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Capstone Project

Strategic Plan Development for the  
North Gateway of Portland, Tennessee

**“The New Gateway to Tennessee”**

## **Introduction**

Portland Tennessee is a progressive community. Just as community leaders capitalized on the assets of their agriculture-based economic opportunities in the past, Portland leaders continue to take advantage of their competitive advantages of location and resources in the areas of industry and commerce today. Portland is the excellent location for industrial, manufacturing, and distribution businesses that benefit from the city's fully developed industrial parks and facilities, multi-state transportation access, strong regional workforce, and a community offering a great quality of life.

Currently a new interchange is under construction on I-65 that connects I-65 north and south to I-40 and I-24 east and west. The new I-65 /109 Exit is slated to open in 2019. The opening as the first interchange into the state will solidify the City of Portland as the New Gateway to Tennessee. Manufacturers and distributors benefit from the city's location and transportation assets. Portland has a population of 12,000 with over 45 industries that employ more than 20,000 people. Portland's transportation assets of highway and rail continue to make the city a key location for manufacturing and business investments.

The new I-65 interchange and the plans for the future State Route 109 Bypass, along with potential development on Highway 31 between interstate exits, will greatly change the physical, economic, and environmental landscape of Portland and its surrounding area. Proper planning for growth is needed to assure the development is designed with the community needs in mind. Future development is inevitable and designing desired land use for growing areas will help developers, as well as the city, prepare for the future.

Through our community assessment there is a need for housing development and retail. The new infrastructure will provide a great opportunity for growth in these areas.

In our class on Strategic Planning, Dr. Kolzow said “Failing to Plan is Planning to Fail.” Who are we? Who do we want to be? How do we get there? And how do we know if we got there? These are just a few questions this project will help answer.

### **Project Description**

The City of Portland anticipates that growth is coming in the next five years. Portland is an excellent setting for growth with the additional infrastructure that is underway. Portland’s leadership determined the need for a land use plan to provide the roadmap to success. The first step of that process was to gather information from local stakeholders about needs. The City felt that bringing in an outside agency would best serve the project and produce the best report. This would be designed to allow stakeholders to have an opportunity to voice their concerns and be engaged in the process. An outside agency would be able to speak without prejudice to the community and receive more feedback. There would also be a level of expertise provided by the engineers and consulting group that city leaders would not be able to provide. The city contracted with Ragan Smith and Jones-Bridget Consulting to conduct the study. This report will show the process taken to create a strategic plan for development and land use. It will also show how they plan to utilize the study for the marketing and development of the City.

### **Project Partners**

The study was conducted using a collaborative approach by assembling a project team that included:

- City of Portland Staff,
- Chamber of Commerce Staff,
- Key Community Stakeholders,
- The Ragan Smith team,

- Jones-Bridget Consulting Group,
- TDOT Representatives and
- Nashville MPO Representatives.

In developing this strategic plan for Portland the committee researched urban planning development trends. The younger generation is interested in walkability, place making, and public spaces. Portland has a compact downtown core with a historical component that is being revitalized. The current trends allow the city leaders to plan for connectivity to the new development. The proposed plan allows for green space and walking trails along with mixed-use development centers.

## **Goals and Objectives**

The Ragan Smith team conducted initial stakeholder discussions, and worked in partnership with the City of Portland staff, the gateway technical committee, and the gateway steering committee to confirm the key goals and objectives as follows:

### Economic Growth and Development

Goal - Position the City of Portland to accommodate healthy economic growth along the North Gateway Corridor and promote regional commerce and tourism.

Objective: Recruit businesses and tourist to the area.

### A Clear Pattern to Establish Future Land Use:

Goal: Map a clear plan to shape specific land use patterns in the gateway and follow through with zoning overlay and development standards to match this pattern.

Objective: To attract developers to the area.

A Strong Plan to Preserve Community Character:

Goal: Establishing design objectives that protect and enhance the quality of life for Portland residents and encourage visitors to return.

Objective: Improve the quality of life to Portland residents as well as attract new residents.

