

**TENNESSEE'S UPPER CUMBERLAND
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**
2017-2022



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TENNESSEE'S UPPER CUMBERLAND



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee is home to breathtaking natural beauty, devoted residents, and historic town squares. Each of the 14 counties that make up the region is unique with its own set of hidden jewels and obstacles. The following document highlights some of the components that make each community special and is designed to serve as a road-map, leading the region in future economic and community development efforts to create a stronger, more resilient region.

In the development of the region's economic development strategy, sessions bringing together key economic development organizations and local leaders were hosted in each of the region's fourteen counties. In addition, a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) committee was formed to combine public and private representation in a region-wide brainstorming session. These meetings resulted in a clear understanding of the region's current economic environment, identification of five primary goals, and the development of the corresponding plan of action.

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is intended to pave the road for the residents and leaders of the Upper Cumberland as they strive to create long-term success and resilience throughout the region. The goal of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is to bring together public and private sectors in the creation of a regional economic approach to strengthen regional economies and sequentially bring jobs and improve quality of life throughout the region. As developments progress and priorities change, the regional strategy and the objectives listed in this plan must change as well in order to create prosperous, more resilient communities throughout the region.

The Upper Cumberland region is composed of 14 counties in the northeastern portion of central Tennessee. The counties that make up the region include Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, Warren, and White. The region contains 5,093 square miles of beautiful landscape and has a population of 348,273.

Population

The region's counties range in size from just over 5,000 citizens in the smallest county to over 75,000 in the region's largest county. Cookeville, the Upper Cumberland's largest city and the urban hub of the region, has approximately 30,000 residents. The region has been experiencing steady population growth over the past several decades, largely consistent with state and national trends. However, the region's rural communities, particularly those with removed connectivity to Interstate-40 are losing residents. The majority of growth throughout the Upper Cumberland has been concentrated in the more urban parts of the region and in communities located along Interstate-40.

Transportation Access

The Upper Cumberland is centrally located between three of the four largest cities in Tennessee, making the region a perfect location for both businesses and residents. Tennessee has outstanding road infrastructure and a large majority of the region is connected by four-lane highways. Interstate-40 runs through the heart of the region, connecting travelers from Barstow, California to Wilmington, North Carolina. The southern counties are just minutes away from Interstate-24 which is a primary route in the automotive corridor of the southeast. The region is home to nine regional airports and multiple rail access points which further industrial opportunities.

