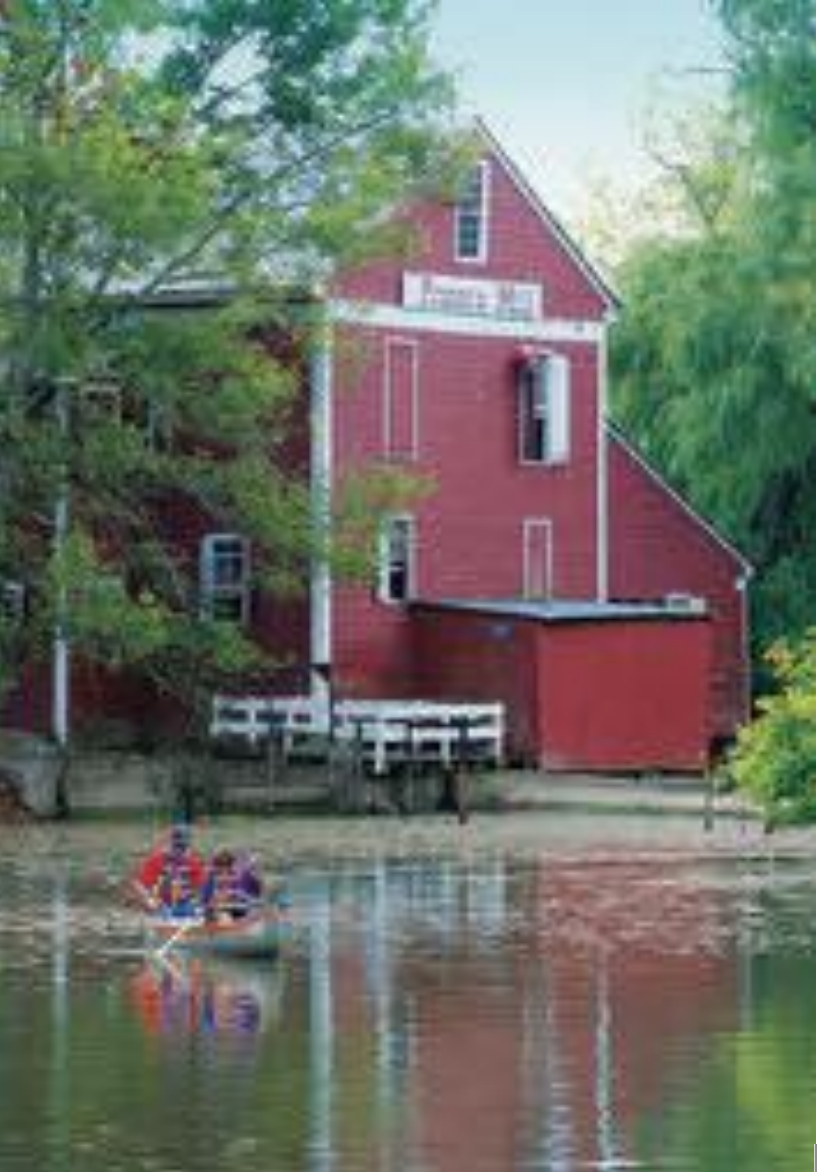
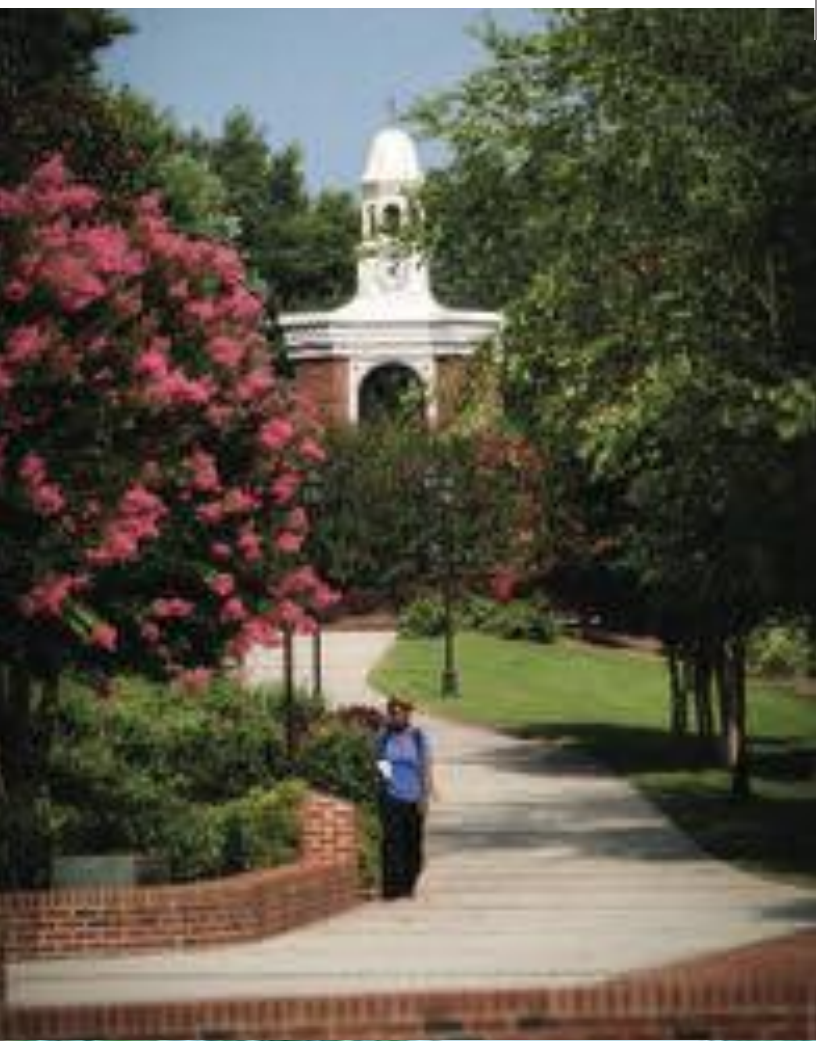
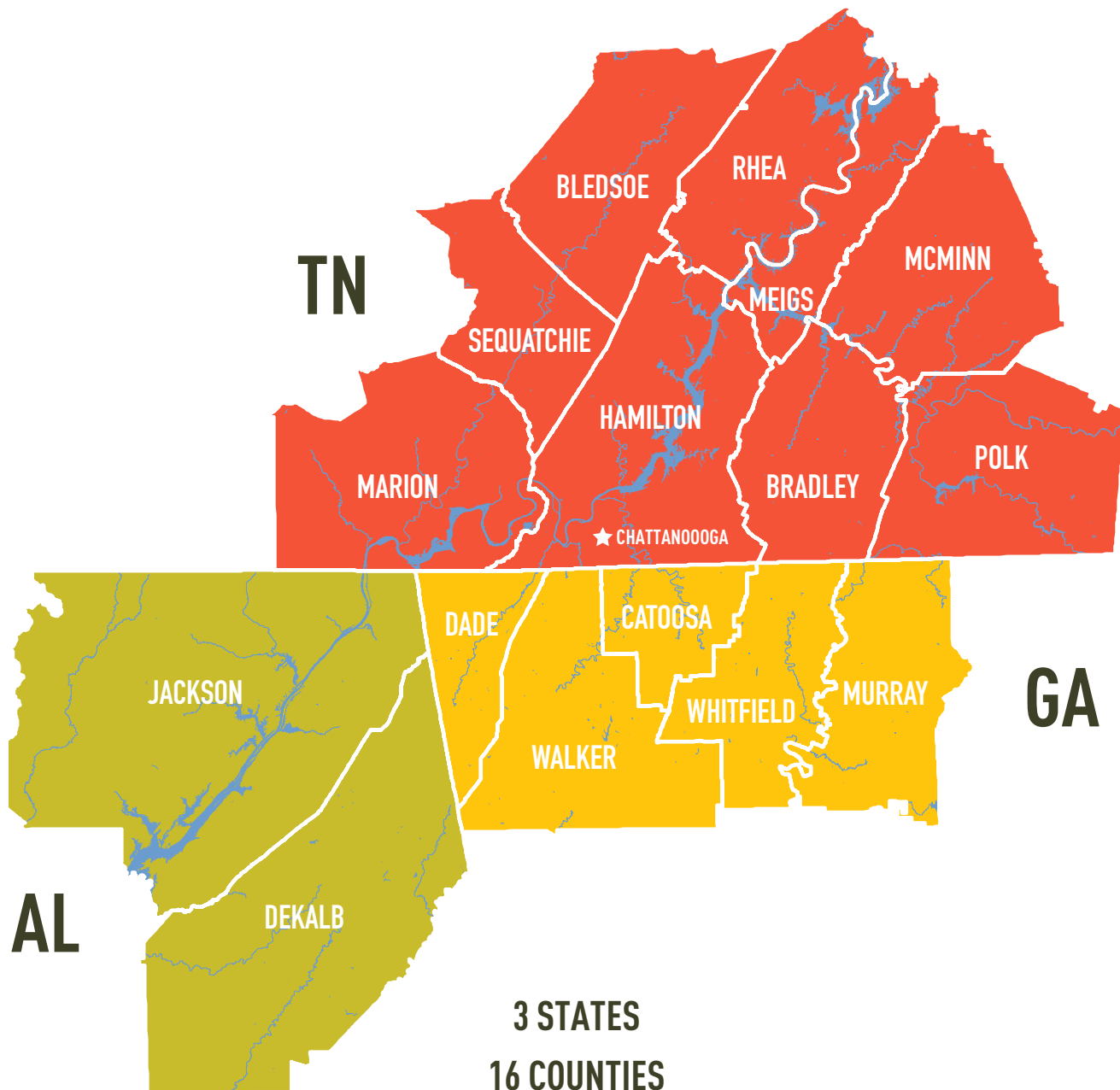


THE CAPSTONE REPORT


2012-2015



THE THRIVE 2055 REGION



3 STATES
16 COUNTIES
79 MUNICIPALITIES
2 CONNECTED WATERSHEDS
6,648 SQUARE MILES
1 MILLION PEOPLE



Where the corners of Northeast Alabama and Northwest Georgia converge with Southeast Tennessee lies the 16-county region that surrounds the city of Chattanooga, Tennessee. This is an undulating land, endowed with rich historical, cultural and natural resources. It is a haven for people seeking communion with nature and the home of working farmlands and abundant waters. It is steeped in industrial heritage, yet embraces new technological frontiers, including the launch of the first 1-gigabit-per second internet service in the United States. The 1 million people who live in the region know it is special. And during the past decade, the rest of the world has noticed too.

Since 2008, the tristate region has experienced more than \$6 billion in economic investment in varying industries, including the automotive, flooring, logistics, solar energy and communications sectors. This economic boom presents enormous opportunity to the region but also has ripple effects that will contribute 400,000 new residents, change workforce requirements and place greater stress on natural assets and infrastructure over the next 40 years.

When the specter of change looms on the horizon, some people try desperately to resist it. Some ignore it altogether.

And some greet it with a handshake and say, "Come on. We've been preparing for you."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Thrive 2055 Capstone Report documents the design and completion of a visionary planning effort to engage the citizens of the 16-county focus area: the tristate region that surrounds Chattanooga, Tennessee. It is the story of how a unique consortium of volunteers from the public, private, educational and nonprofit sectors worked together to envision a prosperous future, determine desired outcomes and produce a 40-year action plan with far-reaching and achievable goals.

A testament to the impact of collaboration, the report describes how imminent and significant change inspired people with diverse interests from three states to take authorship of the future. In doing so, they forged relationships across imposed boundaries and found power in the process of looking forward together.

The deliberate steps in the process were:

- » Establishing a structure of leadership, management and community engagement
- » Listening to the citizens of the region
- » Learning about the forces and trends shaping the region
- » Envisioning alternative possible futures
- » Establishing regional priorities
- » Preparing an action plan
- » Taking sustainable action

The Thrive 2055 leadership engaged thousands of people in discussions on a wide range of issues, including the economy, education, energy, utilities and connectivity, the built and natural environments, public safety, mobility and freight and arts and culture. This collaborative process confirmed the interconnectedness of these regional issues and their current and potential impact on the health and prosperity of the region's people and natural environment.

Understanding the potential consequences of isolation, the project's founders built a framework within which communities could take coordinated steps to ensure a vibrant future for themselves, as well as the region. They opened lines of communication that never before existed to reduce redundant efforts and harness the region's collective bargaining power.

