The 2019 Strategic Plan for Historic Preservation in East Tennessee

PLACES

Partnership • Leadership • Advocacy • Collaboration • Education • Strategies
As Knox Heritage entered its 35th year advocating for preservation in Knox County, they began broadening the scope to include a regional focus. In 2008, Knox Heritage received a 3-year challenge grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) as part of their new Partners in the Field initiative. Knox Heritage was one of only 24 statewide and local partners of the NTHP to receive this prestigious award in the first round.

A task force of representatives from surrounding counties began meeting in late 2008 to strategize on implementing a regional preservation plan. In January 2009, over 75 people attended a public meeting at the East Tennessee History Center to continue brainstorming about creating a new regional preservation organization. By the summer, a new board of directors assembled to develop bylaws and long term plans for this new organization called the East Tennessee Preservation Alliance.

Thanks to the grant, Knox Heritage was able to provide staff and technical support for the East Tennessee Preservation Alliance. “Preservation fosters innovative solutions to complex problems”, said Richard Moe, past president of the NTHP. “Our Partners in the Field matching grants will help our network of preservation organizations across the country use proven tools to save places and revitalize communities. Our statewide and local partners, including Knox Heritage, are at the creative forefront of preservation in the 21st century.” The funds were used to expand the scope of on-the-ground field services and technical assistance to property owners, developers, local officials, and others needing information and tools to protect and enhance their communities.

Partners in the Field challenge grants were funded by a $5 million gift to the NTHP from the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust and matched by contributions of $10,000 or more from local donors and foundations. Knox Heritage secured generous grants from the Chapman Family Foundation, Ambassador and Mrs. Victor Ashe, Haslam Family Foundation, Clayton Family Foundation, and the Cornerstone Foundation. The East Tennessee Preservation Alliance Board of Directors is now charged with keeping the regional efforts funded and growing its impact.

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**A Brief History**

**A Snapshot of Activities**

- Nine annual preservation conferences have been held since 2009 in Townsend, Rugby, Jonesborough, Gatlinburg, Maryville, Oak Ridge, Knoxville, Morristown, and Clinton (Haley Farm).
- 106 individuals, organizations, and projects have been recognized with preservation awards since 2010.
- The Alexander Inn was removed from the “endangered heritage” list after a successful redevelopment with help from the Department of Energy and National Historic Tax Credits.
- “Developer Road Shows” connected developers and community leaders in downtown Knoxville, Maryville, Sweetwater, Morristown, Lenoir City, Jefferson City, Newport, Clinton, and Dandridge.
- A series of community “toolbox”s were conducted in Morristown, Maynardville, Jellico, Wears Valley, Oak Ridge and other places to discuss conservation easements, downtown revitalization, creating local historic districts among other topics. In 2016, the online East Tennessee Preservation Toolbox was launched.
- Regional Summer Suppers have highlighted historic sites in Maryville, Jefferson City and Jefferson County, Sevier County, Grainger County, Morristown, Oak Ridge, Morgan County, Elkmont in the Great Smoky Mountains, Norris, Lenoir City, Cumberland Gap, and Chestnut Hill (Bush Beans).
The current East Tennessee Preservation Alliance program area includes the following counties: Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier, and Union. The region is home to almost 1.2 million people. Knox Heritage takes the lead within Knox County.

Mission Statement

The East Tennessee Preservation Alliance works to preserve the structures and places with historic or cultural significance in our region.
The East Tennessee Preservation Alliance (ETPA) partners with Knox Heritage to serve as the regional arm for preservation activities in 15 adjoining counties. The Knox Heritage/ETPA relationship is important because Knox Heritage serves as the 501(c)3 nonprofit parent organization and provides staff assistance for regional activities along with resources and years of expertise to assist with regional issues. This partnership allows Knox Heritage to focus on urban preservation issues and ETPA to focus on small town and rural preservation. Knox Heritage challenges ETPA to meet certain funding goals annually in order to continue advancing historic preservation education and advocacy as well as finding effective solutions to challenging issues throughout the region. To meet the partnership funding goal, the following strategies are implemented:

I. Regional Memberships
   A. Knox Heritage and ETPA share a dual membership program that connects with a large network of preservation enthusiasts. ETPA monitors the membership base in the 15 county program area surrounding Knox and seeks opportunities to grow the network while maintaining the existing base.
   B. ETPA board members are provided with membership updates from their respective counties and assist with contacting lapsed members while reaching out to new prospects.

II. East Tennessee Preservation Conference
   A. ETPA is responsible for planning and managing an annual regional preservation conference.
   B. ETPA board members assist with marketing the conference within their respective counties, seeking to maximize the number of attendees.
   C. ETPA board members work to secure financial sponsorships from throughout the region.