14

counties make-up
Tennessee's UC

Putnam County is the largest county
by population at
over 75,000



348,273

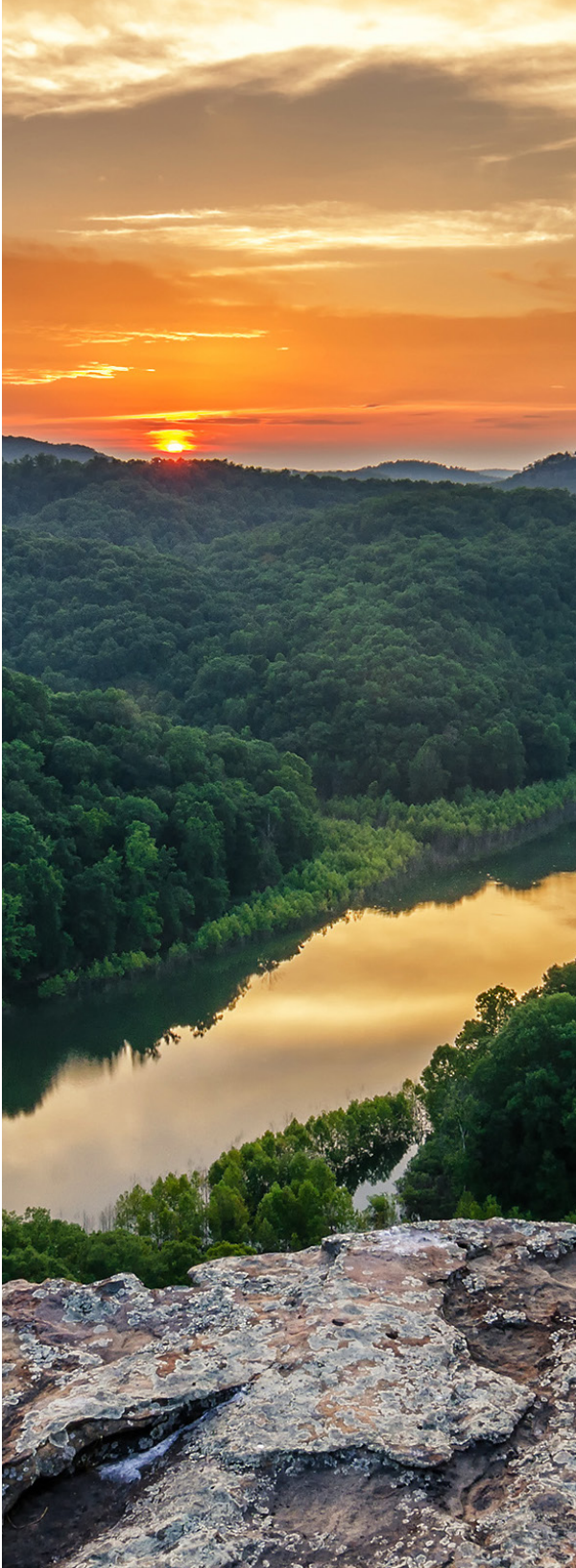


individuals live in
the region and the
average age is 42

12,000

average number of trucks passing
through the region on I-40 each day





The Upper Cumberland is fortunate to be undergoing several current transportation projects, but many needs are still present throughout the region. Several rural communities in the region are still in need of increased connectivity to four-lane highways and Interstate-40. Some of the region's larger communities would benefit from additional interchanges to open industrial and residential development as well as traffic studies to increase safety and efficiency of traffic flow. These communities have local leaders advocating for these projects at a state level, but must work regionally to communicate more effectively.

Geography

The UC is overflowing with natural scenic beauty due to the region's perfect location between the East Central Basin, Highland Rim, and Cumberland Plateau of Tennessee. Waterfalls and natural swimming holes are just a few of the tourism attractions that draw adventure enthusiasts to the area. There are countless hiking trails, camping sites, motorcycle routes, immense caves, kayak excursions and much more sprinkled through the region. The Upper Cumberland has 10 beautiful state parks and is home to Big South Fork National Park. The region would be an ideal location for new hotels and restaurants wanting to better serve visitors and promote longer stays and greater expenditures.



The Upper Cumberland is home to 10 state parks and 1 national park and contains 294,164 acres of public land.



The region contains 105 miles of hiking trails for hikers to explore its natural beauty.



Cordell Hull, Center Hill and Dale Hollow are the region's largest lakes. There are a total of 143 bodies of water in the UC making up 1,267 miles of shoreline.



The region is home to 53% of the caves in Tennessee with a total of 5,463. White County contains the highest concentration of caves in the UC with a total of 1,228.



Economy

The Upper Cumberland is made of small rural towns and a few micropolitan cities. Median household incomes in the region range between \$28,804 and \$43,914. Unemployment has averaged between 7.3 % and 9.4% over the past decade reaching a peak of 13.2% in the height of the most recent recession. The Upper Cumberland is beginning to see a turnaround from the job losses felt during the latest recession. The region has seen several industrial expansions and major job announcements which have turned the tides to a concern for available workforce. Excellent educational facilities including a premier engineering college, Tennessee Tech University, several Community Colleges, and TN Centers of Applied Technology are available throughout the region. These institutions are striving to provide the needed workforce, but demand for a skilled workforce is still outnumbering the incoming labor force for certain sectors.

Workforce & Education

In the Upper Cumberland, leaders are starting to see now more than ever, the great importance of collaboration between industry leaders and educational institutions to produce the labor supply needed in the upcoming years. All 14 counties in the region specifically listed workforce development as a continued need throughout the Upper Cumberland. Some communities throughout the region have begun workforce development initiatives of their own such as career workshops for high school students and workforce development committees to drive collaboration between industries and education.

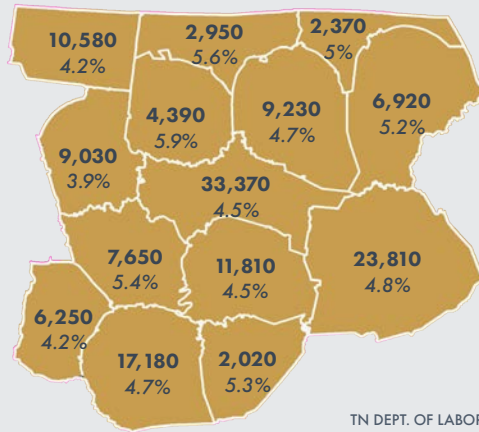
Education levels among adults in the Upper Cumberland have been continuously increasing over the past several decades. In 1970, the percentage of adults with a high school degree or higher was only 26%; that percentage has more than tripled with over 84% of adults in the region having a high school degree or higher. Graduation rates have remained steady and the region has a current high school graduation rate of over 91.1%, significantly greater than the state average of 88.5%, and the national average of 83.2%.

