



## 2016-2021 Delta Region Five-Year Development Plan

# State of Tennessee

**Bill Haslam, Governor**

Ted Townsend, Governor's Designee  
Brooxie Carlton, Alternate



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Department of  
**Economic &  
Community Development**

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**Tennessee Delta Region Local Development Districts**

Memphis Area Association of Governments  
8289 Cordova Rd, Suite 103  
Cordova, TN 38016  
[maagov.org](http://maagov.org)

Northwest Tennessee Development District  
124 Weldon Dr.  
Martin, TN 38237  
[nwtddd.org](http://nwtddd.org)

Southwest Tennessee Development District  
102 E. College St.  
Jackson, TN 38301  
[swtddd.org](http://swtddd.org)



**BILL HASLAM**  
GOVERNOR  
STATE OF TENNESSEE

January 4, 2016

Dear West Tennessean,

It is with pleasure that I present to you the Tennessee Five-Year Delta Development Plan which serves as the state-level companion to the Delta Regional Authority's Regional Development Plan III. This plan outlines how we will invest along with our partner the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) in the 21 counties of West Tennessee to grow economic development opportunities, support workforce development and improve health and public safety.

This plan is a guide for the local communities, elected officials and economic developers who want to leverage DRA funding for projects in their communities. It is intended to ensure flexibility in the allowable use of the funding so individual communities can focus on their specific needs. Priority activities are those that create or retain jobs, advance the workforce, support entrepreneurs and improve infrastructure. Particular consideration is given to projects that create jobs, leverage private and other funding and provide regional impact.

The Delta Regional Authority works to improve regional economic opportunity by helping to create jobs, build communities and improve the lives of the 10 million people who reside in the DRA region that includes all of West Tennessee. Tennessee, through the Department of Economic and Community Development and our partners in the region, supports that goal, and this Development Plan outlines our strategies for its implementation. The plan is in accordance with the Delta Regional Authority Act of 2000, as amended.

Sincerely,

Bill Haslam

## **Introduction: Plan Development Overview**

The Tennessee Delta Five-Year Development Plan outlines the focus for economic and community development for the 21 counties in West Tennessee, particularly on the relationship between the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TNECD) and the Delta Regional Authority (DRA). The plan incorporates the DRA goals and strategies, Governor Haslam's and TNECD's goals and long-term objectives and feedback from those who are involved in economic development in West Tennessee.

During the development of the Regional Development Plan III (RDP III), the Delta Regional Authority held a listening session in Jackson, Tennessee; that feedback has been incorporated into the document. The Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development is the partnering agency for the Delta Regional Authority in Tennessee. In April of 2015, a new division was created at TNECD to focus on improving economic development in the rural areas of the state, which will benefit the primarily rural Delta region.

Amy New was announced as the Assistant Commissioner for Rural Development and began a listening tour across the state to better understand what the department could do to assist rural communities. This followed a listening tour conducted by Commissioner Randy Boyd after his appointment in January 2015. Feedback from these listening sessions has been used to develop a suite of new programs from TNECD focused on Rural Development that will be rolled out beginning in 2016. Feedback from those listening sessions was also used to develop this plan. Additionally, a survey was distributed to partners of the Delta Regional Authority including members of the Delta Leadership Network, staff of the Local Development Districts and elected officials. Those survey results have been incorporated as part of this plan's development.

### **Summary of Greatest Challenges and Opportunities**

Eight Rural Development listening sessions were held in the DRA communities in West Tennessee. Local elected officials and economic development professionals were invited to attend. The top three issues from those sessions, as well as across the state, were a) site development and site inventory; b) education and workforce development; and c) capacity building. Under site development, the participants noted that there is a lack of basic infrastructure for potential sites, that there is little funding available to build out infrastructure without a job commitment, and that marketing assistance is needed for sites. The main issues under education and workforce development were that students are uninterested in careers in manufacturing, that there is a lack of employee soft skills, and that there needs to be better alignment among the education and workforce development providers. Under capacity building, the primary issues related to a lack of training for local leaders and economic developers, a need for technical assistance in the rural communities for specialized projects (like retail development) and assistance needed to facilitate partnerships and coordination of resources.

