



# Mission

Tri Cities 2050's purpose is to preserve and enhance the quality of life of the residents of the Tri Cities area, encourage reasonable and managed growth, attract new businesses and jobs to the Tri Cities area and to ensure that prosperity both comes to the Tri Cities area but also that the citizens of the Tri Cities area reap the benefits and share in the prosperity.

# The Crucial Questions

## What?

The most important question that needs to be answered is what does the Tri Cities area want to be? Does it want to be one of the last great places to raise a family? Does it want to become a tourist trap to bring money into the local economy? Does it want to be a place where the only people who can afford home ownership are people moving in from out of state? Does it want to be a place where the only people moving in are retirees and people who work from home? Does it want to be a place where there are jobs where one can raise a family? Does it want to be a place where one can affordably own a home? There are many things that the Tri Cities can be. I believe that this provides a framework for a plan where it can be a place that welcomes new residents, attracts good employment opportunities, provides an affordable means for home ownership and creates an environment where one can grow up in the area and not need to move away to experience success.

## Why?

A big question many people have is why? Why create this plan? There are a few reasons. The first being that the Tri Cities seems to lack a vision on what it wants to be. I see many people comment on Facebook about homeownership being out of reach for residents who grew up in the area. One might say that Bridge (formerly NETNHUB) already exists and that this would be competing with them. If you look at Bridge how they act is more passive and not really with a plan. They are looking for people to come to them and not proactive like this plan is. They offer data and information which is valuable but is not a plan. One of their current projects is trying to raise money to attract additional air service. In my 20 years in the airline industry, I have seen many cities both big and small use financial incentives to attract additional airlines and routes. What has happened almost every time is that once the financial incentives end so does the air service. You are basically renting air service. What needs to happen is to create an environment where the airlines want to come on their own. Create a local economy where airlines can't pass up the revenue from increased demand. That is more sustainable long term and a better use of resources. Another of the current projects is trying to entice a national retailer to build in the area. Begging Costco to come to town is not a win. It would be great if they came but that shouldn't be touted as a huge success if it happens. My philosophy is not to beg businesses to come but to create a situation where they see the need to come. Even though we have different thought processes on how to improve the local economy and area for residents I would welcome any help Bridge and those affiliated with it can offer to help make this plan a reality.

## How?

Another important question is how to make the plans proposed here a reality. What will make this successful is the involvement of the cities of Bristol, Johnson City, Kingsport as well as the counties of Hawkins, Sullivan and Washington. The task of getting a large amount of bureaucracy involved is a difficult task for any project and certainly a plan of this scale only increases the challenge. However, the fact that this will benefit the area as a whole, as well as citizens of each jurisdiction should inspire the various groups to work harder for unity and to accomplish what needs to be done.

The problem with a lot of development projects in cities is that they use tax breaks to entice companies to come in. Once those tax breaks go away the companies may leave, or the influx of other companies slows. Another negative of that is the companies are usually located outside of the area, so the profit leaves the area. The company may reinvest in the area but most often the money flows out. What I propose for many of the projects is a public/private partnership. That not only allows the area to reap the financial benefits of successful businesses but also gives the area security that the businesses will not shrink operations or move elsewhere. This is a concept that may be new to some, and others may consider it socialism. It is not a concept to be feared or attacked. If ran correctly, it will help usher in an era of prosperity and financial security for the area.

The biggest hurdle is the financial component. The city, county and state governments can help overcome that hurdle by issuing bonds. As the local governments will share in the profitability of these projects, it will allow the bonds to be paid down at a faster rate without having to significantly raise taxes. Their involvement will also mean there will not be a need to offer tax breaks. In addition to the issuing of bonds, there will also be a campaign to encourage investment by the wealthy families in Tennessee. Tennessee is the Volunteer State, and I am sure many of them will heed the call, as generations in this great state have in the past.