LABOR FORCE AND PERCENT UNEMPLOYMENT, 2016

LABOR FORCE
PERCENT UNEMPLOYMENT

LABOR FORCE
REGION: 147,560
STATE: 3,195,900
US: 161,337,000

PERCENT UNEMPLOYMENT
REGION: 4.7%
STATE: 4.2%
US: 4.5%



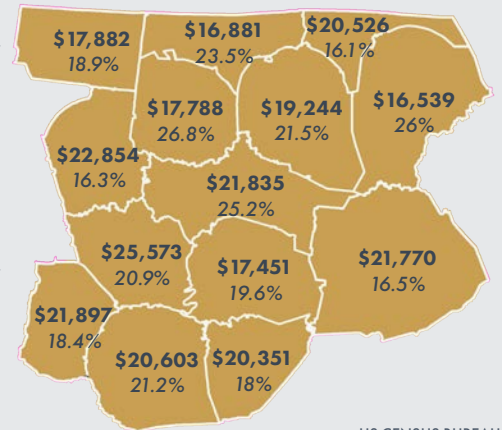
TN DEPT. OF LABOR
AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

PER CAPITA INCOME AND PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION BELOW POVERTY RATE, 2011-2015

PER CAPITA INCOME
% OF POPULATION BELOW
POVERTY RATE

PER CAPITA INCOME
REGION: \$20,603
STATE: \$25,227
US: \$28,930

**% OF POPULATION BELOW
POVERTY RATE**
REGION: 20.9%
STATE: 17.6%
US: 15.5%



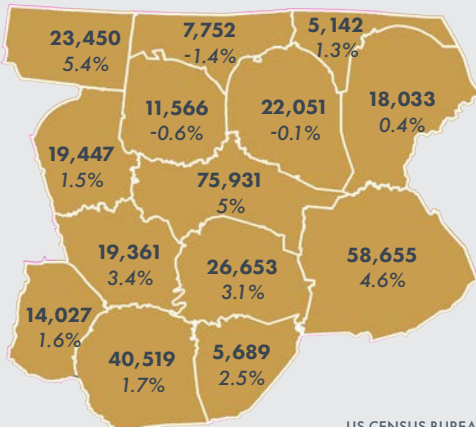
US CENSUS BUREAU

2016 POPULATION AND PERCENTAGE OF CHANGE IN POPULATION, 2010-2016

2016 POPULATION
% CHANGE IN POPULATION
2010-2016

2016 POPULATION
REGION: 348,273
STATE: 6,651,194
US: 323,127,513

**% CHANGE IN POPULATION
2010-2016**
REGION: 3%
STATE: 4.8%
US: 4.7%



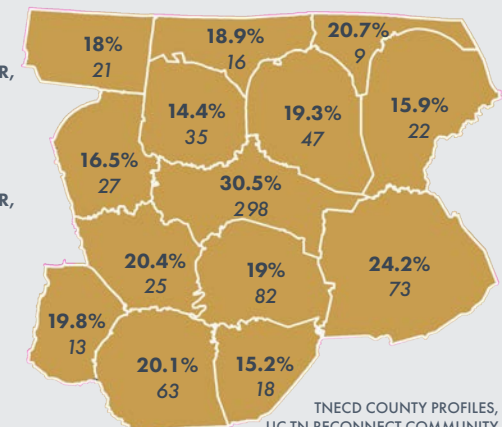
US CENSUS BUREAU

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION WITH ASSOC. DEGREE OR HIGHER, 2016 & PARTICIPATION IN TN RECONNECT, AUG. 2017

**% POPULATION WITH
ASSOC. DEGREE OR HIGHER,
2016**
PARTICIPATION IN TN
RECONNECT, AUG. 2017

**% POPULATION WITH
ASSOC. DEGREE OR HIGHER,
2016**
REGION: 21.9%
STATE: 34.7%

**PARTICIPATION IN TN
RECONNECT, AUG. 2017**
REGION: 749
STATE: 9,803



TNECD COUNTY PROFILES,
UC TN RECONNECT COMMUNITY

Workforce & Education, Continued

Although the region performs well in high school graduation, it begins to lag behind in post-secondary education. The current workforce is composed of 21.9% having an associate's degree or higher and only 15.9% with a bachelor's degree or higher compared to the state of Tennessee with approximately 34.7% and 27.3% respectively. The region has a multitude of educational facilities located throughout the Upper Cumberland. Students have access to a variety of training programs, and it is expected that the Governor's Drive to 55 initiative will increase post-secondary training. High school students may now receive two free years of education through the TN Promise program, and adults may earn an associate's degree or specialty certificate through the TN Reconnect program at no cost.

EMPLOYMENT SECTOR	EMPLOYMENT	AVERAGE WAGE	WORKFORCE PERCENTAGE
Government	19,845	\$34,612	19.77%
Manufacturing	18,579	\$43,652	18.51%
Retail	13,267	\$24,264	13.22%
Health Care	12,150	\$34,596	12.11%
Accommodation/Food Service	8,509	\$13,533	8.48%
Administrative	4,682	\$30,545	4.67%
Wholesale	4,503	\$41,666	4.49%
Construction	3,554	\$38,326	3.54%
Transportation/Warehousing	2,913	\$40,640	2.90%

In the Upper Cumberland, government and manufacturing provide the greatest number of jobs, followed by retail trade, healthcare and social work, and foodservice establishments. Manufacturing still drives a substantial part of the region's economy, but many of today's manufacturing occupations require more advanced training and education than ever before.