III. Summer Suppers
   A. ETPA is responsible for planning and managing annual regional Summer Suppers as part of its fundraising goals.
   B. ETPA board members fund and staff the Suppers and work to promote the event in their respective counties. Knox Heritage special events staff provides assistance with managing tickets sales.
   C. The ETPA Treasurer or the Supper Chairperson manages the finances for the Summer Supper committee.

V. Fee for Services
   A. ETPA board members seek opportunities for staff to provide fee-based services using available expertise within the 16 county region (also see “Strategies”).
Leadership

Accomplishing the mission of the East Tennessee Preservation Alliance requires leadership from throughout the region at the local level. The ETPA board of directors is comprised of at least one representative from each of the 16 counties in the program area. A county may have up to three representatives on the board at any given time. ETPA works to maintain an active and engaged board by seeking preservation enthusiasts and professionals from each county, using the board members to connect with other leaders and organizations in their respective counties, and developing the next generation of preservation leadership. Preservation leaders are found working with historical societies, heritage tourism initiatives, Main Street programs, architecture and design, community and economic development and many other fields that strive to preserve and improve the quality of life for East Tennesseans. ETPA leadership strategies focus on the following:

I. An Active and Engaged Board
   A. ETPA Board members prove effective leadership by:
      - Being the “eyes and ears” for preservation in their respective counties and sharing information with fellow board members and staff. This includes nominating, monitoring, and seeking solutions for endangered places as well as nominating potential award winners.
      - Connecting ETPA programs of work with local media and collaborative organizations such as other preservation groups, civic clubs, government entities, chambers of commerce, etc.
      - Keeping current a personal annual membership with Knox Heritage/ETPA and following its regional news, events, and activities provided through email, newsletters, social media, etc.
      - Assisting with reaching out to new prospective members and contacting lapsed members.
      - Maintaining good communication with staff and fellow board members through email, telephone, and by attending meetings and events.
      - Being a guest, host, or sponsor of at least one ETPA Summer Supper annually.
      - Understanding the importance of funding for maintaining a regional program of work and being responsive to requests seeking annual conference sponsors and other opportunities to generate financial resources.
      - Respecting the confidentiality entrusted to them as a board member, supporting the board in its actions, avoiding conflicts of interest, and representing ETPA in a positive manner at all times.
      - Staying proud of being associated with ETPA and having fun while making a difference in their communities.

II. Leadership Development
   A. ETPA Board members are always looking for new board members, volunteers and opportunities to share the importance of preservation as part of developing the next generation of preservation leaders in their respective communities. Each county may have up to three active representatives on the board at any time.
ETPA advocates on issues of major importance to historic preservation in East Tennessee communities as needed. The board and staff may make position statements as well as work with other organizations in support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy. Key to ETPA’s advocacy work is drawing attention to threatened historic sites through an annual endangered places list, recognizing preservation success stories through an annual awards program and advocating for increased community awareness of preservation programs and participation at the local level through the Preservation Toolbox initiative.

In conjunction with National Preservation Month, ETPA releases its list of the most endangered historic places within the 15 county region outside of Knox County (which Knox Heritage covers with its Fragile & Fading list). The goal is to educate property owners, the general public and local leaders about the plight and value of these significant historic resources. The endangered places included on the list are selected by the ETPA Board of Directors from nominations and the list provides a plan of work for the organization. Preservation strategies are developed for each site that can include working with current property owners, government officials, citizens, and/or potential new owners to preserve these important pieces of East Tennessee’s heritage. We celebrate saved properties removed from the list.

Each year ETPA recognizes outstanding individuals, organizations and projects contributing to historic preservation efforts within the 15 county region outside of Knox County (which Knox Heritage covers with their annual awards). Award winners are selected by the ETPA Board of Directors from nominations received from both the board and the general public which is notified of the nomination process through local press releases.

In 2016, The East Tennessee Preservation Toolbox was launched. The online toolbox at www.knoxheritage.org/etpa/toolbox is designed to be the signature resource center for historic preservation in East Tennessee. It focuses on four types of “end users”: government, developers, homeowners and organizers. A series of community meetings were held within the region during 2016. These meetings were designed to spread the word about toolbox resources and to better assess preservation needs in the region. The PLACES preservation toolbox project was made possible in part through support from the Richard and Julia Moe Family Fund. ETPA is responsible for maintaining and growing content for the toolbox.
Preservation has more power when many individuals and organizations come together to share support, resources and information. No strategic plan for preservation in East Tennessee would be complete without collaborating with other organizations with similar interests and goals. While ETPA works with many local historic groups and sites, historic zoning commissions and individuals, the following are considered key regional collaborative partners to ETPA as they serve the same 16 county program area:

**The Tennessee Historical Commission (THC), through funding from the Department of the Interior and National Park Service (NPS), funds a preservation planning position within the East Tennessee Development District (ETDD) to provide technical assistance to communities in our region. As such, ETDD is able to provide guidance on preservation practices, assist with the ongoing statewide cultural resource survey, facilitate the nomination of properties to the National Register of Historic Places, provide consideration for significant cultural resources through project reviews under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and to help better leverage historic assets in communities through grant opportunities. [www.etdd.org](http://www.etdd.org) and [tnhistoricalcommission.org](http://www.tnhistoricalcommission.org)**

