

PREPARED FOR OPPORTUNITY:

*THE CRITICAL ELEMENT OF DELIBERATE REGIONAL PLANNING
AND COORDINATION TOWARD INCREASING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COMPETITIVENESS, EXECUTION AND EFFECTIVENESS.*

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One of the greatest satisfactions in doing any sound work for an institution,
a town, or a city, or for the nation is that good work done for the public lasts,
endures through the generations, at the little bit of work that any individual
of the passing generation is enabled to do gains through association
with such collective activities an immortality of its own.

Charles W. Eliot

Source: Sieur de Monts (Acadia National Park) National Monument: Address Upon Its Opening, August 22, 1916, quoted in
The Asheville City Plan, (1925) John Nolen, Ph.B, Sc.D.

A Valley and Its People: a look back to look forward

The State of Tennessee, historically, has been at the national forefront of planning and regional economic development from engaging the nationally respected attorney Alfred Bettman, who developed the state's enabling legislation, to the creation of a regional economic development and planning model that became a global model for river valley development. "The Tennessee State and Regional Planning Act [was] considered to be highly progressive." (Guess 1949) Tennessee pioneered investment in field research, mapping, infrastructure development and standardized planning and economic development enabling legislation; all of which collectively paid dividends by allowing Tennessee to attract manufacturers, expand upon its agricultural strengths, support during and rebuild following World War II, and provide the favorable business climate that attracts an award winning level of jobs and capital investment today. The Tennessee Valley Authority and the State of Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development remain the two largest Tennessee investors, information aggregators, and supporting agents for economic development recruitment and preparation. The catalytic successes of these two organizations, however, is not found in county versus county economic development pursuits and rankings, but instead in the foundation built by leaders who had the wisdom to plan regionally, to press for collaborative innovation, as well as to understand how essential it would be to equip local regional municipal planning commissions, communities, utility providers, industrial development boards and local elected officials with the qualified knowledge required to identify opportunities and execute plans. But, no organization can rest on its laurels if it is to continue to lead. Geopolitical economic regions are no different. The marketplace will not wait for a region to prepare land, capital or have highly-informed collaborative leadership, therefore, we must

prepare across geopolitical jurisdictions in order to provide a strong quality of life today and for generations beyond. Tennessee's early enterprising leaders had an entrepreneurial mind-set to position the state for success in the marketplace, but just as in business, continued innovation and well-informed decision making is required to be prepared for opportunity and prioritization. If regional leaders are to brave crossing long held positional boundaries or risking a new method of shared taxation or shared property ownership, then, as Peter Drucker advises, "the first requirement for successful innovation is to look at change as a potential opportunity instead of a threat." (Drucker 1990)

Many Tennessee counties are highly successful, growing at a pace that matches or exceeds the national average. Yet, those Tennessee counties that are considered distressed or underperforming, are unlikely to experience significant change without targeted interventions and partnerships within regions that mirror Tennessee's early efforts to examine its resources, pool its regional strengths, and equip local Tennesseans to prepare for appropriate long-term investments. According to the report *Growth Concentration in Tennessee Regions*, the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations stated that "a number of policy directions could be affected by the growing disparity between the counties in regions that are gaining in relative strength and the counties outside of those regions. Additionally, as business leaders are placing greater emphasis on regional markets and their connections to global markets, the competitiveness of Tennessee's regions is becoming a more critical factor for the state's continued success." (Lippard, Green 2008) For some communities, which often are stretched at the seams following the Great Recession of the last decade, leaders not only find they require financial support, but also need strategic support from cohorts to plan viable possibilities. Multi-jurisdictional collaboration, solid

long range land and infrastructure planning, spatial analytical mapping and resource identification are essential for determining future capital investment opportunities for our varied regions in Tennessee. Yet, the traditional economic development proclivity toward jurisdiction versus jurisdiction competition may defer opportunity at the expense of Tennesseans. Additionally, long-range planning initiatives have been supplanted by short term projects; whereas it is not an either or proposition, since both are necessary at particular points in time. Alone, without the benefit of the broad vision provided by coordinated field-based research and long range planning, short range planning and ad-hoc strategic actions may provide only short term relief if such efforts are not integrated into a longer range approach to connect regional resources and leadership to build a multi-faceted foundation for growth and development. Tennessee can examine its well-respected history of leading local leadership through planning and industrial development efforts as a guide, such as early assistance to Gatlinburg in 1938 for plans for the first major water and sewer systems and a highway to assist with the burgeoning tourism trade or plans for Kingsport to implement the plans of John Nolen to meet rapid industrial growth in “Upper East Tennessee.” (Guess, 1949)

Planning and economic development success, as will be discussed further, hinge upon a number of collaborative efforts that without the application of a regional vision of connectedness and collaboration, from capital to education, the communities may fail to thrive. Ultimately, communities which do not choose to execute a.) effective, collaborative, innovative long range regional planning and b.) regional economic development partnerships due to long-standing geo-political protectionism are less competitively prepared for economic development site selection opportunities and infrastructure investments for two primary reasons 1.) the lack of timely, broad-

based, cohesive comprehensive regional analysis and coordination of interrelated transportation, water and sewer systems, topography, natural resources, economic clusters, electrical and fiber optic networks, and land conditions, and 2.) the lack of intra-organizational funding opportunities and regional revenue sharing that could have allowed individual communities or boards to become more competitive by leveraging partnerships to purchase strategic land resources and to install critical long range infrastructure investments; all of which results in missing potentially larger opportunities to attract jobs and investment to the entire economic region. Instead, communities, particularly rural communities, will struggle with stop gap “one off” projects with ad-hoc funding and decision making that are attempts to correct deficiencies in economic development “product”, infrastructure installation, and long range planning and economic development prioritization.

