



THE LOST WAY

BY JOAN GARRETT MCCLANE
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Nearly 40 years ago, an idiosyncratic multimillionaire, a North Chattanooga housewife and a tribe of idealistic baby boomers formed an unlikely alliance to rebuild a once-great Southern city. The world says they succeeded. But did they really? And could it all be happening again?

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CHAPTER ONE



Eleanor Cooper, 70, looks out the window of her home on Missionary Ridge on July 12, 2017. Cooper, now retired, played an integral role in the work of the Moccasin Bend Task Force. She later headed Chattanooga Venture, the groundbreaking nonprofit organization that jump-started the city's renaissance. STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG STRICKLAND

ON THE SECOND FLOOR of the Chattanooga Public Library, past a locked door and a row of shelves stacked high with aging microfilm, 69-year-old Eleanor Cooper left the last of the boxes, brimming with documents.

Well, all but one.

One remaining box she kept at her home on Missionary Ridge. She planned to read over its contents one last time before releasing the papers, now decades old, to be catalogued in the public record.

Some of the letters contained in carefully ordered manila folders were personal, even painful, and she would have to swallow hard to share them.

Finding, collecting and organizing the letters, emails and notes from the 1980s and 1990s, which many considered trash, had been thankless work. Still, year after year,

Cooper kept at it.

Many felt they knew the narrative of the Chattanooga renaissance. Highly polished versions of it had appeared again and again in newspapers, magazines, books and political speeches for decades, and tucked within each was a certainty: Chattanooga held the rights to a formula. Former mayor Bob Corker, now one of the most powerful members of the U.S. Senate, would eventually call it “the Chattanooga Way.”

But only a few people knew the real story behind the city's rebirth.

Cooper, a retired community organizer and nonprofit organization head, was an insider who knew and worked beside the cast of characters responsible for one of the most celebrated cases of urban revitalization in American history.

And even she sometimes wondered if the

renaissance narrative deserved such acclaim. The very question sent her back to college in 2008, where she spent five years researching and writing her own 350-page answer.

Was it a true, populist reinvention of a post-industrial Southern city, or just a public relations campaign strapped to a slick comeback story? Did the original true believers — idealistic baby boomers from some of Chattanooga's dynastic families — really invent a system for lasting change, or just pave the way for an elaborate rebranding of the city's tourism industry that ignored its most intractable problems and vulnerable citizens?

Cooper knew the truth. It lived at the library, hidden in those boxes and locked in the hearts of a handful of people, living and dead.

This is the unvarnished, untold story of their dreams and despair. These are the lost chapters of the Chattanooga story.



Boxes of old microfilm sit stacked on shelves behind a locked door at the Chattanooga Public Library. Just past the microfilm storage area is a back room where nearly a dozen boxes containing historical records related to Chattanooga Venture and the city's renaissance are kept. Soon these boxes will be cataloged by library staff and made a part of the Venture archives. STAFF PHOTO BY MATT MCCLANE

"WITHOUT A VISION"

IN THE SPRING of 2016, the city seemed caught between two energies.

On one hand, Chattanooga was a boom town, and the physical proof was everywhere. East M.L. King Boulevard, long neglected, was coming to life as trendy restaurants and high-rise apartment complexes cropped up to cater to the expanding University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Meanwhile, the empty, gold-windowed, former BlueCross BlueShield headquarters a few blocks west was on its way to becoming a high-end Westin hotel.

The central city was so filled with construction projects that spring that pedestrians were finding it hard to navigate traffic cones and fencing.

For years, local money had fueled down-

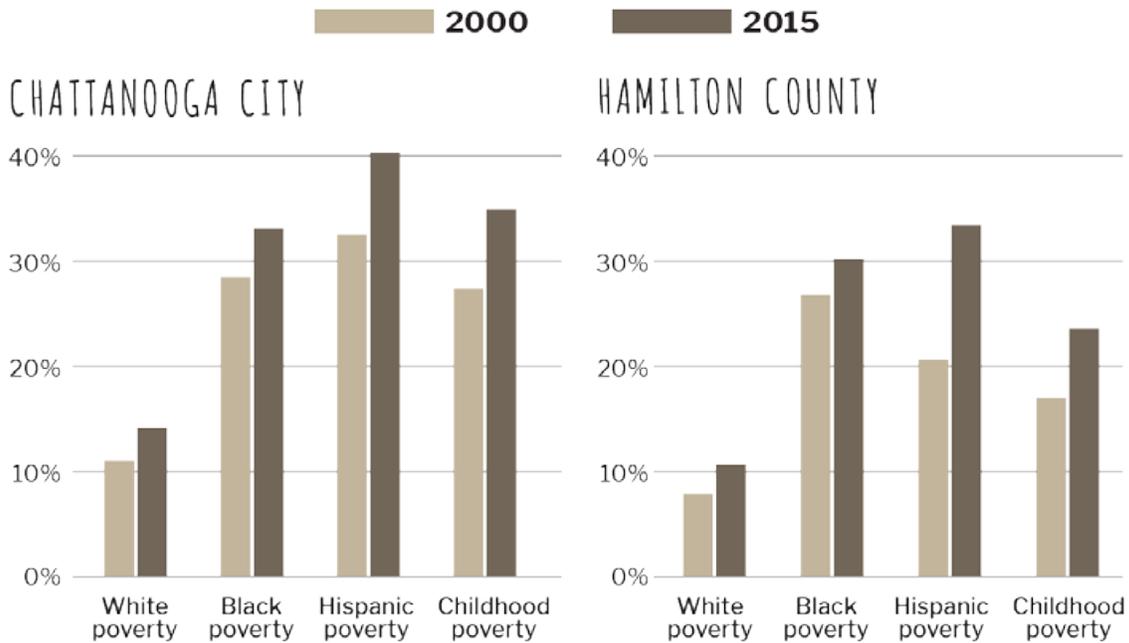


Construction crews work to complete a new apartment/commercial building on the 700 block of Market Street in March of 2016. STAFF FILE PHOTO

town's growth, but outside capital was finally flooding in. In fact, 2016 would prove to be a tipping point. For the first time, half of the projects in the city's urban core were being

POVERTY: A STORM ON THE HORIZON

Poverty rates have increased among all segments of society as stagnant wages, rising costs, falling civic engagement, persistent economic segregation, consistently unsuccessful educational intervention and the growing decoupling of marriage from childrearing continue to shape the futures of children and families.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five year averages

funded by out-of-towners.

Highly educated newcomers, fleeing larger and much more expensive cities, were coming to town to fill new jobs and buy condos. To them, there was no buyer's remorse. Chattanooga was, as *Outside* magazine claimed, "The Best Town Ever."

On the other hand, much was brewing beneath the surface.

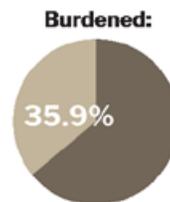
Minority and working-class families with roots in the city were suffering, an abundance of research proved. Housing costs were rising, contributing to a severe shortage of affordable housing. Public schools were failing to prepare a majority of children to make a living wage. Poverty was growing among all races, and few born into poverty were finding a path out. Violent crime was escalating alongside this sense of economic desperation.

CHATTANOOGA HOUSING BURDEN

2000

There were **29,487** total renter-occupied housing units

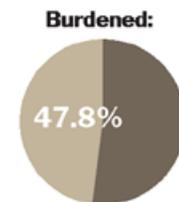
10,608 were considered rent burdened because they paid more than 30 percent of their household income to rent



2015

There were **32,703** total renter-occupied housing units

15,648 were considered rent burdened because they paid more than 30 percent of their household income to rent



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, five-year average, adjusted for inflation.

And worry over this emerging narrative was giving rise to heated public conversations about housing, economic policy, police tactics and the persistence of racial inequality. Where were the solutions, many wondered aloud at a panel discussion hosted at UTC in March 2016. Where was the leadership, those in the crowd asked of the mayor, the councilman, the chief of police and other community leaders present. Where was the vaunted Chattanooga Way?

“I hate to get biblical,” said Lakweshia Ewing, a 37-year-old entrepreneur, leaning forward in her chair onstage and speaking with the certainty of an Old Testament prophet. “But where there is no vision, the people perish.”

The words struck Cooper, who was sitting quietly in the crowd.

There had been a grand vision, in the beginning at least, she thought to herself, remembering when she herself was 30-something, pondering the same proverb.

STAGNANT PAY, RISING RENT

In Chattanooga, wages are down, after being adjusted for inflation, yet the cost of housing continues to rise as the city attracts new residents.

HOUSEHOLD MEDIAN EARNINGS

1999* › \$45,480 per year

2015 › \$40,177 per year

HOUSEHOLD AVERAGE EARNINGS

1999* › \$65,308 per year

2015 › \$58,386 per year

AVERAGE GROSS RENT

1999* › \$669 per month

2015 › \$752 per month

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, five-year average, adjusted for inflation. *1999 income data from 2000 Decennial Census.

ASHAMED

COOOPER, born Eleanor McCallie, was raised in a deeply rooted local family with close ties to Chattanooga’s wealthiest, most powerful citizens. Her grandfather and great-uncle had founded the all-boys McCallie School in 1905, and two of her great-aunts were among the three founders of Girls Preparatory School.

Still, as a teenager, she wanted nothing more than to escape her hometown.

Cooper came of age in the 1960s and 1970s just as anti-Vietnam war protests and the civil rights movement were gaining energy across the county. Like so many baby boomers, she began to see the world very differently than her parents and their peers. The Bible didn’t support segregation and slavery, she firmly believed, despite what so many



A young Eleanor Cooper sits on the lap of her father, Thomas Hooke McCallie. ELEANOR COOPER



First Presbyterian Church is seen on Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2017, in Chattanooga. STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG STRICKLAND

Southern pastors said, and having been born with a name that mattered, Cooper thought she could enlighten her elders.

So one summer, while home from Agnes Scott College, she took a stand at the church her family had attended for generations when she chose to back a bold idea proposed by fellow church member, Alice Lupton, the wife of Coca-Cola heir Jack Lupton and the sister of well-known banker Scotty Probasco.

At the time, First Presbyterian Church on McCallie Avenue sat in the middle of a working-class, black neighborhood, and the children who lived in the surrounding blocks needed child care after school. Since the church had space and equipment that went unused most of the week, Alice Lupton, who was later instrumental in integrating several downtown day-care centers, thought the church could open to the neighborhood.

It was a wonderful plan, thought Cooper, who asked to join in on a meeting with Ben Haden, then the lead pastor of First Presbyterian. Jack and Alice Lupton's daughter, also named Alice, attended the meeting as well, with her boyfriend Rick Montague, a liberal-leaning McCallie School graduate from Lookout Mountain who was also home



Eleanor Cooper, 14, poses for a photo with her mother, Eleanor "Queenie," father, Thomas "T. Hooke," and four brothers in 1960. Cooper left Chattanooga to attend college in Atlanta and didn't return to live in the city until 1981. ELEANOR COOPER

from college and had long been disturbed by his home-church's stance on race.

Haden, however, said no to the day-care request. There wouldn't be enough time to sanitize the church for the white children who came on Sunday, Cooper, Montague and the younger Alice Lupton said the church leader told them the day they all met to discuss the idea.

Their hearts fell.

Montague, disillusioned, left the church. The Luptons pulled their membership not long afterward.

And Cooper determined that, after college, she would leave Chattanooga behind. For 17 years she stayed away.

She traveled to Japan, where she taught English. She moved to New York where she worked for Dr. Caleb Gattegno, one of the most influential and prolific mathematics educators of the 20th century. Later, she lived in Northern California, where she worked at the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker nonprofit.

She finally returned to Chattanooga in the summer of 1981 only because she was between jobs and needed time to plan her next career move. What she saw downtown on the very day of her arrival shocked and excited her so much that she never left again.



Don McLean performs during one of the free, Lyndhurst Foundation-funded Five Nights concerts held throughout the month of July 1981. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE CONCERT

B LUES LEGEND B.B. King was playing in downtown Chattanooga, Cooper learned after reading a local newspaper on the day of her return to the city in July, 1981. He was one act in Five Nights, a month-long free, open-air Tuesday night concert series being held in the heart of the city.

Attending was a bad idea, Cooper's father warned. Riots were expected.

Just the year before, five elderly black women had been shot on East Ninth Street by a Ku Klux Klan member who had driven downtown with two other Klansmen intent on terrorizing blacks. Not long afterward, an all-white jury acquitted two of the Klansmen and convicted the shooter of minor assault,



Four of the five women awarded damages Friday in U.S. District Court are (from left to right) Opal Jackson, Katherine Johnson, Viola Ellison and Lela Mae Evans. Standing behind the four are attorneys Charles Victor McTeer and Betty Lawrence Bailey.

This photo from Chattanooga Times archives show four of the five women who were shot on East Ninth Street by a Ku Klux Klan member who had driven downtown with two other Klansmen intent on terrorizing blacks. Opal Jackson, Katherine Johnson, Viola Ellison and Lela Mae Evans, from left, stand in front of their attorneys.

and the city erupted in four nights of riots. Blacks protested, and Klansmen threw fire-bombs at police.

The next year the Ministers Union, a group of black clergy, began pressuring the Chattanooga City Commission to rename Ninth Street, which ran through the heart of the city's black business district, after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

But the commission resisted.

T.A. "Tommy" Lupton, Jack Lupton's second cousin, had decided to develop two office buildings downtown at a time when no one else would, and both were on Ninth Street. He was fine with East Ninth Street being re-named after the civil-rights leader, the white businessman told city commissioners, but not West Ninth Street, where his buildings stood. When white city commissioners sided with Lupton and his supporters, those pushing for the renaming took to the streets.

That April, just months before the Five Nights concert series began in July, hundreds of protesters, armed with lad-

ders, marched down Ninth street singing "We Shall Overcome." They pasted green bumper stickers that read "Dr. M.L. King Jr. Blvd." on street signs and utility poles as police looked on.

Still, Cooper wasn't afraid to attend the B.B. King concert that night in 1981. She was curious.

She never imagined she would come home and find a crowd downtown as the sun set. For the most part, the heart of the city completely emptied at night. It was hard to imagine a diverse mix of people, white and black, white collar and blue collar, attending anything together.

