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Redeveloping right in Chattanooga

We're nowhere near the end of a whirlwind first day in Chattanooga as I write this, but wow.

Just wow.

What we've seen in less than a day on the Tennessee River is the culmination of 40 years of planning. From a tightly constructed arts and entertainment corridor that connects the river with a historic American arts complex to a green housing development to a double-pronged transit plan that makes the city easy to navigate, it's not hard to see why Wichita Mayor Carl Brewer said at midday, "This is what we want to be."

Chattanooga has transformed itself in four decades in a massive public-private investment partnership that's run into the billions. City leaders here consider it a success, and who can doubt them? New, modern private development is everywhere. Volkswagen and two other major industries have signed on, thanks to the quality of life the city has created and its willingness to give those companies incentives.

That's not to say that Chattanooga doesn't have its rundown areas. But city leaders have ideas in place for the most moribund areas, and they're able to chuckle at some of the long-forgotten businesses there, such as the "State of Confusion" frontage on one downtown street.

One big dream here is a plan to use passenger rail to connect a billion-dollar development project in the south part of the city with downtown and UT-Chattanooga.

If there's a message in what we've seen today, it's that dreaming isn't a junket and it isn't a boondoggle. Because without dreams, progress is impossible.

By Bill Wilson

Posted Wednesday at 2:29 p.m. Filed under Uncategorized

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bth

Posted October 14, 2009 at 3:12 pm | Permalink

Bill – how much of the "private" has the city of Chattanooga built vs. how much was built by private investors? I suspect you will find that they focused the public investment on public infrastructure instead.



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Transit – there are those of us here who have long pushed for transit as a part of the solution to downtown's problems.

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**bwilson**

Posted October 14, 2009 at 3:35 pm | [Permalink](#)

Ben, it appears they're involved heavily in both – infrastructure and incenting development through partnerships.

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**bth**

Posted October 14, 2009 at 3:55 pm | [Permalink](#)

I'd be curious to see the breakdown. Also if they are successful in achieving the advertised rates of return on the public investments. We are usually told close to 3-to-1 and I don't think we are even coming close in too many of them.

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**mcs7584**

Posted October 14, 2009 at 4:12 pm | [Permalink](#)

Well, if it only took Chattanooga 40 years I'm guessing it would take us as least 80 or 100. And to think. By then, Kellogg might be finished.

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**Gotchawork**

Posted October 14, 2009 at 4:32 pm | [Permalink](#)

I had the opportunity to visit Chattanooga earlier this year. My presumptions about the city and downtown in particular were dispelled much to my pleasure. This city which once was considered one of the worst cities in America has a vibrant downtown with much to offer. Their aquarium is world class in my opinion and I would go back again! I don't know the specific steps they took to achieve this turn-around but I do think it is worth emulating.

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**bone**

Posted October 14, 2009 at 10:00 pm | [Permalink](#)

Ya'll are some fuddie duddies, I say build it big and if it dosent work, apply for some bail out money, aka welfare. It worked for some of the big banking companys. We could build it so big that we could claim it is too big to fail. LOL. Naw really though, I am for progress. The only bonedoggle thing this town has done is let these bible thumping freaks sink there claws into our town. It's time to take the power back!!

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**bth**

Posted October 15, 2009 at 8:41 am | [Permalink](#)

Bill – a question: Does Chattanooga 'pull the plug' on a project that fails because it was ill-conceived in the first place? So they can focus resources on things that are working?

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**bth**

Posted October 15, 2009 at 3:01 pm | [Permalink](#)

Santa Monica to experiment with parking psychology  
Consultants find the city doesn't need more spaces, it needs to change how they are used. New pricing model aims to promote walking, biking or busing, freeing up prime spaces for short-term shoppers.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-parking-experiment15-2009oct15,0,2933172.story>

Interesting points ...

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**Bill Wilson**

Posted October 15, 2009 at 5:22 pm | [Permalink](#)

Ben, absolutely – although I find what's called "patient capital" in abundance here. They acknowledge mistakes and develop new plans with little more than a blink of the eye.

The process isn't seamless here: The new mayor, Ron Littlefield, reportedly doesn't share former mayor Bob Corker's enthusiasm for downtown. But he doesn't reject it either.

Postscript: My apologies for being late getting to the questions. The pace here is dizzying.

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**bth**

Posted October 15, 2009 at 5:29 pm | [Permalink](#)

Made it up top of Lookout Mountain yet?

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