



Blount Partnership

Annual Report **2021**



Clockwise Photos (L-R): Amazon construction, Company Distilling announcement, Past Chamber Chairs luncheon, Supervisors Training with Howard Jackson, Townsend Fall Festival, Smith & Wesson groundbreaking with Gov. Bill Lee and CEO Mark Smith.



BLOUNT PARTNERSHIP

Working with diligence, tenacity and determination, the Blount Partnership has established itself as the standard by which economic development, chamber of commerce and tourism development are measured statewide.

And with an attitude of never letting downturns get the best of them, the momentum generated by the huge number of jobs and capital investment brought to the county over the last five years breed the optimism for continued growth.

Per that ambition to make Blount County a leading economic driver in the state, the Blount Partnership will continue to strengthen the regional economy while enhancing residents' quality of life. By investing in the Blount Partnership through Chamber of Commerce memberships, funding of the Economic Development Board of Blount County and the Smoky Mountain Tourism Development Authority, you are helping to create jobs, attract new business, recruit a talented workforce and improve Blount County's competitive positioning and economic prosperity.



The long term goal of the Blount Partnership is to create primary, high-value jobs with competitive annual salaries with a significant capital investment. It also plans to work towards creating more opportunities for the business and family visitors as well as group travel while increasing educational and training programs for the business community.

Additionally, by hosting numerous educational training workshops and seminars while continuing to be an advocate for the business community by making federal, state and local elected officials available to its members, the Blount Partnership remains the only place where people can be heard on an individual basis. Its strong commitment to workforce development is the key to shaping the county's future economic growth.

The Blount Partnership thanks you for your contribution to enhance our economy and quality of life. The importance of the role our partners play in the economic development of Blount County cannot be overstated.

Sincerely,

Bryan Daniels
Blount Partnership President/CEO

Chris Soro
Chair, Blount Partnership Joint Operating Committee

VISION STATEMENT: The Blount Partnership will earn a national reputation as the primary catalyst for this region's competitive success and economic prosperity, steeped in strong tradition and leadership.

MISSION STATEMENT: The mission of the Blount Partnership is to serve its members and stakeholders while promoting economic growth and stability, fostering community development and enhancing the overall quality of life in the region.



2021 Annual Report

MEMBERSHIP

- The United States Chamber of Commerce awarded the Blount County Chamber with its fourth Five-Star Accreditation.
- 82 new members with an investment of \$60,495
- 9 upgrades for an investment of \$17,920
- 40 ambassadors made over 4,500 member calls

ADVOCACY

- Pushed for completion of Pellissippi Parkway.
- Hosted Congressman Tim Burchett about business-related topics on the federal leave
- Advocated four government agendas for local, regional, state, and federal issues
- Hosted four governmental briefings featuring local and state elected officials

QUALITY OF LIFE

- Sold out Taste of Blount with a record 22 event sponsors and 27 vendors.
- Attendance at the Townsend Fall Festival was the largest one with more than 11,000 visitors over the two-day event
- The final Townsend Spring Festival was a success with the largest crowd in more than five years, topping 6,000 for the weekend

