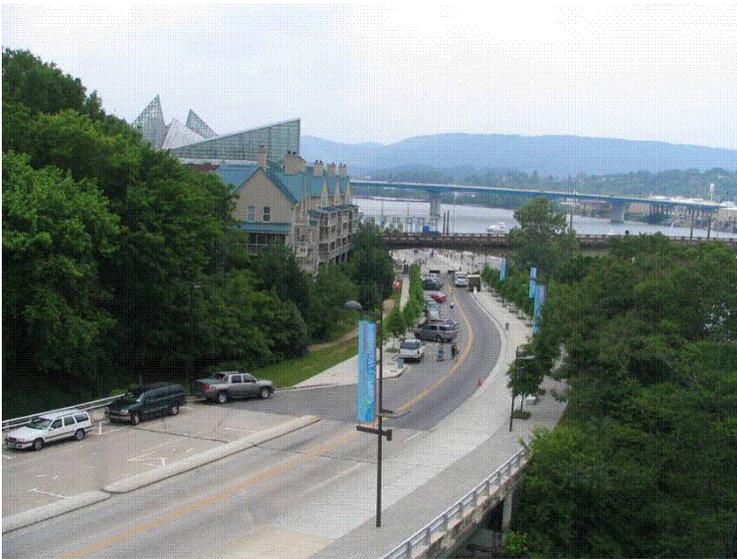


Collaboration on the Chattanooga Riverfront Parkway Leads to Financial Partnership

Source: SHRP II C08: Linking Community Visioning and Highway Capacity Planning, The Louis Berger Group, 2009.

The City of Chattanooga's 2001 Riverfront Parkway Transportation and Urban Design Plan is one piece of a larger city-wide effort for revitalization that began in the 1980s through a comprehensive vision process. The plan focuses on a stretch of Riverfront Parkway between downtown Chattanooga and the Tennessee River, which had for decades carried passenger and truck traffic speedily and efficiently. Riverfront Parkway was considered by the City's transportation planners, local freight-oriented businesses and the Tennessee Department of Transportation to be a vital part of the City's transportation network. At the same time, it was seen by city leaders and economic development officials as a barrier to riverfront redevelopment and city revitalization.



Riverfront Parkway's surrounding land use conditions had evolved from its original design context in two key ways. First, the two high-capacity bridges over the Tennessee River for which it was originally intended as a conduit had declined in importance and overall activity, leading to lower traffic volumes for trucks and heavy vehicles. Second, downtown and riverfront revitalization efforts were creating new demands on the road in the form of shorter trips with a greater need for local land use access. Due to the recreational and tourist nature of many of the riverfront improvements demand was also increasing for *pedestrian* access. Functionally the highway had become obsolete, at least from the perspective of the design volumes at the time of its construction. The Transportation and Urban Design Plan sought to address this obsolescence in a way that preserved overall system capacity while enhancing the surrounding downtown revitalization efforts.

The RiverCity Company, a private not-for-profit organization focused on downtown Chattanooga revitalization projects managed and financed the creation of the Riverfront Parkway Transportation and Urban Design Plan. RiverCity Company's board of directors includes the City and County mayors as well as other prominent public and private-sector representatives. In addition to the City of Chattanooga and Hamilton County's involvement, State and Federal

agencies, area foundations, the Tennessee Department of Transportation, the University of Tennessee, the Chattanooga Fire Department, Siskin Hospital, Friends of the Festival, adjacent property owners and companies that use Riverfront Parkway to move freight were specifically targeted for participation.

The major points of the Plan were developed during an intensive three-day workshop where a consultant team in collaboration with RiverCity, the public, and a targeted list of Stakeholders generated alternative designs for the parkway. Stakeholders included a variety of agencies and organizations such as the City of Chattanooga, Hamilton County, State and Federal agencies, area foundations, the Tennessee Department of Transportation, the University of Tennessee, the Chattanooga Fire Department, Siskin Hospital, Friends of the Festival, adjacent property owners and companies that use Riverfront Parkway to move freight. The public were encouraged through mailings and public notices to visit the charrette in process at any time to observe and offer input.

The plan resulted in the redesign of Riverfront Parkway from a high-speed access-limited highway into a true waterfront street that brings value to downtown and provides local community access. Through strategic negotiations led by committed local elected officials, control of the road was transferred from the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) to the City of Chattanooga. With the expenditure of approximately \$68,000 in consultant fees, RiverCity's time, and volunteer time from the Mayor and stakeholders, the RiverCity Company and Mayor Bob Corker were able to leverage the consensus reached through the visioning process to secure \$60 million in private and foundation contributions (about half of the total funding needed) to finance the rerouting of Riverfront Parkway, developing new housing and creating new green spaces and public art along the waterfront. The remaining \$60 million was financed through debt backed by revenue anticipated over time through a new hotel/motel tax. These improvements in turn attracted hundreds of millions of dollars in new downtown and waterfront investment. In addition, the implementation of the Riverfront Parkway Transportation and Urban Design Plan led directly to the creation and implementation of the 21st Century Waterfront Plan, a \$120 million investment in further riverfront revitalization.

Because the planning process involved a full range of stakeholders in a fully collaborative partnership, the solution achieved addressed the entire context and many sources saw that solution as a tangible benefit to them. As a result, those sources were willing to "own" (literally and figuratively) the result, contributing substantially to the cost of implementing the plan. These types of collaborative financial partnerships are increasingly important in an era of underfunded state departments of transportation. The conversion of the Parkway has been regarded as one of the most notable success stories of a community-led effort of reclaiming an outdated highway infrastructure into one of the catalysts that led to the rebirth of a medium-sized city.