

FILED

Oct. 13, 2014

MARY GOUGE
COUNTY CLERK

D.C.
Blay Holman

**Report From
Carter County Tomorrow**

**Respectfully Submitted to the
Carter County Commission
October 2014**

By Tom Anderson

Carter County Tomorrow Report October 2014

In 1999, local governments were made aware that requirements under Public Chapter 1101 were not only dealing with growth plans. In addition to a growth plan, the law specifies that each county is to form a joint economic and community development board. This board is to be established by interlocal agreement between the county and its municipalities, and its purpose is to encourage all segments of the local community to communicate about development issues. Members of the board are determined by agreement, but must include the county executive, mayors, representatives from industry and the private sector, and an owner of greenbelt property. It is funded by the participating governments. More specific requirements for this board are set out in Section 15 of Public Chapter 1101 (as codified in T.C.A. § 6-58-114).

Carter County Tomorrow was incorporated in 2006

That same year, the City of Elizabethton and Carter County Passed Resolutions- "Recognizing Carter County Tomorrow, LLC as the entity to oversee and promote economic development, tourism, and the promotion of civic, social, cultural and educational programs for Carter County Tennessee and the City of Elizabethton Tennessee and the City of Watauga Tennessee and forming a partnership between Carter county Tennessee, the City of Elizabethton, Tennessee, the City of Watauga, Tennessee, and the Elizabethton/Carter County Chamber of Commerce."

Current Board of Directors shall continue to serve until after organization structure is reviewed. Many directors are statutory.

Carter County

1. Mayor –Leon Humphrey (Term of office)
2. Commissioner – **Open (appointed term of office)**
3. Commissioner – Sonja Culler (appointed term of office)

City of Elizabethton

1. Mayor – Curt Alexander (Term of office)
2. Council person – **Open (appointed term of office)**
3. Council person – Richard Tester (appointed term of office) – Chair

City of Watauga

1. Mayor – Delisa LaFleur (Term of office)

City of Johnson City

1. Mayor – Pete Peterson (Mayor's designee) (June 30, 2014) (Has not attended this fiscal year)

Chamber of Commerce

1. Chairperson – Dr. Keith Young (Term expires June 30, 2014)

Tourism Council

1. Chairperson – Open for CCT Board of Directors to appoint.

Green-belt

1. Green-belt landowner (nominated by CC Farm Bureau) – Keith Hart (Term expires June 30, 2015)

At-large Directors

1. David Bautista
2. Jon Carley (Snap On Tools, Plant Mgr) - Representative Manufacturers (1 yr)
3. Dale Fair (Carter County Bank) - Representative Financial Sector (1 yr)
4. Rob Tony - Representative from Utilities (permanent)
5. Dwayne Taylor (Sycamore Shoals Hospital) – Representative Health Sector (1 yr)
6. Danny McClain (Carter County Schools) – Representative Education Sector (1 yr)
7. _____
8. _____

Ex-officio

1. Sam LaPorte
2. President CCT, LLC – Tom Anderson

Carter County Tomorrow, in the beginning, published the following:

Strategic Mission

Carter County Tomorrow is taking a global view of the economic future. It is based on the total of the sum parts that make up Watauga, Elizabethton, and Carter County. As the world continues to change we need to rethink our position on all aspects of our everyday lives. We will be facing new transportation needs, changing economic factors, more costly energy, and a shift from “that’s the way we’ve always done it”.

On the following pages we have taken the results of stakeholder meetings, the foundation of the state three star program, and the compilation of months of talking to elected officials, area business leaders and citizens from throughout the four corners of Carter County to summarize key issues facing us all.

This document is not intended to answer all the problems we face but rather be a starting point for discussion to address the challenges ahead. In the following eight categories are listed some of the most important and most obvious items to be targeted.

Environment

One of the most valuable assets the region has is the environment around us. The mountains, lakes, rivers, streams and all nature has provided requires protection. Specific plans need to be addressed to protect these assets for generations to come. Replacement of these assets is not possible should they be lost.

Infrastructure

To ensure stability and prepare for economic sustainability the infrastructure is the foundation all else is built upon. The 2009 Land Use and Transportation Plan will help to identify needs and improvements necessary in transportation, water supply, telecommunications, waste water and any other infrastructure necessary to help the region be competitive and to maintain growth.