In the survey sent in January of 2016 to the elected officials, Delta Leadership Network and local development districts in the DRA region, respondents were asked which of the three goals of the RDP III were most important. More than 53% identified the Workforce Competitiveness goal as most important followed by the Infrastructure goal at 43%. Under the Workforce Development goal, the participants indicated that leveraging and connecting higher education institutions, improving the readiness of the region's K-12 students and building a pipeline of talent for current and future employers were the most important strategies. The most important strategy under the Infrastructure goal was to improve access to digital infrastructure, followed by supporting deal-ready site development and building and strengthening the region's basic infrastructure.



## Section A: Challenges and Opportunities: The State of the State



The Delta Region of Tennessee has historically been distressed. The economy has been based on agriculture and manufacturing, and the area is mostly rural. As shown in Figure 1, this region is growing more slowly than the rest of the state, and many Delta Region counties are losing population. The per capita income in every county in West Tennessee - other than Shelby County and its suburb Fayette County - is lower than the state average. The average annual wage is also lower than the state average in every community except Shelby County, where Memphis is located. As shown in Figure 2, the unemployment rate over the last year and in the last month for which numbers are available (November 2015) is above the state and national average levels for every county in West Tennessee. Additionally, there are discouraged workers who have given up searching for work and people who are employed part-time that would like to be employed full-time.

These numbers are similar to the numbers across the Delta, as reported in the DRA Regional Development Plan III. The Delta was hit harder by the Great Recession beginning in 2007 than many other parts of the country, and it has taken longer to fully recover. Additionally, the poverty rate is higher in the Delta than the rest of the country and higher in the Delta portions of each state than the states as a whole. (Source: RDP III).

However, it is not just doom and gloom for the Tennessee Delta. In 2015, Tennessee announced more than 25,000 job commitments – the most ever announced in one year. Since 2011, 17,397 jobs have been announced in West Tennessee. The Governor’s Rural Task Force was created as was the Rural Development division of TNECD to ensure that the success that cities across the state have seen is translated to the rural areas. Their overall goal is to eliminate the distressed counties in the state, and they have announced over \$8 million in new programs to help meet that goal by developing entrepreneurs in the downtown business districts, developing available land for industrial sites and giving grants to communities showing success with the Governor’s priorities.

**FIGURE 1: West Tennessee Population and Income Statistics**

County	2014 Population	Population Change (2010-2014)	Population Forecast (2020)	Per Capita Personal Income 2014	2014 Annual Average Wage
Benton	16,145	-2.1%	16,741	\$32,659	\$29,827
Carroll	28,370	-0.5%	28,782	\$33,184	\$32,165
Chester	17,379	1.4%	18,978	\$29,417	\$31,697
Crockett	14,668	0.6%	15,080	\$36,472	\$38,238
Decatur	11,666	-0.8%	12,077	\$33,878	\$34,976
Dyer	37,935	-1.0%	39,872	\$36,918	\$35,869
Fayette	39,011	1.6%	48,510	\$50,890	\$40,222
Gibson	49,472	-0.4%	52,438	\$34,595	\$33,458
Hardeman	25,965	-4.7%	27,278	\$27,011	\$35,070
Hardin	25,870	-0.6%	26,783	\$35,383	\$36,814
Haywood	18,185	-3.2%	18,128	\$29,707	\$36,943
Henderson	28,009	0.9%	30,298	\$30,916	\$33,553
Henry	32,204	-0.4%	34,055	\$36,345	\$34,074
Lake	7,631	-2.6%	8,579	\$23,582	\$28,562
Lauderdale	27,382	-1.6%	29,186	\$25,468	\$32,877
Madison	98,178	-0.1%	106,352	\$37,571	\$38,971
McNairy	26,267	0.7%	27,760	\$27,774	\$31,797
Obion	30,941	-2.7%	31,559	\$35,704	\$33,917
Shelby	938,803	1.2%	981,022	\$44,705	\$51,719
Tipton	61,623	0.9%	71,196	\$33,626	\$33,910
Weakley	34,373	-1.9%	36,360	\$32,584	\$30,715
TN DRA Region	1,570,077	0.4%	1,661,034	\$40,611	\$47,033
Tennessee	6,549,352	3.2%	7,112,424	\$40,457	\$45,202