Planning for Good Transportation and Utility Infrastructure Needs:

Goal: Anticipate the impact of the new Route 109 interchange and bypass, plan for good connections to the surrounding community, and make provisions to expand the water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater infrastructure to accommodate future growth.

Objective: To stay ahead of the growth and protect the citizens of Portland.

Preservation of Key Open Spaces Areas for Environmental Quality, Parks, and Greenways:

Goal: Create an agricultural commerce zone to enhance the rural qualities of Portland, encourage agricultural commerce, and designate a greenbelt area for potential parks, greenways, and the protection of cultural and natural resources.

Objective: Protect the history and small town qualities of Portland.

**The corridor plan was developed from the following area:**

- Highway 31W starting just north of the intersection with Hwy 52 and extending northeast to the intersection of existing State Route 109.
- State Route 109 from the new I-65 interchange and extending southwest to College Street.
- The industrial park on the northwest side of I-65.



## Process

The corridor plan was conducted in three main phases with the intent of allowing careful analysis of the existing data and identification of key opportunities and constraints followed by the exploration of strategic concepts and the selection and documentation of the solutions. The three main phases of study include Data Gathering and Analysis Phase, Strategic Development Plan with Corridor Concepts and Growth Study, Final Documentation of Solutions with plan graphics, and strategic conclusions.

Throughout the Corridor Study process, several workshops and public input meetings were held to discuss the project goals, review design concepts, and gather public input which proved invaluable in the planning process. The public input was placed in 4 focus areas.

The Economic Growth and Development Focus Area revealed the community's desire for:

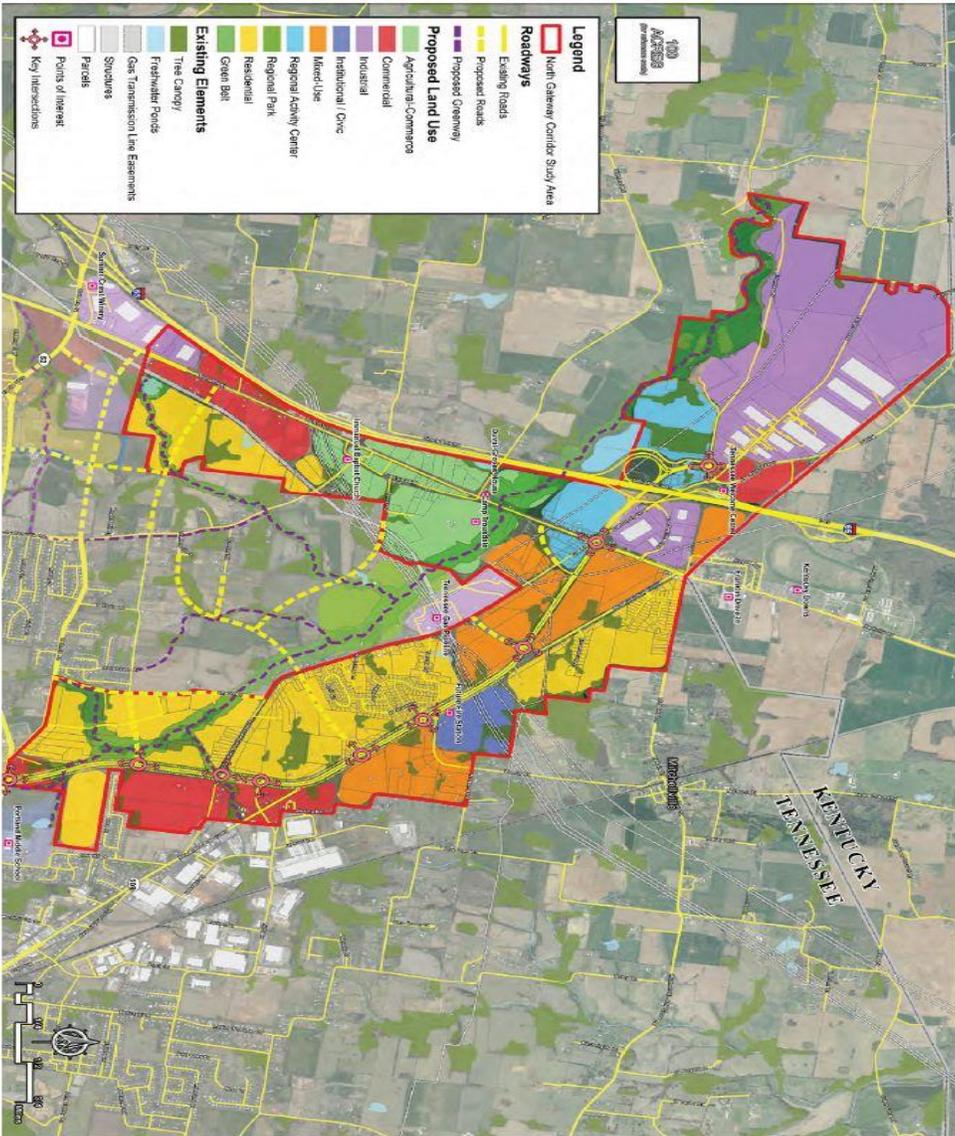
- increased tourism opportunities,
- industrial and commercial growth,
- more housing opportunities and more quality neighborhoods,
- increased density, and,
- a mixture of land uses near the interstate, including a need for hotels, restaurants, and retail.