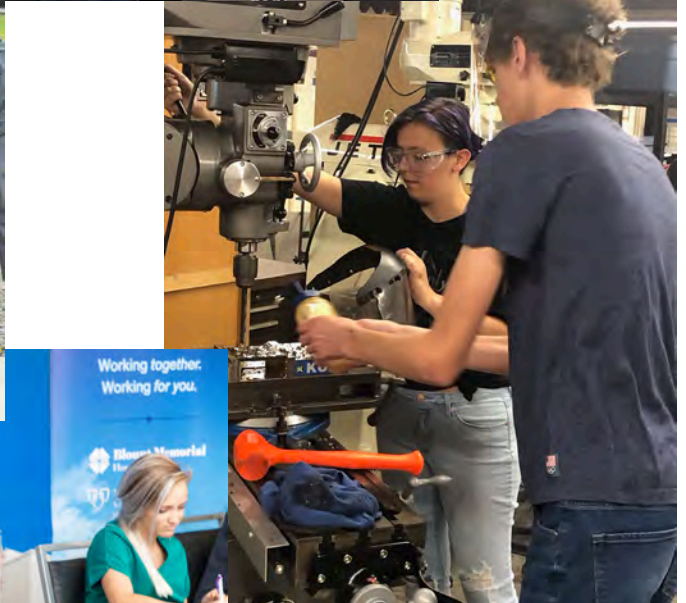
MEMBER BENEFITS

- 28 networking events including coffee club, socials, mixers with an average attendance of 72
- 6 virtual networking events with an average attendance of 46
- 45 education and professional development opportunities with 1,171 total attendees
- 31 ribbon cuttings
- 6 Women in business sessions with an average attendance of 31
- 4 Power Connect Lunches with 40 attendees at each
- Record-high of 50 Small Business Saturday participants
- 82 business counseling sessions

SOCIAL

- Facebook engagement is 2,000% more than the competitor average
- Twitter mentions are 72% higher than the competitor average
- LinkedIn follower growth is up 252% more than last year
- All Instagram analytics are up from last year with engagement doubling year-over-year

Clockwise Photos (L-R): Coffee Club at Camellia Trace Apartments, Blount County Job Fair, Young Manufacturers, Blount County Job Signing Day, Small Town BBQ Ribbon Cutting.





Tourism

2021 Annual Report

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

- Blount County ranked eighth in Tennessee in direct visitor spending of \$337 million in 2020 for a daily average of \$920,792
- Saw direct labor income related to tourism is \$153.5 million
- Saw direct tourism employment of nearly 4,000
- Direct state taxes totaled \$14.7 million
- Direct local taxes totaled \$10.9 million
- Each Blount County household saved \$505 due to taxes generated by tourism

EVENTS

- Hosted the ultra-successful Grains & Grits Spirits Festival which sold out three weeks in advance
- Presented Summer on Broadway with musical guest The Dirty Guv'nahs
- Sold out Hops in the Hills in downtown Maryville as it moved to the Theater in the Park for the first time
- Townsend Visitor Center was used to host the first Bigfoot Festival, annual Bronco Truck Festival, and Great Smoky Mountains Hot Air Balloon Festival
- Continued marketing plan for the convention space at the Airport Hilton
- The Great Smoky Mountains Half Marathon saw more than 2500 runners participate



Clockwise Photos (L-R): Townsend Fall Festival, Hops in the Hills (2), Summer on Broadway.





Economic Development

2021 Annual Report

NEW DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENTS

- Amazon Fulfillment Center Announcement \$200 million investment, 800 jobs
- Smith & Wesson HQ and Manufacturing \$125 million investment, 750 jobs
- Arconic Expansion \$108 million investment, 200 jobs
- Company Distilling \$25 million investment, 60 jobs
- Flex-n-Gate Expansion \$5.5 million investment, 90 jobs
- Project Shamrock \$90 million investment, 200 jobs
- Downtown Developers Group - worked with developers to purchase vacant property downtown for placemaking and workforce initiatives
- RFIs - 37 Blount County submissions in partnership with TNECD and TVA
- Partnership Parkway Extension Road Project

MARKETING & STUDIES

- New website: Blountindustry.com - updated and refreshed with Design Sensory
- Created new quality of life brochure to encourage talent to move to our area
- TVA Community Assessment Study on Economic Development Program
- Participated and supported planning for the James Lima Community Study
- Received additional TVA funding and grants for marketing and small business support
- LinkedIn follower growth is up 236% more than last year
- Highest number of new followers and 800+ MORE engagements compared to city-wide competitors

CONTINUED EDUCATION & BOARDS

- IEDC Nashville Conference - Host Committee
- Continued training and education with IEDC to work towards CEcD
- Conferences attended: Site Selectors Guild - Meet the Consultants, TN Governor's Conference, TEDC, TVA Economic Developers' Forum, IEDC Leadership Summit, and IEDC Annual Conference
- TEP Board of Directors, nominated for 2022 Secretary
- 2021 Library Board Search Committee for new ED