# Goals

- Increase Tourism to the Tri Cities Area
  - Attract manufacturing jobs
  - Create affordable housing
- Increase the standard of living for Tri Cities residents
  - Build a public/private partnership
- Make the Tri Cities area a top mountain destination without becoming a tourist trap
  - Increase air service and renovate current terminal to accommodate growth
    - Encourage and support local small business ownership
  - Create a multi government coalition to better leverage resources and align developments with goals of larger group
  - Collaborate city and county resources to give better return on tax dollars

# Increase Tourism

Tourism is a great way to bring revenue into the Tri Cities area. However, not all tourism is good tourism. I have heard mention of becoming like the Pigeon Forge/Gatlinburg area. While that area is a nice place to visit. It is not a great place to live nor do many of the attractions/businesses add anything to the quality of life of the area residents. The jobs also are of the lower paid service variety. They are great for college students or as a second job but not for supporting a family. Most of them are seasonal and thus do not contribute to the local economy on a year-round basis. I think it is safe to say that the Tri Cities Area does not need a million pancake houses or go kart tracks. There needs to be a balance between becoming a tourist destination and a tourist trap. The Tri Cities area has approximately 37 million people within 250 miles. 10.9% of the nation is within a day's drive, which is a large pool of possible visitors. The beauty of the mountains coupled with a few attractions would make the Tri Cities a top vacation choice for many people. Any attractions would take time to build but I have a proposed event that would bring an increase in visitors in two years from now. I believe that a cohesive vision of what type of tourists the Tri Cities Area wants to attract and a plan to achieve that help ensure tourism increases without the pitfalls of hodgepodge plans and would also build community excitement behind the projects.

## **Bristol Sessions**

In 2027, it will be the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bristol Sessions which is considered to be the birth of country music. My suggestion is to honor those 12 days by having The Bristol Sessions: 12 Nights in Bristol. Between May-October 2027 have 1 weekend a month with 2 nights of concerts at the Bristol Motor Speedway. The advantage of multiple weekends is that it is more likely that tourists would be able to attend one or more weekends if spread out over 6 months versus being able to attend a 12-night festival. As this is a historic event, I believe the 12 nights need big name headliners. Dolly Parton, George Strait, Willie Nelson, Garth Brooks, Kenny Chesney, Keith Urban, Blake Shelton among other legends of Country Music would be approached to perform. It could also be used to give a platform for smaller up and coming bands to be opening acts. As the recovery from Hurricane Helene will take several years to recover from, it could be used to help the area continue to recover. The revenue from the concert as well as the hotels and other tourism-related revenue would bring 6 additional race-size bumps to the area economy.

# The East Tennessee Zoo

One of the things that the Tri Cities area lacks is a world-class zoo. A zoo is something that can not only attract visitors but is something local residents and their families can enjoy year-round. The East Tennessee region has scattered small privately owned facilities but nothing that can be not only a destination but also something that can create a sense of pride. I propose the creation of The East Tennessee Zoo. It will be a large facility with exhibits resembling the animals' native habitats as well containing a large savanna area where animals can roam free much like Disney's Animal Kingdom Kilimanjaro Safari attraction. In addition to the traditional zoo animals, it would be the goal to participate in the panda loan program with the Chinese government. Eastman Chemical has seven facilities in China and their connection to China could be instrumental in the Chinese government selecting The East Tennessee Zoo as part of their panda loan program. If The East Tennessee Zoo were not able to acquire pandas the facility itself would be one that would be unique enough that it would still attract a high number of visitors. The East Tennessee Zoo would approach several of the wealthy families in East Tennessee to contribute to the creation of the zoo as well as invest in the surrounding commercial developments.









# The Serengeti

Another component of The East Tennessee Zoo is a high-class hotel that borders the savanna portion of the zoo. It will be a similar concept to Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge where guests will be able to view animals on the savanna from their rooms. In addition, there will also be a rooftop bar, restaurant and ballrooms with savanna views. The hotel experience will be an added reason for visitors to travel to The East Tennessee Zoo and the Tri Cities area. There will also be outdoor event areas to allow for weddings to be held with the savanna as a backdrop. It will be a unique experience for weddings in a society that seeks out non-traditional wedding options. The hotel being a high-end hotel will create higher paying jobs as well as bring in guests that have higher disposable income to spend in the area.