The Land Use and Community Character Focus Area expressed a desire for improved aesthetics, protecting the rural/small town feeling, and protecting the natural resources and open spaces along the corridor. It was the public's desire to have a design that would be adopted as standards.

# New Land Use Map

## Proposed Land Use:

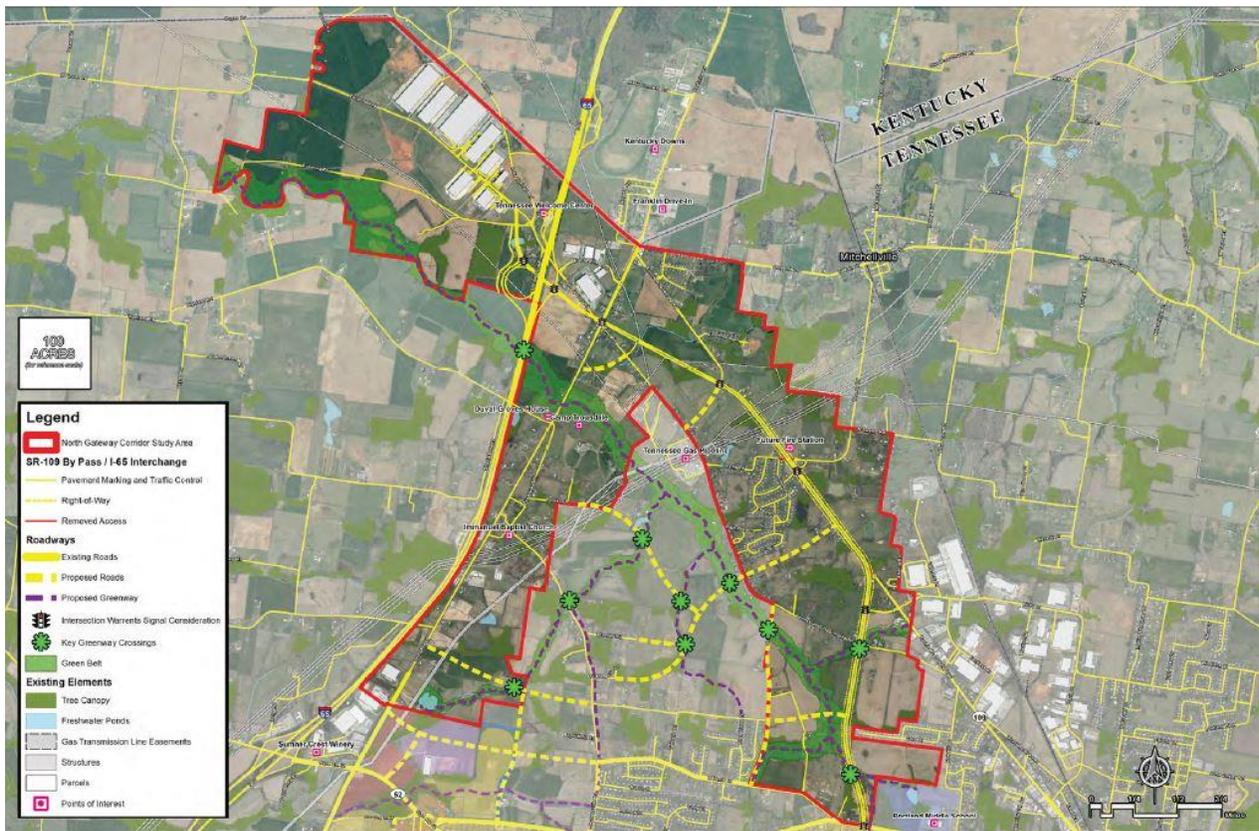
- Agricultural - Commerce**  
Agriculture based operation that brings visitors to farms and commercial facilities for a variety of activities, such as potential agricultural expo events, buying produce, U-pick farms, seasonal events, wine tasting, civil war reenactments, golf, etc.
- Commercial**  
Retail sales, services, motels/motels, recreational services and restaurants that are predominantly privately owned and operated for profit.
- Industrial**  
Area reserved for manufacturing & related uses that provide employment but are generally not compatible with other areas with lower intensity.
- Institutional / Civic**  
Site for public or semi-public facilities, including governmental offices, police and fire facilities, hospitals, chamber of commerce, parks, public and private schools.
- Mixed - Use**  
Areas appropriate for a mixture of residential, commercial, and office use, typically at medium and high densities.
- Regional Activity Center**  
Large retail, services, hotels/motels, and/or residential developments which are designed and oriented to serve a regional market and connect with the regional transportation network.
- Regional Park**  
Large multi-use park to serve a variety of users with elements such as play grounds, ball fields, picnic shelters, greenways, wildlife viewing areas and more.
- Residential**  
Could consist of a variety of housing types, including single-family, townhouses, duplexes, and apartments in context with adjoining land use and available infrastructure. There is a need to provide housing that includes a high quality level of estate homes along with affordable entry level housing.