Project management, consultants and volunteer chairs facilitated working groups in detailed study of those issues and defined their impact on the region. Thousands of data sets were reviewed and thirteen drivers were assessed relative to the most pressing issues facing the region. Out of that, four top drivers emerged:

- » Education and workforce preparedness
- » Regional economic development
- » Regional transportation
- » The region's natural treasures

Using data compiled from an extensive geographic information systems database and a scenario-modeling software tool called *Envision Tomorrow*, Thrive 2055 produced four likely future growth scenarios for the region. When the public reviewed these scenarios, key themes and desired future conditions emerged:

- » Protection of the region's natural treasures
- » Coordination of regional transportation improvements
- » Investment in education and training
- » Diversification of employment opportunities and economic enterprises
- » Growth of communities from within

The resulting roadmap outlines a course that seeks to benefit from the opportunities offered by a changing global economy while maintaining and preserving the region's revered beauty and quality of life. It also defines immediate and long-term action steps toward accommodating the resulting influx of new residents and companies while minimizing the adverse impacts of growth.

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THE FOUNDERS OF THRIVE 2055

The following organizations and their leaders were instrumental in collaborating to launch the region's journey.

BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee
Bradley County Government
CBL & Associates
Chattanooga Area Chamber of
Commerce
City of Chattanooga
Cleveland-Bradley Chamber of
Commerce
Community Foundation of
Chattanooga
Electric Power Board (EPB)
Hamilton County Government
MacLellan Foundation

McKee Foods Corporation
Shaw Industries
Southeast Tennessee Development
District (SETDD)
The Benwood Foundation
Lyndhurst Foundation
University of Tennessee at
Chattanooga
Unum
Urban League of Chattanooga
Whitfield County Board of
Commissioners

THRIVE 2055 FUNDERS

Alliance Physical Therapy
Anna Sue and Bob Shaw Foundation
Appalachian Regional Commission
The Benwood Foundation
BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee
CBL & Associates
Chattanooga Chamber Foundation
City of Chattanooga, TN
City of Ducktown, TN
City of Scottsboro, AL
City of Varnell, GA
Cleveland-Bradley Chamber of
Commerce
Community Foundation of Greater
Chattanooga
Community Foundation of Northwest
Georgia
Electric Power Board (EPB)
First Tennessee Foundation
Greater Chattanooga Association of
Realtors
Grow Greater Dalton
Hamilton County Government

Home Builders Association of Greater
Chattanooga
Jackson County Chamber of
Commerce
Jordan Fabricating
Lodge Manufacturing
Lyndhurst Foundation
MacLellan Foundation
McKee Foods Corporation
Northwest Georgia Regional
Commission
Shaw Industries
Southeast Tennessee Development
District (SETDD)
Top of Georgia
Town of Cohutta, GA
Town of Tunnel Hill, GA
U.S. Economic Development Agency
Whitfield County Board of
Commissioners

**AND THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF
INDIVIDUALS FROM THE 16-COUNTY REGION.**

THE PEOPLE OF THE TRISTATE REGION

Special thanks to all of the citizens, experts and businesses who have contributed ideas and energy to the Thrive 2055 process—This project is rooted in their values and priorities. Thank you for your support and participation.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The executive committee worked with project staff and citizen leaders to keep the planning process on track and direct Thrive 2055 business leadership decisions.

- » Dan Jacobson (Chair)
- » Denny Mobbs (Vice Chair)
- » Benic "Bruz" Clark (Treasurer)
- » Daniel Carter (Natural Treasures Chair)
- » Chuck Dobbins (GA Representative)
- » Gary Farlow (Economic Development Chair)
- » Bill Kilbride (Chattanooga Chamber)
- » Bridgett Massengill (Executive Director/Project Manager)
- » Cheryl Millsaps (Chattanooga Chamber)
- » Rick Roden (AL Representative)
- » Honna Rogers (TN Representative)
- » Edna Varner (Education Chair)
- » Connie Vaughan (Transportation Chair)

COORDINATING COMMITTEE, 2012–2015

The coordinating committee was the steering body that led and championed Thrive 2055. Its members worked long hours, providing critical perspective and inspiration throughout the entire process.

- » Dan Jacobson (Chair)
- » Denny Mobbs (Vice Chair)
- » Benic "Bruz" Clark (Treasurer)
- » Brian Anderson (Past Chair)
- » Steve Anglea
- » Becky Barnes
- » Carol Beddingfield
- » Dan Bowers
- » John Bridger
- » Diana Bullock
- » Jim Caldwell
- » Mike Callaway
- » Daniel Carter
- » Eliza DeLaughter
- » Terry Denniston
- » Steve Dillard
- » Bob Doak
- » Chuck Dobbins
- » Randy Durham
- » Gary Farlow
- » Vicky Gregg
- » Ron Harr
- » Stacy Johnson
- » Beth Jones
- » Bill Kilbride
- » Jill Levine
- » Lisa Maragnano
- » Betsy McCright
- » James McKissic
- » Mike Moon
- » Jeff Myers
- » Jeff Pruitt
- » Nancy Robertson
- » Rick Roden
- » Honna Rogers
- » Matt Ryerson
- » Janet Spraker
- » Jack Studer
- » Edna Varner
- » Connie Vaughan
- » Linda Wiley
- » Tom Edd Wilson

ELECTED OFFICIALS ADVISORY GROUP

The region includes 79 municipalities and 16 counties in three states. Elected officials with diverse interests provided input throughout the process, collaborated with their neighbors and championed Thrive 2055 in their home communities.

SPECIAL THANKS GOES TO THE CHATTANOOGA AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND THE CHATTANOOGA CHAMBER FOUNDATION, PARTNERING VISIONARIES THAT HAVE PROVIDED ONGOING OPERATIONAL SUPPORT AND THE FIRM GROUND ON WHICH THRIVE 2055 CONTINUES TO GROW.

CURRENT PROJECT STAFF

Executive Director/Project Manager – Bridgett Massengill
 Communications and Outreach Manager – Ruth Thompson

PAST PROJECT STAFF

Communications and Outreach Coordinator – Maggie Neff (2014)
 Staff Volunteer – Craig Kellogg (2013)
 Executive Assistant – Carolyn Poole (2015)

THRIVE 2055 INTERNS

Eliot Berz (2015)	Thomas Fairchild (2015)
Forrest Elliot Benton (2013)	Colin Fitzpatrick (2014)
Ryan Dale (2012)	Matthew Oellerich (2013)

FOUNDING PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM, 2009–2015

The following organizations and their representatives were instrumental in launching and sustaining Thrive 2055.

Jeannine Alday, Hamilton County Government
 Brian Anderson, Greater Dalton Chamber of Commerce
 Richard Beeland, City of Chattanooga
 Rob Bradham, Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce
 John Bridger, Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency
 Barnett Chitwood, Northwest Georgia Regional Commission
 Benic “Bruz” Clark, Lyndhurst Foundation
 JoBeth Gleason, Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments
 David Howerin, Northwest Georgia Regional Commission
 Kristy Huntley, The Benwood Foundation
 Dan Jacobson, BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee
 Beth Jones, Southeast Tennessee Development District (SETDD)
 Melissa D. Lu, University of Georgia, Dalton-Whitfield Archway Partnership
 J. Ed. Marston, Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce
 Leigh McClure, Southeast Tennessee Development District (SETDD)
 Julie Meadows, Northwest Georgia Regional Commission
 Cheryl Millsaps, Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce
 Jeff Pruitt, Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments
 Daniel Saieed, Hamilton County Government
 Greg Thomas, City of Cleveland

CONSULTANTS

THE MCBRIDE, DALE, CLARION TEAM – MCBRIDE, DALE, CLARION AND ASSOCIATES – FREGONESE ASSOCIATES – KIMLEY-HORN AND ASSOCIATES – BROWN PEARMAN RUSSELL – B&E URBAN ECONOMICS – A. COULTER CONSULTING – THE OCHS CENTER FOR METROPOLITAN STUDIES – NEATHAWK, DUBUQUE & PACKETT – ARTHUR C. NELSON, PH.D., FAICP

A photograph of two women riding bicycles on a paved path in a park. The woman on the left is wearing a blue t-shirt and black leggings, while the woman on the right is wearing a grey tank top and black shorts. Both are smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is filled with lush green trees and foliage, with sunlight filtering through the leaves. A large white circle is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image, containing text.

Thrive 2055 was a public-private planning initiative launched in 2012 by a group of local community members concerned with how accelerated growth would affect future generations in the tristate region.



THE MISSION

TO MAKE THE MOST OF OUR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES WHILE PRESERVING WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT OUR HOME COMMUNITIES.

The objective of the three-year planning process was to engage the people of the region in identifying regional values and goals along with a consensus on strategies that could be implemented for the long-term prosperity of the 16-county region. To achieve this, Thrive 2055 hinged on continual public engagement as well as an established structure of passionate volunteer leaders. A small project staff, consultants and a network of dedicated local entities supported the initiative.

THE VISION

**EDUCATED PEOPLE WITH
GOOD JOBS LIVING IN A GREAT PLACE**

EDUCATED PEOPLE WITH GOOD JOBS...


Children and adults should have an opportunity to follow a path of education and training that fits their unique capabilities and prepares them for rewarding, long-term employment opportunities at home.

...LIVING...

The people of the region should have safe, healthy, fulfilled and enriched lives with access to the natural and cultural resources that make the region strong.

...IN A GREAT PLACE.

The region should be filled with strong, resilient and unique communities; preserved and conserved natural resources; and infrastructure that links the region together.



On July 15, 2008, at the iconic Hunter Museum of American Art overlooking the Tennessee River, Volkswagen announced that it would locate its newest \$1 billion advanced manufacturing automotive assembly plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The investment would add 2,000 direct jobs, and many more ancillary sectors throughout the surrounding region. Community leaders recognized this investment would trigger a significant shift in the area's future and began asking what changes and impacts might result.

HOW THRIVE 2055 BEGAN

Three months after Volkswagen announced Chattanooga as the location of its newest auto plant, the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce led an intercity trip to Greenville, South Carolina, where a BMW plant has been operating since the 1990s. Ninety-nine business and community leaders from around the tristate region had the opportunity to learn how the Greenville area responded to the arrival of the BMW plant—and subsequent growth—from the people who were on the ground as it happened. They took away several important lessons.

First, growth must be planned. The effects of growth are predictable, and foresight can help capture its benefits while minimizing its negative consequences. For the Greenville area, the BMW plant had a profound impact on the labor market, transportation, natural resources, housing and more. The ripple effect of an international automobile manufacturer, with its ancillary suppliers, went beyond local jurisdictional boundaries and exceeded the abilities of individual communities to manage the impacts of growth on their own.

Second, growth of this magnitude must be planned at a regional level, transcending territorial and egocentric behavior. Greenville area leaders urged the Chattanooga delegation to take a regional approach to planning.

Shortly after the road trip, a series of discussions began between public, non-profit and philanthropic leaders from the tristate area. This was the first time that people from the larger Chattanooga area had come together to have these conversations on a regional scale, and it took time to build relationships and establish trust.