Cluster Analysis

The top manufacturing clusters in the Upper Cumberland include automotive, vulcanized materials, wood products, plastics, furniture, and heavy machinery & production technology. The Upper Cumberland ranks in the top 50 in the US for automotive and vulcanized materials. Automotive manufacturing is the number one employing cluster in the region with nearly 5,000 positions filled. Yorozu Automotive located in Warren County is the region's top industrial employer with approximately 1,750 employees. Manufacturing of vulcanized and fired materials make up the second largest cluster in the Upper Cumberland, employing almost 2,500. Bridgestone in Warren County is the 2nd top industrial employer in the Upper Cumberland, with over 1,000 employees.

Clark Lumber Company located in Macon County is world famous for the high quality and beauty of their Appalachian Hardwoods. Wood product manufacturers make up the region's third largest industrial cluster, with over 1,500 employees. Plastics manufacturers in the region employ nearly 1,500 within the Upper Cumberland making plastic manufacturing the fourth largest cluster in the Upper Cumberland. White County is home to olympic kayak producer, Jackson Kayak, one of the largest plastic manufacturers in the region. Production technology and heavy machinery manufactures are the fifth largest industrial cluster in the Upper Cumberland with over 1,300 positions filled. ATC Automation in Cookeville provides unparalleled lean solutions to industries all over the nation. Furniture manufacturers in the region, such as Livingston Furniture Manufacturing in Putnam County, make up the sixth largest industrial cluster in the Upper Cumberland with over 1,200 employees.

Traditional manufacturing saturates a large part of the region's economy. Local economic development leaders should proactively work to promote employment across multiple sectors by attracting industries outside of manufacturing. Diversification of the region's industrial clusters will decrease potential upset from loss of large employers in local communities and create more resiliency within the Upper Cumberland.

Job closures over the past decades have left several vacant buildings across the region. These buildings primarily do not meet the needs of modern industry. Recognizing this trend, several communities in the region have begun developing green field industrial parks. Parks currently in development are the Clarkrange Business Park, Highlands Business Park, Lafayette Technology Park, Mountain View Industrial Park, and the Plateau Partnership Park. Leadership shall continue to pursue additional industrial land for development.



FITZGERALD GLIDER KITS - WHITE, OVERTON, CUMBERLAND, FENTRESS AND PICKETT COUNTIES

#1 Automotive



#3 Wood Products



#2 Vulcanized and Fired Materials

#4 Plastics



JACKSON KAYAK - WHITE COUNTY

#6 Furniture



LIVINGSTON FURNITURE MANUFACTURING
PUTNAM COUNTY

#5 Production Technology and Heavy Machinery



ATC AUTOMATION - PUTNAM COUNTY

S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- » Road infrastructure
- » Central location in the US
- » Educational Resources: Tennessee Tech; TCAT; Community Colleges (Cookeville Higher Education Campus, Vol State, Motlow, Roane State); TN Promise, Reconnect, Pathways TN, Drive to 55
- » Agriculture
- » Natural Features/Great Outdoors/Beauty of Region: Tourism, Quality of Life – Industrial attraction, Retiree recruitment
- » Industry-Friendly State: No state income tax, Right to Work State, Good infrastructure, Low property taxes, Easy to recruit management, Low cost of living, Industry/education collaboration, #1 in US for automotive manufacturing
- » Low Unemployment Rate (3%)

OPPORTUNITIES

- » Workforce Development: Workforce Summit in Cumberland to start business education collaboration; Industrial Readiness Training - Internships, dual-enrollment, professional development; Expand soft-skill training through curriculum
- » Placemaking: Improve perception (within region and without); Revitalize downtowns; Attract young families; Reverse population decline; Grow health and well-being of region
- » Leadership Development: Education for newly elected local officials & leadership
- » Utility capacity planning
- » Increase recycling
- » Legislative advocacy: Regional leadership working together to request biggest needs of the Upper Cumberland region to elected state and federal legislature
- » Marketing council: Representatives from large regional organizations – TTU, hospitals, highlands, UCDD

WEAKNESSES

- » Lack of Interchange Exits (I-40)/Limited Access (Hwy 111)
- » Rural Location/Connectivity to I-40 (Lafayette)
- » Workforce: Work Ethic, Employability Skills, Substance Abuse, Availability of Trained Workforce
- » Lack of Residential and Commercial Development: Lack of retail, Struggle to recruit (lack of housing for) executive management to small communities, Lack of water to all parts of rural counties, Lack of industrial infrastructure (specifically sewer), Lack of industrial inventory/shovel ready sites, Empty buildings don't meet the needs of current industry, Topography (for industrial)
- » Opioid Crisis and Crime: Overcrowded jails, Limited workforce, Increased healthcare and insurance costs