The Transportation and Infrastructure Focus Area needs were assessed and revealed a need to:

- improve current roads,
- create a walkable community and connections for bikes and pedestrians,
- plan for driveway and curb cuts along the corridor that can be accessed with safety,
- plan for utility infrastructure to support future development,
- promote opportunities and events for the City in the Tennessee Welcome Center, and,
- identify the Portland Exit on Interstate 65 with monuments and/or wayfinding signage.

## Transportation Patterns



The Open Space, Parks and Greenways Focus Area identified the need for these “open space” elements to:

- serve future growth,
- promote agricultural commerce,
- recognize historical properties, and,
- preserve and promote them.

Data collected from the partners incorporated areas for all of the desired uses. Pulling citizens and business leaders together and allowing the community to speak resulted in an easy decision for the City Council to unanimously adopt this plan. Previously created land use plans did not include the public involvement. The result was the plan never being adopted. This process made the leaders comfortable in this decision to adopt. There have been numerous inquiries about development on the proposed corridor. Developers have applied for permits for development in the Corridor Plan Area. Hotels and retail development are currently researching the area and the plan has helped them to identify locations that will easily pass through planning and zoning. Speedway, a convenience –fuel retail location, has received permitting and construction approval, and is moving forward with development. The Corridor Plan allows investors to know what the city will allow in the development areas. This also makes the process easier on the planning and zoning board.

Economic developers have learned to plan for future development. Community stakeholders are one of the greatest assets in planning for development. Dr. Kolzow made us aware in the Strategic Planning course that virtually every plan at one time or another needs to be modified, but in order to make adjustments you must also reassess the priorities. The City will continue to reassess the priorities by using the Plan Do Study Act Cycle (PDSA). As the City grows there will be opportunities to regroup and study the development in order to continue improvements to the land use development plan. The economic development director along with the planning and zoning committee will track the development and meet every six months to study the growth areas and determine if a revision is necessary. The City Leaders along with the residents are excited for the future of Portland and the New Gateway to Tennessee.