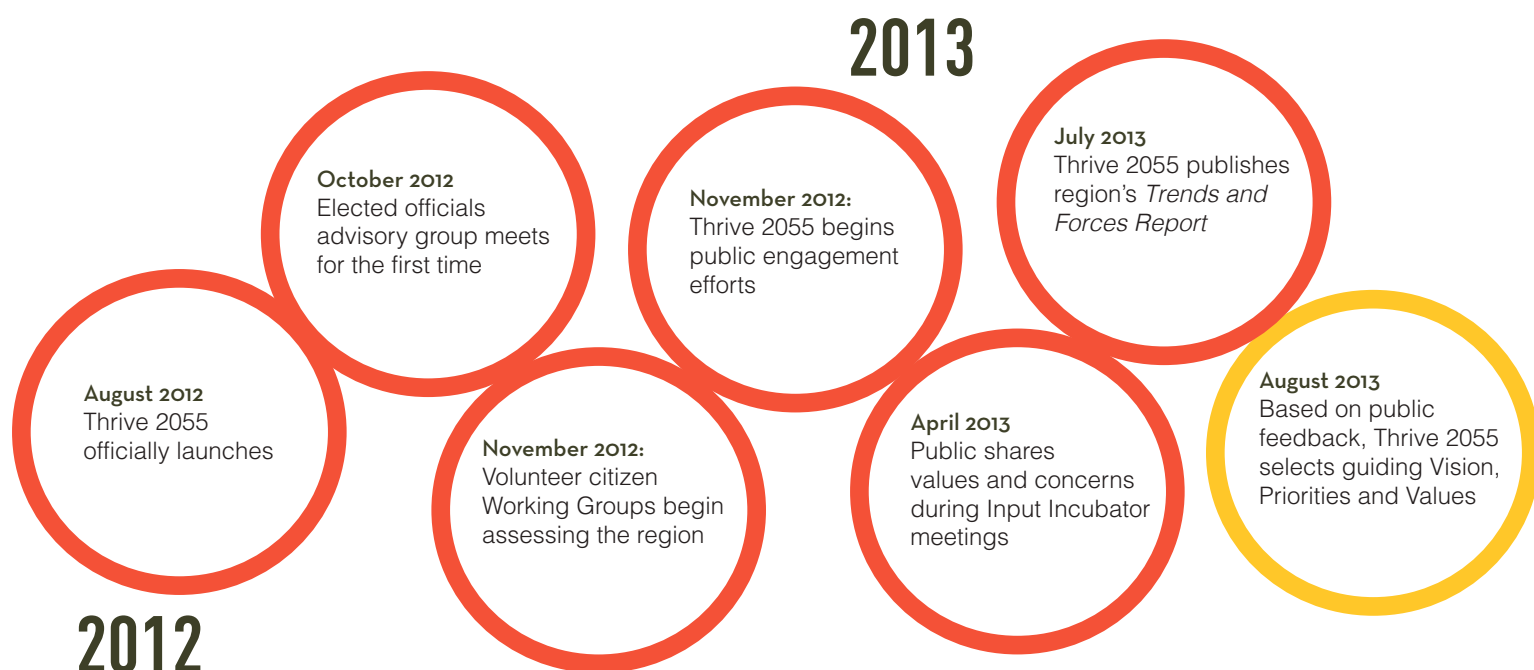
A regional founders group emerged with funding commitments from a broad mixture of private, nonprofit and public entities. This partnership represented a wide range of perspectives and interests, including business, government, natural resources, transportation, arts and culture, tourism, housing and infrastructure. Once leadership solidified in late 2011, a commitment was made to embark on a regional growth planning initiative. Volunteers from each of the committed entities were designated and named the Project Management Team. The team began meeting in earnest to envision a method to carry out the effort.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

When the Project Management Team launched the planning initiative, it had neither a process nor a name. Leaders decided early on that the tone of the initiative and its success in the next 40 years would depend upon bold and visionary outcomes:

- » A strong sense of a shared regional identity
- » A shared vision with strategic regional priorities
- » Agreement on the actions necessary to achieve the vision
- » A group of emerging and existing leaders with the capacity, trust, relationships and commitment to implement ideas and recommendations
- » The public sector and private sector working together voluntarily across political boundaries
- » Confidence that all will benefit from the results
- » Tools for local communities
- » Alignment of public and private investment
- » Measurable benchmarks for success
- » Sustained implementation

THE VISIONARY EFFORT WAS NAMED THRIVE 2055.



THE PROCESS

With a sense of purpose, leadership and an organizational structure in place, the Thrive 2055 Project Management Team had to understand options and envision the implications of potential choices to address change. A three-phase regional planning process was developed:

PHASE 1: LISTEN AND LEARN

- » Understand the forces and trends shaping the region
- » Identify values important to the region
- » Assess existing regional efforts

PHASE 2: DREAM TOGETHER AND SET THE BAR

- » Develop a shared vision with regional priorities
- » Test alternatives to achieve that vision
- » Learn from other regions' successes
- » Create a strategic plan with actions to achieve our goals

PHASE 3: ACTION!

- » Develop implementation tools
- » Initiate voluntary actions
- » Transition from planning to long-term sustainable action

2014



2015

DEFINING THE REGION

With a process and desired outcomes in place, the volunteer Project Management Team set out to determine the geographical focus area of Thrive 2055. After considering numerous factors—such as shared workforce, demographics and commuting patterns—the tristate region was ultimately defined by something much more organic and fundamental: water.

Determining the geographic boundaries of the region was no small feat, given the area's largest metro, Chattanooga, is situated near the borders of three different states. There were already many multi-jurisdictional agencies with defined boundaries, including three metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), the Southeast Tennessee Development District, the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission and the Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments. Some suggested adopting the combined jurisdictions of these entities, while others preferred to define borders based upon data-driven patterns.

While all of those factors informed Thrive 2055, ultimately the geographic reach of the Middle Tennessee Chickamauga watershed—more commonly referred to as the Tennessee River watershed—defined the region. Included were the 16 counties in Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama that contained a substantial portion of the watershed. This decision marked the beginning of a theme that drove the planning process:

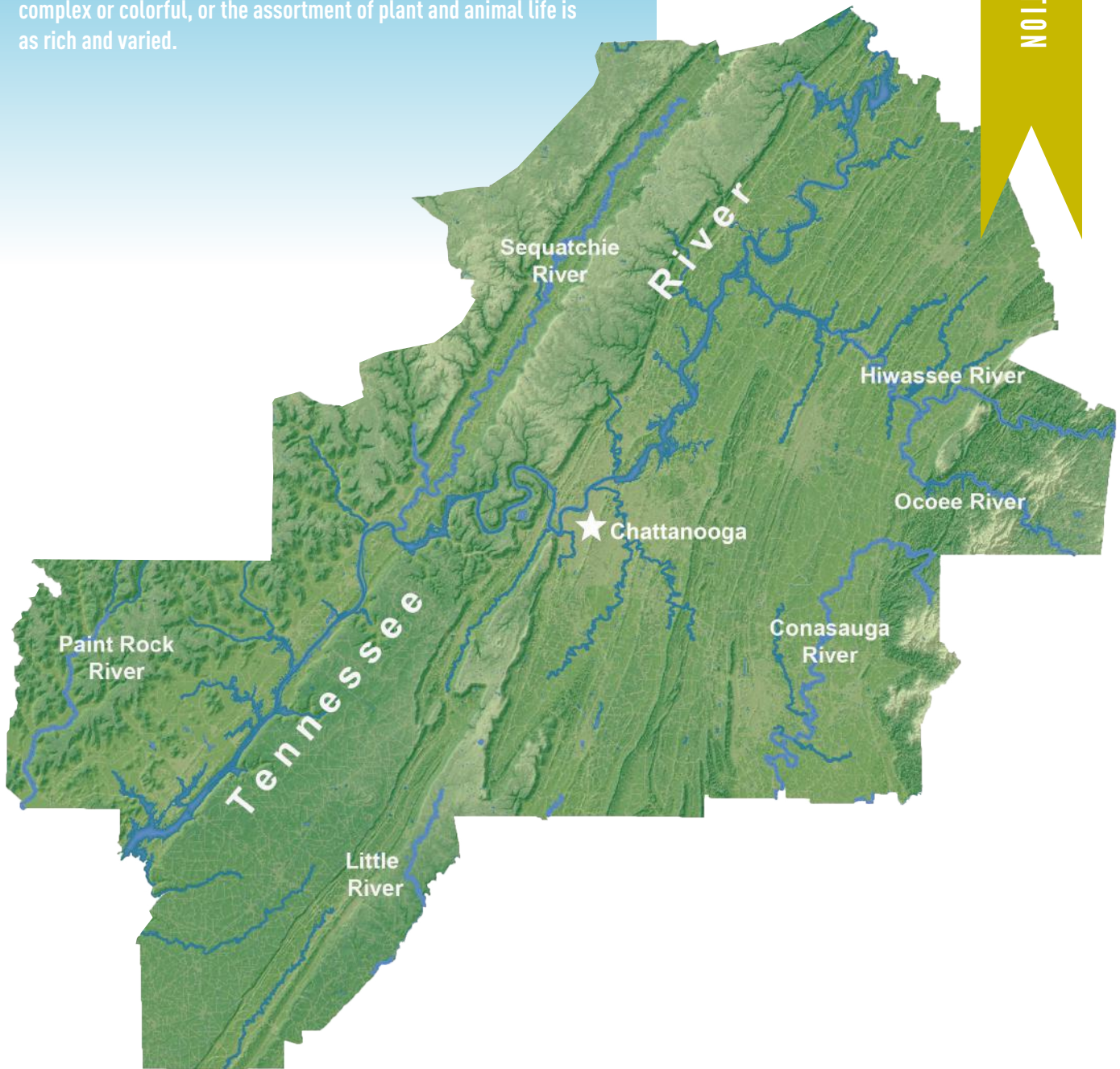
THE POWER OF WORKING TOGETHER SHOULD ALWAYS TRANSCEND JURISDICTIONAL LINES.



A WATERSHED MOMENT

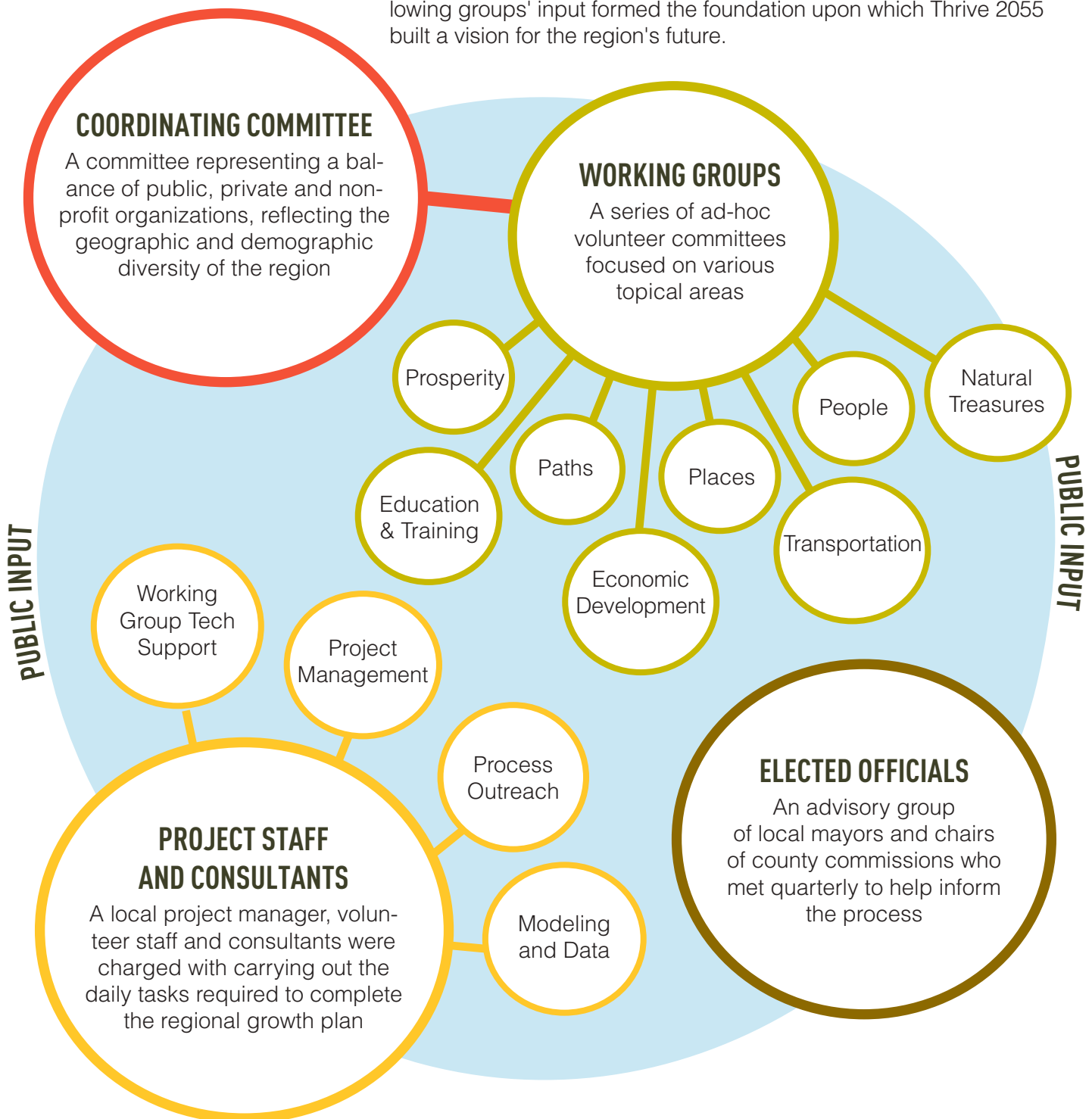
The tristate region is defined by a portion of the Tennessee River watershed and its tributaries. For thousands of years, these waters have been the lifeblood for the natural and human communities that have inhabited this special and beautiful landscape of hills, hollows, towns and farms.

There are few places in the world where the human history is as complex or colorful, or the assortment of plant and animal life is as rich and varied.