# Indoor Park

Tourists with children often look for free attractions in addition to paid ones to keep their children occupied. An indoor park would be something that residents can enjoy as well, especially on days of inclement weather. It would be part indoor playground, and the other part would be like a botanical garden including some type of water feature like a stream, waterfalls and a pond. On the perimeter of the building around the playground, there would be small party rooms so that families can host birthday parties. On the perimeter of the garden portion of the building, there would be ballrooms with views of the gardens that can host wedding receptions, events, etc.



# Affordable Housing

A big challenge in the Tri Cities area is finding affordable housing. Home ownership is out of reach for many citizens, much like it is across the country. One thing that has driven housing costs up is the relocation of many citizens from higher priced areas. The higher selling prices of the areas they have moved from have allowed them to, in many instances, pay cash for homes, which has priced many local people out of home ownership. That coupled with investors buying homes as rental properties have not only priced many natives out of home ownership but also priced them out of renting homes as well. While every city welcomes new residents, this has also caused resentment and an anti-newcomer feeling in many cities across America. Not to mention, the increased cost of materials has caused the prices of homes to skyrocket. This has caused many people to have to move from the hometowns they loved, to seek more affordable opportunities. This is not good for families or the communities that they love.

What I propose is a solution that will not only help make home ownership attainable. It will also increase jobs in the area and allow the area to profit from other communities using this same strategy. One of the most time-consuming and expensive parts of home construction is the framing process. What I am proposing is the creation of two to three different floor plans. Then, by making use of prefabricated frame sections, it will reduce costs in building new construction homes. Much like a Lego set, the different floor plans will make use of the same pieces so it will be cheaper to mass produce. I propose that the area creates its own prefabricated frame factory. By controlling production, it will ensure the sections are of the highest quality. As other cities see the success and efficiency of this style of building, the area will be able to sell those communities frame sections as well. The homes will be 2 stories and roughly 1500-1800 square feet.

I propose the creation of four to five different communities. They would be purpose built with infrastructure set up to allow for future expansion. They will be similar to small towns with a small front yard and sidewalk. The garage will be located in the rear and accessible by an alley. The neighborhoods will all be centered around a central square. At the area closest to the main road will be a small commercial district like a small town. The centerpiece of the commercial district will be a scaled down version of local grocery chain. Behind the commercial district will be a parking structure that will allow for parking without increasing the footprint of the area. The neighborhood will be built to encourage walkability.



A unique program will be created to make home ownership accessible to a larger section of the local population. The starting price for the homes will be \$500,000. However, in order to help long-time residents and those with lower incomes will be a subsidy program based upon both income and length of residency in the area. For instance, if a resident were to meet the income requirements and has been a resident for 7 years their price would be \$350,000. If the resident were to meet the income requirements and has been a resident for 12 years their price would be \$250,000. If the resident were to meet the income requirements and has been a resident for 20 years their price would be \$150,000. There would be certain rules such as no homeowner would be allowed to rent their home out. In order to keep prices low, if someone was a recipient of a subsidy and needed to sell their house, the area would purchase their home back at the purchase price plus 2% for each year of home ownership. This would allow the area to then resell the house at an affordable price to someone else meeting the program requirements. After 25 years of ownership, the homeowner would be permitted to sell to anyone at any price they wish. If a homeowner was not a recipient of a subsidy, they would be permitted to sell to anyone at any time for any price they choose. However, they would still be restricted from renting out the property. This program can be used for the construction of more communities in the area as well as across the country. As the area is both the owner of the frame factory and home building company this would help control costs and ensure the local residents are getting a government that works for their best interests. It would also allow the area to profit from other communities building homes from the area's design.



# TRI Redesign and Expansion

If the Tri Cities area is to grow, it will need to redesign the airport to accommodate the expected increase of passengers, while also minimizing the impact on travelers. What I am proposing is to use the existing main building with ticket counters and airport offices but radically changing the rest of the facility. The days of trying to entice carriers to add service with financial incentives will be no more as the traffic generated will support additional capacity, routes and airlines servicing TRI without any financial enticements. The picture will illustrate the changes.

Each item will be referred to as its number on the picture.