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates; UT CBER 2015 Population Projections; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS; Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Available Labor Nov. 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, QCEW



**FIGURE 2: West Tennessee Employment Statistics**

County	Labor Force Nov. 2015	Discouraged Workers Nov. 2015	Unemployed Workers Nov. 2015	Partially Employed Workers Nov. 2015	Total Available Labor Nov. 2015	12 Month Unemploy- ment Rate (Nov. 2014 through Nov. 2015)	Unemploy- ment Rate Nov. 2015
<b>Benton</b>	6,598	40	500	10	550	8.2%	7.6%
<b>Carroll</b>	12,116	70	940	10	1,020	9.0%	7.7%
<b>Chester</b>	8,104	40	450	10	500	6.4%	5.6%
<b>Crockett</b>	6,808	30	430	10	470	6.9%	6.4%
<b>Decatur</b>	4,458	30	360	0	390	8.8%	8.1%
<b>Dyer</b>	16,411	100	1,270	40	1,410	7.6%	7.7%
<b>Fayette</b>	17,627	90	1,110	30	1,230	6.7%	6.3%
<b>Gibson</b>	20,875	120	1,510	40	1,670	7.9%	7.2%
<b>Hardeman</b>	9,380	50	690	30	770	8.0%	7.4%
<b>Hardin</b>	10,050	60	700	10	770	7.7%	7.0%
<b>Haywood</b>	7,628	50	610	20	680	8.9%	8.0%
<b>Henderson</b>	11,993	70	940	20	1,030	8.5%	7.9%
<b>Henry</b>	13,624	70	870	10	950	7.1%	6.4%
<b>Lake</b>	2,039	10	180	10	200	8.7%	8.6%
<b>Lauderdale</b>	9,572	70	900	20	990	9.3%	9.4%
<b>Madison</b>	46,767	210	2,700	80	2,990	6.3%	5.8%
<b>McNairy</b>	8,772	60	700	10	770	8.9%	8.0%
<b>Obion</b>	12,516	80	1,050	20	1,150	9.0%	8.4%
<b>Shelby</b>	428,301	2,140	27,320	660	30,120	7.0%	6.4%
<b>Tipton</b>	27,250	150	1,920	40	2,110	7.6%	7.0%
<b>Weakley</b>	15,800	80	990	20	1,090	7.3%	6.3%
<b>TN DRA Region</b>	696,689	3,620	46,140	1,100	50,860	7.2%	6.6%
<b>Tennessee</b>	3,057,198	13,040	165,570	3,680	182,290	6.0%	5.6%

Definitions: The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed. Persons who are neither employed nor unemployed are not in the labor force. This category includes retired persons, students, those taking care of children or other family members, and other who are neither working nor seeking work.

Available labor includes: 1) Discouraged workers - persons who want jobs but have given up searching because they do not think they can find work. To be classified as discouraged, one must have searched for work during the prior year and be explicitly reported as currently available for work; 2) Unemployed workers - persons who did not find work at all during the survey week and were currently available for work; and 3) Partially unemployed - persons who worked less than full time during the survey week. Data used in producing these estimates comes from the monthly Tennessee Labor Force Estimates Summary, the monthly Unemployment Insurance claims reports, the 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (U.S. Census Bureau), and national unemployment statistics.



## **Section B: Governor's Goals, Priorities and Programs**

Governor Haslam was reelected in November 2014 with the largest reelection margin in modern Tennessee history. This mandate has allowed him to continue to make progress in his top priorities of education and job creation.