Economy

A diverse economy will be required to offer job opportunities for all those calling Carter County home. We can no longer put all our eggs in one basket. We have a diverse population made up of people with a wide array of skills. It is important that we be able to have an economy that is dynamic and has occupational offerings that take advantage of our skills while challenging our abilities.

Education

Preparing our students for careers that are both rewarding and challenging is vital to the future of our region. Continuing educational opportunities for those that are already in the work place is equally necessary. Learning is lifelong in the 21st century.

Technology and the increasing rate of change require everyone to constantly improve our job skills. We must create an environment of learning to learn. The generations to come will need to follow our lead.

Healthcare

Tremendous gains have been made in the healthcare field in recent years. The healthcare arena needs to be addressed and investment be made to build jobs for the future. Key research is targeted for nanotechnology and biotechnology. These offer potential for students and careers alike.

Development of healthcare facilities, research centers and manufacturing sites all are possibilities for new health related futures.

History, Culture, Arts

Even though the world is changing at an ever faster rate we need to remember the unique history and culture of the region. The Appalachian region is distinct in its heritage and all that took hundreds of years to shape. The arts, crafts, music, and stories that make up Carter County need to be recorded and displayed for not only local residents to appreciate but also the visitors that come from all across the country.

Regionalism

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link – which would imply we need to take our place within the region and our strength and vitality to those around us. Today our economies are closely tied together. Our assets in many instances shared. In many programs we have found it better to share the expenses of agencies rather than go it alone for no reason. Northeast Tennessee has worked closely on many projects that benefit all at reduced costs for the individual county. There is strength in numbers and many more regional opportunities lie ahead.

Quality of Life

To have opportunities – for a good job, for a quality education, access to necessary healthcare, a chance to be involved, and to work for the greater good of one's community, this defines quality of life. There are challenges that everyone faces around every corner. QOL does not guarantee success but rather promotes opportunities. The comprehensive economic development plan seeks to develop and open these doors of opportunities for all residents to participate at the level they choose.

Summary

Moving a community forward is a very large task; everyone has opinions. Successful communities find ways to come to consensus about the big picture issues and then work together on the details. Strategic planning and the basics of the state three star programs have been merged for this document. In the years to come the proposals will be discussed with the local governments, the many existing boards in place, the volunteer organizations that make such valuable contributions and the general citizenry to inform and educate those that want to become more involved in the process.

For communities to grow it must be an inclusive process rather than exclusive.

CCT Board of Directors current chosen 4 strategic priorities, but not be all inclusive as to my activities;

1. West Elk Area Redevelopment
2. Industrial Site Development
3. Existing Industry Program (BEAR)
4. Roan Mountain Sewer Project

Other activities currently include:

1. Entrepreneurial Training
2. Pursuing other funding opportunities (i.e. Grants, private sector investment, etc.)
3. Three Star Certification
4. Respond to requests for information/proposals
5. Workforce and Education Committee
6. Industrial Development Bond Board
7. First Tennessee Development District
8. Hotel recruitment and feasibility
9. Retail Planning/Marketing
10. Northeast TN Valley Regional Industrial Development Association
11. German and European Union Initiative
12. Business Improvement District
13. Downtown Business Association
14. Workforce Development Complex
15. Chamber of Commerce Board
16. Tourism Council
17. Completing organizational policies and procedures

18. Two meetings have been held for Strategic Planning for organization and community (August and September).

Current CCT ED Activities – October 2014

- Organizational Strategic Planning to hold its third session on October 14, 2014 with the assistance of MTAS.
 - Session 3 will be finalizing the mission-defining and goal-setting started in session 2. The Board will define the CCT mission and establish a set of 3-5 short-term goals (less than 2 years) and 3-5 longer-term goals (no more than 5 years).

- Industrial Site Development –
 - State of TN and TVA both require a minimum 5 year Payment In Lieu of Tax agreement be in place.
 - TVA Program – Multijurisdictional Borla Site is still being considered.
 - Okolona Exit area – 2 large building projects (still in feasibility for prospects)
 - Market buildings in Cherokee Industrial Park
 - Working with TVA Sites, NETVRIDA, TCI Group, Owners
 - Current prospects requesting 4mw capacity from Elizabethton Electric Department.

- Potential Carbon Fiber company affiliated with automotive industry contact.

