partners (i.e., bankers, community planners, economic developers, etc.) was included in this analysis. The 2040 regional development pattern trend is one of increased density as population grows in the region.

## **Presentation of Draft Regional Vision Statement**

Ken Poole provided further background and context to where the Working Group finds itself in its process within the overall PlanET framework. He gave a handout of the Vision Statement for participants to review, encouraging them to provide feedback to CREC staff by marking up the handout.

The group reviewed the specific vision elements through a discussion facilitated by Ken Poole. Poole asked for an initial reaction from the group, indicating how items were developed – through previous working group and public meetings, meetings with local business executives and economic and workforce development professionals, etc.

Working group members had the following feedback items:

- The region should also leverage other investments (i.e., education and skills) in terms of its competitive advantage
- The Vision document was lengthy, with some items that seemed to be more goal-oriented
- Low-skilled workers were not included in the vision
- The Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the river should be specifically mentioned

## **Review Preliminary Goals**

Ken Poole referred the group to a matrix of goals provided in their handout. He asked the participants to rate these seven goals on a scale of one to five from “not important” to “extremely important.”

## **Brainstorm Possible Strategies**

The Working Group reported back on which goals they found most and least important. The following items were brought up in the discussion:

- Goal 6, “Strengthen the region’s workforce supply” should focus on quality rather than quantity
- Rural areas are important to focus on specifically
- The role of available land could be included in Goal 4 by changing the wording to “Reinforce sub-regional economic niches and locations”
- Support services for existing businesses was not explicitly stated, though Working Group members thought that the concerns of these firms were included in many of the goals
- A “Market Development” goal could be added, which would entail the concept of product ideation, perhaps working collaboratively with the University of Tennessee
- Each goal as a brief phrase could be interpreted in a variety of ways; the goals become much clearer as you begin to look at the associated sub-bullets
- The goals could perhaps be redeveloped with a lens toward customer targets
- An overall theme of competitiveness could be developed, which could be a unifying theme for all other Working Groups as well

Ken Poole asked the group what indicators would be best to monitor these goals. The ensuing brainstorming discussion led to the following suggestions:

- Overall
  - Job creation
  - Job quality

- Income
- Firm productivity
- In-migration (perhaps specifically focusing on a younger demographic)
- Entrepreneurship
  - Number of new startups that survive over a period of time
  - Number of new product lines
- Workforce
  - Number of positions difficult to fill
  - Educational attainment
  - Underemployment
- Research and development
  - Investments
  - Number of new patents/licenses
- Global market access
  - Sales outside the region

Vaughn Smith expressed that indicators and goals for other working groups would have a distinct impact on the goals and associated indicators for the Economy and Workforce Working Group. He recommended that the various Working Groups have synergies to best catalyze those spillover effects.

Ken Poole asked the Working Group to review the specific sub-elements of the seven draft goals. The following items made up the subsequent discussion:

- Rural areas face different economic and workforce challenges within the region
- Technical training is needed for those who will not attend college
- Middle-skill technical jobs should be better promoted to students and workers in the region
- High school completion is a regional issue
- Education is not valued highly

- Mentoring and apprenticeship opportunities could be a worthwhile strategy
  - Most local apprenticeship programs require a high school diploma
- Tourism promotion through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and other recreational areas of local importance could be another worthwhile strategy
- Advocacy for a local \$35 million educational initiative under way might be considered

## **Next Steps**

CREC collected the handouts to incorporate the feedback of the Working Group. CREC will follow up with the group by email and perhaps teleconference to ensure buy-in of the refined goals and indicators to be prepared for the October meeting.

Rob Kerns provided details of upcoming steps for scenario development in anticipation of the October meeting.

Mark Donaldson wrapped up the session, again pointing out a tentative meeting date of October 5 for the combined meeting of the various Working Groups. He also announced that staff is considering the development of a symposium focusing on economic competitiveness during the first week of December. The tentative date for the symposium is Monday, December 3.