### Education:

With the creation of the [Tennessee Promise](#), the only program in the country to give every graduating high school senior the opportunity to earn a certificate or associate's degree free of charge, and [Tennessee Reconnect](#), an initiative to help adults in Tennessee complete their higher education, Haslam has set the stage for the [Drive to 55](#), the effort to get 55% of Tennesseans equipped with a college degree or certificate by 2025.

### Job Creation and Economic Development:

Tennessee was the "State of the Year" according to *Business Facilities* magazine for 2013 and 2014, the first state to win the award in back-to-back years. More than 25,000 jobs were created in the state in 2015, a record number for Tennessee.

Governor Haslam has set a vision for Tennessee to be the number one state in the Southeast for high-quality jobs. The Department of Economic and Community Development (TNECD) has been tasked with helping to reach that vision and has set five long-term objectives:

1. Have 55% of job commitments above the county median wage
2. Be in the top two in per capita personal income in the Southeast
3. Be number one in capital investment per capita in the Southeast
4. Have the lowest unemployment rate in the Southeast
5. Have no distressed counties by 2025

("Distressed" counties are those that are in the bottom 10% of counties in the nation based on the three-year unemployment rate, per capita personal income and the poverty rate. For fiscal year 2016, the Tennessee Delta Region has four distressed counties: Hardeman, Lake, Lauderdale, and McNairy. The list of distressed counties will be issued by TNECD each summer.)

In addition to the Governor's top priorities, TNECD is focused on developing our Delta communities. The primary initiatives are briefly described below.

### Rural and Community Development Programs:

The [Governor's Rural Taskforce](#) was developed in 2015 to bring together many of the resources that are available for rural communities. The task force will coordinate programs and funding and develop new initiatives to eliminate the distressed counties in the state.

Through the [ThreeStar](#) program, Governor Haslam has set the focus on five areas that are critical to the success of Tennessee communities:

- jobs and economic development
- fiscal strength and efficient government
- public safety
- education and workforce development
- health and welfare

Each year the communities receive a “report card” showing their status and how they progressed over the previous year. The report card enables them to evaluate the success of their community development initiatives and how they compare with the rest of the state.

The [Community Programs](#) division of TNECD coordinates the federal funding (including Community Development Block Grants and DRA funding) that flows through the department to assist communities with community and economic development, particularly focused on infrastructure development.

The [Select Tennessee](#) program provides opportunities for communities to develop and certify their available sites for industrial development. Through the certification program, site selection consultants certify qualified sites that are then marketed by TNECD. The Site Development Grant program offers assistance to certified sites and those working toward certification to make improvements. And the Property Evaluation Program helps communities evaluate potential sites and prioritize their investment into sites.

The [Tennessee Main Street](#) program helps communities develop their downtown business districts, and the Tennessee Downtowns program provides a structure that is based on Main Street principles for communities who may just be getting started on downtown revitalization. Ten Delta communities participate in the Main Street program, and nine have participated in Tennessee Downtowns. Through a partnership with the Community Development Block Grant program, TNECD awards Commercial Façade Improvement Grants to Tennessee Main Street and Tennessee Downtown communities.

Beginning in fiscal year 2016, TNECD will work with communities to develop asset-based strategic plans. Plans in the first year will be focused on distressed counties, then other counties will be added each year.

Tourism Enhancement Grants will be awarded beginning in fiscal year 2016 for projects that increase tourism revenues for communities in the Delta Region and throughout the state.

Through these programs and the economic development incentives offered by [TNECD](#) through the FastTrack Infrastructure Development Program and Job Skills Training programs, Tennessee communities have a toolkit for economic and community development that prepares them for success.

## Section C: Alignment of State Priorities with Delta Regional Authority Priorities and Implementation Plan



Through the Strategic Planning process, the DRA developed three priority goals, and strategies that will be implemented to meet each of those goals. Each project in which the DRA invests, including any projects in Tennessee, must address at least one of these goals. Tennesseans were involved in the development of the goals and in the entire strategic planning process. This section of Tennessee's plan outlines the DRA goals and strategies as found in the RDP III, and how those are supported by priorities in Tennessee.