Formed the same year as ETPA, East Tennessee Quality Growth helps area governments, businesses, non-governmental organizations and individual stakeholders achieve consensus on quality growth goals and develop plans and programs to achieve those goals. Their resources help planning commissioners and support staffs, regional transportation groups, government officials, business people, community leaders and other stakeholders evaluate choices and implement the best decisions on growth for our area. [www.etqualitygrowth.org](http://www.etqualitygrowth.org)

The purpose of METTC (Middle East Tennessee Tourism Council) is to provide a forum for the travel industry of the sixteen county region (same as ETPA and ETDD); to increase tourism to the region; to be the voice of the regional industry stating to the general public and government officials the importance of tourism as an economic driver; and to cooperate with programs of other organizations similar in purpose. [www.9LakesEastTN.com](http://www.9LakesEastTN.com)

The East Tennessee Historical Society (ETHS) is one of the most active private historical organizations in the state. Recognizing that East Tennessee’s history, heritage, and geography are distinct from the rest of the state, the East Tennessee Historical Society provides services and programs uniquely tailored to the region. ETHS partners with and promotes the history and events of organizations and sites across 35 counties in East Tennessee (including the ETPA 16). Since 1924, ETHS has been an adjunct to and headquartered with the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection of the Knox County Public Library. The two operate as a private/public partnership to preserve and share the history of East Tennessee. [www.easttnhistory.org](http://www.easttnhistory.org)
ETPA works to educate the public on the many benefits of historic preservation. These include distinct cultural, environmental and economic benefits. The education strategy for ETPA includes holding an annual preservation conference, working with publications such as *Everything Knoxville*, sharing on social media and being active and involved in the region through site visits, speaking engagements, technical workshops and tours. ETPA staff is ready to speak as requested to local historic zoning commissions, planning commissions, city councils, chambers of commerce, civic clubs, history groups and other organizations that may be interested in learning more about historic preservation issues.

Each year ETPA plans and manages the East Tennessee Preservation Conference, the signature preservation education and networking event in the region. Conference topics focus on the importance of preservation to quality of life and the economic development of our communities. Each year, the conference travels to a different location in the region. Past conferences have been held in Townsend, Rugby, Jonesborough (jointly with the Heritage Alliance), Gatlinburg, Maryville, Oak Ridge, Knoxville, Morristown, and Clinton (Haley Farm).

ETPA staff and board members contribute a monthly history article for *Everything Knoxville*. An archive of past articles is being built on the ETPA web pages. Topics cover interesting places and events throughout the region and always showcase the annual endangered heritage list, regional awards and conference.

ETPA utilizes Facebook and Twitter to share program news and events. With over 1,700 followers, ETPA often cross-promotes with Knox Heritage with almost 10,000 followers. Interesting stories from similar organizations and networks are also shared on a regular basis in order to promote historic and cultural awareness within the region and introduce ETPA to folks who may not be familiar with the program.
ETPA seeks to develop strategies for challenging historic preservation issues in the region. This may involve accessing Knox Heritage staff expertise, collaborating with multiple organizations, and/or connecting the right people and resources to have an impact. The primary strategy is to grow staff technical expertise as well as the ETPA network of local organizations and professionals who have diverse backgrounds in preservation problem-solving. Primary focus areas include:

**Historic Real Estate Intervention**

ETPA seeks to partner with Knox Heritage on building a powerful regional historic real estate intervention program. This includes working with private property owners, government entities and others to help protect or transfer property into the hands of preservation-minded ownership. Methods used involve purchasing or receiving donations of property, renovations for resale, adding protective easements and marketing properties.

**Rural Preservation**

While Knox Heritage focuses primarily on urban preservation issues, ETPA has an opportunity to assist with smaller towns and rural areas. Developing sound strategies for rural preservation challenges is an important goal for the region and ties in closely with the development of historic real estate intervention strategies.

**Facilitation & Support**

ETPA can facilitate other organizational meetings, assist with community project planning, provide technical resources, promote historic sites and events, participate in special projects and grants and other preservation related issues as needed.

**Tax Credit Management**

Knox Heritage/ETPA staff can professionally manage historic rehabilitation tax credit documentation through the Tennessee Historic Commission and the National Park Service. The service includes all three phases necessary to qualify for and receive the tax credits. This is a fee-based service.

**Downtown Revitalization**

ETPA is prepared to work with communities to develop a downtown revitalization plan based upon the National Main Street Center model and working with the Tennessee Main Street and Tennessee DOWNTOWNS programs. East Tennessee has a unique opportunity to focus on this essential community asset utilizing ETPA resources and experience.
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