Yet, there they were, pouring into a vacant lot between Broad and Market streets where the EPB building now stands.

Cooper can remember senior citizens sitting in lawn chairs, bouncing babies on their knees, and others resting on the curbs. Many stood, as well, feeling a restless excitement.

Maybe Chattanooga was actually changing, she thought.

"At last," she allowed herself to hope.

LYNDHURST RISING

THE ROAD TO Five Nights, Cooper later learned, began with the 1977 death of Cartter Lupton, the second-generation owner of the country's largest Coca-Cola distributor. He had left behind a \$200 million estate, which, at the time, was the largest ever probated in the South.

His son and heir, John T. "Jack" Lupton, had no intention of running his family's business or his family's foundation, then called the Memorial Welfare Foundation, the way his father had. For years, the majority of the foundation's funds had supported Chattanooga's private schools and hospitals, but Jack Lupton

wanted a blank slate, his letters show.

Chattanooga faced enormous challenges in the 1980s, and rather than retreat to "little bitty conclaves" where "nobody communicated with anybody," like his father, Jack Lupton said he wanted to find and fund solutions with the foundation's holdings, which grew from \$35 million to \$85 million after Cartter Lupton's death.

"They wanted to keep this place a secret. They didn't want anybody knowing about what a nice little deal they had here," Lupton told a newspaper reporter in 1986, criticizing his father and his father's peers. "Well, they



Rick Montague, in sunglasses on the right, walks beside William Hollingsworth "Holly" Whyte, an American urbanist who visited downtown Chattanooga in 1984. Montague was then head of the Lyndhurst Foundation. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

were full of s---, as far as I'm concerned."

Montague, who had married Jack Lupton's daughter, Alice, in 1968, right after graduating from the University of Virginia, was tapped to head the foundation, which was renamed Lyndhurst after the razed mansion the Lupton family had owned in the Riverview neighborhood. Before the appointment, Montague had been teaching English at Baylor School.

Progressive and outspoken, he wore tennis shoes with his sport coat to important meetings, and his passion for civil rights, paired with his access to Jack Lupton, left many traditionally minded elites unsettled. The city was plagued by inequality, and the children of poor and working-class families, black and white, were being cut off from opportunity, Montague had learned as a scoutmaster and later as a board member of the Boys Club. The needs and disparities demanded action, he believed.

Jack Lupton, without dictating specifics,

demanded creativity and risk taking of his son-in-law.

"If we're succeeding at everything we do, then we haven't been taking enough risk," Lupton told Montague.

So Montague, determined to impress Jack Lupton, resolved to learn the ins and outs of running a family foundation as quickly as he could. On the foundation's dime, Montague attended conferences and training sessions across the United States, and over a few years he built a team of promising advisers.

Jack Murrah, an English teacher who had worked alongside Montague at Baylor, was hired as a Lyndhurst associate. Montague and Murrah shared many intellectual interests, including an obsession with James Joyce's short story "The Dead." The story asked questions they both wrestled with as they grew older. What is the nature of selfless love? What is its impact, even after the grave?

In other ways, Montague and Murrah



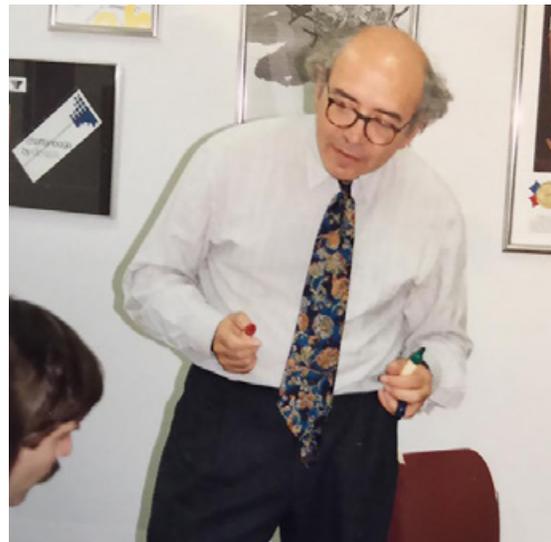
Jack Murrah, left, is pictured during a Lyndhurst Foundation-funded trip to Indianapolis, Ind., in 1983. Murrah taught English at Baylor School before leaving to work as an associate at the Lyndhurst Foundation for his friend, Rick Montague. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

were different. Montague, raised amid privilege, was relentlessly optimistic and tended to run impulsively with any idea that excited him. Murrah, on the other hand, was soft-spoken and deliberate. Despite growing up in a working-class family in Clanton, Ala., Murrah had gained entry to Vanderbilt University, where he displayed great academic prowess before earning a graduate degree from the Middlebury Bread Loaf School of English.

Meanwhile, Gianni Longo, a fiery Italian immigrant who lived and worked in New York City at the Institute for Environmental Action, became another important ally to Montague and Lyndhurst.

While attending a National Council on Foundations meeting in Seattle, Montague picked up a book co-written by Longo called “Learning from Seattle.” He was so struck by the book’s message that he called Longo when he returned home. After receiving board approval, Montague commissioned Longo to do a study of Chattanooga.

Longo’s report, completed after seven



Gianni Longo, seen here in the Chattanooga Venture office, is a New York City-based consultant who worked closely with the Lyndhurst Foundation and later Chattanooga Venture. A report he wrote on Chattanooga, published in 1980, argued that the city’s divisions had to be addressed for economic progress to occur. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

months of intensive study, revealed the guiding logic behind Five Nights.

Pollution wasn’t the city’s main problem in the early 1980s. Thanks to the mandates



A large crowd gathers in downtown Chattanooga for one of the Five Nights concerts held in July of 1981. The Lyndhurst Foundation conceived of and funded the concert series, hoping it would bring the city together and renew interest in downtown. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

of President Richard Nixon's Environmental Protection Agency, the smog — famously cited by Walter Cronkite more than a decade earlier when he called Chattanooga "America's dirtiest city" on network news — had abated. The big question for Chattanooga was growth. Newcomers weren't moving in and the educated children of native Chattanoogans, both black and white, were fleeing. Meanwhile, the manufacturing-based economy remained in freefall.

And the greatest roadblock to growth, the cancer killing Chattanooga, argued Longo in his 1980 report, was the city's deep and historic divisions.

Chattanooga was rife with conflicts — city versus county, small business versus corporation, old versus young, black versus white, worker versus manager and newcomers versus native — that continually stalled and foiled efforts to address problems. There was also a bitter hopelessness that had set in, according to the Longo report, especially among poor and minority residents who had little say in city government. For example, commissioners were elected "at large," not by districts, a system that ensured majority white rule.

Conspiracy theories ran rampant, fueling anger, and leaders made matters worse by failing to communicate with citizens, opting

instead for closed-door decision making, the report concluded. The city was rigged, many told Longo, run by a few individuals and powerful families who made decisions to benefit themselves.

A reknitting had to take place, Longo told Montague after delivering his sober findings. When trust was lost, community planning became an impossible endeavor.

That was where Five Nights came in. A free, open-air concert series with attractive headliners that could draw a diverse crowd might help leaders and citizens see the city and themselves in a new light, Longo said. Similar events had worked elsewhere.

The night of the first concert, Montague paced the streets around the once empty parking lot. Earlier that day, according to Montague, former Chattanooga mayor Robert Kirk Walker had seen him and grabbed him by the lapels.

"The city of Chattanooga is going to blow up tonight," he told the 36-year-old Montague. "And I am going to hold you personally responsible."

Montague kept walking, watching for the chaos so many believed was inevitable. But the moment never came.

He never saw Cooper, who was grinning from ear to ear, in the crowd.

"AN IRON WHIM"

JACK LUPTON, who was then busy running a Coca-Cola bottling empire that stretched across the South and West, would prove to be an enigma as events unfolded.

For the most part, records show, he took a hands-off approach to Lyndhurst in its early years, trusting in the direction set by Montague. Yet there were times when he would suddenly and abruptly engage.

"He ruled with an iron whim," Murrah, who retired from Lyndhurst in 2010 after working there for 32 years, often said of Lupton.

"THIS TOWN IS
LIKE A BUNCH OF
G— D—, INBRED
COLLIE DOGS."

- JACK LUPTON

And his moods were as unpredictable as his interests. It was fairly common for people to check in with Clara Lane, Lupton's longtime assistant, and ask whether he was running hot or cold.

No one dared bring up anything they cared about with Lupton on one of his bad days. On his better days, however, Lupton could be exceptionally charming, open and comical, spouting off the kinds of things many wanted to say but that only a handsome multimillionaire could get away with.

"This town is like a bunch of g— d—, inbred Collie dogs," Montague said Lupton once told the Lyndhurst trustees, his way of poking fun at the intermarriage among the city's wealthiest families, including his own.

As the plans for Five Nights unfolded, Lupton became concerned over the fight to rename Ninth street as M.L. King Boulevard.



Jack Lupton was heir to a Coca-Cola bottling empire that stretched across the South and West. His family fortune funded the Lyndhurst Foundation, which financially supported Chattanooga Venture, River City and the Tennessee Aquarium, among other projects. STAFF FILE PHOTO

His cousin, Tommy Lupton, who was opposed to the renaming, was putting the family name in a negative light, he told Montague privately. Still, always wary of the public spotlight, he didn't want to criticize him openly. Instead, he asked Montague and Lane, his assistant, to invite a group of local black leaders to their sixth-floor Lyndhurst offices, housed in his cousin's gleaming new Tallan building.

What could he and Lyndhurst do to help the black community, he asked the handpicked group, which met privately for several weeks.

Get behind the renaming of Ninth Street, said Irvin Overton, who would later go on to be a top executive at Erlanger Hospital. That was what mattered to the black community, Overton said.

But that was a line Jack Lupton wouldn't cross. Politics were unpredictable, uncontrollable, and he wouldn't discuss politics, he told the group.

Lupton was unaware that the concert series his foundation was backing was being seen as a veiled political statement. For that matter, he was unfamiliar with many of the Five Nights acts, including B.B. King.

That July, as the concert series was underway, Paul Clark, one of the white city commissioners who had been resisting the renaming of Ninth Street, called Lupton's assistant and told her to tell her boss that he had changed his mind. Not long afterward, Clark surprisingly seconded black city Commissioner John Franklin's motion to rename Ninth Street, and the commission unanimously approved.

Lupton was bewildered. He hadn't asked Clark to change his vote, despite rumors to the contrary.

Montague, on the other hand, was thrilled.

THE BEND

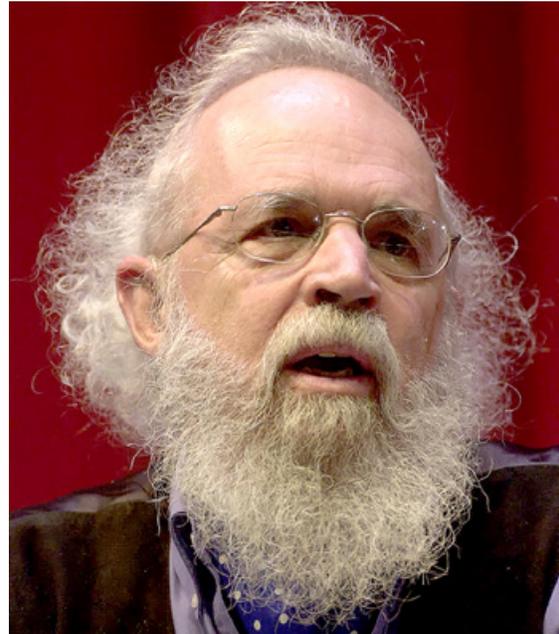
FIVE NIGHTS began a cultural shift. More than 45,000 people attended the five, free concerts, and experienced downtown as a safe, shared space, just as Longo had hoped.

Next, Montague and his allies worked to build on the momentum.

Lyndhurst had seen the impact young people could have when it funded a series of student-led community health fairs across the rural South. Why not ask young architecture students at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville to help the Chattanooga community envision what a new, shared downtown might look like, Montague thought.

So in the spring and summer of 1982, students recruited by Lyndhurst and mentored by UT-Knoxville professor Stroud Watson held exhibits showcasing their vision, which included the first-ever pitch for a linear park along the Tennessee River, as well as the first pitch for an aquarium on the riverfront.

At the same time, Montague and the Lyndhurst trustees agreed to help fund an



Stroud Watson shaped the work of the Moccasin Bend Task Force when he advised the group to focus on the downtown side of the Tennessee River and not on the development of Moccasin Bend. Watson, who taught architecture at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, when he first began consulting in Chattanooga, later went on to head Chattanooga's Urban Design Studio. STAFF FILE PHOTO

Urban Land Institute study of Moccasin Bend, the 600-acre peninsula jutting out into the Tennessee River near downtown, which was underused and being eyed by developers. And the study, also presented to the public in 1982, recommended that the city and Hamilton County let a citizen-led task force decide the fate of the Bend.

The night of the presentation at the Hunter Museum of American Art, Dalton Roberts, the Hamilton County executive, tapped Montague.

“Can I call you Mr. Chairman?” Roberts asked Montague as they waited in a buffet line for food.

Four others — two chosen by the city and two chosen by the county — also were appointed to the citizen task force, which was jointly funded by Lyndhurst, the city and the county.

With a blank slate, it was hard to know where to start. Some among the task force believed economic development should be the sole aim, but Sally Robinson, then the executive director of the Adult Education Council, challenged the group to think about how its work could heal the long-divided city.

To many, some of the city’s most recognizable places invoked pain. Some might walk by the Walnut Street Bridge and see a beautiful, historic gem. Others might imagine the bodies of black men hanging from the steel support beams, accused and sentenced by mobs without due process.

“We need places that are free from history,” Robinson said the first time the task force gathered over dinner at Montague’s home on Lookout Mountain.

The comment struck Montague, who cared

far more about laying the groundwork for a cultural upheaval than a physical transformation.

Watson, who struck up a friendship with Montague while working with the UT-Knoxville architectural students, would also shape the direction of the task force. Although the group was tasked with planning

for Moccasin Bend, Watson argued the group had the wrong focus if it wanted to bring change to Chattanooga. It was the downtown side of the river that sorely needed attention and planning.