Goal 1: Workforce Competitiveness – Advance the productivity and economic competitiveness of the Delta workforce

### **DRA Strategies and Actions:**

- Build on the momentum of the *Re-Imagining the Delta Workforce* initiative to create a strong pipeline of talent to support current and future employers in the Delta region.
- Improve the workforce readiness of the region's K-12 students and adult population by increasing the number of internships, work co-op programs, and other initiatives, with a focus on soft skills and employability.
- Create awareness of opportunities in Delta communities to attract talent from outside of the region.
- Continue initiatives to improve the health and wellness of the Delta workforce to elevate the productivity and competitiveness of the region's employers.
- Pursue strategic initiatives to better leverage and connect the Delta region's higher education institutions for workforce development and economic development.

### **Tennessee Activities:**

Through the Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect efforts, the State has invested in initiatives to ensure that the future workforce meets the needs of employers. These initiatives of Governor Haslam focus on post-secondary preparation of the workforce. Additionally, Tennessee has been recognized as the fastest improving state in the nation according to the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), which is commonly known as the Nation's Report Card and which tests fourth and eighth grade students in reading and math.

Health and wellness is an important part of Governor Haslam's initiatives. Through the Three-Star Community Development program, each community is tracking the obesity rates of their 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and implementing programs to address obesity in their youth.

Tennessee has a strong system of higher education institutions from the Tennessee Centers of Applied Technology and Career Centers. These provide training and certifications to the University of Tennessee system and private colleges and universities. These institutions are building partnerships with the business community, new and expanding industries and K-12 institutions to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the current and future workplace.

For DRA funding, Tennessee will prioritize projects that address the DRA strategies listed above as well as these **Tennessee Strategies**:

- Help meet the goals of the Drive to 55 and increase post-secondary attainment rates
- Prepare children to enter school ready to learn
- Increase high school graduation rates
- Support the Workforce 360° partnership
- Advance STEAM curriculum throughout the K-12 education system

Goal 2: Infrastructure – Strengthen the Delta's physical, digital and capital connections to the global economy

### **DRA Strategies and Actions:**

- Build and strengthen the region's basic infrastructure (water, wastewater, electricity and gas) to stimulate job growth and capital investment.
- Make strategic investments in the region's transportation infrastructure (highways, rail, water-based transport and air travel) to support the growth of key industries.
- Expand and improve access to affordable digital infrastructure (broadband internet, cellular and satellite access) across the region, especially in areas where it is currently deficient.
- Support state and local economic development organizations and local development districts in their efforts to put in place deal-ready sites for business recruitment and expansion projects.

- Improve capital access throughout the Delta, especially in non-urban areas where it is lacking most.

#### **Tennessee Activities:**

Through grant programs that support community infrastructure and industrial site infrastructure, TNECD and the Tennessee Department of Transportation work to expand basic infrastructure in ways that support economic development and quality of place.

Additionally, the expansion and adoption of broadband has been identified in the Tennessee DRA survey, the rural development listening sessions and Commissioner Boyd’s listening sessions as crucial to furthering economic development in the state through educational and entrepreneurial opportunities. An assessment of the use and adoption of broadband will be conducted by TNECD in 2016, and the results will be used to develop a plan for the expansion of broadband throughout the state that will be implemented throughout this Development Plan execution period.

Entrepreneurial development assistance and capital access are also being addressed by TNECD through their support of LaunchTN, a public-private partnership focused on supporting the development of high-growth companies in Tennessee.