A FOUNDATION OF PARTNERS

With a region defined, a process in place and a name given to the planning initiative, the effort was staged to begin. As already evidenced, the lifeblood of Thrive 2055 was the community of volunteers, leaders and people of the tristate region who served in myriad capacities throughout the three-year planning process. From sharing ideas at public meetings to approving next steps for action, the following groups' input formed the foundation upon which Thrive 2055 built a vision for the region's future.



PARTNERS IN ACTION

THE PUBLIC

- » Provided feedback regarding personal values and community desires
- » Shared ideas for solving regional problems and their dreams for the future
- » Joined working groups to engage in more technical participation
- » Became champions toward casting the regional vision and leading efforts to advance the mission
- » Guided the outcomes of the process

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

- » Provided oversight, coordination and execution of the planning process
- » Offered perspectives of diverse sectors, including the business community, local governments, non-profit groups and the public
- » Evaluated the process, content of deliverables and structure of events
- » Approved and guided communications and public engagement

PROJECT STAFF

- » Offered organizational support to the project
- » Coordinated team efforts; served as an extension of stakeholder organizations
- » Provided technical support of agencies, organizations and entities with specialized skills
- » Reported to the Coordinating Committee, preparing deliverables and gathering information related to the various stakeholders' input and direction
- » Coordinated with local professionals and volunteers participating in working groups

ELECTED OFFICIALS

- » Represented their home communities' interests and needs in a regional forum
- » Engaged with their peers and constituents to understand the issues and values present within the region
- » Shared concerns present in their communities
- » Learned about the implications of policies and trends affecting their communities and the region

WORKING GROUPS

- » Met on an as-needed basis with very specific objectives
- » Performed tasks in coordination with the overall objectives of the planning tasks and processes
- » Participated in facilitator-led discussions and work sessions on specific topics
- » Provided critical assessment of significant issues and opportunities associated with specific topics
- » Developed implementation strategies for the action plan



UNDERSTANDING THE REGION

Since the project's inception, the Thrive 2055 leadership knew that planning for the future would not be successful unless they first understood the drivers that affected the region. To learn more, leadership worked on two parallel but connected tracks: understanding regional forces and trends through extensive research and analysis, and gauging regional values and needs directly from the people of the region through public outreach.

In November 2012, Thrive 2055 Working Groups began assembling data related to four areas of focus, which became known as the Four 'P's: People, Prosperity, Places and Paths. The culmination of their work, the *Thrive 2055 Trends and Forces Report*, was the result of eight months of information gathering and analysis. It provided an illuminating view of the region's strengths and challenges.

This exercise provided many lessons, including data-supported indicators that confirmed that accelerated growth was already exacerbating existing challenges and creating new ones. In addition, it uncovered that:

- » The region's rural areas struggle with double-digit unemployment and gaps between current workforce skills and new industry demands.
- » Local governments are fiscally constrained and challenged to meet existing infrastructure needs at a time when impending growth is likely to demand new infrastructure and public facilities.
- » Growth pressures are occurring in areas that have limited infrastructure. In some cases, these pressures are beginning to threaten the region's critical scenic and environmental areas.
- » There is increasing concern about an escalating trend of economic isolation among at-risk families in urban and rural pockets throughout the region as the job market shifts to higher skilled labor.

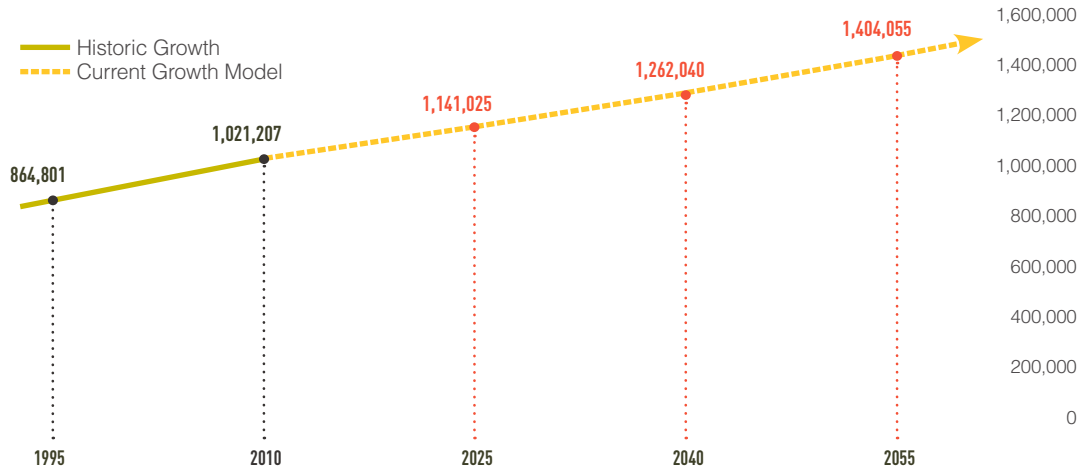
Once they understood the compelling forces and trends shaping the region, the Thrive 2055 leadership embarked on a self-assessment. With the support of a consultant team, they organized an expanded team of volunteer leaders to evaluate the region's current performance in addressing critical issues that would influence the future.

TRENDS AND FORCES: PEOPLE

The People Working Group studied population data and baseline indicators relating to individual and community demographics.

Detailed results may be found in the Thrive 2055 Trends and Forces Report (2013).

16-COUNTY REGIONAL POPULATION GROWTH FORECAST

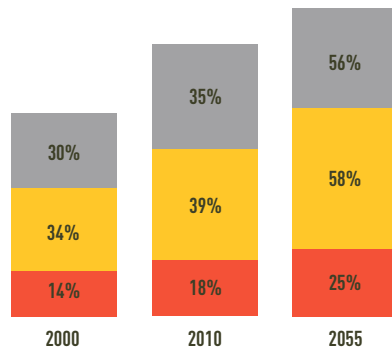


The tristate region has historically lagged behind the South and the U.S. in ethnic diversity, and the gap is expected to widen during the next 40 years. This figure is significant, as population diversity often correlates with an area's high-tech success and potential growth.

CATOOSA, BRADLEY, WHITFIELD AND DEKALB COUNTIES ARE PROJECTED TO SURPASS HAMILTON COUNTY IN TOTAL POPULATION CONTRIBUTION, INDICATING A DECENTRALIZATION OF GROWTH AND EXPANSION OF EXISTING URBANIZED AREAS INTO THESE COUNTIES BY 2055.



■ Tristate Region
■ United States
■ South



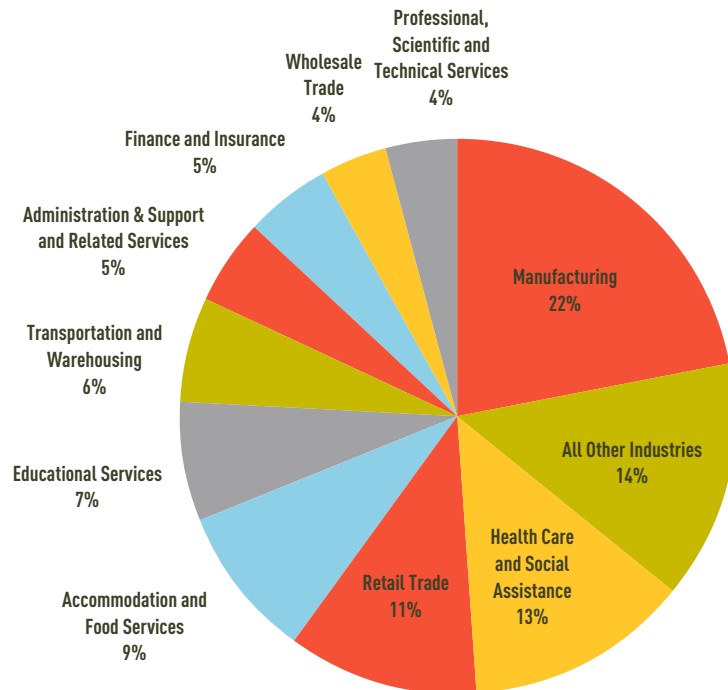
MINORITY POPULATION PERCENTAGE



One in four children (24.4%) in the tristate region live in poverty. This figure is higher than the tristate region's overall poverty rate (16.5%) and slightly higher than the nation's childhood poverty rate (20%). While poverty is a deeply personal plight, it is also a strong indicator of low workforce readiness, educational attainment and public health in a community.

TRENDS AND FORCES: PROSPERITY

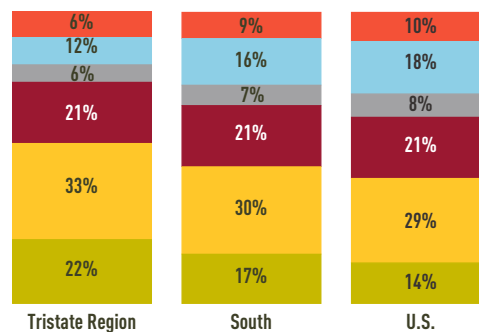
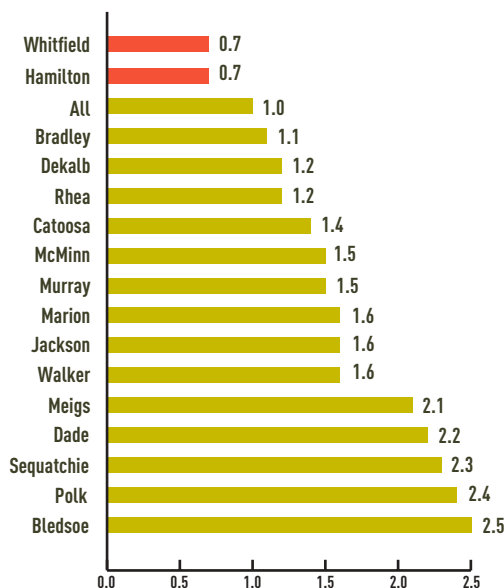
The Prosperity Working Group studied baseline indicators relating to education and workforce preparedness, as well as economic competitiveness.



SHARE OF JOBS BY INDUSTRY IN THE TRISTATE REGION, 2011

The percentage of the region's employment in the manufacturing sector (22%) is significantly higher than the nation's (9%). For most counties in the region, the manufacturing sector is the largest provider of employment opportunities. Employment projections prepared for Thrive 2055 estimate that the total number of jobs in the region will grow by about 68% between 2010 and 2055.

RATIO OF WORKFORCE TO JOBS BY COUNTY, 2010



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG POPULATION AGED 25+

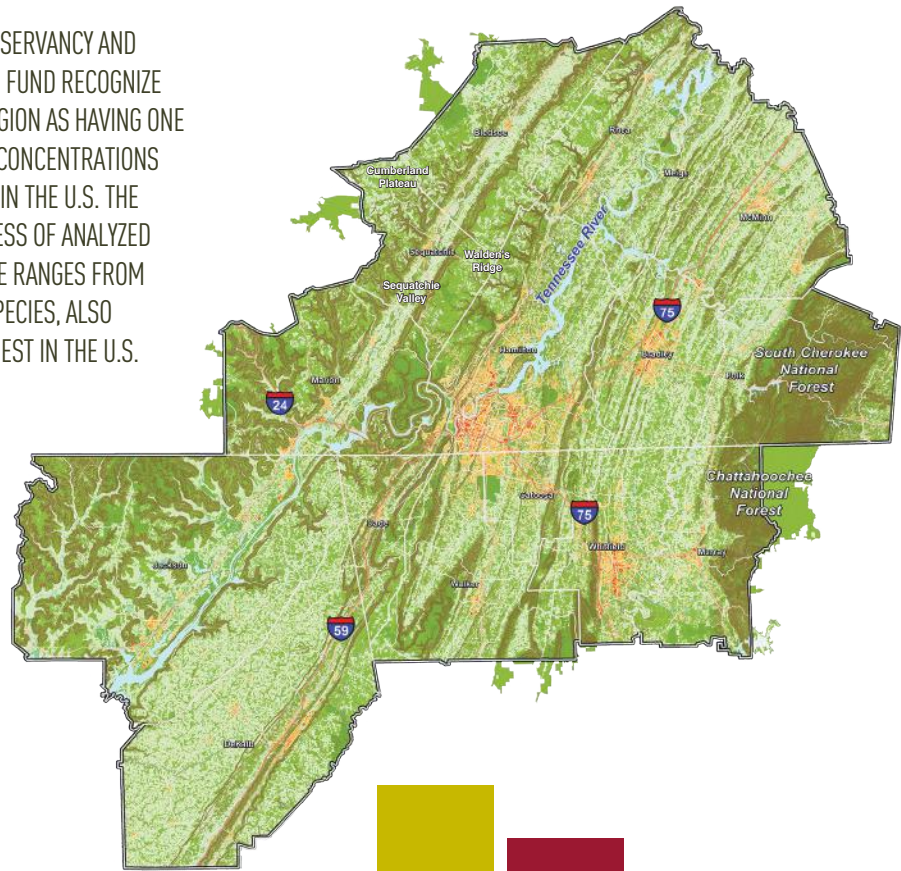
- Graduate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Associate's Degree
- Some College
- High School Diploma or Equiv.
- No High School Diploma

Twenty-two percent of the region's adult workforce does not have a high school diploma or equivalent. That is 8% more than the national rate.