So, after agreeing, the group approached city and Hamilton County leaders and asked to do an about-face. Instead of Moccasin Bend, they wanted to study a 20-

mile length of the Tennessee River, from the Chickamauga Dam to the Marion County line, with a linear public park in mind.

With a green light from officials, they launched a national search for a consultant, and after much debate settled on the top pick of Montague and Watson.

Representatives of Carr, Lynch Associates, of Cambridge, Mass., had an approach unlike any other. Their plan, they promised the task force, would be shaped by Chattanoogaans, not expert planners and architects, and it would evolve under public scrutiny, not be locked away until the last minute.

“This thing will only succeed if you reach out to all in the community, and if you involve particular initiatives that get to the minority community,” Imani Kazana, the firm’s community engagement expert, told Montague.

She would need help with the outreach, however.

So Montague made a call to an old friend.



This aerial image of Chattanooga shows downtown and Moccasin Bend before the city's renaissance, which was sparked in the mid-1980s when the Moccasin Bend Task Force and Chattanooga Venture began working to engage the public in community planning initiatives. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

A NEW WAY

ELEANOR COOPER jumped at the offer to work with the Moccasin Bend Task Force and quickly began planning outreach with Kazana. Over a three-year period, the two women would arrange 65 public meetings.

Many were held at the Chattanooga Public Library on Broad Street. Others were more intimate. And some were meant to reach minority communities in particular. One gathering was held at a black church, while others were hosted at Kirkman Technical High School, the Bethlehem Center in Alton Park and a community center on the west side of the city.

“What do you want, regarding the Tennessee River?” Cooper and Kazana asked, time and again.

Access to the water, one woman said. At the time, most of the riverbank was blocked by brush and private property, making it nearly impossible to swim or launch a canoe. An elderly black man said he wanted the plans to include safe places to fish. A mother said she wanted a paved walkway so she could push her baby stroller along the river’s edge.

There were tense moments along the way.

At one packed library meeting, a landowner along Suck Creek stood up and asked what was on many people’s minds.

“We just have one question,” he said. “When are you going to take our land?”

Never, answered Steven Carr, one of the consultants who was presenting a working draft of the river park plans. There was no hidden agenda, he said.

Later, American Indians voiced concern

over sacred land on Moccasin Bend, fearing it would be violated by future development. The task force responded by proposing a national park to protect the space.

There was also general anxiety about whom the plan would ultimately help. Even Robinson feared that Chattanooga might end up creating a lure for tourists, rather than a place that Chattanoogaans could use and enjoy.

Still, as the process unfolded, Cooper and Montague watched in awe.

Longo’s study had painted a grim picture of a city divided and disenchanting, but meeting after meeting illustrated that a new, shared hope was bubbling up. Consensus seemed possible. Community-building seemed possible.

“So many details that were once the discussion of a task force, elements in a plan, ideas on paper, were now tangible objects,” Cooper wrote to Carr several years later, on the weekend the Tennessee Riverpark finally opened. “What we hadn’t imagined was the magic of the sunlight in May, the sound of the birds in the early morning, the reflection of the water in the afternoon, the music of children, black and white, playing together, and the smell of barbecue as families of all races picnicked beside the river. We didn’t even know how much we needed it.”

In the speeches made that day, she noticed that the radical beginnings were already being forgotten, she wrote.

“But there were those of us there,” she said, “who remembered.”



A crowd listens to a speech during the 1983 “Quality of Life” conference, which was hosted at the Read House by the D.C.-based Partners for Livable Places and funded by the Lyndhurst Foundation. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE TRIP

THE MOCCASIN BEND Task Force taught a lesson, those involved believed. There was a better way of doing the people’s business.

And, in 1983, they weren’t alone in questioning traditional approaches to city planning and economic development. Longo was just one consultant in a growing network of national nonprofits and experts pushing leaders of post-industrial cities to begin thinking in new ways.

Groups like the D.C.-based Partners for Livable Places, which hosted a one-day conference in Chattanooga in May 1983, argued that opportunities were flocking to cities that catered, not to corporate interests, but to the interests of residents. Many cities Partners for Livable Places showcased attested that a “quality-of-life” emphasis offered a competitive edge.

Still, this perspective wasn’t shared by those sitting in many of Chattanooga’s top offices.

City leaders, including those at the local Chamber of Commerce, obsessed over recruiting industry and believed it was more important to sell those outside the city than those inside. Coddling a public with a host of differing opinions wasn’t a solution.

Ron Littlefield, then a young, urban planner from Georgia who was working for Dave Major at the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, disagreed. He felt the chamber, flummoxed by the falling population and job numbers, should send an envoy to Indianapolis, which had been highlighted at the Partners for Livable Places conference funded by Lyndhurst.

Major wasn’t interested, but Bob McNulty, head of Partners for Livable Places, with Lyndhurst’s backing, was able to



Ron Littlefield, right, worked for the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, which was busy coming up with a plan to stir economic development in the early 1980s. He was fired from the Chamber in 1983 because he pushed back on leaders' decision to move forward with an economic development agenda that did not engage the community. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

rally interest in a visit to Indiana. Forty-seven people — all middle- and upper-class residents from a variety of backgrounds — would end up going on the trip, which was funded by Lyndhurst.

Indianapolis, once called India-No-Place, was a thriving metropolis, and its turnaround, boosters argued, could be traced back to a diverse, 60-member board of citizens called The Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee.

Federal funds for cities began drying up in the late 1970s and were further cut during the Reagan administration. Before the committee was formed, the city was shedding staff and couldn't afford to fix potholes or meet the funding needs of public schools, but a new bottom-up approach to planning, institutionalized with the creation of the progress committee, had helped turn the tide.

There were social issues the committee addressed such as desegregation and policing, but its main success was bringing the middle class and the private sector into the govern-

ment's work, filling the gaps Washington had left them with, those in Indianapolis said. "Public-private partnerships," as they called them, had saved the day. It could be a slippery slope to commercial control, many would later realize. But then, the approach seemed to reflect America's highest ideals. Government became open, pliable, and far more efficient.

Tom Hebert, a representative from the Tennessee Valley Authority who went on the trip, was wowed, and he wasn't alone. Still, Major, then the executive vice president of the Chattanooga chamber, remained unimpressed. He had no intention of returning home and mimicking Indianapolis, he told Hebert.

So, in between sessions, Hebert, frustrated, approached Montague.

"What should we do?" he asked.

Montague walked him to the edge of the auditorium the group had gathered in and pointed to someone in the seated audience.

"See that woman down there?" Montague told Hebert. "That's Mai Bell Hurley. Talk to her."



Mai Bell Hurley, center, a community volunteer and fundraiser, stands with others from Chattanooga during a tour of Indianapolis, Ind. Hurley was one of 47 delegates who traveled to Indianapolis. When she returned, she and several others began pressuring local leaders to support a community-based planning process. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE HOUSEWIFE AND THE COMMITTEE

HURLEY, who worked as a newspaper reporter for the Chattanooga News-Free Press before marrying Bern Hurley, a Provident Life & Accident insurance executive, exerted enormous influence as a community volunteer at the time, despite the city's patriarchal culture.

"Can a woman lead?" a United Way board member once asked when Hurley was tapped to head the year's fundraising drive.

"Mai Bell Hurley can command legions!" a businessman scolded.

Despite being highly educated and politically astute, she feigned humility, often calling herself "the housewife of North Chattanooga," knowing the great benefit

of being underestimated. She was expert at navigating the male-dominated power structure, having an innate sense of when to press and when to pull back.

The lessons of Indianapolis would find no life in Chattanooga without her.

The trip had been inspiring for many, including Hurley, but city leaders simply weren't interested in the Indianapolis approach. The chamber, under Major's leadership, had its own economic development plan underway, and, unknown to most, the newly elected city mayor, Gene Roberts, was developing a plan, too. Still, rather than wait and worry, Hurley, Hebert and Montague, who began discussing strategy while in Indianapolis, decided to act.

They would form a committee called the Options Study Group to come up with a better community planning process, they told the city mayor, and to start they invited anyone who had gone to Indianapolis to be a part.

Three middle-class blacks would remain involved. Claudie Clark worked for Coca-Cola. Jerome Page headed the Urban League, and Howard Roddy was then the head of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department. Bill Evans, a member of the electric workers union, also was recruited to give voice to the labor union perspective. Some, including black City Commissioner John Franklin, would later

criticize the group's lack of diversity. The same, established people were often tapped to represent the black community, while the perspective of poor and working-class blacks was often left out. Still, Hurley felt the mix was right.

The Options Study Group, which met weekly between mid-December of 1983 and mid-February of 1984 would end up studying 11 cities and conclude that those in Indianapolis were right. Cities such as Chattanooga were doomed if elected officials and businessmen continued to map out the future in a vacuum.

The old order had to be upended.

VENTURE RISING

THE OPTIONS Study Group members felt they knew what needed to be done. Still, it seemed they were too late.

The mayor and chamber, behind closed doors, already had decided how they wanted to address the city's stagnation, Hurley soon learned. The plan, she heard, was to create a new economic development entity called Partners for Economic Progress and to hire a San-Francisco-based planning firm that could guide their steps.

Infuriated, Hurley confronted Mayor Gene Roberts, who told her not to worry. Just wait and hear the perspective of the San Francisco firm, he insisted.

The group was well aware of the San Francisco approach, however, thanks to Montague, who had studied San Francisco during months of research.

In San Francisco, the planning — directed by the very firm the city and county executives wanted to hire — had been top-down, not bottom-up as it had been in Indianapolis, Mon-

tague found. The problems chosen to address were handpicked by the business community and the process had been controlled by the private sector, which had ignored issues such as crime and social welfare. The community voice was completely left out. In Chattanooga, where there was so much suspicion of the "power structure," an approach like that couldn't work, the group concluded.

Their concerns didn't gain currency, though. A few months later a Chattanooga News-Free Press article announced that 36 corporate leaders, all white heads of major banks and businesses, were backing the chamber initiative.

Still, the Options Study Group members kept working on an alternative plan until, finally, they stumbled onto an approach they thought could work. They would form an independent 501-c-3 organization, and they would call it Chattanooga Venture.

And its first order of business would be a communitywide planning process unlike anything the nation had ever seen.

Coordinating Council



Mai Bell Hurley



Dalton Roberts



Gene Roberts



Harold E. Ruck



H. Carey Hanlin



Jack Lupton



Olan Mills Jr.

The two projects will be coordinated by a seven-member board of community leaders.

Citizen participation is what will make this economic development plan different

By Dave Flessner
Times staff writer

The Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce will launch Chattanooga's third major economic development program next month.

try to identify and promote those unique qualities within every community that make a city great."

Chattanooga Venture, a consensus-building group patterned after similar citizen organi-

munity — and I think a wrong one — that a few people make all the decisions," she said. "Chattanooga Venture provides an avenue for any citizen to become involved with community issues that they think are important.

Ms. Hurley and more than 100 other com-

Chattanooga Times archives show the seven members of the Coordinating Council, which was created to mediate between Chattanooga Venture, the citizen-led planning nonprofit that launched in 1984, and the business-backed planning organization Partners for Economic Progress.

THE PROTECTOR

MONTAGUE SHOULD deliver the message, the group agreed. With the backing of Lupton and Lyndhurst, he could safely negotiate with the powers behind the economic development plan and be taken seriously.

"Slow down ... long enough and hard enough to realize the benefits and opportunities presented here," he wrote the mayor.

Both initiatives could work together, Montague proposed.

"I don't think that economic development without wide community vision, participation and leadership will work," he added. "Unless the two arms embrace each other, trust each other, listen to each other and balance each

other, the \$3.5 million effort at economic development will be (another) failure."

A third organization, one that could mediate between a chamber-backed plan and a community-backed plan, could be the solution, he argued.

This "super board," as he called it, would consist of seven people: The mayor, the county executive, the head of Partners for Economic Progress, the head of Chattanooga Venture and "the three most powerful corporate chairmen in the city who are known for their broad vision and experience, effectiveness, trust, openness and ability to listen."

It was a power play. The key was to leverage Jack Lupton, who, once involved, could

tip things in favor of Chattanooga Venture. City leaders saw Lupton as a rare, big fish, impossible to net. He didn't like publicity. He didn't like drama. But a link to him and his resources could prove invaluable. This was a way to get their hook in, and Hurley and Montague knew it was a pitch few politicians could resist. And they were right.

The offer was accepted.

Montague asked Jack Lupton to sit on the Coordinating Council, as it was formally named.

"I DON'T THINK THAT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT WIDE COMMUNITY VISION, PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP WILL WORK,"

- RICK MONTAGUE

Hurley approached H. Carey Hanlin, the CEO of Provident insurance, where her husband worked, and together they convinced Olan Mills, a Democratic fundraiser and photography business magnate, to play a part as well.

The presentation by the San Francisco-based firm was canceled, and there was a standing-room-only

crowd at the next Options Study Group meeting, which Hurley opened to applause.

She would be the first chairperson of Venture, a radically open organization with free membership that would be solely funded by Lyndhurst and controlled by the largest and most diverse board the community had ever seen. Littlefield, who by then had been fired from the Chamber, would be its first executive director.

It was a huge victory for the everyday Chattanooga, they all believed at the time.

'Chattanooga Venture' Project Launched; 7 Named To Council

"Chattanooga Venture," an organization to link community interest groups and focus public attention on problem-solving and productive action, was launched by Mayor Gene Roberts and County Executive Dalton Roberts today.

Members of Venture's Coordinating Council were named by the mayor. They are Mayor Roberts, Dalton Roberts, Hal Ruck, Mai Bell Hurley, Carey Hanlin, Jack Lupton, and Olan Mills II.

Mr. Ruck is president of Partners for Economic Progress. Mrs. Hurley is chairman of Venture.

Mayor Roberts said of the members of the council, "they want to see Chattanooga grow and prosper just as each of us wants to."

County Executive Roberts said that the projects involved in Venture are "some of the most exciting things that have happened in this town since I've been here."