Further considering rural communities, particularly those which are more isolated, many complain that they cannot afford prepare in advance for site selection by purchasing property to be eligible for incentive programs or site preparation--a condition which also may be compounded upon the risk of losing land to other development due to a lack of adopted zoning in the jurisdiction. When combined, these two factors place a community’s site development opportunities particularly at risk. Furthermore, if such properties are not identified and inventoried through field work and planning efforts, then the process toward moving a site to “product” status for site selection often experiences further delay. The alternative is to focus on regional opportunities and results by using the critical nature of long range planning to perform, execute and accomplish strategic planning goals versus firefighting and “back against the wall”

reactionary efforts. No well-executed marketing and branding campaign ever can compensate for an ill-timed water or sewer installation or intra-jurisdictional competitiveness that thwarts regional development opportunities. But, having willing, informed partners can help.

“Shortsighted, wasteful, uncoordinated”: choosing regionalism and deliberate action for effectiveness

James Agee’s words sing of his Tennessee Valley region in the October 1933 Forbes article, *“Where did the Tennessee Valley Authority come from?”* but he clearly recognizes the fragmentation of Tennessee’s economy and its people. The Tennessee Valley Authority’s (TVA) work, he reports, “is intended to be of, by, for the valley people.” A valley, of “44,000 square miles,...about the size of England,...a valley which is the heart of the Southeast.” (Agee, 1933) Questioned by local power companies, fought in the courts, and heralded by visionaries, the TVA was about to harness the water and the land to power the lives of “some, 2,000,000 people.” Agee continues to describe the Valley, its people, and its wealth of minerals and its problems, from topography and flooding, to wastelands of former forests and land depleted of all value. The communities’ previous efforts, he notes, have been, “consistently shortsighted, wasteful, uncoordinated” and the TVA was out to show that “man must learn to cooperate with his surroundings,” so that its work, if successful, would be a classic work of importance to all of the U.S., well beyond the Southeast. It was the deliberate regional approach, the pulling together the best minds to coordinate research, the examination of the conditions and circumstances of the land, as well as its people, that allowed TVA to turn the rage of rivers into industrial development, agricultural advancement, and population growth to both the metropolitan and rural areas of Tennessee and its neighboring state and regional economic partners. Yet, if not for the fact the issues

were addressed and harnessed as a whole, across a region, if not placed on a coordinate plane to examine and measure the facts, the impact would not have been the same. Today, we can adhere to the lessons gained about regional preparedness and collaboration by both maintaining the strong base of information and the relationships across regional jurisdiction in order to develop the best opportunities--not simply the only opportunity left because time has expired to prepare for potential outside business investments. Otherwise our communities are, as described by General Colin Powell, OBE or overtaken by events. That, says Powell, he considers “a felonious offense. You blew it. If you took too much time to study the issue, to staff it or to think about it, you become OBE. The issue moved on or an autopilot decision has been made.” (Powell, 2012)

As discussed in Territory and Function, the Evolution of Regional Planning, Friedman and Weaver note that their research showed that “[TVA’s] real emphasis was on resource development as a means of economic expansion.” They also quoted the Hansen and Perloff 1942 publication, Regional Resource Development and its discussion of TVA’s success stating, “Business opportunities can be created and the public welfare advanced by a comprehensive program of regional development. A long range expansionary program would stimulate private enterprise and enable business to plan its investments on a more secure basis [p.2].” The impact of TVA’s coordinated regional planning approach caused rapid growth to metro areas between 1930 to 1950, in that the Tennessee Valley region, “gained [population] at four times the national rate of growth. (Friedman, 1955, pp 55-7)” (Friedman and Weaver, 1979) Fortunately, the TVA approach remained intact following World War II, as most comprehensive planning boards established by the federal National Planning Board initiative changed their sole focus to industrial development, except for in Appalachian states associated with TVA. The fundamental