1. Expand the terminal building to the area currently used as the parking lot for rental cars. Install 4 baggage carousels.
2. Move the security checkpoint closer to the front of the terminal building in the current open waiting space.
3. Create a multi-level parking garage in the space currently used as the parking lot. Move the counters for rental cars into the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor in the area marked as 3. It will be connected to the terminal building by skyway.
4. Parking garage with access to the check-in counters via skyway.
5. Create a Customs and Border Patrol area for processing incoming international passengers.
6. Gate for International Arrivals
- 7-15. Gates all with jetbridges
- 16-19. Restaurant and Retail Outlets



There will also be an additional lane to the road into the terminal area. Travelers will be able to be dropped off on either side of the road, as the skyway will allow for access to the terminal building. This will allow for the increase of travelers without an increase in road traffic.

The ability to handle international passengers will allow for service from low-cost carriers that may operate once or twice per week to international destinations. It is unlikely a major carrier would start daily service to international destinations but the ability for a low-cost carrier to offer service to vacationers weekly would be successful. It will also allow the carriers with hubs in Charlotte and Atlanta to use TRI as an additional option for diversions in case of inclement weather in either hub.

# Manufacturing Jobs

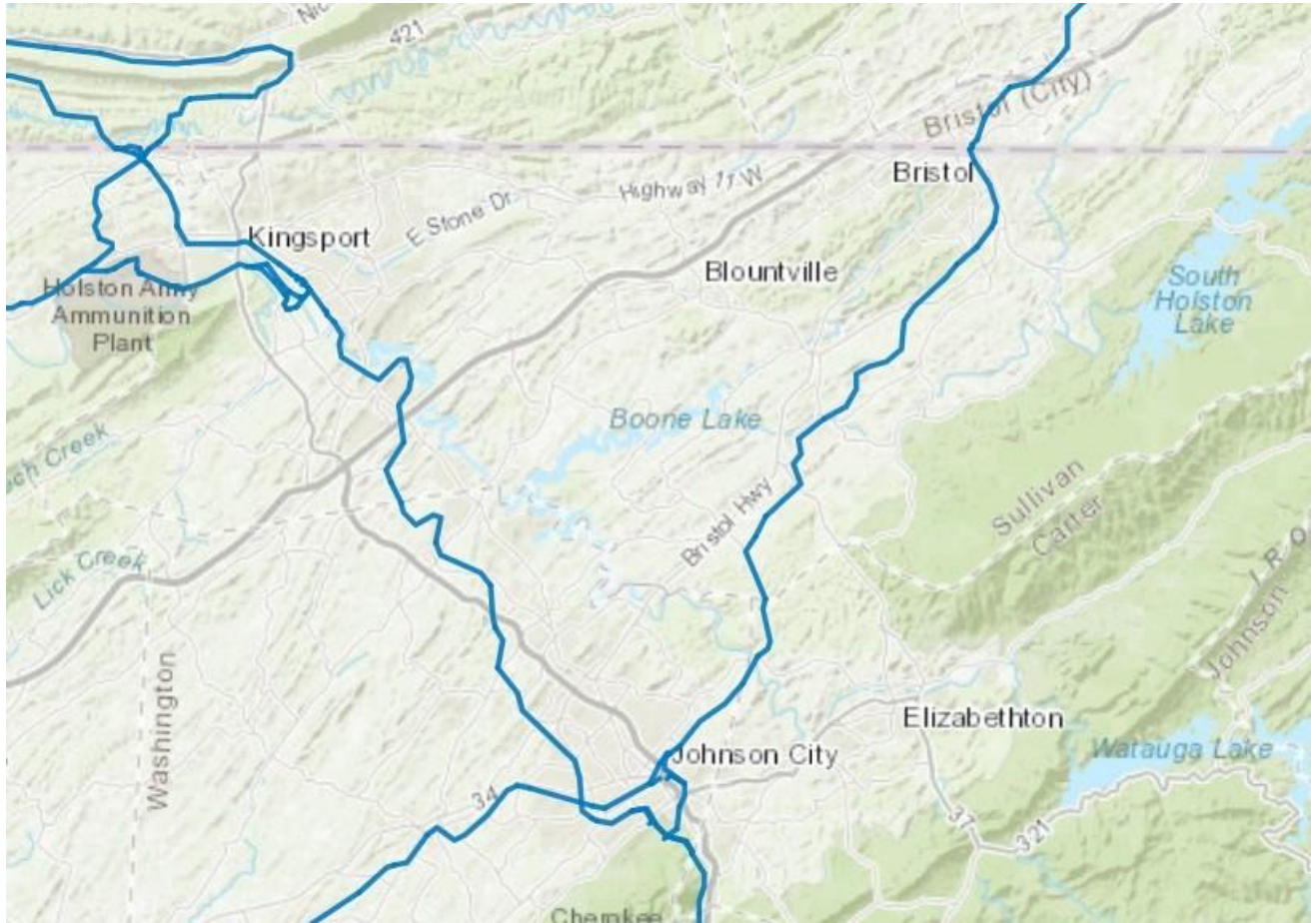
Areas seeking to increase jobs in their local economy often are forced to use tax incentives or other means to try and attract businesses. I believe that by utilizing a public/private partnership, the Tri Cities area can create an environment where manufacturers will come without needing an incentive. I believe that the Tri Cities area should create a specific manufacturing zone. There are freight rail lines in the area that a spur line can be created to service the zone. Rail doesn't increase road traffic; it is a reliable method of transportation and has been used for a large amount of time in this country with success.