2021 Annual Report

BLOUNT COUNTY JOB SIGNING DAY

- 21 participating students
- 10 participating employers from Knox and Blount County

8TH GRADE CAREER FAIR

- Record number of employer participation (53)
- 1,400 participating students

JOB FAIRS

- Record number of employer participation at the Blount County Job Fair held at Foothills Mall (61)
- Conducted a virtual career fair entitled Career Connection
- Attended numerous job fairs at four-year and community colleges and high schools to highlight the positions available in Blount County

COMMUNICATIONS / PROMOTION

- Created career infographic guides and posters for distribution in the school systems
- Produced new workforce campaign at McGhee Tyson Airport
- Grew Facebook followers by 10% and Instagram engagement is up 135% over last year
- Celebrated modern manufacturing and its impact on this community during Manufacturing Month

PATHWAYS

- Along with the Blount County Public Library, continued the Arconic Foundation Global Internship Program and presented 10 soft skills classes
- Helped connect numerous interns, work-based learners, apprentices, and job seekers with local employers
- Conducted monthly educator's roundtable to continue discussions on a shared Career Technical Education (CTE) facility in Blount County
- Partnered with Pellissippi State Community College on the Governor's Investment in Vocational Education (GIVE) Grant to implement multiple camps for high school students where they learned and participated in manufacturing and construction
- Held multiple workforce advisory committee meetings on STEM, advanced manufacturing, construction, and information technology

A hand-drawn graphic with the words "IT Accounting" in a white, chalk-like script. The background shows a person's hands using a calculator and writing on a document, with a laptop keyboard visible in the upper left.

IT Accounting

2021 Annual Report

MERGED TWO SERVER CABINETS INTO ONE- FEB 2021

Increased efficiencies of the audio/visual and network equipment plus created additional space

UPGRADED A/V SYSTEM IN UPSTAIRS CONFERENCE ROOM- MARCH 2021

The new and replaced equipment allows video conferencing among all cloud-based platforms i.e. Zoom, Teams, Google Meet, Goto Meeting, etc.

UPGRADED WI-FI SYSTEM FOR EVENTS AND OFFICE CONNECTIVITY

The additional equipment has dramatically reduced the Wi-Fi glitches occurring, allowing the event vendors greater capabilities to sell their products with Wi-Fi-based systems.

ADDED 30 MOTOROLA RADIOS

For better communications among staff members and volunteers during the events.

SETUP NEW TIMETRACKING PROGRAM- CLICKTIME.COM

Clicktime.com is the new electronic time-keeping system for the Blount Partnership, replacing our proprietary system that was over 10 years old.

ADDITIONAL IT UPGRADES

- Installed wired network connectivity to the visitor center
- Completed the VOIP phone system installation, programming, and training at both locations.
- Installed a new AV monitor in the chamber lobby for digital signage

CYBERSECURITY MEASURES

- Added Norton Antivirus programs to all office computers
- Added LastPass Password management licenses for all employees
- Hosted a Cybersecurity training session with Stefan Wilson of Allevia Technology for all staff
- Added Synology Backup Drives at Chamber & TVC

ACCOUNTING PROJECTS

- Upgraded Sage50 to the 2022 version
- Implemented invoicing and AR reporting for the IDB rentals and all SMTDA billing activity
- Setup a scanning process for all deposit tickets and receipting info and documentation.
- Added a mobile POS for credit card and/or cash transactions



ARR Accounting

2021 Annual Report

AMAZON PROJECT

- Coordinating drawdown & expenditure of \$12M bond issue per contracts with multiple vendors
- Management of Greenway portion with engineers & Alcoa Gov't

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Provided guidance and recommendations on transition from COVID restrictions to the "new normal" operation(s)
- Vetted & onboarded 3 new employees
- CPR certification / re-certification for staff - added AEDs & 1st aid kits
- ClickTime implementation to upgrade timetracking functionality