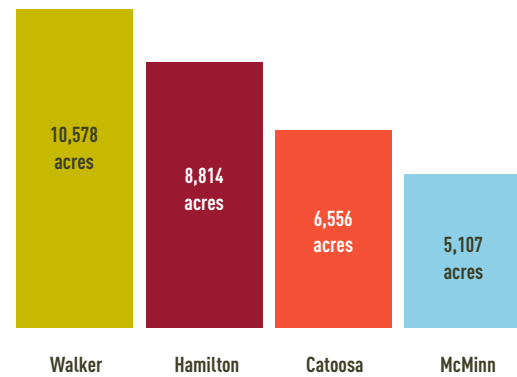
TRENDS AND FORCES: PLACES

The Places Working Group studied baseline indicators relating to the region's natural and built environments.

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY AND WORLD WILDLIFE FUND RECOGNIZE THE TRISTATE REGION AS HAVING ONE OF THE HIGHEST CONCENTRATIONS OF BIODIVERSITY IN THE U.S. THE REGION'S RICHNESS OF ANALYZED TERRESTRIAL LIFE RANGES FROM 3,237 TO 4,295 SPECIES, ALSO AMONG THE HIGHEST IN THE U.S.



PROJECTIONS PREPARED FOR THE TRISTATE REGION SUGGEST THAT POPULATION CHANGES WILL DEMAND A TOTAL OF 244,000 NEW HOUSING UNITS BETWEEN 2010 AND 2055. DEMAND FOR LARGE, SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES WILL REMAIN STABLE, WHILE GROWTH WILL OCCUR IN HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT CHILDREN, SINGLE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS AND HOUSEHOLDS HEADED BY A PERSON 65 YEARS OR OLDER.



FARMLAND DECLINE, 2002-2007

Between 2002 and 2007, the region saw a net loss of 18,223 acres, or 28.4 square miles, of farmland. The greatest losses occurred in Walker, Hamilton, Catoosa, and McMinn counties.

TRENDS AND FORCES: PATHS

The Paths Working Group studied baseline indicators relating to mobility, freight and other infrastructure, as well as energy availability.



The average household in the tristate region travels more vehicle miles than the national average. This is likely the result of the influence of rural counties, where residents must travel greater distances—sometimes in heavy commute patterns—to access employment, retail and community services in neighboring counties.

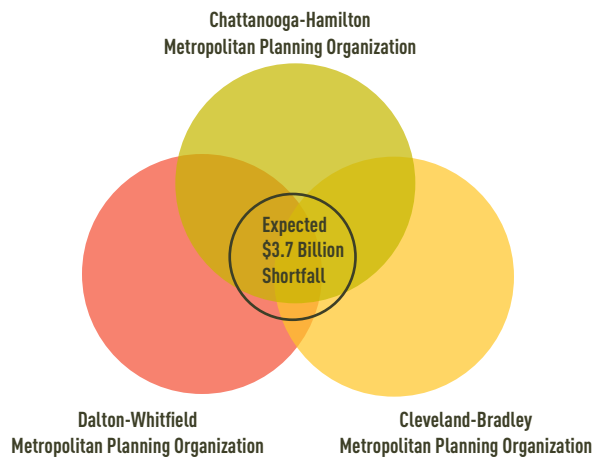
80% OF THE REGION'S FREIGHT TRAFFIC IS CONSIDERED "THROUGH TRAFFIC," WHICH MEANS THAT IT ORIGINATES OUTSIDE OF THE REGION WITHOUT DESTINATION WITHIN THE REGION.

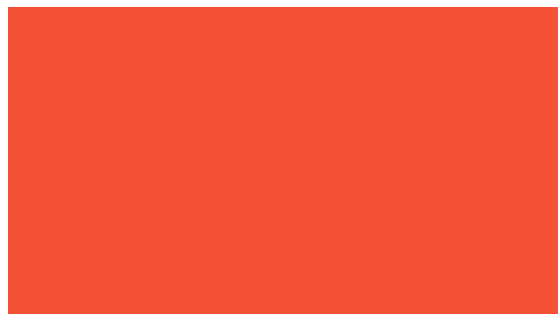
THE REGION IS LARGELY DEPENDENT ON PRIVATE VEHICLES FOR MOBILITY. LESS THAN 1% OF THE REGION'S RESIDENTS USE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

LOGISTICS-DEPENDENT INDUSTRIES MAKE UP 40% OF THE GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT AND SUPPLY 40% OF THE JOBS IN HAMILTON, CATOOSA, DADE AND WALKER COUNTIES.



The cost of expanding and maintaining the region's transportation system is far outpacing external funding sources. The region's three metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) report a combined funding shortfall of more than \$3.7 billion for identified improvements needed to remedy existing problems with local, state and federal highways (excluding any future or planned projects).



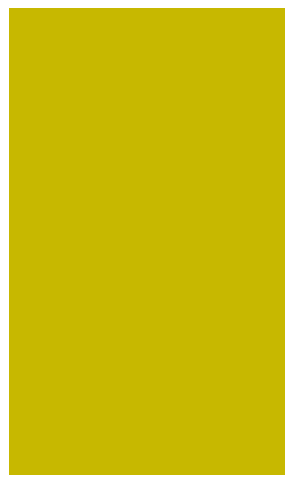


ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

In addition to studying regional forces and trends, it was critical to understand what people who live and work in the region thought about the future. With the input of the region's residents, Thrive 2055 could set goals that were inclusive of their diverse needs and aspirations. In addition, a well-informed action plan would bolster adoption efforts among local leaders and organizations as implementation began.

With a world of places to live, why do people choose the tristate region as their home? What is important to preserve for their children and grandchildren? What should the region look like 40 years from now? Thrive 2055 posed these and other questions to people living in the 16-county region through a variety of mediums and at multiple points throughout the project's three phases.

Traveling more than 13,000 miles across the region, Thrive 2055 volunteers and staff hosted public meetings (called Input Incubators), conducted online and print surveys, made presentations to civic and community organizations, met with business leaders and government officials and solicited feedback at festivals and other regional events. They compiled what they heard into a series of reference documents, which they continually studied as they identified regional priorities and values, initiatives and action items.



ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

INPUT INCUBATORS

Hosted in multiple counties across all three states, these public meetings utilized live polling, activity stations and information sessions to allow residents the chance to provide feedback on a host of regional issues.

SYMPOSIA

These events were characterized by roundtable discussions and activities designed to foster actionable goals. Participants included Thrive 2055 volunteers, as well as professionals specializing in areas related to the project's four initiatives.

SURVEYS

Through surveys, citizens from the 16-county region confirmed their regional values and priorities, highlighted natural areas of interest and provided ideas for implementing the Thrive 2055 Strategic Action Plan.

PRESENTATIONS

Especially in the project's beginning, many people learned about Thrive 2055 through word of mouth. This took the form of presentations to county boards, civic and social groups, student classes and community and neighborhood associations.

MEETINGS IN A BOX

This approach provided participants with materials that could be downloaded online or picked up in locations around the region, allowing people to take the questions home, to work, to school or to their own gathering groups to discuss.

VOLUNTEERS

Thrive 2055 volunteers participated in Working Groups and Initiative Groups, helped manage public events, served on the Coordinating Committee, gave group presentations and offered tremendous support to the project's staff.

3,201 PEOPLE ENGAGED

10,000 HOURS VOLUNTEERED

13,496 MILES DRIVEN

2.1 MILLION MEDIA IMPRESSIONS



SETTING PRIORITIES

The Thrive 2055 volunteer working groups—People, Places, Paths and Prosperity—spent the summer of 2013 gathering public input on 12 of the region’s most pressing issues:

- » Education and workforce
- » Economic competitiveness
- » Natural environment
- » Transportation and freight mobility
- » Health
- » Built environment
- » Water and sewer
- » Public safety
- » Tourism
- » Arts and culture
- » Power and energy
- » Communication

In the fall of 2013, the Thrive 2055 Symposium brought these groups together to present their findings. Using thought-provoking individual and group exercises, 80 regional leaders gained critical insight into which issues would best benefit from regional collaboration and have the greatest impact on the region.

THE SYMPOSIUM WAS A PIVOTAL POINT FOR THE LEADERS. IT FOCUSED THEIR ATTENTION ON FOUR SHARED PRIORITIES FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME. AND FROM THESE PRIORITIES CAME POWERFUL CHALLENGE STATEMENTS:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BANDING TOGETHER TO BE REGION STRONG.

"It's time for us to stop competing with each other and instead, join together as a region and compete with the world."

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE

LIFELONG LEARNING.

"Nothing threatens our economic momentum more than the gap between education and training in the evolving national and global economy."

NATURAL TREASURES

ENSURE OUR REGION'S NATURAL LEGACY.

"The natural environment is the underpinning upon which all life depends for sustenance and well-being. We must ensure that we do not love to death the things we love most within our region."

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

ACCESS TO THE ASSETS.

"How we fund, coordinate and maintain infrastructure that allows us to travel efficiently, communicate and build our communities is one of the great challenges of our time."

ENVISIONING TOMORROW

Utilizing an innovative scenario-modeling tool Thrive 2055 engaged the public in evaluating four future growth scenarios for the region. With the ability to model, create and assess multiple land use scenarios, test and refine transportation plans and model complex regional issues, the possibilities for anticipating consequences and results from growth were limitless.

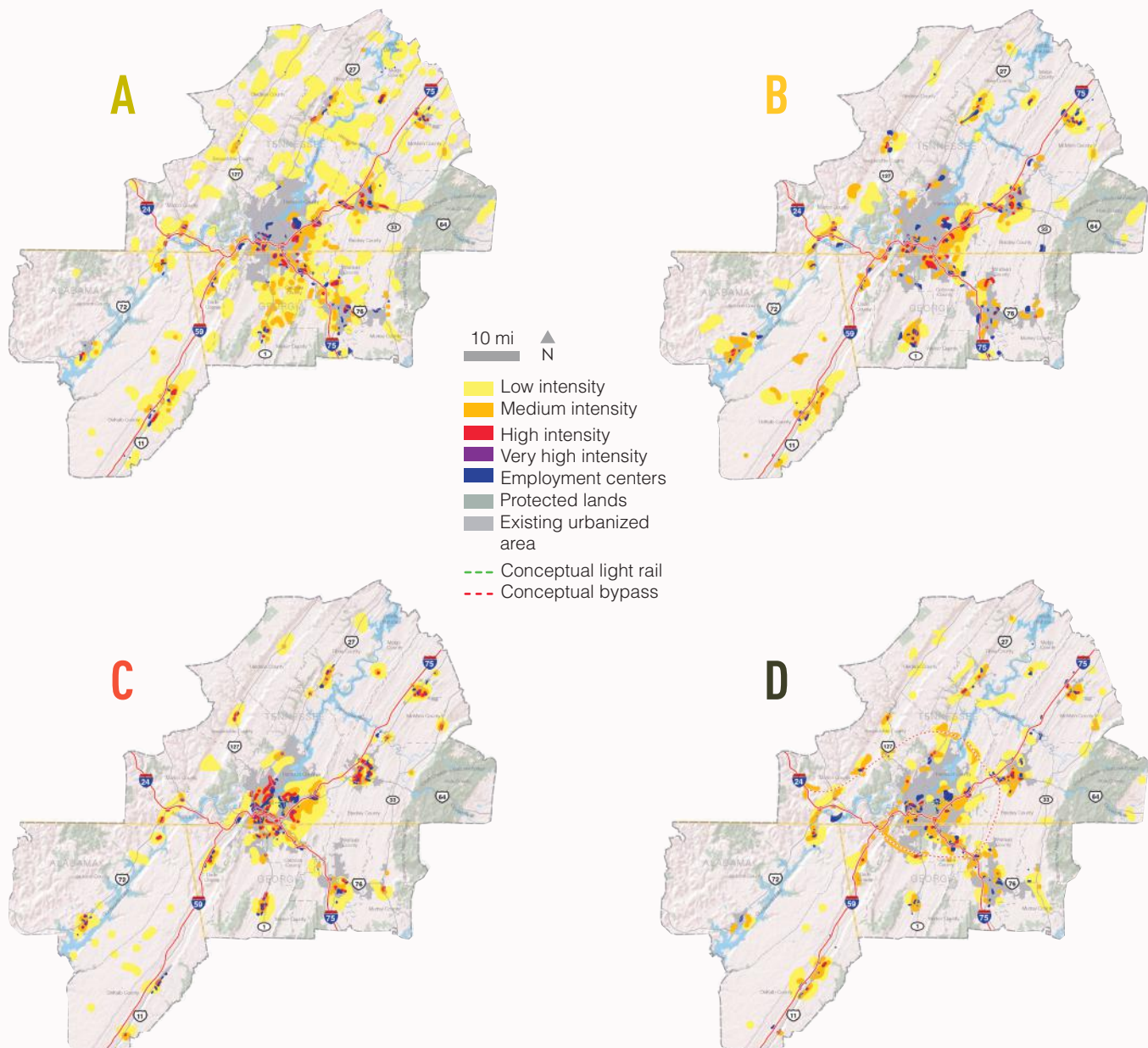
During the early pre-planning phase of Thrive 2055, the Lyndhurst Foundation was the catalyst for forming a partnership with the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga's Interdisciplinary Geospatial Technology Lab. The IGTLab took on the intensive work of collecting geographic information for the region.