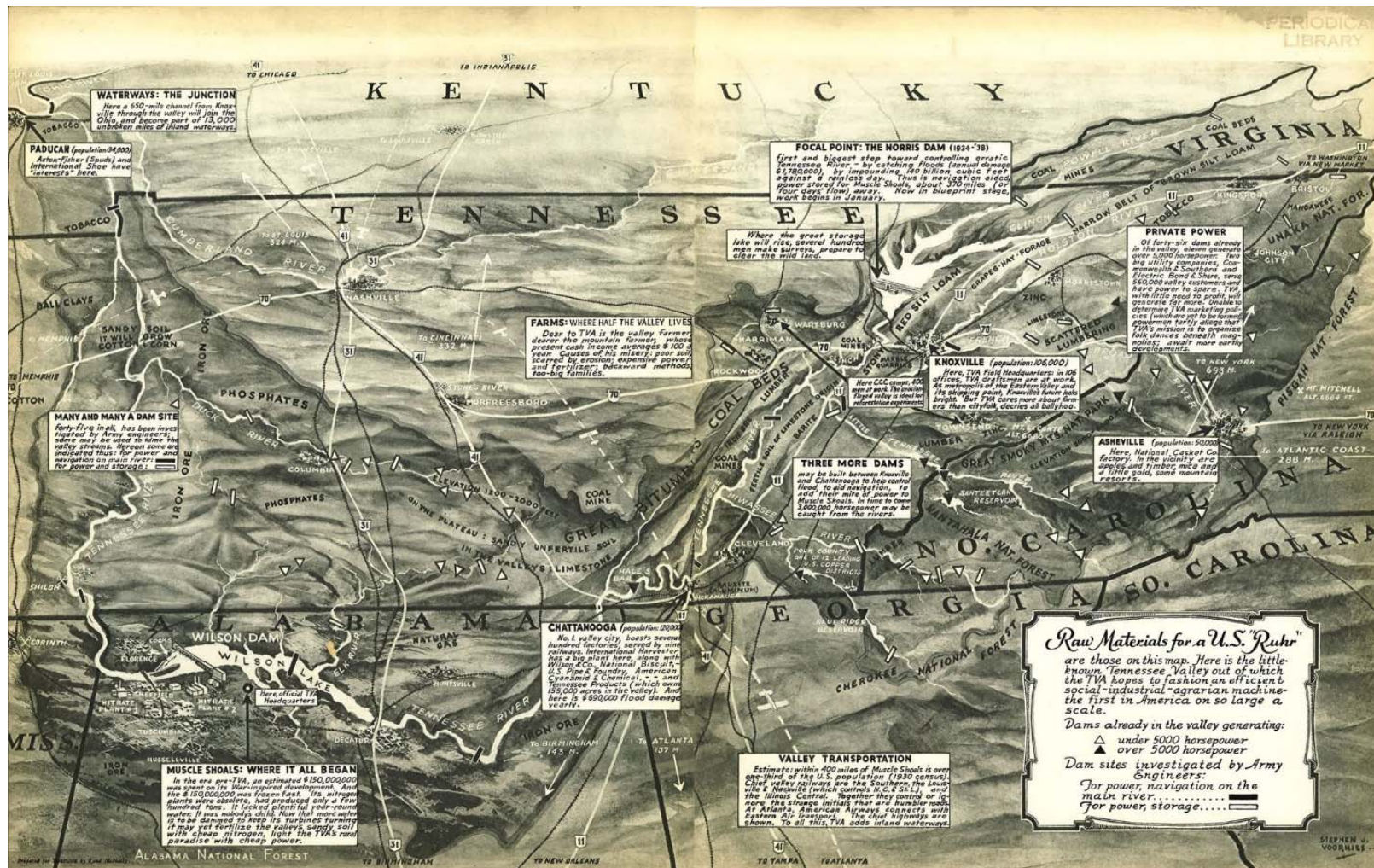


Figure 1: Raw Materials for a U.S. "Ruhr" map published by Forbes in October 1933 illustrating the coordinated TVA regional planning initiative "social-industrial-agrarian machine", described as the U.S. Government's first major regional economic development and planning agency. (Agee, 1933)

difference in outcome was that TVA had the ability not just to study, think, and prepare strategic plans, but also the ability to implement and execute in partnership with local and regional agencies and community partners. (Rothblatt 1979) Again, the results of TVAs role in planning and collaborating to “synthesize” and build local institutions in a “decentralized and adaptive manner” impact economic development still today. In addition to the population growth discussed above, “manufacturing employment in the valley expanded by 218,000 or 99 percent during the 1929-1953 period compared to 82 percent in 11 southeastern states and 64 percent in the nation.” (Rothblatt 1979) TVAs concerted regional approach and its development of planning systems and practices built the foundational mission for planning and economic development of today in the Valley and in the state of Tennessee. Part of that legacy was the establishment of a strong, deep system of long range planning, information gathering and synthesis, and staff support for local community execution that was developed by the State of Tennessee.

By April 22, 1933, in part due to the work of the National Planning Board and the Tennessee Valley Authority, the state of Tennessee was employing long term planning and citizen engagement efforts to change the economic and social conditions in Tennessee and cooperate with the TVA area of the state. The Tennessee Valley Commission was composed of six citizens, two members from each of the state’s grand divisions, who were appointed for four year terms. Franklin D. Roosevelt launched the National Planning Board by June of the same year, thus providing a federal funding mechanism for the new Tennessee planning and industrial development efforts. In 1935, the commission became a branch of state government and “all other state departments [were] instructed to keep the commission

informed of all their projects, improvements, and plans.” (Guess, 1949) The responsibilities included research, state planning, industrial

