A Mountain Goat, Erwin, & Elvis: Outreach in Tennessee

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State of Tennessee
Rural outreach is not homogenous.
Part I: A Mountain Goat
Grundy County, TN

County Population: 13,703 (2010 census)
Size: 361 square miles
‘Big’ Towns: Tracy City, Altamont, Monteagle, Coalmont
History

1840: Coal discovered
1844: Grundy County founded
1858: Tracy City founded

Photos Courtesy of the Tennessee State Library and Archives
1937: Grundy County High School built

Photos Courtesy of the Tennessee State Library and Archives
This was 1939. Where are we now?
In Dire Need...

- Grundy County economic performance is among the bottom 10% of all counties in the US.
- Grundy Co ranks 95 out of 95 counties in TN for overall health outcomes and quality of life.

- The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) - Robert Wood Johnson's County Health Rankings, 2012-2018
In Dire Need...

Tracy City Elementary:

- Over 89% of students are economically disadvantaged

Per Capita Income, Grundy Co (Averaged):

$27,943

($48,112 US; $45,665 TN)

TN Dep’t of Education and ARC data, 2012-15
But what about the mountain goat?
It goes back to the coal.

- 1853: *Mountain Goat* Railroad built
- 1985: Railroad decommissioned

Remember those dire statistics? What can be done?
Asset: Built Environment

The high school closed in 1997 and has sat vacant since.

The railbed has sat unused since 1985.
Asset: People Power

Community members = Assets
Asset: Funding

**State**
- TDOT
- TDEC
- ECD
- TDH
- TDTD

**Federal**
- Appalachian Regional Commission
- EPA
- HUD
- USDA
- CDC

**Other**
- Local Development District
- Foundations
- Individuals
- AOA
Today

The old High School is being transformed into the South Cumberland Learning and Development Center
The Future

There’s still work to be done.
Today
Today

8 of 37 miles of trail completed...there is more work to be done.
The Future
Partners

Vision

- EPA HQ EJ & Region IV
- TDOT & TDOH
- ARC
- TDEC DOR, UST, Clean Energy, Parks, Rec & Trails
- Local Development District
- American Optometric Association
- Local nonprofits & business owners
- TN Dept of Tourism
- Yale
- Foundations
- University of the South
- USDA & HUD
- Citizens & Elected Officials

Easy, right?!?!
Support Community Vision

EVERYONE YOU WILL EVER MEET KNOWS SOMETHING YOU DON’T
Recognize Community Champions as Critical Assets
Part II: Erwin
Erwin, TN (Unicoi County)

Erwin Population: 6,097 (2010 census)
Elevation: 1,673 feet above sea level
Topography: Not flat.
Need in Unicoi County: Jobs

Per Capita Income

- US
- TN
- Unicoi Co

$0 - $50,000

-ARC County Economic Status Report, 2020
Pathway to Address Need: Site Certification

The TN ECD Select Certified Sites program elevates sites to the level of preparedness necessary for corporate investment.
Pathway to Address Need:
Site Certification

Including:
➢ Utilities Eval.
➢ Survey & Maps
➢ Geotech
➢ **Phase I ESA**
Property:
- 15-acre property, on rail, 0.25 mile from I-26
- Former manufacturing
- Vacant since 2009

Findings:
- The environmental hazards were perceived
- No actual impacts found

Result:
- Only pad-ready industrial site with railroad access in NE Tennessee
Be an Asset to Other Agencies
Part III: Elvis
Memphis, TN
Memphis, TN
July 5, 1954

Elvis Records “That’s All Right” at the Memphis Recording Studio
July 8, 1954

- DJ Dewey Phillips plays *That’s All Right* on WHBQ’s “Red Hot & Blue Program” radio program
- Broadcast from studio in the Hotel Chisca
- Start of Elvis’ career
1956

Elvis performing in the basement ballroom of the Hotel Chisca

Elvis & Dewey Phillips in the Hotel Chisca (WHBQ Recording Studio)
Then-to-Now

1958

2012
• Chisca sold to a church for $10
• HQ for church

1970s-1990s

• Church moves HQ out of Chisca
• Chisca sits vacant

1990s

• Chisca turns 100!
• There is no party.

2013
Meanwhile...

- Shelby County received EPA 104(k) Brownfields Community Wide Assessment Grant.
- Phase I ESA done on the Chisca
- Heavy deterioration found due to neglect + RECs identified
- Determined re-use could happen at the Chisca
- Purchasers/developers did Phase II ESA on their own to determine & address environmental concerns
Leveraging

- EPA ($5,892)
- City ($2,000,000)
- Private Investment ($19,500,000-$24,000,000)
- Downtown Memphis Commission ($1,000,000)
LADIES & GENTLEMEN

ELVIS

HAS LEFT THE BUILDING
The Former Chisca Hotel, Memphis, Tennessee

The Chisca Hotel has been a fixture in the Memphis skyline for over 100 years. This historic building has served several purposes throughout its life, but notably, it was the broadcast center where Elvis Presley's voice first hit the airwaves. From 1949-56, its mezzanine was the base for WHBQ radio's "Red, Hot, and Blue" program, and from there, DJ Dewey Phillips broadcast Elvis' first record on July 7, 1954. Elvis' first radio interview was also conducted in the hotel by Phillips. Since the late-1990s, the hotel sat empty after the last owner, Church of God in Christ, moved its headquarters. There were several redevelopment projects proposed for the building since then, including tearing it down, but all plans were abandoned or put on hold because of the 2008 market crash. Starting in 2013, the 300,000 square foot property began undergoing remediation and rehabilitation efforts as developers prepared to turn the historic landmark into a mixed-use building with apartments and retail space. In 2016 the Chisca reopened with 161 apartment units, lofts and penthouses and two ground-floor restaurants.

An EPA Brownfields Community Wide Assessment Grant awarded to Shelby County funded two Phase I Environmental Site Assessments on the property in 2012. This initial $5,892 investment by EPA resulted in approximately $2 million short-term investment by the City of Memphis, a long-term investment of $1 million in Downtown Memphis Commission Funds, and $19.5-24 million in private capital long-term investment. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Division of Remediation staff provided technical oversight for the EPA grant awarded to Shelby County.
Summary

• Rural outreach is not homogeneous
• Support community vision
• Recognize community champions as critical assets
• Be an asset to other agencies
• Capture successes + tell the stories