This data had never before been compiled on a regional level, in this much detail. Research included data requests from partnering agencies, as well as individual hiking trips on unmapped trails with GPS devices. New geographic assets were uncovered during this unprecedented two-year discovery phase.

Building upon this data, Thrive 2055 used a state-of-the-art software modeling tool, Envision Tomorrow, to design four possible futures for the region. Each scenario told a different story of the future based on varying development patterns, housing options, job locations and infrastructure decisions. The possible futures showed how decisions could impact where people choose to live, work, play and move around the region.

From June to August 2014, citizens from across all 16 counties studied these Possible Futures and rated their performances in four areas: housing, land use, transportation and jobs. Their feedback became the principles which guided the development of the Thrive 2055 Strategic Action Plan.

Today, the Envision Tomorrow tool is housed in the region and is available for local communities and citizens to use in projecting the future implications of their decisions.



SCENARIO A: BUSINESS AS USUAL

This scenario visualized how the region would likely grow over the next 40 years if current development trends continued. Assumptions were made that job centers stayed strong and growth kept pace with the population. Job growth would continue occurring in office and industrial settings, consistent with current conditions.

SCENARIO C: GROWING FROM WITHIN

This scenario visualized how the region would most likely grow if the region followed emerging demands for housing and job opportunities for the millennial generation and empty nesters. Office and retail would lead employment growth focused more in urban centers, and great quality of life would attract and retain young, creative workers.

SCENARIO B: 1-75 MANUFACTURING CORRIDOR

This scenario visualized how the region would most likely grow if additional manufacturing businesses located or expanded operations primarily within the region's existing highly accessible job centers along I-75. Advanced manufacturing growth along I-75 in the major job centers were assumed to attract further employment and housing to the corridor.

SCENARIO D: REGIONAL LOOP, LOCAL ACCESS

This scenario visualized how the region would likely grow under current policies if a new highway loop was built to improve east-west connectivity and provide alternative routes for freight and passenger movement. Improvements to the region's infrastructure would support growth in warehousing, freight and distribution employment.

WHAT MATTERED MOST

While gathering input on the four scenarios, Thrive 2055's volunteer leadership heard from 1,137 people in all 16 counties about what was most important to them. Work was focused on achieving a regional vision that reached across urban, suburban and rural populations. Most people surveyed preferred themes that focused on economic prosperity and educational opportunity, but Thrive 2055 heard overwhelmingly that economic growth could not come at the expense of the region's natural treasures.

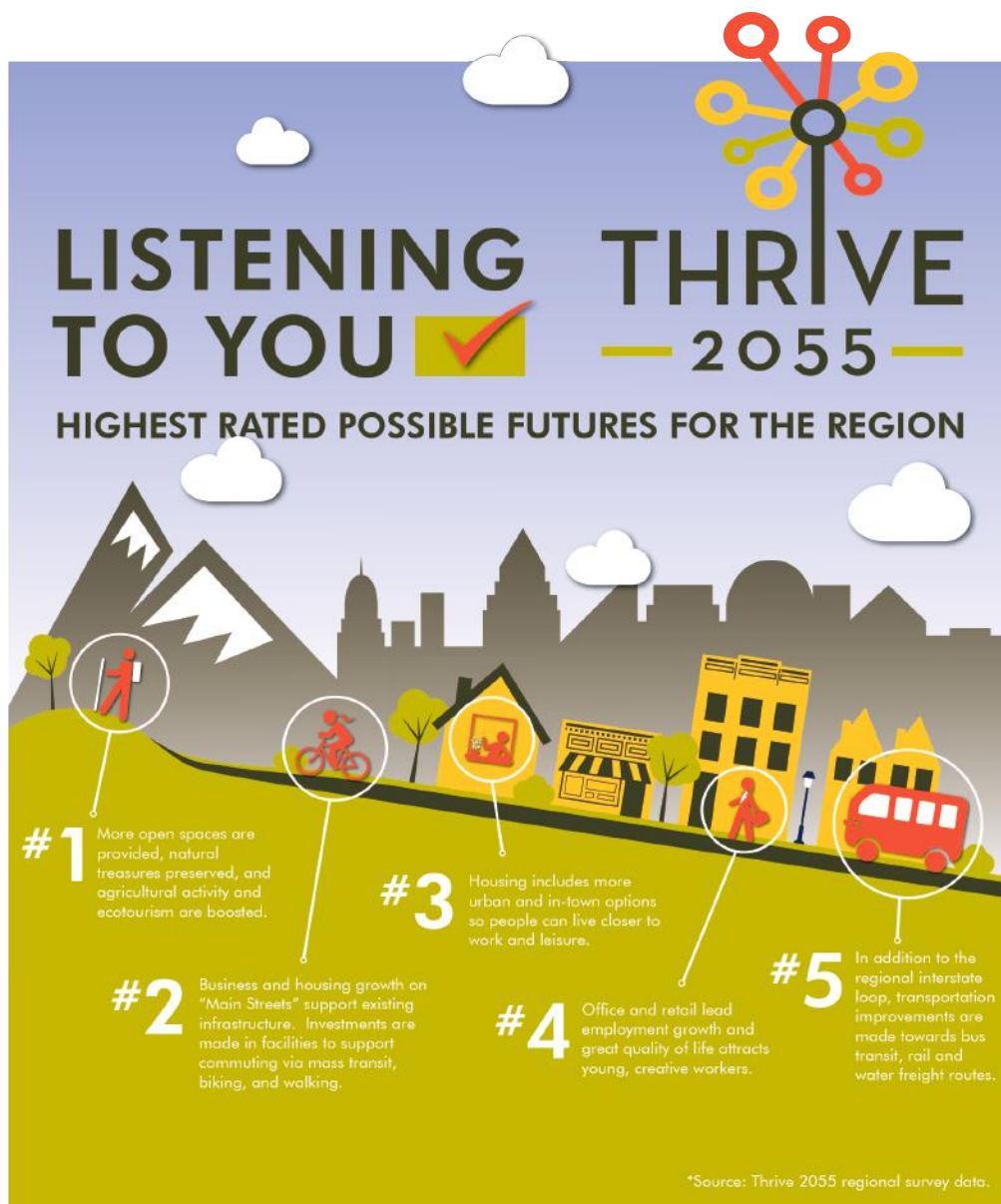
Working together as a region to address future issues with transportation, education, earning potential and business competitiveness were also priorities, but keeping a keen focus on the natural, scenic beauty of the tristate region was imperative.

THE FOLLOWING THEMES RATED THE HIGHEST ACROSS THE REGION (ON A SCALE OF 1-5, 1 BEING LOWEST):

- » More open spaces are provided, natural treasures preserved and agricultural activity and ecotourism boosted. (4.4 out of 5)
- » Business and housing growth on "Main Streets" utilize existing infrastructure. Investments are made in facilities to support commuting via mass transit, biking and walking. (4.1 out of 5)
- » Housing includes more urban and in-town options so people can live closer to work and leisure. (4.0 out of 5)
- » Office and retail lead employment growth, and great quality of life attracts young, creative workers. (4.0 out of 5)

THEMES THAT RATED THE LOWEST WERE:

- » Farmland and open spaces in suburban areas are developed for small and large-lot homes. No future open space plan is put in place. (2.2 out of 5)
- » Farmland and open spaces in suburban areas along an interstate loop are developed for small and large-lot homes. Existing parks and protected lands are maintained. (2.4 out of 5)
- » The current transportation system is maintained. Road improvements that are already funded are implemented. (2.6 out of 5)
- » Housing types are similar to today with greatest growth in suburban and countryside single-family homes. (2.7 out of 5)



THRIVE 2055 ALSO HEARD THAT:

- » People may welcome new growth as long as a strategy to protect the region's natural treasures is in place.
- » Improving education is critical. Support for teachers, increasing high school graduation rates and reading and writing support were the top priorities in education among participants.
- » Economic development approaches that linked jobs with accessible locations in existing towns and cities around the region scored an average of 4.0 out of 5.
- » Investing in urban infrastructure throughout all cities and towns in the region to relieve congestion and provide better options for transit, walking and biking was the highest rated in transportation related issues. (4.1 out of 5).

THE REGION'S PLAN FOR ACTION

With a sharp focus on the highest-priority issues affecting the region and an abundance of public feedback, Thrive 2055 leaders began creating strategies for improving education and workforce, economic development, regional transportation and natural treasures. The product of their work is the Strategic Action Plan, which is outlined in the following pages.

Short-term actions to be carried out over the next five years are listed under each of the Thrive 2055 key initiatives. These are followed by a long-term course of action, and a list of the people and organizations in place today that are necessary to ultimately achieve shared regional success.

A companion to the plan, the *Regional Compass* provides local residents with a broad overview of the Strategic Action Plan and describes ways anyone, regardless of age or profession, can contribute to its goals. The *Regional Compass* and the full Strategic Action Plan, including a task worksheet, may be found online at www.thrive2055.com.



EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE



THE CHALLENGES

After reviewing extensive education data and listening intently to the educators and citizens of the region, one thing became clear: Nothing threatens economic momentum more than the gap between educational outcomes and the evolving needs of a global economy.

EDUCATION VALUES

Educators believe that education is simply not valued as much as it should be in this region.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Educational problems are highly correlated to poverty and related health and social issues, such as: poor prenatal care, unstable family environments and lack of an education culture.

AFFORDABILITY

Higher education is becoming less and less affordable, making it increasingly difficult for middle-class and lower-income families to capitalize on good options.

CONFUSING PATHS

Education and workforce training involve a complex system of preschool programs, public, private and technical schools, community colleges, four-year universities and other variations. Navigating this system can be a challenge, and inconsistent communication with the public can frustrate potential students' attempts to engage with the process.

FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE BIAS

The regional community needs to break away from the bias that anything less than attendance at a four-year institution is a failure.

LACK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The region must work to improve communication between the business community and educators about what is lacking in job preparedness.

LACK OF METRICS OR BENCHMARKS

Because the region straddles three states, there is no integrated regional information system.

A PLAN FOR EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE

People throughout the tristate region desire to increase their earning potential, and employers desire to find qualified employees within the region. The region must transform its education process to ensure citizens are prepared for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

FIVE-YEAR ACTIONS

- » Promote and build a community understanding and advocacy for transformative changes in education and training
- » Develop experiential education as integral parts of the region's education and training programs
- » Coordinate articulation requirements throughout the region

LONG-TERM ACTIONS

- » Advocate for transformational change regarding the way we prepare adults and children to meet the demands of the future
- » Instill the value of lifelong learning in families and communities throughout the region
- » Increase the earning potential of the region's residents
- » Foster a sense of corporate citizenship
- » Promote real-world experience as an integral part of preparing residents for the future
- » Improve the efficiency of navigating the higher education system throughout the region

PARTNERS ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESS

Parents, adults, children and students

School boards and superintendents

Universities and colleges

Business and industry

Teachers, professors and educators

The people of the 16-county region

Private foundations and non-profit organizations that focus on education

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



THE CHALLENGES

The region has been competing with other regions on a national and global scale for jobs, talent and economic investment. The problem is that recruitment efforts have never before been aligned on a tristate level.

COORDINATION

With three states and 16 counties, regional economic development efforts have suffered from 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.

WORKFORCE PREPAREDNESS

Industry leaders are concerned about the misalignment of the educational system and the needs of the labor market. This creates a disconnect between the available labor pool and job openings.