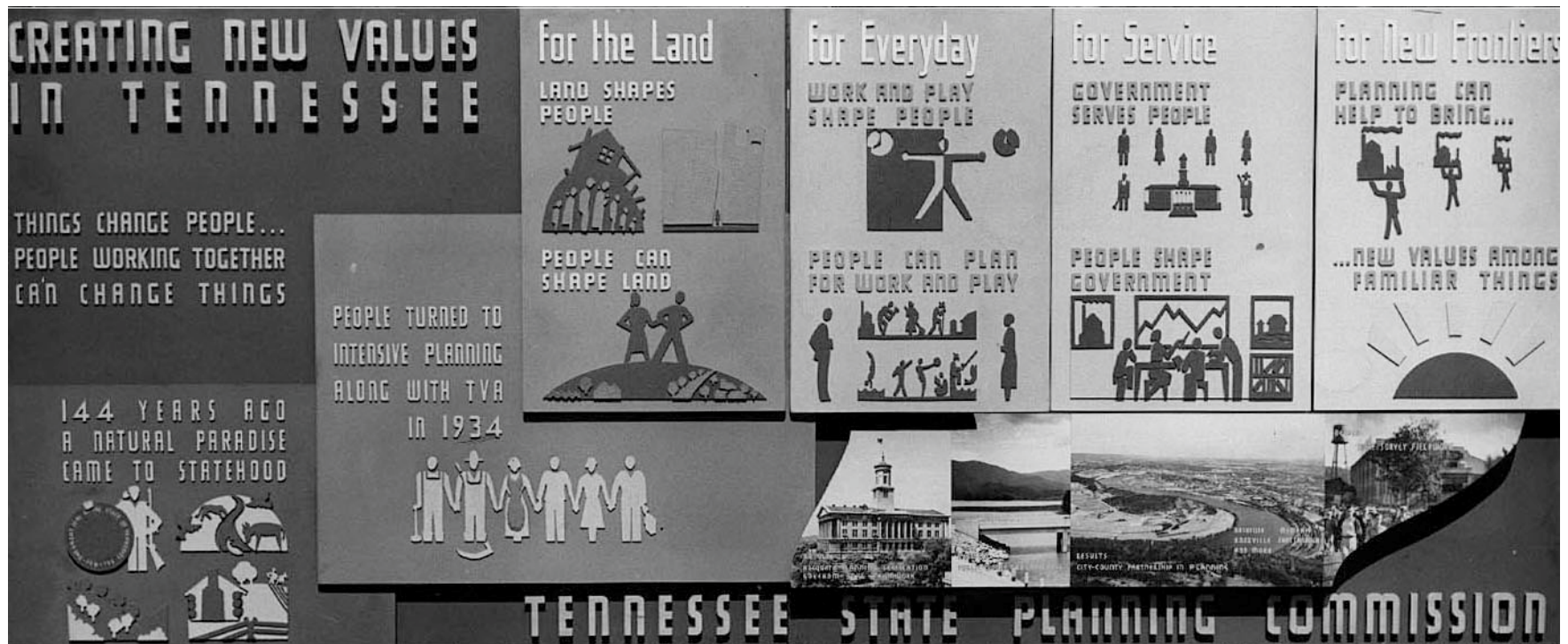


Figure 2: Tennessee State Planning Commission Mission artwork, *Creating New Values in Tennessee*, showing the broad impact of the agency across the state.

development, local planning assistance, and community services. Additionally, the TSPC was responsible for the “Industrial Planning Council, the policy-determining agency for the Industrial Development Division.” Its mission per the state plan, was “to accomplish the most efficient use of the state’s resources so as to promote the prosperity and welfare of the people of the state.” (Guess, 1949) The mission was informed by a variety of research projects, including a report on industrial opportunities in special case study locations; a

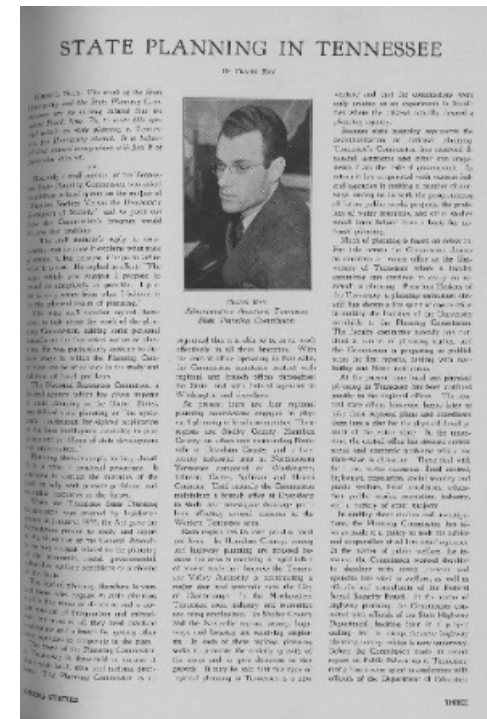
practice echoed today by the Department of Economic and Community Development the Property Evaluation Program (PEP) effort to provide standard criteria to determine which properties and which communities are able to best utilize the state's resources.

Shown in Figure 2, *Creating New Values in Tennessee*, the Tennessee State Planning Commission was tasked with multi-departmental coordination and communication, in addition to linking efforts to four carefully delineated regions of the state and to the University of Tennessee's research capabilities. Examining the numerous documents produced by the TSPC, it remains clear today the extent of their efforts and their accumulation of expertise that allowed the State of Tennessee and their Local Planning Offices (LPO) to provide strong decision making data. But also, the field work performed by the commission staff was critical to understanding where to prioritize, how to time investments, as well as tap into the knowledge of what communities were prepared politically, educationally and fiscally for site and infrastructure development. Again, the needs of communities in Tennessee have not changed and access to similar information and prioritization of projects and expenditures is needed in many rural communities across the state.