Speaking at a news conference at the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, Mrs. Hurley spoke of "Vision 2000," the first major project of Venture.

Vision 2000 is "a process to set goals for a better future," and it will involve 2,000 volunteers in the community. Mrs. Hurley said it would have "totally open membership," and



COUNCIL MEMBERS AT LIBRARY — Shown with County Commissioner Bill Bennett, seated at left, are members of the Coordinating Council of Chattanooga Venture, who were publicly named by Mayor Roberts, standing, today.

The mayor is a council member. Other members are, from left, Mrs. Mai Bell Hurley, Carey Hanlin, Olan Mills II, Jack Lupton, County Executive Dalton Roberts, and Harold Ruck. (Staff photo by Alex McManis)

In a news article announcing Chattanooga Venture in 1984, Chattanooga Mayor Gene Roberts called the business-backed plan "a sales effort" and the citizen-led Venture "quality control." TIMES FREE PRESS ARCHIVES

To Montague and Hurley, Lupton represented a known quantity, a democratic force, a protector. He had always wanted things to be done differently in Chattanooga. This was his chance.

Those on the outside, however, couldn't separate him from the Lookout Mountain mythology, from the image of wealthy men, born into money they didn't earn, deciding the fates of companies and cities from inside private clubs, isolated from the impact of their decisions. Lupton was so private, always denying requests from the media and fiercely guarded by those inside his bubble, that the average Chattanooga couldn't guess at his motivations for involvement.

But really, no one, not even Montague, could predict his actions, and that would become clear in the years to come.

A NEW DAY

“WHAT KIND of city do we want Chattanooga to be?” That was the question Chattanooga Venture would take to the public.

Pat Wilcox, a Chattanooga Times writer who had volunteered with Venture, hurriedly worked with others on a brochure, an invitation to the citizen-led revolution they believed would save their city.

“Chattanooga Venture heralds a new day in the way decisions will be made. A new day of community based leadership,” they wrote.

They described Venture as an open association of citizens, a channel for the

exchange of information, a means to focus the collective energy of the community and a tool for solving problems and setting a direction for the future.

Years later, reading the words of that same brochure would bring sadness.

“I don’t know how many people shared my view,” Wilcox said in 2012, when Cooper interviewed her for her dissertation. “I expected it to be a permanent thing. It didn’t turn out that way.”

It was Chattanooga, after all, a place where even the geographic grandeur whispered that there were those above and those below, those that mattered and those that did not.

CHAPTER TWO

COMING TOGETHER, COMING APART

BY JOAN GARRETT MCCLANE
AND JOY LUKACHICK SMITH

THE DREAM BEGAN in the middle of a scene.

Eleanor Cooper was hanging from a second-floor balcony, choking on fear, and below her, the contents of her purse had spilled onto the ground.

“Help,” she whispered, afraid to draw attention to the valuables that could have easily been taken right from under her.

Several friends were nearby. They could hear her plea, but they didn’t respond.

“All that is valuable to me has been dropped,” Cooper typed in a journal after she woke that morning in September 1993, documenting the nightmare. “I can’t do anything about it. And I can’t scream.”

“I am left hanging.”

It was a metaphor, she realized as she wrote the scene. She felt abandoned. But more than that, she felt something precious to the city had been lost, maybe forever.

In the real world, Cooper had just said goodbye to Chattanooga Venture, the revo-

lutionary, citizen-led nonprofit organization credited with jump-starting Chattanooga’s remarkable rebirth in the last decades of the 20th century. As she pecked at the keys of her computer, the loss finally set in.

She wanted to hold on to what she and hundreds of others had helped build but ultimately she couldn’t save it.

It seemed very few wanted to continue pioneering an approach to civic engagement that could teach a lesson to the world, despite the strides that had been made. Venture had served its purpose, some of the very people who had once argued for its permanence would say. It had given birth to an extraordinary story, as well as new dreams of growth and development, far beyond what anyone had imagined possible. That was enough.

What was left of Cooper’s own vision, however, was grief, a sadness that would remain, festering in the corners of her mind for decades.



A group meets during Chattanooga Venture's Vision 2000 process to discuss citizens' ideas for Chattanooga's future. About 1,700 attended Vision 2000 sessions at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE BIRTH OF A VISION

A DECADE before the grief, however, there was great excitement.

Few in or outside the movement to change Chattanooga's culture of top-down decision-making knew what to expect when Venture launched in the summer of 1984, asking Hamilton County residents: "Would you like to have a greater role in the future of Chattanooga?"

For so many years Chattanooga's future had been mapped out in the halls of the tony Mountain City Club. Citizens, cynical and frustrated, believed there was little hope for

reform, studies had shown.

Still, many responded with a resounding yes to Venture's call.

"The most exciting thing is that they welcome anybody and everybody," a special education teacher from Red Bank gushed to the reporter the day of Venture's grand opening at the old Ross Hotel on Georgia Avenue.

"This country started with civic involvement. Venture is beginning to draw people back into the workings of their government," a contractor said the same day.

A high-school counselor called Venture



Citizens participate in Chattanooga Venture's Vision 2000 community-planning process. During sessions, participants were asked to write down and share their best ideas.
CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

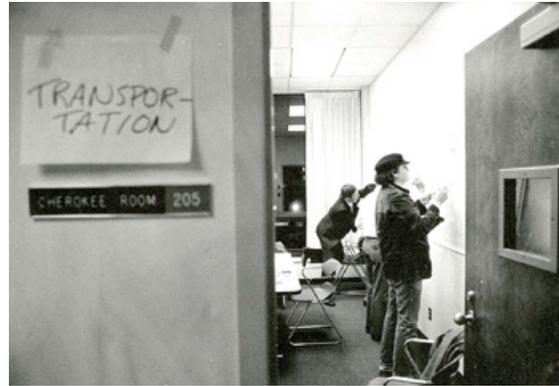
“the best thing invented since the wheel. It will hopefully help get this community out of the doldrums.”

And interest multiplied when Venture announced its signature effort: a community-led planning process it called Vision 2000.

About 1,700 attended Vision 2000 sessions at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga's student center designed to collect ideas” to improve “work, play, place, people, government and future alternatives.” Every opinion was counted, and no idea was considered too big or too small, trained facilitators told the groups that met to brainstorm the six topics. To ensure strong attendance, Chattanooga Venture, which was funded by the Chattanooga-based Lyndhurst Foundation, provided transportation and child care for those who needed it.

Many of the ideas were solutions to practical, street-level problems. A nurse, frustrated by the number of women she treated for abuse, suggested the city's first battered women's shelter. Other participants, frustrated by the lack of activities available for latchkey kids, suggested after-school programming. None existed at the time.

The list of needs grew and grew. What about a group home for troubled boys? A media campaign to end teenage pregnancy? A new county-city jail? An urban magnet school? A panel to address labor-manage-



Facilitators, trained in nominal group technique, write down citizens' ideas during Chattanooga Venture's Vision 2000 community-based planning process, held at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

ment relations? A city council/mayoral form of government?

Then, after all community ideas were collected, the community was called together again to vote on the long list of 2,500 ideas. Six months later, the 40 community-determined priorities of Vision 2000 were handed off to Venture task forces that anyone with an interest could join.

Compelling scientific studies undergirded the approach, formally called “nominal group technique.” In the industrial era, paternalistic elites didn't make decisions by committee, and they justified the closed culture by assuring themselves that they knew better. They had the money, the connections, and often the education that qualified them. Yet, study after study was showing that often their choices, made in a vacuum, were dead wrong. The wisdom of a crowd almost always trumped the wisdom of its smartest member.

Looking back from the perspective of the 21st century, the Tennessee Aquarium, and the surrounding development it spurred stands as the most tangible result of Venture, but a survey conducted in 1992 showed far more was accomplished. Over nearly a decade, 223 programs and projects reflected the 40 community goals determined through the Vision 2000 process, generating \$790 million in investment.



Ron Littlefield, then executive director of Chattanooga Venture, right, records the group's ideas while directing a meeting during the Vision 2000 community-based planning process, which began in 1984. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

"SOMETHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN"

STILL, BEFORE anything tangible resulted from Venture's Vision 2000, the very young nonprofit's community planning experiment was drawing attention from across the country.

Nowhere, according to journalists and urban planners at the time, had such a process been attempted, and nowhere had an attempt at community engagement seen such widespread community buy-in.

Momentum multiplied when James Rouse, arguably America's most influential urban

planner and developer, visited Chattanooga in November 1984, as Vision 2000 was underway, and crowned Venture the rising hope for fledgling cities across the country.

Rouse, who had made his fortune from the shopping malls and suburbs that grew out of the white flight that followed integration, had come to Chattanooga thanks to Rick Montague, the son-in-law of Coca-Cola bottling heir Jack Lupton who, at the time, headed Lyndhurst, the Lupton family foundation.

Over the years, Rouse had become pas-



Nationally renowned developer James Rouse speaks to Chattanooga news media about Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise, a nonprofit organization he and Chattanooga Venture helped found to make local housing fit and livable for all, especially the poor.
CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

sionate about the housing needs of the poor, and he told Montague, when they met at a conference, that he was looking for a city willing to partner, with his foundation, the Enterprise Foundation, to create a model for providing safe and affordable housing, as well as neighborhoods that celebrated economic and racial diversity.

Chattanooga could be an example to the entire nation, he believed. Venture was proving that.

“[I sense] a very impressive spirit here that something is going to happen in this city,” Rouse said on the stage of the Tivoli Theatre in the fall of 1984 before a crowd of more than 800 people.

His challenge would lead Venture to help create Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise, a nonprofit originally intended to build affordable housing, offer loans for home repairs and provide financial assistance for potential home owners.

Still, while Rouse’s visit validated Venture’s work, it also revealed a tension within the movement.

Many business leaders had reluctantly backed Venture only after Lupton had of-

fered his support. They liked the attention the city was getting from the Vision 2000 process, but they remained more interested in solving the city’s image problems than transforming the way decisions were made.

How could they attract more tourists and new industry, they asked Rouse, who had once played a key role in revitalizing Baltimore’s downtown when he developed an aquarium and shopping district on the city’s riverfront.

Help Chattanooga, listen to Chattanooga, Rouse insisted when he visited Chattanooga in 1984, and the image problems will take care of themselves.

Once home, Rouse offered a more detailed response in a letter to Dan Frierson, then-vice president of the nonprofit Allied Arts.

In Baltimore, he and others had brushed aside the participation of the larger community, but times had changed, Rouse wrote. Political action required broad support. Plus, the community could offer strong leadership.

Nonprofits like Venture would pave the way to the future, he believed.

“Clearly,” he wrote. “(Venture) has mounted strong momentum which must be maintained and strengthened.”



A drawing by former Chattanooga Times cartoonist Bruce Plante shows Mai Bell Hurley, Chattanooga Venture's first board chair, holding a package that includes images of the most significant players in the city's renaissance. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE WISH LIST

MAI BELL HURLEY, one of Venture's architects and the nonprofit's first board chairperson, agreed with Rouse. Chattanooga needed community leadership. After all, in her opinion, the powers that be had led the city nowhere thus far.

But Hurley, one of the most influential women in the city at the time, wasn't a populist or an idealist, despite being so vocal about the need for bottom-up decision making. She was a pragmatist.

It was wonderful that so many had engaged in the Vision 2000 process, she wrote Lyndhurst Vice President Jack Murrah after the six-month process had ended.

"There is a blue sky, kid-in-a-candy-store quality" to Vision's 40 goals, "which certainly is hopeful," she wrote. "But (it) will only be helpful if reason and intelligence are brought to bear on its prospects."

The revolution required dollars and cents, she believed, as well as a degree of savvy. So Hurley, the consummate fund-



Mai Bell Hurley, Chattanooga Venture's first board chairperson, speaks in 1985 to media and citizens about the state "wish list," the five capital projects Hurley believed best reflected the community's 40 Vision 2000 goals. Then-Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander stands behind Hurley in a navy blazer. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

raiser, began working the political channels that would bring resources to bear.

To grease the skids, Hurley, the city mayor and a handful of business and nonprofit leaders turned to then-Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander. Memphis had received millions in state dollars to redo its aging Orpheum Theatre and its iconic tourist district, Beale Street, and Chattanooga needed funding too, the delegates insisted.

The governor wanted to help, he assured Hurley, but Alexander had stipulations. He would only support bricks-and-mortar projects that were bold and unique. An example, he offered, might be a state aquarium on Chattanooga's riverfront, an idea that had been proposed a few years earlier by University of Tennessee students and their mentor, architect Stroud Watson.

Once home, leaders of Venture debated how best to whittle down the 40 Vision 2000 goals to a short list of capital projects that might entice the governor. At first, it

seemed Venture leaders would let the public decide.

Records show a Venture committee was working to develop a survey that would allow the public to convert the Vision 2000 goals into a list of capital projects. Alexander even wrote a cover letter in which he called Venture "the most important urban initiative in Tennessee" and asked for "advice on which goals are most important" and "what specific projects should be undertaken."

Hurley quickly took over, however. Without seeking board approval, she began creating the list herself. Privately, she tested her ideas on those she respected or those with power who might stand opposed. Finally, she sought the approval of Lupton, as well as the city mayor and the governor's staff.

"Timing now is everything," Hurley wrote to Cooper, who was then on staff with Lyndhurst. "The tide seems to be turning in our direction ... The advice we are getting from political experts is to keep a steady course

... My real concern is that we not sponsor an opportunity to change the package.”

The decision backfired, however, when word of a finished “wish list,” as it became called, was leaked to the media.

The “wish list,” shaped by the advice of business and political leaders, included funding requests for a river park and a fishing pier, both named by the public as priorities in the Moccasin Bend Task Force meetings. The Tivoli Theatre and Bessie Smith Hall, a performing arts center to be built on M.L. King Boulevard, were named.

████████████████████
ANGRY VENTURE
MEMBERS PASSED
OUT BUMPER
STICKERS THAT
READ: “RETURN
VENTURE TO THE
PEOPLE!”

But the “wish list” also included a state aquarium — which came as a surprise to some.