- Un-named project – medical related. Looking to build for processing plant and distribution center. Currently looking in North Carolina and Tennessee. Job potential 100 plus. Still active, a site visit has taken place.

- Project Albuquerque - Light manufacturing and distribution. Efforts toward securing a 200,000 square foot building to construct or lease. 136 jobs initially. Qualification for State and local incentives are being discussed and waiting of letter of intent from company.

- New project – involving a developer of cost effective, very high efficiency heating and cooling products using sorption heat pump cycles. Working to locate laboratory and eventual manufacturing in Carter County. Efforts on-going, principle officer looking at other sites as well.

- Project 20/20 Vision – Completed initial meeting with principal of the company. 75-100 new manufacturing jobs, several million dollar investment. Just beginning, but currently only looking at Elizabethton/Carter County. Preliminary engineering and site prep estimates is complete. Waiting for company to complete feasibility.

- Website Development – TVA marketing specialists and Times Digital Group

- West Elk Area Redevelopment Master Plan and Feasibility

- Parsons Brinkerhoff has been award the contract with following deliverables:
 - Market Analysis
 - Potential Land Use Scenarios
 - Future Tax Base Analysis
 - Conceptual Master Plan
 - Approximate time to completion 3 to 4 months.

- Retail
 - Potential joint city-county officials training in early 2015
 - Working with the City of Elizabethton on In-fill strategies
 - Pursuing a lead for “general store” in town of Watauga.

- On-going effort towards a hotel development company representing over 100 properties is being recruited and exploring Elizabethton as potential site.

- Entrepreneurial Trainings and Workshops
 - Currently working with 3 entrepreneurs
 - Partnering with Small Business Administration to begin trainings in Elizabethton and Downtown Business Association. First training session will be Tuesday September 23 and will focus on social media.
 - Partnering with and facilitating CO.STARTERS - a 9-week program that helps aspiring and seasoned entrepreneurs examine assumptions and turn business ideas into action. More than a course, CO.STARTERS is the starting point for building a vibrant startup community.

- TDOT SIA Route
 - NCI –securing release from creditor for land to be donated for the access road ROW.
 - Working with engineers for Preliminary Engineering Report to begin Fast-Track Infrastructure activity
 - A.Y. McDonald donating property for ROW. Needing additional assurance for access to loading dock area. Assurances will be in place within next 5-7 days.
 - Wetland mitigation (0.53 acre) permitting process being considered for delineated wetland in project area.
 - Final documents complete and delivered by county attorney for ROW
 - Edge of disturbance issues have been addressed.
 - Storm water pollution prevention plan (swppp)

- NCI Expansion
 - Over 30 new hires this year and plan to begin a fully staffed 2nd shift
 - Will streamline and better configure existing building
 - Training and fast tract grants
 - Construction anticipated for building addition.

- Downtown Sign Project – grant is complete, however, efforts continue with Downtown Business Association.
- STL finalizing capitalization for purchase. It was anticipated the sale would have been final in August 2014, but bridge financing not complete. Continuing to work with company as they explore options as attempt to keep them in Elizabethton and Carter County. 103 jobs to be retained, 40-45 new jobs, still on-going.
- Chamber activities include board activities, web portal, and technology.
- Tourism Council Activities - increasing promotional activities and events
- WDC activities – Northeast Correctional Annex inmates completed painting exterior of both buildings. Resurfacing of roof of building 2 project has begun.
- Visiting industries as part of the existing industry program.
- Roan Mountain Sewer Project
 - Contract in place
 - Dr. Kelly Foster Director of Survey Research & Development, Applied Social Research Laboratory and graduate students to complete study.
 - Mountain Electric Cooperative to assist with the cost of the survey
 - Surveys, canvassing and focus groups processes have begun.
 - September 11, 2014 a Town Hall” meeting took place at Roan Mountain at Cloudland Elementary. Approximately 30 people participated.
- Education/Workforce Development Committee (next meeting October 15)
 - Job/Career Fair will be held on April 14, 2015 at the Tennessee College of Applied Technology in Elizabethton.
 - All City and County high school seniors will participate during school day.
 - Job Fair is anticipated to be open to public from 3 pm to 7 pm
 - Continues to listen to industry and education to close skill gaps and create an employee “pipeline” for a stable future.