In addition to these programs, Tennessee will focus DRA funding opportunities on the strategies listed above and these **Tennessee Strategies:**

- Develop basic public infrastructure that supports community and economic development
- Support the expansion, adoption and use of broadband
- Expand the availability and readiness of industrial sites
- Implement programs that support entrepreneurs and access to capital

Goal 3: Community Competitiveness – Facilitate local capacity building within Delta communities, organizations, businesses and individuals

#### **DRA Strategies and Actions:**

- Develop new strategic initiatives and continue existing programs that build capacity among local leaders in Delta communities.
- Emphasize programs and investments to advance entrepreneurship and high-growth business development in Delta communities, ensuring that the unique innovation assets found within the region’s urban areas are leveraged to benefit the entire region, including rural areas.
- Enrich the quality of place of Delta communities through catalyst projects and creative place-making.
- Encourage initiatives centered on social innovation, social entrepreneurship and social equity to address critical challenges facing Delta communities while also providing opportunities to attract and retain talent.

### **Tennessee Activities:**

TNECD understands the importance of diverse communities that recognize and build upon their individual assets. The Department's mission, "We are passionate about developing dynamic, diverse economies and thriving communities for generations of Tennesseans," shows that TNECD is committed to developing our communities, businesses and people. Through local leadership programs, regional programs like the West-Star Leadership Program and participation in the Delta Leadership Network, Tennessee has invested in the development of elected officials, business owners, education leaders and community leaders. With programs like Main Street and Tennessee Downtowns, place-making and quality of life are emphasized.

Tennessee will support this DRA goal through the following **Tennessee Strategies:**

- Support entrepreneurs through increasing access to capital and services
- Develop the capacity of the people of the Tennessee Delta through effective leadership training programs
- Advance the urban and rural areas of West Tennessee through asset development and creative place-making
- Provide technical assistance to local governments

An overarching goal for TNECD as well as the Governor's Rural Taskforce is to eliminate distressed counties in Tennessee. Each of the DRA Goals, DRA Strategies and Activities and Tennessee Strategies support this long-term objective. As the primary, explicit economic development goal of the State of Tennessee, activities and projects that address this goal along with a DRA goal will be given priority consideration for investment.



## Section D: State Resources: Best Practices, Tools and Models for Economic Development

### State Resources:

The Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development ([TNECD](#)) has three regional Jobs Base Camps in the Delta region. The [regional staff](#) work alongside the communities to recruit and grow businesses in the area. They assist with strategic planning, help businesses who needs resources to expand, and recruit new companies to the area.

The Rural Development division at TNECD ([tnecd.com/rural](http://tnecd.com/rural)) was created in 2015 in response to feedback from listening sessions that expressed the need for more resources for the rural areas throughout the state. Rural Development has aligned existing programs at TNECD and created new programs to promote economic and community development and ensure our communities are among the best places in the world to live and work.

The creation of the [Governor's Rural Taskforce](#), also in 2015, brought together resources from a wide range of organizations to advance rural communities and economic development. Its members represent state, federal and local government and organizations that assist communities and families, and they work toward the long-term objective of eliminating distressed counties from Tennessee.

LaunchTN is focused on supporting the development of high-growth companies through work in five key areas: entrepreneurship, commercialization, capital, corporate engagement and outreach. Each region has a Regional Entrepreneurial Accelerator. The accelerators in West Tennessee are focused on agriculture in the [Northwest](#) and healthcare and medical devices in the [Memphis area](#) while the [Southwest](#) accelerator provides a makerspace and coworking opportunities while training entrepreneurs. These accelerators are supported by TNECD, local funding and [LaunchTN](#).

### Best Practices in Tennessee's Delta Region:

#### Southwest:

The Southwest Tennessee Development District (SWTDD) created the SOAR - *Strategic Opportunities to Advance our Region* - program to assist the eight counties in the Southwest District in developing an asset-based investment program that focuses on sustainable job creation. SOAR consists of four basic steps: 1) each county must pass a resolution to participate in and lead the program in their county; 2) local leadership must take a self-assessment survey which covers seven focus areas of economic development (agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing, tourism, retail development, education/ workforce development, and quality of life); 3) professionals in each of the focus areas analyze the surveys and compare local views with their professional observations and statistical data; 4) a facilitated asset-based investment strategy is developed with priorities and responsibilities for implementation. (Information provided by SWTDD; <http://wteneews1.com/?p=17345>)

NADO recognized the SOAR program in 2015 for innovation as a best practice in rural economic and community development.