An aquarium had not been named as one of the 40 Vision 2000 goals, but, in a booklet, published after the community planning process had ended, an aquarium had been listed in a bullet point under the goal to “establish a comprehensive riverfront development plan.”

A “state ‘fish tank’ on the river” was listed, along with hundreds of other citizen ideas, during the Vision 2000 meetings.

Listing an aquarium would cement the governor’s support. That seemed clear to Hurley. And its inclusion had to be protected, she believed, because some thought funding for existing attractions such as the Tennessee Valley Railroad Mu-

seum and Memorial Auditorium should trump an aquarium.

“We need to stay united behind the package,” Hurley wrote Cooper. “It combines populist sentiment for the river and expert/professional advice about the best way to start the development!”

Leading up to the Venture board meeting, angry Venture members passed out bumper stickers that read: “Return Venture to the people!” and gathered at a city commission meeting to voice their opposition to the “wish list.”

“Venture is more than Mai Bell Hurley and Ron Littlefield,” a Venture board member said. “(They) don’t bring us into the process. (They) don’t get a consensus and then cut us off and go in here and talk to politicians ... behind everyone’s backs.”

“I feel that we lost track of our primary purpose,” Pat Wilcox, a Chattanooga Times editorial writer and board member, told Hurley when the Venture board met. “The only people who were at the table were the people who had always been there.”

Others, including Montague and Littlefield, stood behind Hurley’s “wish list.”

Cooper, troubled, pleaded with Hurley to hold public meetings that could educate confused or frustrated citizens about aquariums and the economic benefits they had brought to other cities, but Hurley didn’t want the aquarium to become a public debate.

Meanwhile, Hurley’s maneuvering paid off. Before the close of 1985, Alexander called with news. Chattanooga would be getting a windfall of \$9 million, a funding pot that would radically shape the future of the renaissance already underway.

LUPTON'S WAR

FEW WOULD EVER know about Hurley's role in shaping the state funding package because, to most, it seemed obvious that the puppet master, for better or worse, was Lupton.

After all, Lupton represented the deep pockets behind Lyndhurst, the Moccasin Bend Task Force and Venture. He also had been a generous donor to Alexander's gubernatorial campaigns.

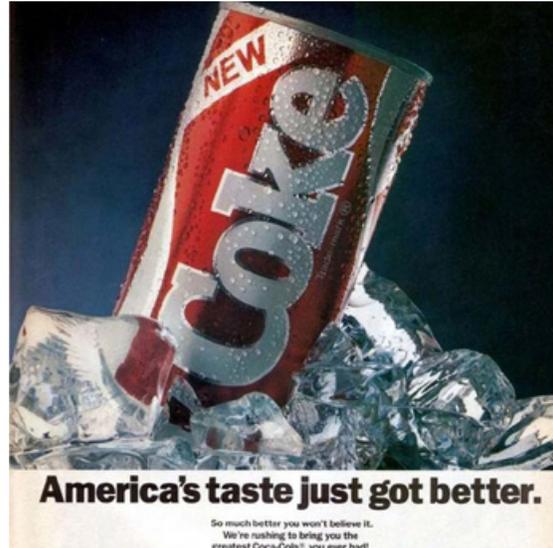
Venture's Vision 2000 and its big talk about bringing bottom-up leadership to Chattanooga was all for show, some whispered, a theory still posited today. From the beginning, Lupton and his friends had wanted an aquarium and nothing else, some suspected. "Jack's fish tank," many opposed would call it.

In reality, Lupton, who didn't attend a single Venture meeting and had remained relatively hands off, had originally opposed the idea of an aquarium.

At the time, there wasn't a single aquarium in the U.S. losing money. So, for cities with access to a waterfront, an aquarium was a smart gamble. That was why the UT architectural students had pitched the idea in 1983. It was also why Steven Carr, the Cambridge-based planner hired by the Moccasin Bend Task Force, had worked an aquarium into the final plans for the Tennessee Riverpark.

Still, Lupton was unconvinced. He was especially cold on the idea of an aquarium that celebrated the local freshwater ecosystem, preferring instead something like a sportfishing center, letters show.

Eventually, it was Alexander who talked Lupton into backing and funding the aquarium that would become the catalyst



An advertisement for New Coke published in 1985. The soft drink, backed by Jack Lupton, the Chattanooga-based Coca-Cola bottling magnate, was an enormous flop and was pulled just 79 days after being launched. COCA-COLA CO.

to downtown development and tourism.

At the time, unbeknownst to most, it was Coke's rival, Pepsi, not an aquarium, that Lupton obsessed over.

Pepsi, a sweeter alternative to Coke, was drawing customers with a modern marketing campaign that played into the culture wars raging in the 1980s.

Lupton, the country's largest bottler, wanted Coke to go on the offensive in the soda fight, and he convinced reluctant Coca-Cola executives to go along with a new strategy.

Coke, like Chattanooga, needed to move into the new era, he believed, and like Lyndhurst it had to take big risks.

Soon, an advertising response was launched and, in secret, the Coke laboratories began work on a new, sweeter formula with a bit less bite.

Market research said the new formula was a home run. Only 10 percent of those who tested New Coke didn't like it.

But New Coke, announced in April 1985, was an enormous flop and triggered an unprecedented brand backlash that is still studied by business school students to this day. New Coke was pulled, just 79 days after its launch, and Coke was relaunched as Coca-Cola Classic.

The whole debacle, which was unfolding as Vision 2000 wrapped up



Above is a button worn by participants in the Pepsi Challenge that chose Coke over Pepsi in the famous test taste hosted by Pepsi as part of its advertising strategy against Coke. COCA-COLA CO.

and Hurley was ironing out the state "wish list," embarrassed Lupton, who, despite his distaste for the media, had served as a spokesman for the new product.

Soon, Montague would find Lupton sitting alone in a Tallan Building conference room, staring at a wall that displayed a map of all his Coke plants.

"It's all gone," he said, without emotion, his way of communicating the split decision to sell his company shares for \$1.4 billion.

A RIFT

THE 1986 SALE, a move that shocked many, would further change the direction of the Chattanooga renaissance.

Suddenly, Lupton, armed with an enormous windfall, had attention to spare, which he turned to Montague, who by then was working on his next big idea for how to move Chattanooga forward.

The public had created a vision, but who would see it through? The answer, Montague found after much research, was incubating in St. Paul, Minn.

The Lowertown Redevelopment Corp. was a nonprofit seeking to revitalize an old warehouse district in St. Paul with a \$10 million grant from a local foundation. With

the money, the organization bought property and recruited developers to give the area new life, but its work was tempered.

Afraid their efforts might displace lower-income, working residents as redevelopment led to higher real estate prices and rents, the nonprofit's leaders tried to set up checks and balances that would protect the district from the phenomenon of gentrification, then sweeping America. For example, the St. Paul group was radically transparent and managed by a diverse board.

Chattanooga needed an exact replica, Montague argued, a development engine that had the people's trust and diverse interests in mind. "Greater Chattanooga Partnership Inc.," as he called it, would

“WHAT HAVEN’T WE PUT, MAYBE THE INDIGENT OR THE LAME?
AND THE BLACK MEMBER IS BEING APPOINTED BY PEOPLE THAT THE
COMMUNITY APPOINTED. SO THEY CAN’T LOOK FUNNY AT US.”

- JACK LUPTON

be another major step in toppling the old order, which favored business interests above all, he believed.

Cooper, working alongside Montague at Lyndhurst, wholeheartedly agreed with the approach.

“Chattanooga has been plagued by a history — or at least by a pervasive attitude — that the city is sharply divided along class and race lines and that only certain ones on one side of that line get to make decisions,” Cooper wrote Montague. “In the long run, the citizens will have to pay (for) a large portion of these efforts through public funds and will be the users and consumers of the developments. Their attitude toward them and their involvement in them will continue to be crucial to their success.”

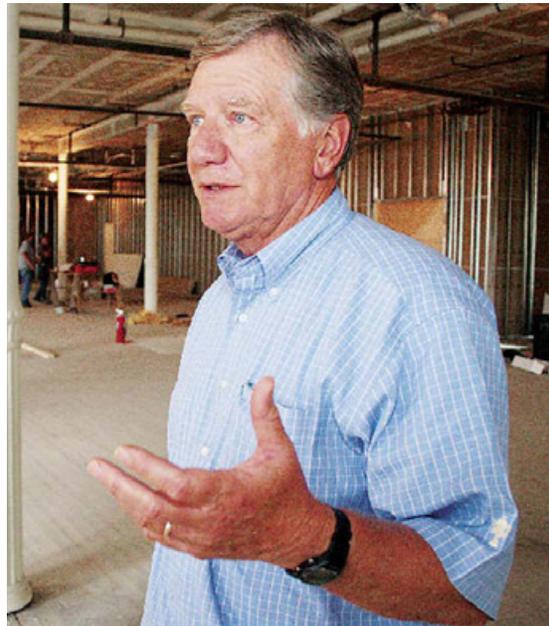
The stumbling block on this path, however, was Lupton.

For one, Lupton didn’t like the name Montague had settled on. RiverCity Co. was more fitting, he thought.

Montague named Jim Bowen, who had worked with him on the Moccasin Bend Task Force, to head the new development nonprofit, which would be seeded with \$4.5 million from Lyndhurst. The task force, which predated Venture, had been the first Lyndhurst-backed effort at open and transparent public planning.

Lupton, meanwhile, had a different person in mind. Bill Sudderth, a developer who had worked with Lupton, had a background in real estate.

The transparency posed by Montague was another point of contention. Lupton didn’t want to do business in public, even if



Bill Sudderth was Jack Lupton’s choice to head RiverCity, a private nonprofit created to spur downtown development and oversee projects such as the Tennessee Aquarium and the Tennessee Riverwalk. STAFF FILE PHOTO

it was, in many ways, the public’s business. It was democratic enough that the board would be made up of various community and elected representatives, he thought.

“You can’t do much better than we have tried to do as representation is concerned,” Lupton told a Chattanooga Times reporter in 1986. “What haven’t we put [on the board], maybe the indigent or the lame? And the black member is being appointed by people that the community appointed. So they can’t look funny at us.”

Lupton also had an opinion about who should be on the executive board of the new nonprofit, and Montague soon found he wasn’t on the list.



Former Coca-Cola bottling magnate Jack Lupton addresses a large crowd that had gathered downtown to celebrate the groundbreaking of the Tennessee Aquarium. Lupton had originally opposed the idea of an aquarium but later chose to personally shoulder a third of the costs. His family's foundation, Lyndhurst, also provided funding. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE SABBATICAL

THERE WAS A part of Montague that understood why his father-in-law pushed him aside: He had never run a company. While he had many talents, no one considered him a businessman. Development was not his expertise.

Still, the move frustrated Montague. RiverCity, like so many other Lyndhurst initiatives, had been his brainchild, after all, and he had worked hard to lay the groundwork for it to be successful. But who was he to complain? It was Lupton's money. It was Lupton's foundation. It was Lupton's show, Montague reasoned.

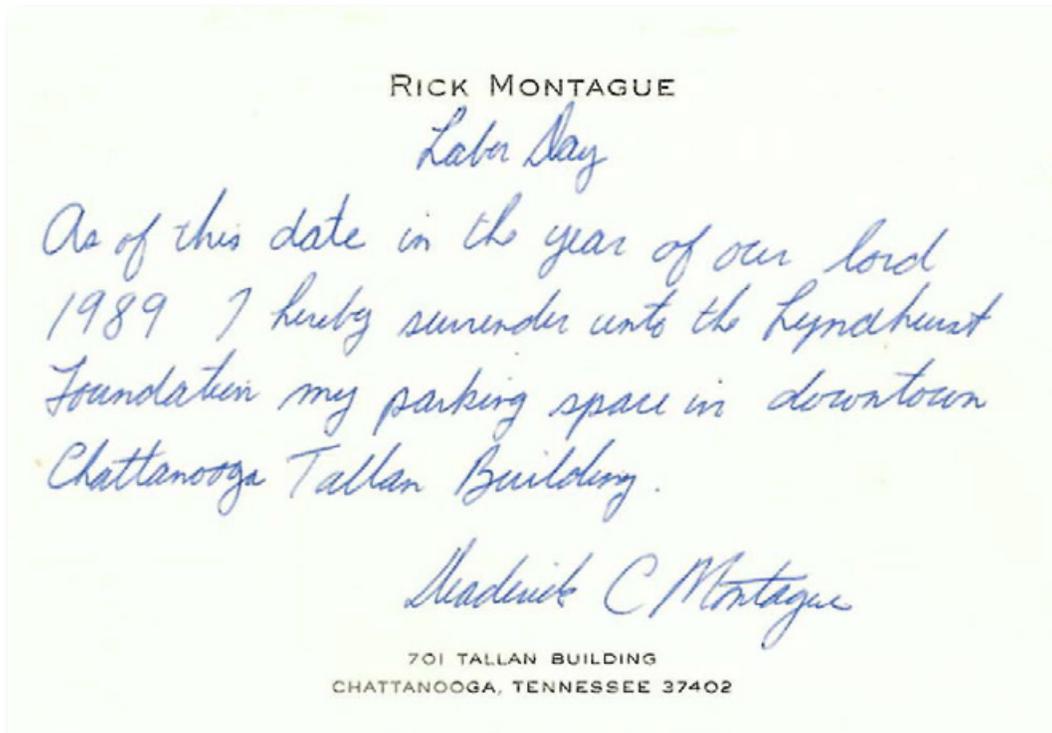
What's more, Montague loved his quirky, unpredictable father-in-law.

Still, in the ensuing months and years,

their relationship grew more tense. They disagreed about the look and focus of the aquarium, which Lupton by then was fully behind, having agreed to shoulder a third of the costs and even engage in public, verbal warfare over its necessity.

"We are going to build the Tennessee State Aquarium," Lupton once wrote Ward Crutchfield, a state senator who had insulted Lupton in print. "And we're not going to charge the taxpayers another red cent — and you know it! Now you take that message back to the boys who put you up to this crap!"