As mentioned earlier, I propose the public/private partnership of the creation of a factory that makes frame sections for homes. This will allow the area to greater control the cost of homes as well as profit from other areas building homes from the frame sections. There will need to be both a window manufacturer and a metal roof manufacturer. The area can choose to invest in either of those or negotiate favorable terms for using their products. Other home related manufacturers may choose to build factories as well. Being on the rail line allows all manufacturers to ship in raw materials as well as ship out finished products. It would make it easier for other communities to receive the materials and products for home building.

In the same manufacturing zone, I propose an effort to entice a microchip manufacturer to build a facility in the area. As seen during the pandemic, the microchip shortage was detrimental to manufacturing and to the United States as a whole. This factory would be vital to the US economy and manufacturing. As it is crucial to national security, this may allow for the use of Federal funds which in turn will benefit the area without utilizing local tax dollars.

These are just a few possible companies and industries that can create jobs in the area. The location of the Tri Cities makes it centrally located for a good portion of the nation's population and would be an asset to companies.

## Freight Rail Lines



## **Public Use of Funds**

The public's shared ownership of multiple companies will create revenue for the cities and counties. There are a few possible uses for the funds. The main one would be to ensure the first responders, city employees and teachers are well funded for what they need to do their jobs. The hope would also be that the funds would be used to raise their pay to the levels they deserve. The people who serve citizens and students are greatly underpaid in this country. It is time to change that. Another use of the funds could be to create a fund to encourage small business ownership in the area. Through the use of startup loans, loans to grow businesses and mentorship, the small businesses in the area will be poised for success.

# Conclusion

These are just some of the ideas that can make the Tri Cities an even better place to live, work, raise a family or relocate to. It is by no means set in stone. All good plans are able to be adapted to be a better solution to a problem. A plan created by an outsider will surely draw skepticism and for some people it may seem like it is an insult to the area. That could not be further from the truth. I fell in love with the area and see so much potential. Potential for families to have good jobs and become homeowners. For communities to not lose their children to bigger cities because of a lack of opportunity. For people to live the American dream that seems just like that to many people, a distant dream. I also see potential for bad as well. Out-of-town businesses coming in and acquiring large amounts of land and building homes that are out of reach from those whose families have spent generations here. I see opportunities to share the beauty of the area that preserves the area and does not result in becoming a tourist trap overrun with pancake houses, go kart tracks and junky souvenir shops that only provide low-income jobs. I've seen people from areas near here affected by a hurricane that has been largely forgotten by the country and the media. In my time in the Tri Cities, I have met many good people. People who deserve to live in a great place and experience prosperity. The Tri Cities are in an area that is often the target of cruel jokes and stereotypes. Now is the time for the people of the Tri Cities to rise up and show the world who they are. Many of these ideas may come from one man but to be successful it will take everyone's support. The opportunity for the Tri Cities to be even greater is within reach.

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\*All images are AI generated and are conceptions of proposed ideas