THREATS

- » Aging Population: Retirement of experienced workers; Increase in needs for healthcare; Lack of affordable housing for seniors; Absence of transportation for aging seniors; Rise in needs for in-home care
- » Workforce: Leakage - rural industries paying lower wages – driving workforce to higher paying areas; Departure - experienced workforce transitioning into retirement; Lack of skin in the game producing lower quality students; Lack of interest in sectors where there is (or will be) a shortage of employees such as manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, etc
- » Solid Waste: Many rural communities at capacity for landfill; Very expensive to properly dispose of waste
- » Natural disasters: flooding, fires, ice storms, tornadoes, droughts - regional preparedness and collaboration is crucial in the event of circumstances beyond our control
- » Sustainability: Leadership turnover - consistency in programs and initiatives by local leadership from one administration to the next; Federal and state leadership - uncertainty in funding vital to rural communities ability to thrive

OUR REGIONAL ROAD MAP

Forming Goals & Objectives

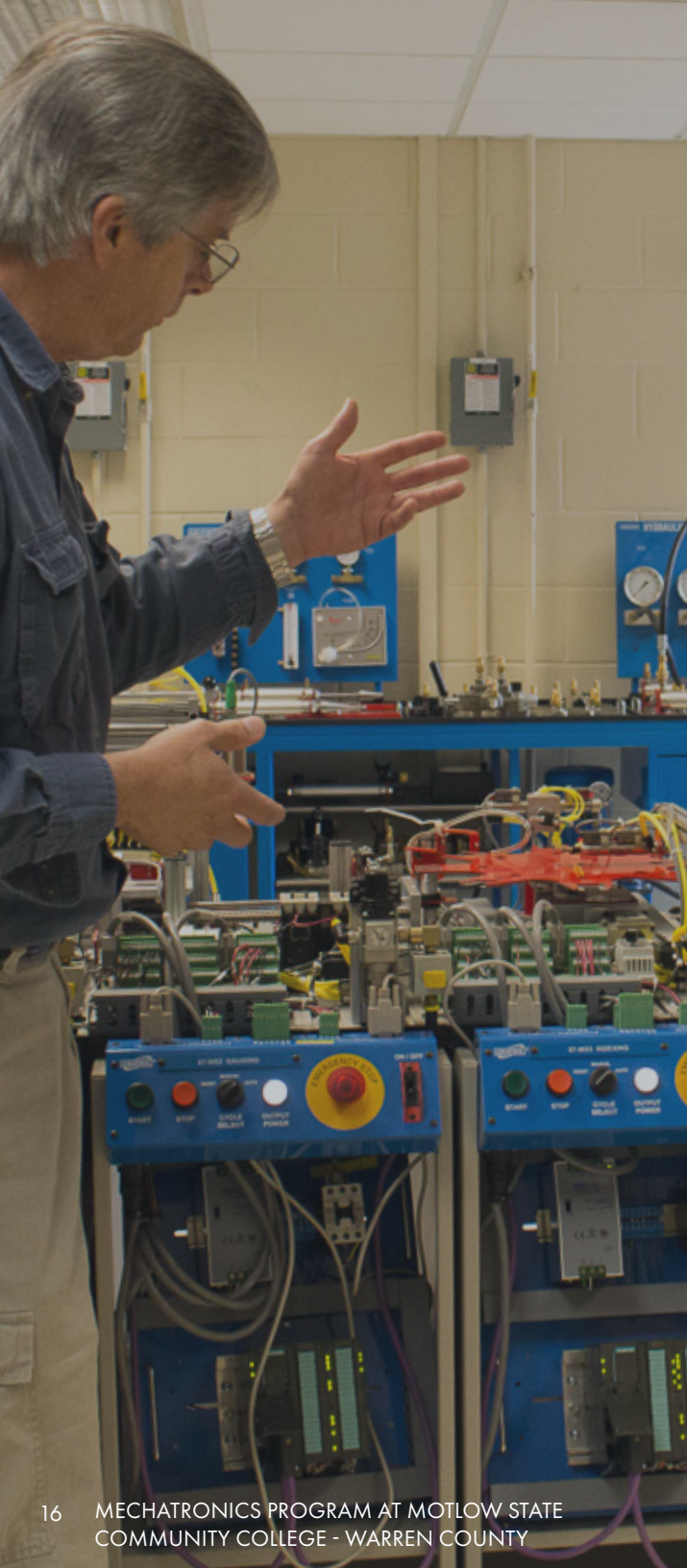
Multiple goals laid out in the following pages support state and nation-wide goals of workforce development, advocacy, industrial development, retail development, and transportation. All of these goals fall in line with existing regional and state plans and support the region with building resilient communities across the Upper Cumberland. Resilient communities respond better when a crisis hits, overcome disasters quicker, and generally emerge superior over other communities. Community leaders should be prepared for natural disasters, loss of a leading employer, or any other unexpected major disruptions to the economy. Increasing resiliency throughout the Upper Cumberland is vital for the prosperity and sustainability of the region.