Montague and his father-in-law also continued to disagree about the type of leadership the city needed, as community engagement and goal-setting gave way to actual



Rick Montague jotted this note to Eleanor Cooper in 1989. Montague headed the Lyndhurst Foundation for 10 years before his father-in-law, Jack Lupton, asked him to take a yearlong sabbatical during a period of mounting disagreement. Montague chose not to return to work at Lyndhurst after his sabbatical ended. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

development. Montague was an insider, yet he couldn't convince those spearheading the aquarium and RiverCity to see the benefits of transparency and public participation, he told Cooper in a letter a few years later.

"I felt psychologically hemmed in by JTL (Lupton)," Montague wrote.

Then, as RiverCity was buying up more than 30 acres downtown to later be sold and developed, Lupton made another surprising move.

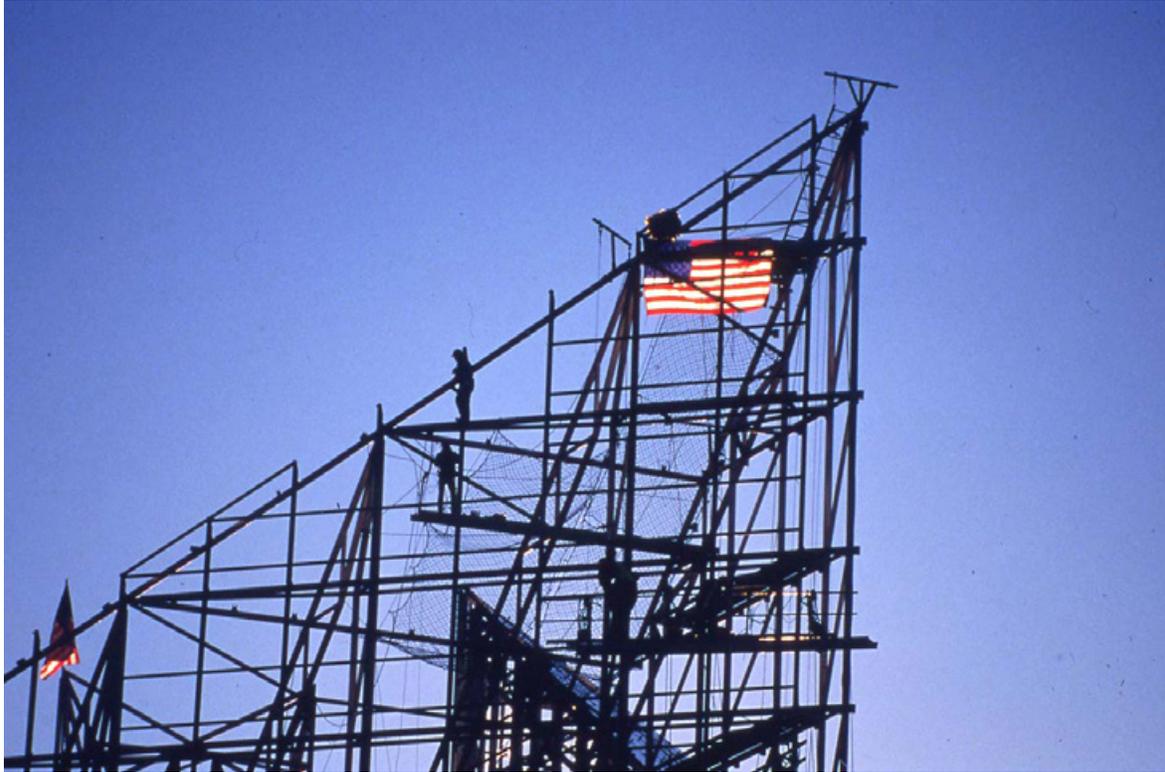
"You have put in 10 good years for me," he told Montague in the summer of 1987. It

was time for a sabbatical.

Jack Murrah, a longtime Lyndhurst staff member and close friend of Montague, would assume Montague's role at Lyndhurst, the newspapers announced, though Montague would remain on the board.

For years, Murrah, Cooper and Montague, who never rejoined the Lyndhurst staff after being put on sabbatical, tried to understand Lupton's decision. Was it about ego? Control? The loss of Coke?

Lupton never offered an explanation.



Workers construct the peaks of the Tennessee Aquarium, which opened in 1992. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE MESSENGER

A S MONTAGUE'S role in the renaissance was changing, so was Venture's.

RiverCity, which launched in 1986, began driving the city's physical transformation, working hard to stir downtown development and manage the implementation of the Tennessee Riverwalk.

The aquarium, which wouldn't open until 1992, was underway.

Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise, another child of Venture, also took center stage. It had opened with funding from Lyndhurst and real-estate mogul Bob Corker in

1986 with the bold aim of making housing for the very poor fit and livable within a decade, according to records. Ironically, CNE ended up working more and more with RiverCity to develop market-rate housing that would draw the middle class to Chattanooga.

Venture's place in the community, however, became cloudier.

Hurley remained as Venture board chairwoman, while also serving on the board of Lyndhurst and RiverCity, but Littlefield, the nonprofit's first executive director, left in 1986 to run for public office. He would go on to be elected to two terms as the city's mayor.

To replace Littlefield, Jim Hassinger, who had been working at the planning commission, was hired to run Venture, then a few years old and still solely funded by Lyndhurst.

Under Hassinger, Venture hosted a series of community forums on “policy choices facing the city,” but Venture’s main focus turned to public relations. A changing Chattanooga was gaining more and more notice outside the city. Scholars, hoping to find a model that could be passed on to other troubled post-industrial cities, even gave Venture’s experiments a name: “The Chattanooga process.”

As interest grew, some group had to step into the marketing and promotions role, Hassinger argued. Also, with the conclusion of the Vision 2000 planning process and the controversy surrounding the state “wish list,” local trust and interest had begun to wane. So Venture also needed a campaign aimed at Chattanoogaans.

In agreement, at first, Murrah and the Lyndhurst board funded the development of an extensive marketing plan.

RiverCity, Lyndhurst and the Chamber of Commerce would play a role in promotion, but Venture should serve as ground zero, the 1988 report argued, because it connected with the people and played the largest role in sparking the turnaround. Still, Venture would never own the rights to the story.

“Hold everything!” Lupton wrote after reading the consultant’s report.

“We are focusing on the messenger and not on the message,” Hurley wrote the consultants, after hearing their strategy. “What is the message? And who will say what it will be?”

Behind the scenes, letters show Hurley worked to derail the marketing plan, which positioned Venture as the lead communicator. Her interest in Venture was giving way to new commitments. RiverCity, she and Lupton agreed, should be the promoters of downtown, as well as the teller of Chattanooga’s story.

Meanwhile, an ideological divide be-



Jim Hassinger was Chattanooga Venture’s second executive director. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

tween the renaissance architects became more and more apparent.

Hurley, once Venture’s loudest advocate, was beginning to think the citizen-led nonprofit no longer had a role to play. Less than a year after the marketing plan was debated, she left the organization she had given birth to and became the first woman elected to the Chattanooga City Council, formed after a federal judge ruled the city’s longstanding commission-style government violated the constitutional rights of black residents.

Venture board members believed the organization should be working harder to connect with and empower Chattanoogaans and avoid any semblance of elitism. After all, Venture had launched to improve the community by engaging all citizens in local decision-making.

Hurley, however, had had an epiphany, she wrote Montague in 1989.

Venture had always been elitist, she argued, and that was its virtue.



Chattanooga Venture leaders pose for a picture in front of a Venture sign in 1986. From left are Mai Bell Hurley, Rick Montague, the Rev. Robert Keesee, Jim Hassinger and Ron Littlefield. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

“It was designed ... for those that want to be hopeful and helpful, for those who want to do something for others, who want progress and change, who are tolerant, who have taste, who believe that this community is capable of being better than it is,” she typed to Montague. And it should resist the “average aspirations of the average Hamiltonian.”

If Venture wasn’t willing to be unpopular, she wrote, then there was no reason for it to continue.

Montague, saddened by her new thinking, disagreed.

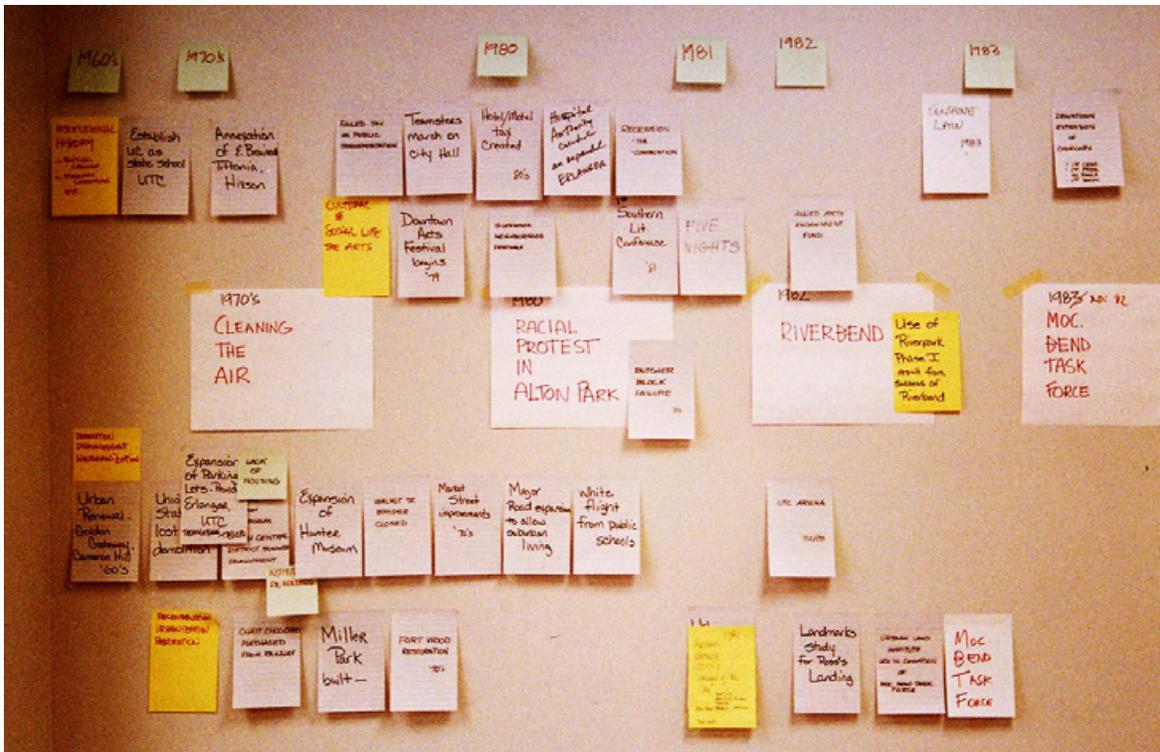
Chattanooga desperately needed the peacemaking and consensus building that Venture had once embodied.

“If leadership forces cannot adopt listening as the primary element within leader-

“IF LEADERSHIP FORCES CANNOT ADOPT LISTENING AS THE PRIMARY ELEMENT WITHIN LEADERSHIP, THEN ALL WILL BE VANITY AND ALL WILL BE ARROGANCE AND OUR GLORIOUS PROJECT WILL BECOME TOMBSTONES!”

- RICK MONTAGUE

ship,” Montague replied. “then all will be vanity and all will be arrogance and our glorious project will become tombstones!”



Post-it notes, detailing local history before and after the city renaissance began, stretch across the walls in Chattanooga Venture's office. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

ONE MORE ROUND

HASSINGER, Venture's director, would leave Venture not long after Hurley.

So Montague, determined to return Venture to its roots as a catalyst, convener and consensus builder, stepped in as Venture board chairman for a short time. He turned to Cooper, still on staff with Lyndhurst, for help.

Many, including Hurley, it seemed, had forgotten the nonprofit's back story and mission.

"The stories, the emerging plans and the context must be repeated again, and again, and again," Montague wrote Cooper. "Until some group fills this need, the heady days of the ear-

lier '80s won't return, and the renewal we seek will not take place. ... Before people can feel they belong, they must first understand."

Quickly, Cooper, who left Lyndhurst in the fall of 1990 to head Venture, worked to right the ship.

She asked Murrah, then president of Lyndhurst, to increase its funding, justifying the request by outlining a slew of new activities for the organization that would help it reconnect with Chattanooga.

Under Cooper's leadership, Venture opened a "facilitators bank," which offered trained individuals who could help burgeoning community groups with planning and



A Chattanooga police officer works with residents in Highland Park in 1992 to cultivate a community garden, one of the projects Chattanooga Venture helped the neighborhood start. In the early 1990s, Venture helped dozens of neighborhoods organize and address their hyper-local needs and concerns.
CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

conflict resolution. In addition, consultants were hired to help neighborhoods organize and identify their hyper-local concerns. Venture also published materials and organized community meetings to educate locals on the new form of city government. A separate project involved Venture in helping public housing residents learn to self manage the government-subsidized property they shared.

But her boldest idea was not a new one: The city needed to come together again and engage in the visioning process that had put Chattanooga on the map.

In the early 90s, Venture was inundated with calls from journalists, urban planners, civic activists and political leaders,

all wanting to know how “the Chattanooga Process” could be used. And if the model, pioneered in Chattanooga, was giving hope to the rest of the county, why couldn’t it still serve the city that birthed it, Cooper thought.

The redux would be called Re-Vision 2000, but this time, Cooper was determined to learn from the past. In the first community visioning exercise, nearly a decade earlier, crowds had been far too white, middle class and middle aged, she believed. This vision would include far more diversity, and touch on what might have been missed by Vision 2000.

At first, Murrah was thrilled by the energy Cooper injected into Venture.

“Eleanor has taken Venture by storm,” he wrote to the Lyndhurst board. “Everything is changed or changing ... the agenda is bulging with new undertakings, both substantive and celebratory.”

Funding, however, was becoming a bit of a quandary, he acknowledged to the board.

Cooper wanted Lyndhurst to up its support, which sat at \$400,000 in 1991, by 50 percent, and Murrah told the board he thought Lyndhurst should be generous with Cooper in her first year as head of Venture. Still, he wrote, Lyndhurst couldn’t sustain that level of funding for Venture in future years. The foundation also was committed to being the principal funder of CNE, River-City and the Tennessee Aquarium, among other things. Venture was important to the community, he argued, but it needed to begin fundraising outside of Lyndhurst as well. A diverse pool of funders would best ensure its longevity.