In recognition of similar needs in the 1930s, the development of the Tennessee State Planning Commission led to the creation of a system of Local Planning Offices to work as catalysts and neutral community partners, in addition to the "four regional planning commissions engaged in physical planning in local communities. These regions [were] Shelby County [Memphis], Hamilton County [Chattanooga], an urban area surrounding Nashville in Davidson County, and a five county industrial area in Northeastern Tennessee composed of Washington [Johnson City], Johnson, Carter, Sullivan, and Unicoi Counties." (Ray, 1936) (*The local planning offices remained in operation until April 2011, though their focus had become more limited in the last decade.*) University Tennessee alumnus and

administrative assistant of the Tennessee State Planning Commission, Frank Ray, had been drafted to explain in Tennessee Alumnus magazine the University of Tennessee's role in research, as "much of planning is based on research," and to explain how the peculiarities of each of these regions necessitated branch offices to tie together the "three-fold" work of the Nashville based Tennessee State Planning Commission and its work with federal programs, state concerns, and local problems to be addressed to aid the state's growth. Referring to the Northeast Tennessee area, the efforts were to emphasize industry and recreation, while the regional plans that resulted from the offices were to coordinate the development of the entire state, as well as address "certain social and economic problems which [were] state-wide in character." Though the Tennessee State Planning Commission (TSPC) no longer exists, its work fundamentally impacts and informs much of the effort underway today.

The TSPC performed in-depth, coordinated field studies throughout the state, from reports on public education, fiscal and tax laws, transportation, geological conditions and resources and even the financial validation of the governor's policy to utilize the gas tax. It was the collection of information for well informed decision making at a faster pace which made the TSPC and their regional offices an asset toward "mutual cooperation", as "the executive and several branches of the State government have found the State Planning Commission to be of assistance in the State reorganization program, because the Planning Commission had very early assembled a mass of information on the State's many problems." (Ray, 1936) The University of Tennessee also established itself as a resource for planning



and economic development research, which eventually led to the creation of the now dissolved University of Tennessee Graduate School of Planning, from which a significant number of public policy, economic development, and planning practitioners were trained. Currently, multiple agencies provide data research in Tennessee, including the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR), the State of Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, the Department of Education and the Department of Tourism, yet the coordinating mechanism of the TSPC, their cohesive reports to the state, and the local institutional knowledge held by their regional staff, identified opportunities and set the stage for effective execution of those projects coordinated within a region for economic and community development. An examination of municipal planning commission minutes in the Tri-Cities Tennessee area shows the interaction among the state planning commission local planning commission staff and local leaders, the staff serving as both consultant and catalyst to guide decisions for investments that remain in place today. However, it is highly likely that the knowledge acquired by the Tennessee State Planning Commission has been exceeded by progress, thus regional research needs to be updated by a non-jurisdictional local partner(s) to guide and inform the creation of regional alliances, projects and successful long range planning efforts.

Why bother, however, with a discussion of the now defunct Tennessee State Planning Commission and the early years of the Tennessee Valley Authority? Because their efforts, practices and successes are crucial to considering where opportunities lie for today's Tennessee, in order to avoid what Agee's 1933 article earlier referred to as the Tennessee Valley's former "consistently shortsighted, wasteful, and uncoordinated" tendencies. We need to be most productive as a region and seek opportunities in advance. Economists throughout the U.S. following the Civil War and well into the 1920s struggled to determine how to increase the productivity of the

Southeastern United States, “which at no point in its history [had] produced the portion of the manufactured goods of the country that its area and population called for” and had lagged well behind the rest of the country for generations (Miller and Perkins, 1928). The Tennessee Valley Authority’s regional approach changed that trajectory. Today, portions of Appalachia are experiencing reduced productivity and out migration due to systemic economic transitions.

Again, as economic trends and prospects change, communities of Tennessee, Eastern Kentucky, Southwest Virginia, and Western North Carolina, need a renewed regional approach to development, resource identification and long range planning efforts to plan a new future. It must be a deliberate, cooperative regional approach that recognizes the power of telecommunications technology, education, and the ability to work as a region to pool resources and share tax revenue to provide employment throughout a region for families who daily cross jurisdictional and political boundaries to provide for their family’s well-being and spend their sales tax dollars not only where they work and live, but online, as well.

Just as successful business partnerships are created to build alliances that can bring capital, connections, ability to execute and opportunities to sell, communities must create regional investment teams based upon what they can build for their citizens together and be prepared for decision making by acquiring knowledge and expertise from long range and strategic planning and research to make projects a reality; including land and infrastructure and market ready training investments. In coordination with national agencies such as the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Economic Development Administration, the State of Tennessee and the Tennessee Valley

Authority remain the standard bearers who can coordinate elements in order to expedite the success of regional alliances. The precedent was set by a long, firm, track record of planning and economic development during the past nearly eighty-five years.