LACK OF AVAILABLE DEVELOPMENT-READY PROPERTY

Currently, there are only a few assembled tracts of land with proximity to interstate highways, rail access and available infrastructure. If economic development professionals are not prepared with an inventory of infrastructure-ready sites, the region loses future job growth opportunities to other parts of the world.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Fiscally responsible infrastructure is an essential element of economic competitiveness. As the resources available for transportation improvements continue to decline, and as federal dollars shrink, the region's ability to compete for job growth will be weakened if infrastructure does not keep up with the pace of that growth.

A PLAN FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The region must elevate its presence on a global and national scale, and develop a strong, regional brand to attract and retain business and industry.

FIVE-YEAR ACTIONS

- » Establish an organizational mechanism to coordinate and promote regional economic development
- » Establish a regional brand
- » Develop a regional marketing campaign
- » Establish a regional economic database of sites available for development

LONG-TERM ACTIONS

- » Increase the net amount of economic development leads in the region
- » Improve the success rate for new economic development leads in the region
- » Increase global awareness of the region in key target industries as well as the site selection industry
- » Avoid duplication of existing regional economic development efforts
- » Cooperate and collaborate with education and training, natural treasures, and regional transportation efforts

PARTNERS ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESS

Economic development professionals in the region

County-wide economic development authorities

Business and industry

Chambers of Commerce with an economic development professional

Regional industrial development agencies

State departments of economic development

Utility companies

The people of the 16-county region

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION



THE CHALLENGES

Funding and maintaining transportation infrastructure is one of the greatest challenges facing the United States. Transportation systems are essential to connecting people, places, goods and jobs. The commute patterns from the 16 counties into and out of Chattanooga-Hamilton County illustrate the importance of coordinating improvements to the regional transportation network.

FREIGHT CONGESTION

The tristate region is one of the nation's top 10 metropolitan areas for volume of freight traffic, and is highest on the list for the volume (80%) that is traveling through the region.

AUTOMOBILE CONGESTION

Three major interstates converge in the Chattanooga area: I-75, I-24 and I-59, around which many of the major employment centers are clustered.

TRANSPORTATION CHOICES

Less than 1% of the region's people use public transportation. The region's primary mode of travel is automobile, and vast amounts of suburban and rural areas have limited access to other transportation options. Urban areas are having greater success at offering reasonable alternatives such as greenways, bike lanes, fixed-route transit and shuttle services.

FUNDING

The region is heavily reliant on state and federal dollars to fill the collective funding shortfalls of three metropolitan planning organizations' long-range transportation plans. The competition among these organizations for funds is at an all-time high, due to aging infrastructure and diminishing funding sources.

A PLAN FOR REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

Transportation coordination will help the region achieve economic success and avoid gridlock. Conversations with neighboring state and county transportation planning organizations must continue to identify innovative solutions to future transportation needs.

FIVE-YEAR ACTIONS

- » Create a regional transportation forum
- » Identify desired regional transportation performance characteristics
- » Identify candidate projects, programs, initiatives and funding
- » Develop a process to promote strategic projects, programs, and initiatives
- » Monitor relevant transportation indicators for signs of improvement and decline

LONG-TERM ACTIONS

- » Improve access to the region's assets in education, economic development and natural treasures
- » Pursue transportation solutions that advance the efficiency of moving people and products around the tristate region
- » Optimize existing infrastructure
- » Promote enhanced travel choices and flexibility during peak periods for enhanced regional connectivity and cost-saving solutions
- » Empower local transportation decisions through regional best practices, data and methods
- » Create bold, new strategies that transform the way people and products move through the region

PARTNERS ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESS

Metropolitan planning organizations (Dalton-Whitfield, Chattanooga-Hamilton and Cleveland-Bradley)

State departments of transportation

Rural planning organizations (Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee)

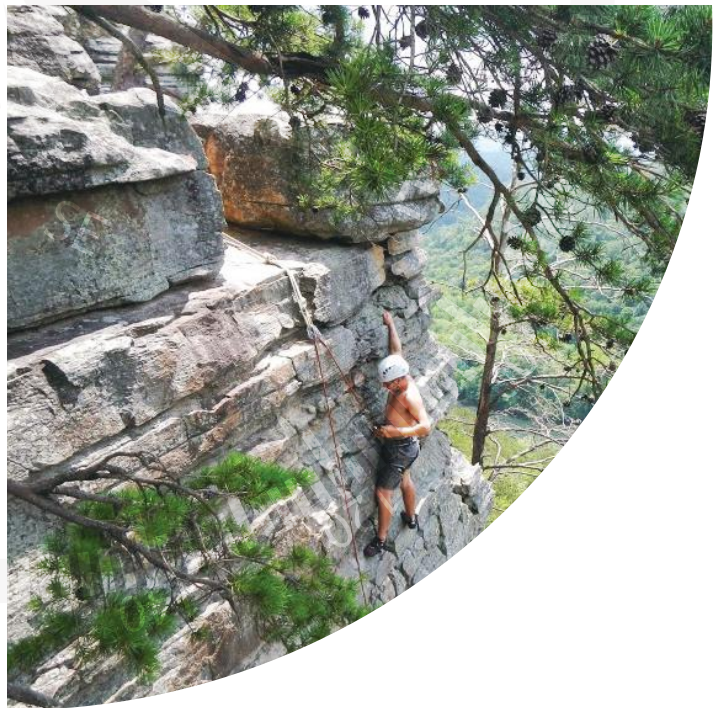
County and municipal transportation planners

Business and industry

Chattanooga Metropolitan Airport Authority

The people of the 16-county region

NATURAL TREASURES



THE CHALLENGES

The abundance of natural beauty in the region was apparent long before Thrive 2055 entered the scene. What was not apparent was the magnitude of biodiverse lands and waters that currently exist, and the pressures that threaten them.

AN ILLUSION OF ABUNDANCE

As the population grows and consumes more land for residential and commercial development, the region will have fewer areas that can replenish themselves. Overuse or removal of resources at an increased rate could result in permanent or significant loss of the current abundance that nature provides.

ALTERING RUGGED NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT IS INCREASINGLY PROBABLE

Modern development practices and increasing demand can significantly alter natural landscapes. Without careful stewardship, the region is at risk of permanently losing natural resources of significant value to the health and prosperity of the region.

NO WINNERS OR LOSERS: SHARING THE BENEFITS

Decisions made by local communities for the preservation of significant, shared natural treasures presents economic gains for everyone in the region.

GROUND AND SURFACE WATER CONTAMINATION

Currently within the tristate region, there are approximately 900 miles of streams and rivers, and 105 acres of lakes and reservoirs listed on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 303(d) list of Impaired Waters. The prevalence of failing onsite septic systems and wells, development patterns, agricultural runoff and the challenges of the region's topography all compromise water quality.

CHANGING CONDITIONS AND TECHNOLOGIES IN WORKING LANDSCAPES

Technological trends employed in working landscapes are changing the way land is farmed, logged and mined. These trends are having an effect on how much land is needed for production and the ways many people make a living wage from these landscapes.

LIMITED PROTECTION FOR RESOURCES

The rural counties that hold much of the region's natural lands and waters have few tools available to plan for or manage the protection of those resources. Without protective standards, long-lasting negative impacts can easily occur.

A PLAN FOR NATURAL TREASURES

The beautiful natural environment surrounding the region also sustains its people with wholesome food, renewable forests, clean air, fresh water and outdoor recreation for healthy living. Strengthening these natural treasures will strengthen the economic vitality and character of the region, and improve the health of the people and the place that they call home.

FIVE-YEAR ACTIONS

- » Establish a conservation partnership
- » Prepare a regional natural treasures plan

LONG-TERM ACTIONS

- » Connect people and places through nature
- » Protect and enhance water quality
- » Create new and expanded regional outdoor recreation opportunities
- » Conserve and protect key scenic, cultural and working landscapes
- » Strengthen the economic vitality and character of the region through responsible stewardship of the region's natural treasures and nature-based economic development
- » Improve the health of the region's people through access to natural treasures, clean and abundant water, local food and outdoor recreation

PARTNERS ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESS

Private and public land owners

Conservation, environmental, tourism and recreation groups

Private land trusts

National Parks System

State Parks Systems

Business and industry

Local and state governments

Private foundations with an environmental stewardship focus

Universities and schools

The people of the 16-county region





CELEBRATING SUCCESS

The dedicated leadership of the region successfully achieved what they set out to do: engage the people of the region to create a plan of action making the most of economic opportunities while preserving what is most loved about their home communities. They came together, identified regional needs, organized volunteers throughout 16 counties, engaged in extensive outreach, studied forces and trends shaping the region, narrowed their focus to the highest priority initiatives and laid the groundwork for action by crafting the Strategic Action Plan. In December 2015, the planning initiative came to a successful conclusion, marking the end of an intensive three-year planning effort and launching the ongoing advancement of the 40-year regional vision.

PROCESS MILESTONES AND DELIVERABLES

ORGANIZATION PHASE

Stakeholder Interviews
Website and Marketing Launch
Established Coordinating Committee
Coordinating Committee Kick-off
Public Kick-Off
Project Plan

Public Outreach and
Communications Plan
Website/Brand/Logo
Data Request Index
Model Methodology Plan

PHASE 1: LISTEN AND LEARN

Trend Assessment and
Model Calibration
Community Assessment
Best Practices/Lessons Learned
Public Workshops & Input Incubators
(Round 1)
Stakeholder Interviews
Elected Officials Meetings
Surveys

Regional Symposium
Compendium of Public Input
Trends and Forces Report
GIS Model and Existing and
Trend Scenarios
Best Practices Reports
Assessment Reports
Public Communications and Social
Media Presence

PHASE 2: DREAM TOGETHER & SET THE BAR

Regional Vision and Initiatives
Strategic Approach
Initiate Action
Working Group Meetings
Coordinating Committee Meetings

Input Incubators (Round 2)
Meetings-in-a-Box
Annual Symposium
Regional Vision Handbook
Strategic Action Plan

PHASE 3: TAKE ACTION

Action Initiation
Envision Tomorrow Training
and Transition
Initiative Sustainability and
Implementation Plans
Productions and Implementation
Working Group/Initiative Group
Meetings
Coordinating Committee Meetings
Executive Committee Meetings

Thrive 2055 Organizational
Business Plan
Regional Transportation Vision
Natural Treasures Vision and Map
Education and Training Actions Report
Regional Economic Development Entity:
Greater Chattanooga Economic
Partnership
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
GIS Tools and Database/Regional
User Group

CONCLUSION

TANGIBLE OUTCOMES

Much work is ahead as the region pulls together to begin implementation. However, tangible results are already occurring, fulfilling the desired outcomes envisioned at the project's outset. The most profound outcome has been the coming together of people.

Prior to the conclusion of the planning process, a group of economic development professionals from the region traveled to Germany to promote the region to German companies. Representatives from Hamilton, Whitfield, Bradley, Catoosa, Walker and Dade counties all promoted the region, indicating the depth to which the various economic development entities were committed to working together. Companies they met with were shocked to discover that a representative from Georgia was not only talking about sites in his county, but also referring them to sites in Tennessee. The regional economic development professionals were struck by the positive and enthusiastic responses they received and how companies not familiar with American cities preferred to deal with a single regional point of contact.

Also prior to the conclusion of the planning process, the White House invited the Greater Dalton Chamber of Commerce to Washington D.C. to discuss issues of significance to businesses in the greater Dalton area. The Chamber invited leaders from all three states to join them in Washington D.C., understanding that a regional perspective would be more powerful than a singular one. While there, they promoted the Thrive 2055 regional effort and spoke with one voice to a range of regional infrastructure and freight issues. Similar positive reactions were received from the White House staff and congressional leaders, making it clear that speaking with a coordinated regional voice is much more likely to get attention (and resources) from federal leaders.

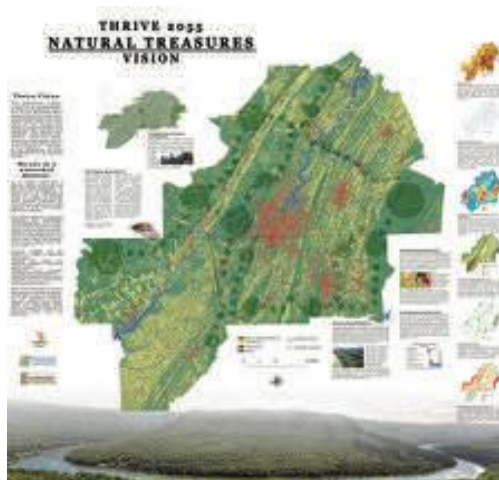
In the initial months following the conclusion of the three-year planning process, tangible successes have already occurred:

THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Thrive 2055 launched a Thriving Communities Initiative in January 2016, enabling each community in the region to preserve and leverage their unique identity by building strong asset-based strategies for reinvesting the region's economic prosperity into each of its great places. Partnering with the Lyndhurst Foundation, the Southeast Tennessee Development District and ArtsBuild, Thrive 2055 selected eight inaugural communities to participate in a three-month design thinking crash course. Volunteer teams of local citizens representing diverse professions and interests participated in the effort to develop economic development strategies utilizing arts and culture assets. To encourage implementation, the Lyndhurst Foundation awarded up to \$20,000 in grant funding per participating community. This program is ongoing.