Community & Private Sector Participation

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee was formed to create a plan for lasting resiliency and prosperity throughout the Upper Cumberland in the region's 2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The committee was made up of private and public-sector representatives from across the region. The broad range of committee members provided a diverse and comprehensive representation of those who live, work, and do business in the Upper Cumberland. Committee members include representatives from local chambers, workforce agencies, local financial institutions, small businesses, economic development partnerships, elected officials, and other local leaders. In addition to the CEDS Committee, UCDD staff hosted a series of Economic Development Strategy Sessions inviting local leadership and residents from each community. All regional organizations assisting with economic and community development met with the local representatives to focus on the current needs and future vision for each of the 14 counties individually. Several trends were recognized across the region and the information gathered from each of these meetings is reflected in this document.

Regional Partnerships

Organizations of the Upper Cumberland region have worked extensively to develop strong relationships and a collaborative working environment. All organizations are of one mind and have the same goal – to continually improve the quality of life for residents of the Upper Cumberland. Regional partners include but are not limited to the Upper Cumberland Development District (UCDD), TN Economic & Community Development (ECD), Tennessee Technological University (TTU), Highlands Economic Partnership, TN Central Economic Alliance, Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency, MTIDA, Tennessee Valley Authority, Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation (TDEC), Upper Cumberland Tourism Association, Biz Foundry, USDA Rural Development, Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), Local Workforce Investment Act, Vol State, Motlow, Nashville State, Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) in Livingston, Crossville, and McMinnville, local utilities, county school districts, county executives and commissions, city mayors and aldermen, county chamber directors, county IDB representatives, numerous private companies and countless volunteers.



GOAL 1

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Plan of Action

The region is extremely fortunate to have local leaders and volunteers that see the importance of working together to produce a highly skilled, educated, and driven workforce. Regional partners are working with educators to help connect them with local industries to determine the upcoming workforce needs for the region. The Governor's Drive to 55 initiative has created several programs that the Upper Cumberland is utilizing to create a stronger, more skilled workforce. TN Promise, a Drive to 55 program, is designed to give all graduating high school students the opportunity to further their education with two free years of education at a technical school or community college. Similarly, TN Reconnect, a new program through the Drive to 55 initiative offering a two-year degree or certification to adults free of charge, has greatly bolstered the amount of available skilled labor throughout the Upper Cumberland. The region was among the first regions across the state to apply for and commit to sustain a Reconnect Advisory program that provides personal support for adults interested in returning to school or attending for the first time. Navigating the educational system can be daunting and the regional counselors have seen a great interest in their program serving over 10,000 in the Upper Cumberland in the first year of operation.

One initiative that is being addressed in the region is the need for more logistics training facilities. In a recent example, a public-private partnership between Fitzgerald Trucking, TCAT Livingston, and Tennessee Tech University will bring new state of the art facilities for logistics training and research as well as a new opportunity for local students to get hands on education in the diesel trucking and logistics field without leaving the Upper Cumberland.

Another way local leaders are working to drive the goal of a skilled workforce is by forming workforce development committees throughout the region. Educators at the high school level have seen a lack of employability skills needed for graduating seniors to enter the workforce. In an effort to proactively fix this issue, several communities have adopted career readiness programs to teach soft skills and professionalism skills that were not previously included in standard K-12 curriculum. Students participating in this program earn a second degree of career readiness proving to employers the competencies gained and practiced while in high school such as attendance, punctuality, and teamwork. Several counties are also realigning career fairs for high school students to focus more on career paths and how to get there; educating them on the opportunities at all educational facilities (TCAT, community college, university) and how they may flow seamlessly along a career path.

One major success from the 2015 CEDS goals is developing in Warren County. Through a grant with the State of TN, Motlow McMinnville will build an advanced robotics training center to serve high-tech manufacturers locally and across the United States. TCAT Livingston is also building a new facility to expand their capacity for new courses and programs. The counties of the Upper Cumberland are seeking creative ways to train students for the jobs of the future and equip them with the life skills to succeed. Workforce development will continue to be a goal of the region including the pursuit of additional creative solutions.

Educated & Healthy Workforce Meeting All Employment Needs in the Region.

Objective 1: Connect employers to employees.

Action Item 1: Increase communication with existing businesses to determine their current and future employment needs.

Action Item 2: Educate residents on the availability of jobs and the skill sets required to obtain them.

Objective 2: Increase the number of citizens with postsecondary degrees and certificates.

Action Item 1: Seek funding to sustain Upper Cumberland Reconnect advisors that assist adults interested in returning to school, navigate the educational system.

Action Item 2: Connect postsecondary education organizations with local businesses to offer specialized training for businesses.



TENNESSEE STATE CAPITOL

GOAL 2

REGIONAL ADVOCACY

Plan of Action

Success in our communities requires collaboration between local partners to voice the needs of the region to elected state and federal legislators, in order to accomplish the greatest priorities for the Upper Cumberland region as a whole.

This goal is designed to formalize the regional approach to advocacy; to mobilize leaders, citizens and regional partners toward action on the part of our Representatives and Senators. Many issues and opportunities that arise at the legislative level have similar impact on each individual community of the Upper Cumberland; by uniformly expressing the desires of the region a greater impact will be felt in the legislative bodies and thusly the results of those votes.