The Tri-Cities Tennessee-Virginia region has been a center of intra-jurisdictional competition, but it also has a strong history of economic development at the local community level. Johnson City, Tennessee, (Washington County) and neighboring Kingsport, Tennessee, both have an admirable early timeline of comprehensive planning and economic development initiatives. The beneficiaries of the private investments and empire building of a visionary and shrewd industrialist, George L. Carter, the Tri-Cities Tennessee-Virginia area operated as part of Carter's personal economic region, as he built his Clinchfield Railroad empire from the coalfields of Southwest Virginia, the lumber and furniture firms of South Central Virginia, and the industrial firms he and his partners recruited throughout the region to Kingsport, to Johnson City, through North Carolina and South Carolina to the ports of Charleston, South Carolina. From offices in New York or his homes in Johnson City, Bristol or Hillsville, Carter knew one thing, geopolitical boundaries would not prevent him from profit and expansion into what became a "wagon wheel" of development emanating from the Tri-Cities. His brother-in-law J. Fred Johnson brought planning to Kingsport to prepare for the growth of new companies he had recruited, including Eastman Kodak. John Nolen planned within the Tri-Cities and parts of the region, thus connecting them in ways the communities and their local leaders may not have understood at the time, as Nolen had the opportunity to see trends, conditions and patterns in the entire region, just like George L Carter and his agents.



Figure 3: An early Washington County, Tennessee map, showing the surrounding counties of Greene, Carter, and Sullivan, encompassing what is part of present day Unicoi County abutting the North Carolina state line.

Johnson City and Kingsport each contracted with John Nolen of Boston, “a leader in small city planning and one of the most prolific and significant figures in the entire city planning movement.” (Frazier 2007) Nolen also provided professional planning to the neighboring Appalachian cities of Asheville, North Carolina, Spartanburg, South Carolina, and Roanoke, Virginia; all connected to the railroad. (Fulton 2017) Due to Johnson City’s growth, from 5,000 to more than 25,000 in twenty five years (Frazier 2007), the city launched an early effort to cooperate with regional economic development with neighboring Carter County/Elizabethton in 1925 in order to prepare for the location of German synthetic fiber companies American Bemberg and American Glanztoff. Nolen had just completed The Asheville Plan, when John H. Cathey, Asheville’s Mayor-Commissioner of Finance reminded his city that the plan was adopted in Asheville so that “waste of effort, waste of time and money in useless experiment, is thus avoided because the City knows in advance what it hopes to achieve.” (Nolen,

1925) Nearby, Johnson City leaders chose to hire Nolen due to their need to address the impending regional growth from foreign manufacturing investment. The planning effort was seen by the business and civic community as an opportunity to prosper from well planned preparations. Stunningly, Johnson City ultimately did not pay Nolen his fee and the Johnson City plan remained unpublished due

to differing opinions between the Chamber of Commerce, the Mayor, and newly elected members of City Commission, despite the efforts of a number of leading citizens to have the plan adopted. (Frazier 2007) The fact that Carter and Washington Counties, the City of Johnson City, and the Chamber of Commerce worked together to improve water supply to offer property to the sister companies in order to bring the investment to the region is the most important example for existing infrastructure entities in the region today.



*Figure 4: Dr. Hugo Hoffman with his invention the Continuous Spinning Machine, used in American Glantzoff fiber manufacturing in Carter County, TN.
Source: www.cartercountyhistory.com*

In the years that followed, such cooperation became infrequent, as competitiveness among Johnson City, Kingsport, and Bristol and their neighboring communities increased. Though the multi-jurisdictional Tri-Cities Industrial Park was built in Piney Flats, Tennessee nearly forty years ago, the usual practice, as in many communities, has been to develop independently of potential regional partners. The only other joint project since then is located at the Tri-Cities Regional Airport, Aerospace Park.

The State of Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Northeast Tennessee Regional Industrial Development Association have continued to be the unifying economic development entities throughout the region. Currently, a new approach to regionalism is warranted as our economy transforms, connectivity increases and the growth of

manufacturing clusters is a reality. Parag Khanna, Senior Fellow at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy says in a recent opinion piece, “[regional policy efforts] would start by focusing not on state lines but on existing lines of infrastructure, supply chains and telecommunications, routes that stay remarkably true to the borders of the emergent super-regions....” (Khanna 2016) The Tennessee Valley Authority crossed six states. The State of Tennessee historically developed one of the best networks for information and planning in the country; they remain viable concepts for the future. Fortunately, a few smaller areas of Tennessee are beginning the regional discussion, while others, like the Chattanooga region are setting the standard.

Localism returns to Regionalism

During 2015-16, regionalism began be bantered about again in Northeast Tennessee when Johnson City and Washington County, Tennessee aligned with abutting Unicoi County and Carter County to form a new economic development regional alliance, the Northeast Tennessee Regional Economic Partnership. NETWORKS, the Sullivan County economic development organization, also had partnered with neighboring Hawkins County approximately one year before. Washington County, TN and its partners, Greene County, Johnson County, and Sullivan County and its partner continue to interact within the region, but at this time, they maintain separate organizations. Regional marketing occurs only through the airport effort and through the Northeast Tennessee Regional Industrial Development Association. Additionally, few comprehensive regional discussions are occurring among the entities, other than workforce development, though an excellent opportunity exists to forge stronger relationships and target goals which will benefit the region and its people. (Note: The Tri-

Cities TN-VA (Bristol TN/VA-Kingsport-Johnson City) regional marketplace includes Northeast Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, Eastern Kentucky and Western North Carolina.)