Surprised but not dejected, Cooper accepted the challenge, but the reception of business and political leaders she approached for financial support was chilly.

“Venture — a bunch of rich people — just concerned with poor/social issues,” she wrote on a notepad, transcribing the thoughts of some city council members.

“We don’t need any new ideas,” she jotted



A Chattanooga Venture staff member helps residents in Harrison Bluff in 1992 come up with goals for their neighborhood. In the early 1990s, Venture helped dozens of neighborhoods organize and address their hyper-local needs and concerns. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

down, after another meeting, during which she had asked for support of Re-Vision 2000.

The “economic power structure” just couldn’t see how Venture was helpful, someone else explained to Cooper. The nonprofit “had outlived its usefulness.”

Then, a bigger challenge emerged.

Lupton was leaving Lyndhurst, he announced unexpectedly in October of 1991, and his children, most of whom lived outside of Chattanooga, would be taking over. It soon became clear that they wanted to take the family foundation in new directions.

At the first meetings of Lyndhurst’s newly configured board, Murrah argued Venture’s worth, while also acknowledging that Lyndhurst should reduce its funding and force Venture to be more financially independent. Still, the new board voted to stop funding altogether. CNE was addressing the

downtown housing deficit. RiverCity was overseeing the completion of the aquarium and the riverwalk and promoting economic development downtown. How was Venture still needed, they wondered.

After the vote in 1992, Murrah would deliver sobering news to Cooper. Lyndhurst would be severing ties with Venture, Murrah wrote, and would offer one final grant of \$1 million, the equivalent of two years’ funding, to see it through the transition.

How could the “essential ingredients of civic progress be made available without the exceptional and inevitably temporary support of a single foundation?” Murrah asked Cooper in the same letter.

“It is, perhaps, a great irony that the best time to force the resolution of that issue ... is when Venture is at the peak of its performance.”



Rick Montague, right, talks with citizens at a Re-Vision 2000 event at Miller Plaza in 1993. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

A FINAL BLOW

A S **LYNDHURST** pulled away from Venture, the future of the near-decade-old nonprofit seemed uncertain.

Without the protection of Lupton and Hurley, it seemed no political and business leaders were willing to fund the organization. The city's image problems were beginning to fade away. Chattanooga was back on the map and long-awaited development was underway, filling downtown with bodies and businesses.

Meanwhile, in early 1993, Re-Vision 2000, Venture's second community-led visioning process, was underway, and the 2,600 participants, from 40 Hamilton County zip codes, were sending another message

to Cooper. There was more work to be done.

And this new communitywide vision, Cooper believed, better reflected the city's diverse population and perspectives. Thirty percent of participants were under 25. Twelve percent were black. Twenty-four percent came from households earning less than \$20,000 a year. And 85 percent had not participated in Vision 2000.

"I felt valued," said Sajeena Geevarghese, a teenage Re-Vision 2000 participant who was interviewed for a short video about Venture. "Someone is finally listening."

"The least one sometimes can come up with the best idea," said Alberta Bayne, a black woman who bounced a baby on her

knee during one of Re-Vision meetings. “We may be common-thinking people, but we all are created equal.”

“The more voices that converge, the more they (leaders) have to listen,” said James Fother, then the pastor of Chattanooga United Church.

“Things can change,” said Alva Crowe, an American Indian resident. “Things can happen when people come together and work together.”

“We made a strong leap forward, we walked on the moon, so to speak” added then-Hamilton County Executive Dalton Roberts, referring to the first community visioning process. “So are we going to close down all our rockets now, or are we going to look at other planets? We certainly have not arrived. There are a lot of things we need to do.”

Still, the success of Re-Vision 2000 and the chorus of voices it ignited failed to motivate financial support for Venture.

So, in a last ditch effort, Cooper called Lupton. He alone could save it. She knew that much.

He was behind her, he told her when she reached out, and he agreed to gather a powerful group to brainstorm Venture’s future.

On June 30, 1993 some of the city’s most influential players responded to his call. Around a table at Venture’s headquarters on Broad Street sat Hurley, Roberts, Corker, photography business magnate Olan Mills and Chattanooga Times owner Ruth Holmberg. Accounting executive Joe Decosimo and developer brothers Bo and Bill Sudderth and Jim Catanzaro, who had been recently elected chairman of Venture, also came.

At first, the group debated whether it made sense for another organization, like RiverCity, to absorb Venture, but no conclusion was reached. They also debated Venture’s role in the community until Lupton broke in.

“I want to hear from Ele [Eleanor],” he said. Nervous, Cooper offered up the solution



Eleanor Cooper, left, meets at the Chattanooga Venture office with a group of local leaders called together by former Coca-Cola bottling magnate Jack Lupton, right. The meeting would deal the final blow to the nearly decade-old community planning nonprofit. ELEANOR COOPER

she thought would work best. Venture could divide into two units. One would continue to work with the community and incubate new ideas. The other would promote “the Chattanooga process.” With interest so high, it could serve as a source of revenue, she argued.

But midpitch, Lupton abruptly cut Cooper off.

He had changed his mind, he told the room.

Some in the group snickered. Lupton so often suffered from a sudden change of heart.

“Does anyone want to make the argument for why Venture should die?” he asked the room.

Hurley lifted her hand.

“I’ll take a stab at it,” she said.

A few weeks later Cooper found herself in the nightmare, hanging from the banister, alone.



Jim Catanzaro, then-president of Chattanooga State Community College, leads a Chattanooga Venture board meeting during his tenure as chair. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

LICKING WOUNDS

AFTER THE meeting Lupton would offer an olive branch: \$100,000. But Venture was already dead. Cooper could feel it.

The end, detailed in her journal, would be messy. Hoping to make what was left of Venture's funding last, Chairman Catanzaro came up with a plan to fire almost the entire staff without consulting Cooper, who was out of the country on vacation. She was told to execute the plan upon her return.

Shortly after, in the fall of 1993, Cooper, frustrated with the board's treatment of her and their failure to aid in fundraising, penned her resignation. When Lupton heard the news, he also wrote Catanzaro. It

was time, he said, to let Venture fade away.

"I ... am saddened by the ending of a vision that we shared and the rupture of an organization that once served the community," Cooper wrote Murrah, in the aftermath. "One lesson that is learned is that history does not last long."

Montague, always the optimist, tried to console her.

"We may have lost some small wars; we may have tried to please some corrupt, stupid, insane, inept and conspiratorial 'generals' in the war," Montague wrote to Cooper. "We did what we could."

They were idealistic, fed up with "the same old B.S., racism, class conflict and middlebrowism." They had wanted to trust and listen, to give power and voice to every-

day people who felt alienated and angry, he wrote. Later, though, they found they were alone in those hopes, and it hurt.

“Some key actors weren’t in the fight for the long haul, but, in truth, I don’t think they saw a long haul,” Montague wrote.

Still, it was a great ride, he added, and “the world changed a little bit - in some rather fundamental ways.”

A few weeks later, Murrah and Cooper met and tried to make sense of a decade as they hiked along a trail at the foot of Look-out Mountain.

Afterward, Murrah jotted Cooper a note.

“I have no more points to make about Venture,” he wrote. “What happened was that good people did the best they could with what they had every step of the way. Also some bad people did the best they could. Some died. Not enough.”

“And thus was the fall of the house of Usher.”

October 7, 1992

Dear Rick,

I thank you so much for your wonderful letter. I am truly touched by your faith in me. I don't know that I have anything other than an undying sense of expectations, and that may stem from seeds planted long ago, from some youthful expectation that change was possible. But your friendship and sharing the journey has made so much possible for me that would not have been otherwise. Whatever happens, I appreciate that very much.

And lots has happened, Rick. It is hard to feel it sometimes, because much of the pain of getting here has been inflicted internally. Change has exacted its price in ways we never anticipated, but that is why we live. The drama of real lives still exceeds fiction-- although if you keep writing, the balance may shift.

I appreciated your candidness on our walk. I value so much the openness that we have built over the years. And I know that few can share the pain and stress of this last year.

Rick, it has been your energy, your commitment and your vision that has driven most of the worthwhile initiatives so far. This city is now reeling from the impact, and it will be for years to come, although few can trace the source.

Let's walk and talk again and see the city as it changes.

Thanks, friend.

Yours,



Eleanor Cooper penned this letter of appreciation to Rick Montague in 1992. Both were fierce advocates of Chattanooga Venture. ELEANOR COOPER

AN END

IN THE spring of 1994, Murrah received a copy of Venture’s last grant report.

It detailed how Re-Vision 2000 had created a task force to carry out more than two dozen of the most important plans to emerge from the city’s new vision.

An update on the neighborhood networks detailed how Venture would continue to help neighborhoods organize. Under Cooper’s leadership, neighborhood associations had grown from six to nearly 80.

Cooper had resigned and the shell left of

Venture had moved to Chattanooga State Technical Community College. A few years later, it would disappear completely. But the report described how Venture was emerging from a difficult transition and was committed to seeing the new vision through.

Murrah, knowing that wasn’t the case, scribbled a note on a yellow sticky pad and stuck it on top of the report before he sent it to be filed.

“Mark this as the final report from Venture. Close the books. Burn the files.”

CHAPTER THREE

REWRITING A HISTORY, RECASTING A FUTURE

BY JOY LUKACHICK SMITH
AND JOAN GARRETT MCCLANE

A S THE DOWNTOWN TOUR went on, the story — told by area business leaders and boosters — started to sound scripted.

Each narration of Chattanooga's turn-around began the same way.

"In 1969, on the evening news, Walter Cronkite called Chattanooga the dirtiest city in America," another city leader told the group that had flown to Chattanooga from western Massachusetts in the fall of 2015.

The racial conflicts and divisions that plagued the city in the early 1980s weren't mentioned. Neither was the unprecedented effort to topple Chattanooga's longstanding culture of top-down decision making that favored businesses.

So, that night, after the group's tour and meetings had concluded, the visitors from Massachusetts sat together and discussed what they had seen and heard. Marcos Marrero, the economic director of Holyoke, Mass., was one of the first to speak up.

There was something about the rosy renaissance narrative that seemed off, he



Crowds gather on the Walnut Street Bridge during the 2016 Sunbelt Bakery Ironman 70.3 event. The popular pedestrian bridge stands as just one example of the legacy left by Chattanooga Venture, the nonprofit that opened in 1984 to spark a citizen-led planning revolution. The organization fizzled a decade later after some of its fiercest advocates pulled their support. STAFF FILE PHOTO

said. When they asked locals about the quality of the local public schools, they were told the Hamilton County school system was troubled. Where were the community's black leaders? His companions had the same questions.



Bailey Allen, Madeleine Dougherty and Mark Gilliland carry signs on North Moore Road during the 2016 annual M.L. King parade. The large sign challenges the claim of Outside Magazine, which called Chattanooga “The Best Town Ever” in 2015. STAFF FILE PHOTO BY TIM BARBER

The Chattanoogaans they met boasted of bold leadership and risk-taking, as well as strong “public-private partnerships.” Still, they weren’t bowled over by the beautiful city or its highly advertised, but loosely defined, “Chattanooga Way.” On first impression, Chattanooga seemed like so many other cities in America: Just one more place where serious political and economic problems hid beneath a veneer of artisan restaurants and new construction.

And, to a large extent, they were right. Studies were continuing to show that Chattanooga was, in fact, two cities, growing further apart, perhaps destined for collision in the years to come.

For example, one study released in early 2017 by the personal finance website Mag-

nify Money showed Chattanooga was one of the best places in the country to live for those earning more than \$100,000 a year. Another study published by researchers at Harvard University and the University of California-Berkeley, however, showed Chattanooga had some of the worst economic mobility rates in the country.

Like many, Marrero and his colleagues had come to Chattanooga in search of solutions to economic problems. Yet, they were also looking for innovative approaches to America’s stickiest problems: generational poverty, limited economic mobility and worsening class and race-based segregation, factors they knew threatened growth in the long term.

Hadn’t there been a people’s movement in Chattanooga, a vision, they wondered. The



Michael Gilliland leads a group of Covenant College graduates on “The People’s History” walking tour through downtown Chattanooga. Gilliland, 36, is the volunteer leader of Chattanooga Organized for Action, a grassroots group that, in recent years, has raised questions about discriminatory banking practices, as well as local affordable housing policy. STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG STRICKLAND

widely publicized story of Chattanooga’s citizen-led planning process had, in part, drawn them to the Scenic City. Where had that led? Did Chattanooga feel, as advertised, a shared sense of power and hope?

They had no idea where to turn for answers.

The original renaissance architects had passed the torch to new leaders. Coca-Cola bottling heir and iconoclast Jack Lupton, whose family fortune gave life to the Lyndurst Foundation, RiverCity, the Tennessee Aquarium and Chattanooga Venture, among many other things, had died. So had Mai Bell Hurley, the political juggernaut who helped secure the state funding that set downtown’s physical transformation in motion. And those who were still alive were in their late 60s and 70s, long retired, weary of public life and mostly forgotten.

Greg Richane, another member of the Massachusetts group, turned to Google.

He typed a string of words: “Social justice. Equity. Chattanooga.”

On the top of the page, one site stood out. Chattanooga Organized for Action — a grassroots group that, in recent years, has raised questions about discriminatory banking practices, as well as local affordable housing policy — seemed to offer the other side to the Cinderella narrative.

“It might come as a surprise to some that there are two Chattanoogaes,” the website read. “A city of opportunity for some, and a city where the gravity of poverty gains a stronger grip.”

It was after midnight, but Richane pulled up his email and began typing a request to Michael Gilliland, the 36-year-old volunteer leader of the nonprofit organization who worked full-time as a restaurant manager in the Bluff View Art District.

“Help me bring the whole story home.”

Gilliland, awake, wasn’t shocked by the note. After all, it wasn’t the first. It also wouldn’t be the last.

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY

THE TALLAN BUILDING loomed over M.L. King Boulevard as the group of Covenant College graduates gathered in late April of this year and waited for “The People’s History Tour” to begin.