New legislative priorities will arise every year, but the primary focus of each stance will align with the following core principles of the region.

- » Support Rural Composition (remind law makers to consider the effects on small rural communities in contrast to urban areas on the state)
- » Improve connectivity of communities removed from Interstate 40
- » Support efforts improving the state and region's competitiveness in job creation
- » Maintain or increase the current level of local government control

Given the rural nature of the Upper Cumberland it is important to analyze how new legislation will affect this region differently than the urban epicenters of the state. One example that is still affecting many small communities across the state is the laws relating to annexation of property. These regulations were passed with the best of intentions to solve a problem in and around the major metropolitan areas of Tennessee. There have, however, been unexpected consequences creating challenges for many cities in the region. It is important that proposed legislation is fully research and discussed in an effort to identify and minimize potential complications. This is a role that the leadership of the Upper Cumberland should play and will be a priority.

Legislative members are fully educated on most prominent needs and concerns of the region.

Objective 1: Local leadership identifies the most important legislative issues to the region.

Action Item 1: Elected officials of each community meet together regularly to determine the most important legislative matters and the region's stance on each.

Action Item 2: Create documents to clearly express the position of the region on a wide range of topics.

Objective 2: Increase legislator awareness of the region's stance on political subjects.

Action Item 1: Expand involvement in Day on Hill events.

Action Item 2: Coordinate regionally focused meetings among sub-groups of the Upper Cumberland.

GOAL 3

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Plan of Action

The Upper Cumberland Region has seen significant ebbs and flows in manufacturing employment over the past several decades. Many parts of the country saw manufacturing leave the United States with no hope of return on the horizon, but onshoring is proving to be a major economic driver throughout the region once again. The State of TN has earned a great reputation in making quality products and competing on a global scale. This reputation for quality is also represented throughout the Upper Cumberland and can be seen in businesses across the region such as Jackson Kayak, a world renowned kayak producer selling top quality products throughout the world. As the region grows, it is vital that our industrial footprint grows - creating high-quality and sustainable employment opportunities. Local leaders and regional partners are very aware that in order to be in the game of industrial recruitment, you must have industrial product - land and buildings. Many communities are actively seeking ownership and/or development of industrial land, but there is simply not adequate inventory. Increasing the volume of industrial product available in the region, improving our regional image, and proactively marketing the region will be a major focus over the next five years.

Another crucial component of industrial development is the expansion of existing businesses. Retention of an established company has a much higher probability of success than recruiting a new company. Each community must plan for specialized retention and expansion programs that meet the needs of their individual businesses. The nature of each business determines the amount of exposure they prefer, their target audience, their clients and suppliers - some businesses need name recognition, yet some prefer to work unnoticed. Similarly, some companies are wholesale while some provide direct service varying the level of promotion they would be comfortable receiving. No matter the structure of the business every employer needs to be supported and appreciated. These business owners take on great personal risk to create jobs, provide goods and services, and support the communities they are located in. Finding appropriate ways to work with our existing businesses and provide the correct type of support is a leading goal for the Upper Cumberland region.





JACKSON KAYAK - WHITE COUNTY

Prepared communities, competitive in industrial recruitment and expansion.

Objective 1: Increase inventory of industrial property across the region.

Action Item 1: Educate local officials and Industrial Development Boards on best practices for the purchase and development of prospective industrial property.

Action Item 2: Continue development of publicly controlled sites i.e. environmental testing, utility expansion, site preparation, etc.

Action Item 3: Identify privately held sites that may be marketed or optioned and educate the owners on industrial development.

Objective 2: Improve Request for Information responses by participating in TVA RFI audit program, sharing responses across the region, and implementing regional marketing.

Objective 3: Increase regional marketing efforts through industrial trade shows such as SelectUSA Investment Summit. Proactively share regional marketing material to develop awareness of the Upper Cumberland among business decision makers.

Objective 4: Create local Business Retention & Expansion programs in each county.

Action Item 1: Educate chamber directors and community leaders on the best methods to support existing industries.

Action Item 2: Establish a plan of approach for each community to ensure businesses are contacted multiple times each year.

GOAL 4

RETAIL DEVELOPMENT



Plan of Action

For decades communities have focused on recruiting and expanding industrial based jobs with the understanding that retail and commercial development follows job creation. Though a portion of this logic is still correct, changes in economic trends have proven that retail establishments can be proactively recruited. As with industrial recruitment real estate is extremely important to retail businesses. It is important to work with local realtors to identify pieces of property that meet the physical footprint requirements in addition to the demographics required by the desired retailers. Events such as the ICSC conference are ideal locations to present specific buildings and land to company representatives and/or real estate brokers. Easing the level of research in the decision making process may increase the number of retail establishments in the Upper Cumberland.