Returning to the concept of the multi-generational impact of long range planning, one of the initiatives in the Washington-Carter-Unicoi effort relies on the work of previous planning efforts during the TVA and federal regional planning efforts. A renewed focus on planning and marketing outdoor recreational tourism along the nearby Appalachian Trail and the Cherokee National Forest has begun, building on the efforts of one of the early federal regional planners for the Regional Planning Association of America (RPPA), geologist Benton MacKaye, who designed and located the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (the AT). (The AT crosses Carter and Unicoi Counties and nearby North Carolina counties and provides tourism revenue to the region.) Additionally, John Nolen's 1920s work had pressed for a plan for Johnson City that would "connect a system of city parks to the nearby mountains" (Frazier 2007) Nolen said that Johnson City "has a strategic location as a resort city, [but] little has been done to stress this feature of Johnson City's individuality....." ((Nolen) Frazier 2008)

But immediate, larger and more challenging projects remain for the new Washington-Unicoi-Carter County, Tennessee alliance, as they have set out to acquire more property, which will necessitate innovative public policy and shared taxation policies to collaborate on cross jurisdictional land use planning and site development in the Northeast Tennessee region. From determining how best to allocate State of Tennessee Tier 1 through 4 incentives when the classifications differ across county line to how to work with the variety of infrastructure/utility providers across the region. According to Gary Farlow, who serves as President and CEO of the Cleveland/Bradley Chamber of Commerce, he has seen such partnerships across municipalities and county lines work well.

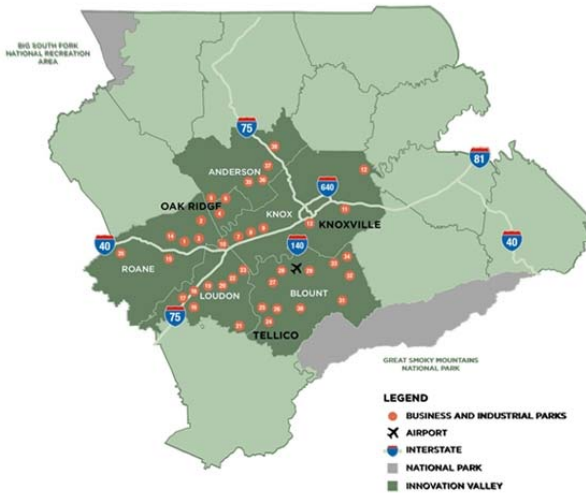


Figure 5: Innovation Valley county map, showing the regional representation, including Blount County. www.knoxvilleoakridge.com

While working in Blount County, Farlow, who has experience as both a professional planner and economic developer, was involved with the development of industrial parks. During a recent interview discussion concerning how to balance the interests of municipalities and counties that often compete for property tax or sales taxes, he said that the partners in Blount County developed an innovative formula for sharing the costs and the revenue among Blount County, Alcoa, and Maryville; one which received an award from the Tennessee Municipal League and has been used by other groups since. It took time to build trust

among the partners and explain the mechanism of the return on the investment for the partners, but the agreement worked well. (Farlow, Oldham 2017) Since then, Blount County also extended their regional economic development involvement by being part of the Innovation Valley (www.knoxvilleoakridge.com) partnership.

Additional regional examples can be found in the Tri-Cities TN-VA region just across the state line, where the Commonwealth of Virginia is offering incentives for collaboration. Bristol, Virginia, located directly on the Virginia-Tennessee state line with Bristol, Tennessee, in the Tri-Cities TN-VA area, has applied for the new incentive offered by the Commonwealth of Virginia for economic development regional efforts--another reason for regions within Tennessee to consider the value of regional planning and economic development beyond traditional political battle lines. "For localities that cooperate, GO Virginia offers grants for innovation, financial investment, improvements, invention and infrastructure." (McGee, 2017) Bristol, Virginia's, Mayor, Kevin Mumpower, stated in the

Bristol Herald Courier on August 7th, 2017, that “I think we’re a lot stronger and have a lot more leverage; the population is a lot larger, financial and staffing resources are much bigger when we work together.” (McGee, 2017) Jason Berry, Washington County, Virginia, Administrator of the entity partnering with Bristol, Virginia, stated the need for cooperation more starkly, “If we don’t start working together, we’re all going to die on the vine,” (Bailey, August 3, 2017) The GO Virginia program is a public private partnership of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Others recognize that the path to regionalism isn’t easy, but essential. Karl Stauber, President and CEO of the Danville, Virginia Foundation emphasized while participating at a Martinsville GO Virginia meeting, “There’s no fairy dust” to improving economic development, but it requires a process “more collaborative than staying in our individual silos” as communities. (Powell, M. 2017)

Gary Farlow also discussed his opportunity to serve in economic development leadership roles in one of the most forward thinking regional efforts in the state, Thrive 2055, a regional vision and economic development planning process for the three state region surrounding Chattanooga, Tennessee. (Farlow, Oldham 2017) A citizen based visioning and planning process launched by Chattanooga area leaders following the announcement of a Volkswagen manufacturing facility, the initiative intended to get ahead of the potential growth that would occur with the arrival of the German company. Having visited Greenville, South Carolina, which had experienced rapid growth following the arrival of German headquartered BMW in nearby Greer, S.C., Chattanooga leaders determined that not only would their immediate area need to make plans for the future, but they couldn’t do it without their neighbors and not just Tennessee neighbors. Counties in Georgia and Alabama also were part of the planning process, all centered around the geography of the regional watershed.