MAPPING THE REGION

The same tool used to create four possible growth scenarios for the tristate region also allows individual communities and counties to see how their development decisions play out on a more local level. In February 2016, Thrive 2055 hosted a symposium educating users on the capabilities of the powerful Envision Tomorrow mapping tool, during which GIS professionals from around the region were trained to use the software. This tool is now



readily available in each of the region's 16 counties, and an ongoing user group will continue meeting to become better versed in its user capabilities.

In addition to planning tools, Thrive 2055 has begun work on a natural treasures vision map to:

- » Protect wildlife and the habitat it needs to flourish and endure;
- » Expand and create new regional outdoor recreation opportunities;
- » Conserve and promote working farms and forests; and
- » Safeguard and expand iconic cultural, historic and scenic landmarks and vistas.

Incorporating recommendations from existing local and regional conservation and recreation plans, this effort will seek to ensure that present and future generations have access to plentiful and abundant wildlife, healthy forests, clean water, fresh air, wholesome food and an expansive network of preserves, parks, trails and blue ways.

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

REACHING BEYOND TODAY

As the Thrive 2055 planning process neared completion, it became evident that the region would still need an entity to convene conversations and ignite action toward advancing the regional vision and achieving the long-term goals of the Strategic Action Plan.

SUSTAINING THE VISION

Thrive 2055 had established a regional presence. The organization had become a facilitator of regional thinking—a place where people could discuss and create thoughtful solutions to regional matters. Based on the assumption that Thrive 2055 must continue to work beyond the planning initiative, the Coordinating Committee accepted the Sustainable Business Plan in the fall of 2015. Thrive 2055 had broken through countless barriers to collaboration, and the region was just beginning to see the benefits.

In December 2015, Thrive 2055 leaders, volunteers and supporters celebrated the end of the regional growth planning process and recognized the leadership for their tireless efforts on behalf of their home communities. From that celebration's attendees came the compelling message that Thrive 2055 must not simply be put in a report to sit on a shelf.

It was determined that the organization be redefined to carry on as a long-term, action-oriented entity that could reach beyond borders and political jurisdictions to collaborate on a regional scale. An Executive Transition Team was created to craft a new mission and structure, based on the Sustainable Business Plan. The team began meeting in January 2016 to transition Thrive 2055 into a sustainable organization.

Based on the needs expressed by stakeholders and supporters of Thrive 2055, key long-term roles for the organized entity would be:

- » Spark collaboration among three states and 16 counties to work on a regional scale
- » Advocate that the region's four priorities, Education and Workforce, Regional Transportation, Natural Treasures and Economic Development, be kept in consistent balance
- » Champion innovative solutions for the issues of today and tomorrow
- » Convene conversations among diverse interests to achieve a balanced regional approach
- » Educate and empower communities to make informed decisions about their future growth
- » Ignite action to implement long-term, data-driven strategies that are based on regional data, metrics and benchmarks

THRIVE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

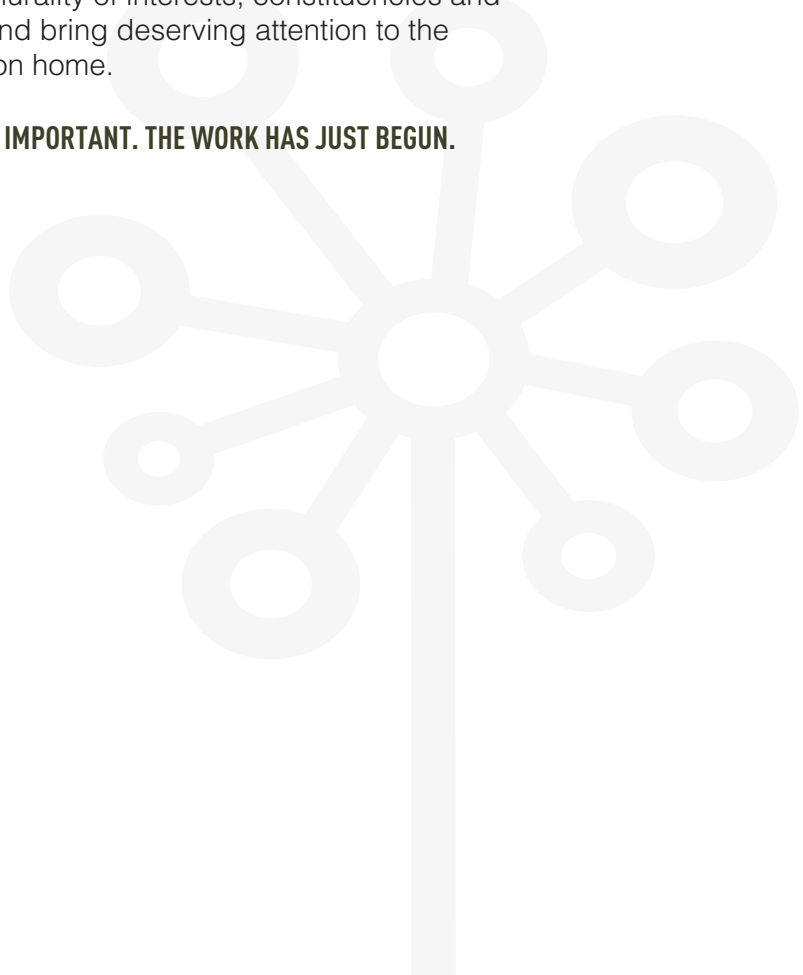
In July 2016, the Thrive 2055 Executive Committee approved the reorganization of the planning initiative into a sustainable entity, called the Thrive Regional Partnership, to carry forward the region's vision for the future. Its mission will be to develop, implement and sustain a vision for responsible and inspired growth in the coming decades. Through collaboration, communication, analytics and innovation, the Partnership will optimize economic opportunities while protecting the natural treasures and landscapes that define this special place.

The tristate region is in a watershed moment. As the region experiences an explosion of growth, the very nature and culture of the mountains, rivers, farms and communities that make the place so unique today could very easily be lost forever. Between 2008 and 2012, the region saw \$4 billion in economic development announcements. In 2015, the region saw \$1.2 billion in economic development announcements in one month alone. Global trends and forces from as far away as Panama, Europe and China will press closer as technology develops and people and products move farther and faster.

The complicated and exhaustive issues that threaten the way people travel around the region cannot go unresolved. The very things that provide sustenance and life cannot be abandoned. And, adequately preparing people for the jobs of today and tomorrow cannot be neglected.

While the tristate region connects to the world, the Thrive Regional Partnership will provide communities with opportunities that they simply would not have without a regional organization in place. The Partnership will cast a vision that reaches beyond the immediate concerns of today and presents real innovations for a prosperous future. It will maintain a plurality of interests, constituencies and inputs in order to serve the entire region and bring deserving attention to the great people and places that call the region home.

THIS WORK IS TOO IMPORTANT. THE REGION IS TOO IMPORTANT. THE WORK HAS JUST BEGUN.



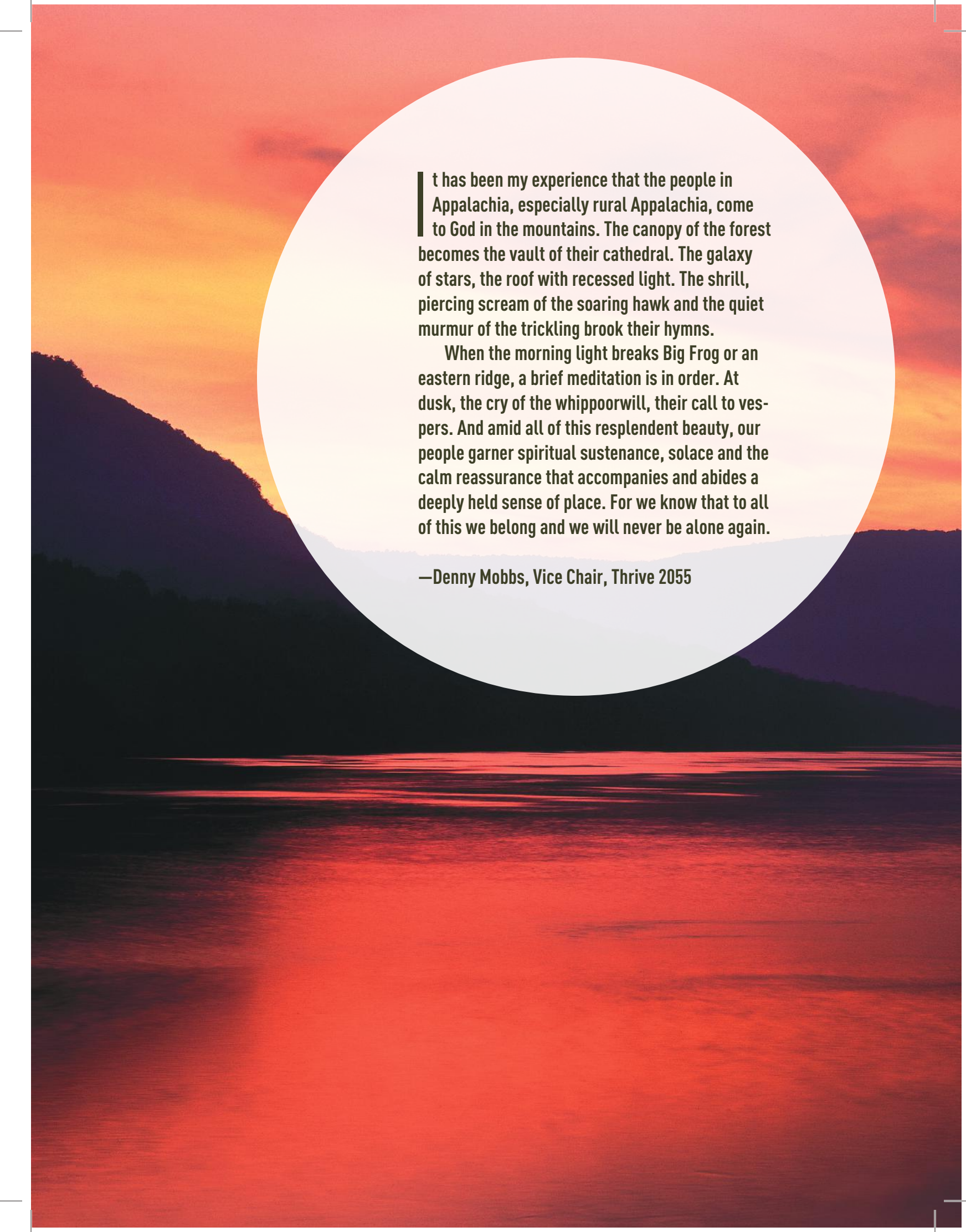
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Community Health Needs Indicators Assessment (2012)
16-County Snapshot Report (2012)
Socioeconomic Forecasts 2025-2055 (2012/2013)
Trends and Forces Report (2013)
Existing Conditions Base Land Use Model and Trends Scenario (2013)
Education and Workforce Preparedness Assessment Report (2013)
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Built Environment Assessment Report (2013)
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Public Safety Assessment Report (2013)
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Compendium of Public Input-Online (2013)
Regional Vision Handbook (2014)
The Strategic Action Plan (2014)
Possible Futures Workbook (2014)
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Regional Compass (2015)
The Sustainability Business Plan (2015)

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It has been my experience that the people in Appalachia, especially rural Appalachia, come to God in the mountains. The canopy of the forest becomes the vault of their cathedral. The galaxy of stars, the roof with recessed light. The shrill, piercing scream of the soaring hawk and the quiet murmur of the trickling brook their hymns.

When the morning light breaks Big Frog or an eastern ridge, a brief meditation is in order. At dusk, the cry of the whippoorwill, their call to vespers. And amid all of this resplendent beauty, our people garner spiritual sustenance, solace and the calm reassurance that accompanies and abides a deeply held sense of place. For we know that to all of this we belong and we will never be alone again.

—Denny Mobbs, Vice Chair, Thrive 2055