FOREIGN TRADE ZONE

- Picked up FTZ administration; collaborating with Zone user to gather & review data and file timely Annual Report
- Field questions from interested parties as to availability and FTZ benefits
- Planning for website upgrade to use FTZ as a more robust marketing tool

MISC. ITEMS

- Provided guidance to Denso on state grant compliance
- Managed Denso Greenway Extension project toward successful conclusion in 2022
- Coordination of finance aspect of multiple projects with government finance groups - Laurel Park, Seefried, Eagle, etc.



Communications

2021 Annual Report

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

- Made more than 20 appearances on three television networks to promote Partnership community events in Blount County.
- Held radio interviews about the Smith & Wesson project
- Continued local radio advertising with WKVL and WBCR on the football broadcasts for William Blount, Maryville, and Alcoa High Schools.
- Sponsored The Sports Page weekly sports talk radio program. Produced on Facebook Live, the Blount Partnership is branded on the screen along with two 30-second radio ads.
- Used the billboard located on U.S. 129 in Maryville to promote events.
- Appeared on Dawn Steimer's Around the House radio program to talk about summer community events.
- Continued to build relationships with media representatives in print and electronic media.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Chamber Facebook engagement is 2,000% more than the competitor average
- Economic Development LinkedIn follower growth is up 236% more than last year and the Chamber is up 252% more.
- Blount Area Jobs Instagram engagement is up 135% over last year
- Started a Blount Area Jobs LinkedIn and Peaceful Side Pinterest
- Continued to Facebook Live all ribbon cuttings.
- Focused efforts on creating Instagram Reels for Chamber and Peaceful Side

UPDATES

- Hired Alyssa Smith in May as social media manager to handle Blount Partnership communications across all platforms
- Upgraded programs in the lobby monitors to streamline the updating of events and information.



Professional Involvement

2021 Annual Report

HONORABLE MENTIONS

- Bryan Daniels named to ETSU Research Corporation Board
- Bryan Daniels named Chair of International Economic Development Council Planning & Business Development Committee
- Kim Mitchell named Women in Tennessee Tourism & Hospitality Leader of the Year by HospitalityTN.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Managerial staff attended the following meetings and conferences to gain further insight into national trends.

- U.S. Chamber Institute for Organizational Mgmt.
- International Economic Development Council
- Southern Economic Development Council
- American Chamber of Commerce Convention
- Tennessee Chamber of Commerce
- Governor's Conference on Tourism & Econ. Dev.
- Public Affairs Conference/Boots N Business
- The Social Shake-Up Conference
- Tennessee Hospitality and Tourism Association
- Southeast Tourism Society Marketing College
- Distillers Convention

BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

Blount Partnership Joint Operating Committee

Chair Chris Soro, C2RL, Inc.
Vice Chair Chuck Alexander

Chamber of Commerce Board Representatives:

Chair Rick Shepard, Leadership Blount
Chair-Elect Trevis Gardner, MKAA
Past Chair Chris Soro, C2RL, Inc.

Economic Development Board Representatives:

Chair Matt Murray, University of Tennessee
Vice Chair Greg Wilson, First Horizon
Past Chair Chuck Alexander

Smoky Mountain Tourism Development Authority Representatives:

Chair Tim Seay, Century 21 Smoky Mountain Real Estate
Vice Chair Jewell Overton, ProNova Solutions
Past Chair Bryan Cable, Hilton Knoxville Airport