GREATER CHATTANOOGA ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

A successful trip to Germany helped solidify the importance of establishing a more formal partnership between economic development entities within the region. An action step of the Thrive 2055 Strategic Action Plan, this newly established partnership achieved commitments from five organizations representing 13 counties across the region by January 2016. Housed within the Chattanooga Chamber Foundation, the regional economic development partnership will operate under the following guiding principles:

- | | |
|---|---|
| » Mutual trust | healthy and productive internal regional competition |
| » Appearance and reality of neutrality | » Fiscal efficiency and responsibility |
| » Voluntary participation | » Clear rules for collaborating, sharing information, referring prospects and investing resources |
| » Fair and sufficient financial support | » Adaptability and flexibility |
| » Independence of action | |
| » Professional expertise | |
| » A protocol that accommodates | |

THE THRIVE 2055 REGION



Investing in quality data and mapping analytics for decision making.

The THRIVE 2055 program in the Chattanooga region invested in information, readily accessible, up to date data to make decisions. The ease of access to well-maintained regional planning and infrastructure information must be respected, as it is the essential part of planning that enables reliable timely economic development decisions. The primary practice of information gathering for economic development revolves around preparing data and requests for proposals for site selectors and companies that are interested in relocating to a single site. The goal to provide information in response to a specific inquiry can be accomplished by most communities due to the limited scope of the request, however, that level of information is insufficient for making long-term decisions for communities and regions or for making decisions quickly on unanticipated alternatives, especially in today's data driven decision making, quantifying culture.

Instead, as noted by Chapin and Kaiser, information is obtained and a system of information is built to work with other elements of land use and regional planning. They continue, saying, "Its purpose is to make information planners and decision-makers need readily available, in usable form, at a reasonable cost, when they need it" (Chapin and Kaiser 1979) such as the Virginia Economic Development Partnership's GIS Yes Virginia open data site, a program that began gathering information for the GIS mapping program in 1998. Our regions have a wealth of data thanks to the foundation established by TVA, USGS, local universities and the State of Tennessee planning related divisions over the decades helps, however, many communities currently need better resources to synthesize and maintain key data easily. Other non-profit development organizations or government departments have a small staff, which makes it difficult to maintain long range planning information or geographic information systems mapping, thus they may be forced to obtain the information inefficiently on a case by case basis from a multitude of sources.

The economic development section of the Thrive 2055 plan ultimately reported that regionalism was crucial in that, "with three states and 16 counties, regional economic development efforts have suffered from a lack of coordination among competing communities, putting the region at a disadvantage with other parts of the U.S. and the world. Promoting the idea that what is good for one community is good for the entire region will increase job opportunities for everyone, regardless of county or state." The Thrive 2055 initiative stated that the community would be taking "deliberate steps in the process" to identify opportunities for implementing regionalism.

Generations later, the efforts of leaders, professionals and citizens who were involved in the early efforts of the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Tennessee State Planning Commission, the University of Tennessee Graduate School of Planning, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Appalachian Regional Commission and those agencies and organizations that originated with their efforts, the roots still run

deep. However, today's political jurisdictional boundaries, the pace at which information is sought, the urgency of creating and expanding job opportunities and the competitive nature of economic development among the Valley; all have the potential to thwart the additional opportunities that could be discovered unless more deliberate actions are taken to act regionally, acquire and synthesize the necessary information for the best decision making and determine what steps and measures must be made to prepare, execute and implement the future. Coming full circle from discussion of the Tennessee Valley Authority's early efforts, a Knoxville News Sentinel article, *"Leaders strategize economic development,"* reported that Knoxville-Oak Ridge Innovation Valley partners heard Stephanie Hamby of the Tennessee Valley Authority advise them that, "You need to think regionally. Companies don't care about city boundaries or even state boundaries. They are just looking for a good place to locate." (Paciorka, 2017)

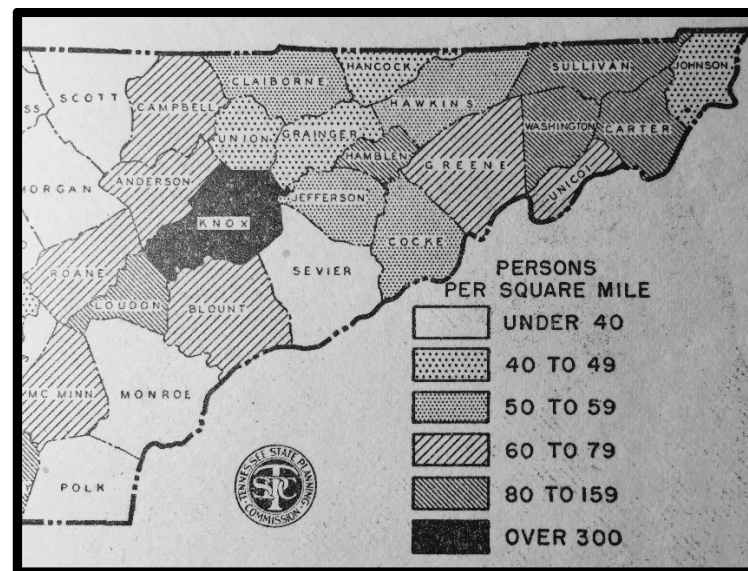


Figure 6: East Tennessee Population 1940 Census for comparison to present data and regional growth.

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