Before recruiting potential competitors, Upper Cumberland Communities shall also take a direct approach to grow and expand existing businesses. Leakage data identifying which items residents leave a community to purchase elsewhere may be shared with local businesses and entrepreneurs. Training and other resources will be available to help these individuals expand their current business or start a new one. A local clothing store may expand their product line to include men's shoes and reduce the leakage occurring in that community. It is important the leadership of the region support local businesses and educate them on the needs of their customers.

Regional partners and several individual communities in the Upper Cumberland have taken the first step in being proactive by participating in a retail recruitment training program - Retail Academy. Utilizing the information gained and knowledge received to actively recruit retail establishments is a primary goal for the Upper Cumberland. Increasing the services and products available to the residents of the region will increase sales tax, create jobs, and improve the regional economy.

The region has adequate, thriving retail establishments supporting the quality of place of the Upper Cumberland.

Objective 1: Grow the community by attracting new retail business.

Action Item 1: Identify prime retail real estate in each community.

Action Item 2: Establish target retailers that demographically align with each community.

Action Item 3: Market available sites to prospective retail establishments whose requirements align with site characteristics.

Objective 1: Retain and grow existing commercial businesses.

Action Item 1: Publicize leakage data educating business owners on needed products and services for each county individually.

Action Item 2: Hold entrepreneur training informing the entrepreneur community of the businesses needed in each county based on leakage data.



GOAL 5

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Plan of Action

The Upper Cumberland region is fortunate to be served by two major roadways - Interstate 40 running east to west and Highway 111 connecting north and south. There are; however, certain parts of the region still lacking adequate road infrastructure for prospective industrial clients, existing businesses, residents and visitors. The high demands of modern industry require ease of transportation now more than ever. Approximately 95% of prospective industry site searches require a location within 10 miles of an interstate of 4-lane highway. The furthest counties in the region are up to 41 miles from Interstate 40. The Tennessee Department of Transportation has several current and upcoming projects in the Upper Cumberland region such as the expansion of Highway 10, putting one of the region's more rural communities one step closer to better industrial transportation access. Other major road projects, such as the widening of Hwy 127 between Cumberland and Fentress Counties still waits in uncertainty of if and how it will be completed. A lack of state and federal funds have placed significant strain on the Department of Transportation which is reflecting in downsizing of projects. This is seen through the development of Super-Two highways rather than traditional and previously planned four-lane highways.

Transportation and mobility are a major priority for the region. Certain parts of the region have adequate industrial property that is simply not easily accessed due to current highway access laws and regulations - revising these laws would open up prime property for industrial development in the heart of the region. Other parts of the region are in need of traffic studies and engineering, specifically regarding how to improve safety and traffic flow at narrow underpass traffic exchanges of Interstate 40. The region will prioritize transportation projects throughout the region and petition local, state, and federal partners, with one voice, to ensure the needs of the region are met.

The region is easily accessible to residents, visitors and businesses.

Objective 1: Improve transportation network.

Action Item 1: Inventory existing transportation projects and track progress and expected time-line to completion.

Action Item 2: Identify future needs through exploration, research and traffic studies

Action Item 3: Work with traffic engineers to understand needs and impact in order to make the case among State and Federal funding partners.

Objective 2: Educate State and Federal partners on the identified needs.

Action Item 1: Create a priority project list and rank projects by need as a region.

Action Item 2: Lobby state and federal partners in support of the top identified transportation projects.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Increase/Decrease in the Region's Workforce

New Jobs Created

Employment Retention Rate

Increase/Decrease in Unemployment

Degrees/Certificates in Region

Increase/Decrease in Median Household Income

New Retail Establishments

Connectivity/Highway Expansions

INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Chuck Sutherland Photography

TN Department of Economic and Community Development - County Profile Tool

TN Department of Environment and Conservation - Tennessee State Parks

TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development

US Bureau of Labor Statistics

US Cluster Mapping

US Census Bureau

UPPER CUMBERLAND DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

Providing Solutions Through Regional Cooperation

The Upper Cumberland Development District (UCDD) was created by the Tennessee General Assembly to provide regional planning and assistance to the following counties: Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, Warren, and White. UCDD staff members are dedicated to providing quality services to the people of the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee through the programs and services offered in each department: Area Agency on Aging and Disability, Economic and Community Development, and Housing and Family Services. It is UCDD's belief that the fourteen counties, along with the many municipalities contained within, are made stronger through regional cooperation and shared resources.

UCDD's Economic and Community Development staff members are well equipped to assist communities with a wide variety of services offered through our Economic and Community Development programs: Cumberland Area Investment Corporation, Economic Development, Geographical Information Systems, Grant Writing and Administration, Historic Preservation, Local Planning, Solid Waste Assistance, Statistical Information, Strategic Planning, Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, THDA Home Rehabilitation Program, and Transportation Rural Planning Organization.

The areas of expertise and unique skill sets represented within the staff position the Upper Cumberland Development District to be a strong asset to communities and enable the agency to serve as a driving force in economic development throughout the region.





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