Blount County Chamber of Commerce Board

Chair Rick Shepard, Leadership Blount
Chair-Elect Trevis Gardner, Metropolitan Knoxville Airport Authority
Chair - Chamber Foundation Bob Booker, DENSO
VIP Chair Stephen Deucker, Cirrus Aircraft
Board Member at Large Mike Lutheran, Royal Metal Powders
Board Member at Large Tracy Queen, ICC International
Auto Sales & Services, Transportation & Petroleum.....Kendall Case, Smoky Mtn. Harley-Davidson
Construction, Building Trades & Suppliers.....Ben Pinnell, Hickory Construction
Finance & Professional Tony Thompson, Pinnacle Financial Partners
Government & Public Utilities Tom Hatcher, Blount County Circuit Court Clerk
Hotel/Accommodations, Restaurants & Recreation Richard Maples, Kinzel Springs Partnership
Individuals/Non-Profits..... Vanessa Painter, Blount County Children's Advocacy Center
Manufacturers, Wholesalers & Agriculture Bryan Hayes, Clayton Homes
Retail/Service/Real Estate/Insurance Drew Miles, Miles Insurance Agency
One Year Director Russ Bradberry, Cherokee Millwright
One Year Director Brian Davis, Danny Davis Electrical Contractors
One Year Director Dennis Dockery, Michael Brady Architects
One Year Director Joy Carver, Dandy Lions
One Year Director Keeli Boyce, Express Strategic Services

Ex-Officio Members:

Chair, Economic Development Board Matt Murray, University of Tennessee
Chair, Smoky Mountain Tourism Development Authority Tim Seay, Century 21 Smoky Mtn. Real Estate
Legal Counsel Matt Haralson, Kizer & Black, Attorneys
City of Alcoa Mark L. Johnson, City Manager
Blount County Ed Mitchell, County Mayor Blount County Government
City of Maryville Greg McClain, City Manager

BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

Economic Development Board

Chair	Matt Murray
Vice Chair	Greg Wilson
Chair Emeritus	Fred Lawson
Secretary/Treasurer	Gary Hensley
Member	Chuck Alexander
Member	Joe Dawson
Member	Dave Bennett
Member	Monica Gawet
Blount County	Ed Mitchell, Mayor
City of Alcoa	Mark Johnson, City Manager
City of Maryville	Greg McClain, City Manager
Ex-Officio Members:	
Legal Counsel	Robert N. Goddard, Goddard & Gamble
Chamber Representative	Rick Shepard

Smoky Mountain Tourism Development Authority Board

Chair	Tim Seay, Century 21 Smoky Mountain Real Estate
Vice Chair	Jewell Overton, ProNova Solutions
Secretary/Treasurer	Boyce Smith, Walmart
Business/Resident Representative Alcoa	Bryan Cable, Hilton Knoxville Airport
Business/resident Representative Walland/Townsend Area	Chad Rochelle, Dogwood Cabins
Business/Resident Representative Maryville	Joy Carver, Dandy Lions
City of Alcoa Representative	Mark L. Johnson, City Manager
City of Maryville Representative	Greg McClain, City Manager
Blount County Mayor or County Commission Rep.	Jeff Jopling, Blount County Commissioner
Chamber Representative	Rick Shepard

Blount Partnership Staff

President/CEO	Bryan Daniels
Vice President	Tammi Ford
Director of Events & Partnership Programs	Jessica Belitz
Director of Economic Development	Lauren Emert
Director of Membership	Jessica Hahn
Director of Accounting & Human Resources	Bruce Kerr
Director of Tourism	Kim Mitchell
Director of Communications	Jeff Muir
Executive Administrative Assistant	Brenda Farner
Administrative Project Manager	Paul Monroe
Social Media Manager	Alyssa Smith
Facilities Manager	Robert Galyon
Facilities Associate	Mike Webb
Administrative Assistant	Deborah Nye
Administrative Assistant	Amy Lawson
Administrative Assistant	Claire Carter
Administrative Assistant	Alexa Johns
Maryville Welcome Center Host	Kasey Ferguson
Townsend Welcome Center Host	Sharon Thornton



Gleniv Shepard Seminar



DENSO ribbon cutting for newest facility.



Taste of Blount



Express Strategic Services Ribbon Cutting



Great Smoky Mountains Hot Air Balloon Festival



Summer on Broadway



Great Smoky Mountains Bigfoot Festival



Networking at coffee club