#### Northwest:

The Northwest Tennessee Development District (NWTDD) formed the Northwest Tennessee Economic Alliance to bring employment opportunities to the region in a new and unique way. Recognizing rural counties were being overlooked by prospective employers who were focused on the larger metropolitan areas, the Alliance meets regularly to better market this rural region as a whole, raise funds, and brainstorm innovative ideas to bring employment opportunities to the area. The Alliance created a website that directs interested employers to the region and resources; published new marketing materials for distribution at conferences and other engagements; received training from marketing consultants; and attended trade shows to spread the word about the economic opportunities in Northwest Tennessee. The organization is currently reassessing its priorities to be more aligned with the TNECD Rural Development initiatives. (Information provided by NWTDD)

#### Memphis Area:

The Memphis Area Association of Governments (MAAG) assisted with the development of the Mid-South Regional Greenprint. In November 2011, Shelby County Government was awarded a \$2,619,999 Sustainable 61 Communities Regional Planning Grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to prepare the Mid-South Regional Greenprint and Sustainability Plan. The 25-year plan is designed to enhance regional sustainability across state lines by establishing a unified vision for a region-wide network of green space areas, or Greenprint. The Greenprint serves to address long-term housing and land use, resource conservation, environmental protection, accessibility, community health and wellness, transportation alternatives, economic development, neighborhood engagement, and social equity in the Greater Memphis Area.

The Greenprint study area includes the Memphis and West Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), covering four counties and 18 municipalities in the states of Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi. The study area boundaries include Shelby County, TN, and the cities of Arlington, Bartlett, Collierville, Germantown, Lakeland, Memphis, and Millington; northern DeSoto County, MS, including the cities of Hernando, Horn Lake, Olive Branch, Southaven, and Walls; eastern Crittenden County, AR, including the cities of West Memphis, Marion and Sunset; and western Fayette County, TN, including the cities of Piperton, Gallaway, and Braden.

The idea for the Greenprint Plan was borne from the work of the Mid-South Greenways Steering Committee, a voluntary ad hoc group of parks, greenways, and open space stakeholders from throughout the region. The group has 34 member organizations and serves as a convener for green infrastructure planning and development. The group boasts a strong history of collaboration and



communication across jurisdictional boundaries. At the 2009 Urban Land Institute-Memphis forum “Exploring the Transformative Roles of Greenways,” Mid-South regional greenways, parks, and open space stakeholders advocated that greenways are more than just recreational trails. They are engines of change that boast an array of enticing economic benefits, support environmental revitalization, promote healthy behaviors, and connect our multi-state communities.

This consensus provided the spark needed to bring the Steering Committee together that same year and prompted a commitment to meet regularly in pursuit of a common mission: to unite stakeholder voices and strengthen efforts to advance an integrated network of greenways in the Mid-South.

In August 2011, the Memphis and Shelby County Office of Sustainability began meeting with stakeholders throughout the region to explore opportunities that would be eligible for funding through the HUD Regional Planning Grant. The concept of connecting the region through green infrastructure quickly emerged as a top idea, validating and confirming the work of the Mid-South Greenways Steering Committee. The grant application for the Greenprint was submitted by Shelby County Government in September 2011 with letters of support from over 22 regional stakeholders, including municipalities, nonprofits and foundations. Notification of the grant award was received in late November 2011 and the planning process began in the summer of 2012.

The planning process was driven by a consortium of governments and organizations from public, private, nonprofit, philanthropic, and community sectors. Over three years, the consortium membership rapidly grew from 22 stakeholder entities to 82, represented by over 300 individuals from the tri-state region, engaged in one of eight working groups. In addition, over 3,000 regional residents were engaged through a public participation phase including public meetings, outreach to community groups, and online engagement.

(Information provided by MAAG and available here:

<http://midsouthgreenprint.org/about/background-and-process/>)