It would be one of several narrated walks across the city that year, led by Gilliland and Jefferson Hodge, another young volunteer with Chattanooga Organized for Action. In the two years since connecting with the group from Holyoke, Mass., Gilliland had received numerous requests for information about the city’s history from those who felt dissatisfied by the shorthand, booster-backed version. An increased media spotlight on local problems related to poverty, crime, housing and education had revived interest in the city’s past.

Gilliland and Hodge started the tour on M.L. King Boulevard for a reason, they told the recent college graduates. Leaders are willing to admit to a polluted past. Yet Chattanooga’s long history of race and class conflict are brushed under the rug, they explained, before educating the group about the 1980 Ku Klux Klan shooting of five black women downtown, as well as the 1981 fight to rename Ninth Street as M.L. King Boulevard.

“If we don’t tell the accurate story, we’re never going to be able to address the problems we are now facing,” Gilliland said.

To Gilliland and Hodge, Chattanooga Venture, the nonprofit that jump-started the city’s turnaround, wasn’t even worth mentioning. Among the leadership class, there had never been genuine interest in the needs of poor and working-class Chattanoogaans, they told the students that day.



Covenant College graduates review historic photos and material given to them during “The People’s History” walking tour of downtown Chattanooga. The tour was organized by Michael Gilliland and Jefferson Hodge, two volunteers with Chattanooga Organized for Action. STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG STRICKLAND

It was a take on history that both Rick Montague, Lupton’s one-time son-in-law and the former head of Lyndhurst, and Eleanor Cooper, the last director of Venture, had feared. More than 30 years ago, they had believed — thanks to a groundswell of local support and a flood of outside praise — that they were standing at the center of a revolution that taught change and consensus were possible in a polarized America.

Cooper wrote Montague in 1990, just a few years before Venture faded away: “My goal, or one sign of whether we have been successful is that when we are Mai Bell Hurley’s age, there are lots of players, lots of diverse players, diverse in age, race, sex, location of residence, economic status, etc. Lots of ‘us’ making decisions, leading up progressive efforts, raising money, donating money and getting the glory.”

Today, that vision still proves elusive.



Citizens gather in the mid-1980s during Chattanooga Venture's Vision 2000 planning process, which lasted for six months, involved 1,700 Chattanooga residents and resulted in 40 community-chosen goals for the future. Academics would later call the experiment "the Chattanooga process." CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

A WAY, LOST

CITY LEADERS ASSERT Venture and its visioning experiments, Vision 2000 and Re-Vision 2000, left a lasting legacy.

"Today we do it so often it's in our DNA. It has its own name, it's the Chattanooga Way," RiverCity President Kim White told a group of University of Tennessee at Chattanooga students during a presentation in 2014.

In some ways, she's right. It's nearly impossible to find a local initiative that doesn't boast some form of citizen engagement.

"Nominal group technique," the formal name for the process Chattanooga Venture used during Vision 2000 and Re-Vision 2000, continues to be used by area organizations and consultants, albeit in much smaller settings.

Still, those who've studied Chattanooga's turnaround say the Chattanooga Way, or the Chattanooga process, as academics call it, was cast aside decades ago.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Venture took a radical approach to community planning.

Instead of asking the perceived best and brightest to chart Chattanooga's future course, Venture leaders went to the general public without an agenda, records show, and asked every member of the community to build and refine the city's goals.

This degree of engagement, which required enormous trust in the wisdom of diverse groups and highly skilled facilitation, simply doesn't exist on the scale it once did, argues Storm Cunningham, a redevelopment expert who studied Chattanooga for his book "reWealth!"

The private, nonprofit RiverCity, for example, only vets larger projects with the public after they are conceptualized and nearly ready to go. Leaders today, he said, ask more for approval than engagement.

These days, there is no shared vision for the future of Chattanooga, just a host of different groups engaging people in different ways and spinning off their own ideas about the future, informed largely by academics, experts, business leaders, politicians and foundation boards, he said.

Others who've studied Chattanooga agree with Cunningham's assessment.

"Local democratic participation tended to become more and more mirage or smoke-screen for elite manipulation and control," wrote Ernest J. Yanarella and Robert W. Lancaster in "Getting from Here to There?: Power, Politics and Urban Sustainability in North America," after studying Chattanooga's turnaround.

In the meantime, local political, economic and racial polarization has worsened, making a consensus on local problems and solutions seem more improbable than ever.

Of course, Chattanooga is not alone. Academics have been warning about the



Beverly Johnson, a facilitator during Chattanooga Venture's Re-Vision 2000 in 1993, writes down ideas presented by community members present. CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY

disintegration of community adhesion since the 1970s, pointing to falling trust in major institutions and dwindling membership in civic clubs and churches. A host of factors, including the advent of the Internet and social media, have driven Americans into isolated pockets, experts say. The divide seems to have deepened since the 2016 presidential election.

Still, Venture pushed back on the trend for a time and shouldn't have been killed, Cunningham said.

Cities need "renewal engines" such as Venture, Cunningham argues, because they serve three important and distinct purposes that fuel progress. They create and house a shared vision of the community's future. They foster buy-in and culture change, and they provide a neutral ground for partnering.

"They had no way of knowing how crucially important it is to keep visioning, culturing and partnering processes together in one organization, and for that organization to be seen as being of the people, run by the people, for the people," wrote Cunningham.



Kim White, CEO of RiverCity Co., speaks during a groundbreaking ceremony in the 700 block of Market Street in 2015. STAFF FILE PHOTO

"IT'S MORE DIFFICULT"

ON THE OTHER HAND, White, who has been at the helm of RiverCity for eight years, says she doesn't think the city needs another round of communitywide visioning or an organization such as Venture. She believes the right stakeholders need to continue to work together to tackle the city's next set of challenges.

"It's really about getting the right people in the room," she said. "Today you can't just say, let's do whatever you want. It's a lot more granular now. It's not just asking a group of citizens what they want to enact. It's more difficult to have a Venture."

Chattanooga Mayor Andy Berke, now serving a second term, said he also doesn't see the need for a community vision or a Venture. The public hasn't asked for such an approach, and his administration does a good job with civic engagement, he added.

"We do community engagement every day. That's an essential part of what I do ... part of my job is listening," said Berke. "It informs the decisions I make every day."

In recent years, however, more and more have cited a disconnect between the agendas of leaders and the needs of citizens.

"You call it Gig City. African-Americans call it rigged city," said the late community



Local Nation of Islam minister Kevin Muhammad speaks at Chattanooga City Hall in 2016, challenging Mayor Andy Berke's state of the city address. STAFF FILE PHOTO BY DOUG STRICKLAND

activist Joe Rowe, who along with a group of downtown property owners called on the city to suspend a controversial tax break program that Berke had revived in 2014.

Others were frustrated when public feedback was discarded after meetings in 2016 to determine how much parking developers were required to build to accommodate new housing.

“Some remembered the ‘good old days’ of Chattanooga Venture: openness, transparency, productive community discussions held in good faith,” Franklin McCallie, a Southside retiree, wrote in an editorial to the Times Free Press.

Community members voiced similar frustration with Berke's Violence Reduction Initiative, which was built by experts outside of Chattanooga without much public feedback.

“We stand before you today as the voice of the voiceless, the voice of those whose voices have fallen on deaf ears and whose deeds are not recognized in city hall and the

chambers of justice,” said local Nation of Islam minister Kevin Muhammad, who spoke to city council members in 2016 before a packed audience who had come to city hall to support his speech.

It's a bad omen for the future, Cunningham warns.

Cleveland, Ohio is a perfect example. Much like Chattanooga, Cleveland faced environmental embarrassment in 1969 when oily slime on its Cuyahoga River caught fire. And, much like Chattanooga, Cleveland, a former industrial town with a waterfront, became known for civic efforts that brought it out of crisis. But the public-private partnerships forged during that era fell apart in the early 2000s.

According to Cleveland State University economist Ned Hill, who studied the unraveling, the shift occurred with the emergence of a “less democratic, top-down community planning process that was driven almost exclusively by the city's business elite.”



Eleanor Cooper, 70, at her home on Missionary Ridge. In 2013, after five years of researching Chattanooga Venture and community learning theory, she published her dissertation through the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga titled "Citizens Changing Ideas Into Action: A Phenomenological Study of Community Learning." STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG STRICKLAND

REFLECTING

COOPER NEVER INTENDED to grow old in Chattanooga, a place she had considered narrow-minded and wedded to the past.

But her friend Montague changed that when he took over Lyndhurst, at the request of Lupton, and began pushing city leaders, with the help of allies like Hurley, to begin thinking in new ways.

In the 1980s, from her perspective, the city was surging with energy and excitement as partnerships, trust and confidence were built, first through the work of the Moccasin Bend Task Force and then through Venture.

Later, after Venture was killed by some of the very people who created it, doubt and skepticism set in. Perhaps Hurley was right. Maybe Venture had served its purpose and needed to die, Cooper thought at times.

While innovative, Venture was clearly imperfect. It lacked a diverse funding base. Nonprofits can rarely, if ever, rely on everlasting funding from a single foundation. It also lacked a large degree of racial and economic diversity, especially in its early years. Eventually, its influence began to wane as its most powerful members lost interest in its mission.

Yet, after enrolling at UTC in 2008 and

spending five years studying the early years of Venture for her doctoral dissertation, Cooper came to some of the same conclusions as Cunningham. Perhaps the Venture experiment could teach something to cities facing big challenges in the midst of growing polarization.

There was a reason traditional civic engagement models often led to little public buy-in.

For people to care and act, they need to feel connected. And Venture, in the beginning, at least, created connections that didn't exist before, Cooper said.

It created a community of people who, as Hurley often said, wanted to be "hopeful and helpful." People didn't just show up to a lecture and leave. They brainstormed. They learned from one another.

At each step of the visioning process, participants were given equal weight and equal control of the process. Those running the meetings weren't there to convince others to oppose or support anything. They were there to listen and moderate. Everyone's ideas, big or small, were recorded. And then

the long list of ideas gathered from the public was presented to the public, members of which voted on which ideas they thought should be top priority.

It's an approach that can still make the impossible seem possible, Cooper believes.

"Learning plus connection equals vision," she wrote in the conclusion of her dissertation. "Vision not only drives change but it also builds community. It has a multiplier effect."

These days, Cooper hopes a new generation, looking to innovate in the realm of civic engagement and consensus building, will care enough to learn from the city's past and build on her generation's successes and failures.

Others agree that renewal is needed.

"I laud Chattanooga for what they have accomplished but fault them for not looking ahead for a set of new challenges, new issues of today, that need to be addressed with vigor, originality and innovation," said Bob McNulty, founder of Partners for Livable Communities, the organization that introduced Chattanooga to the idea of public-private partnerships in the 1980s.

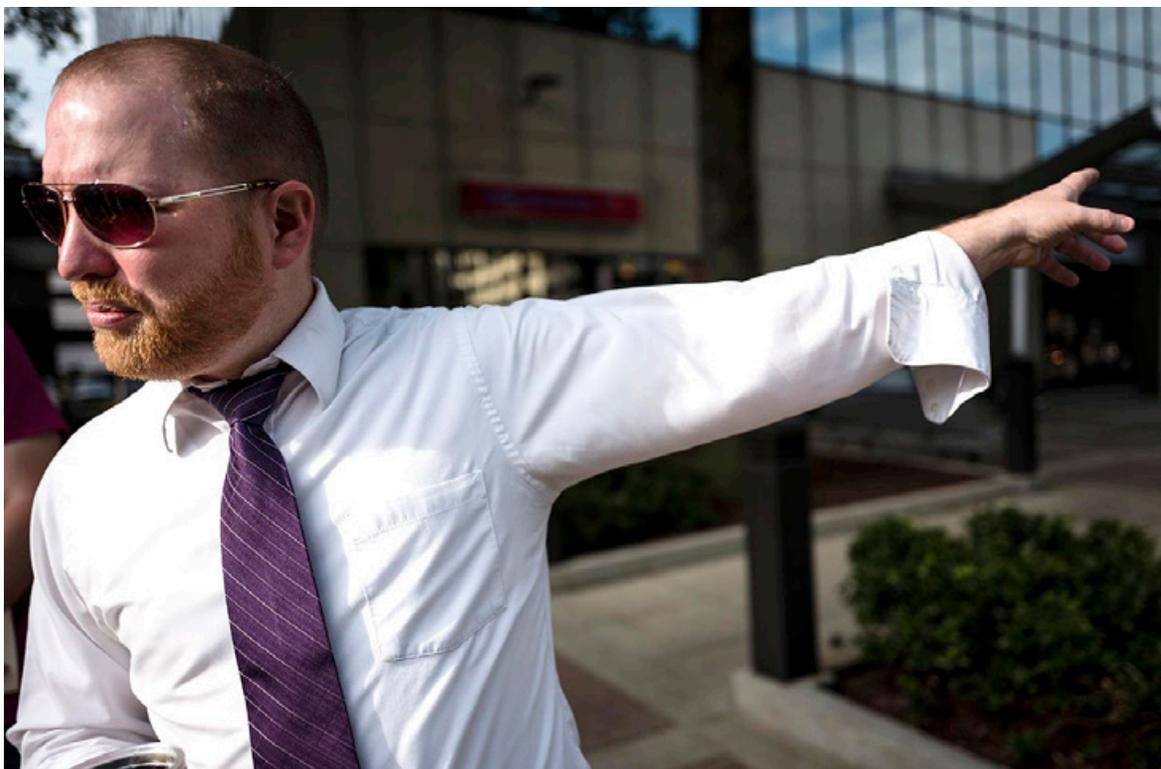
"START OVER"

Gilliland, who has been working since graduating from UTC to get local leaders to acknowledge and address the plight of working-class Chattanoogaans, was born in Red Bank in 1981, just as Montague and Cooper were beginning their work.

Still, while Gilliland admits Chattanooga is far more attractive than it was when he was growing up, he has never felt pride in the renaissance narrative of his hometown. To him, the city's story is told and retold simply to benefit Chattanooga's rich and powerful, who are poised to benefit from surging interest.

Like many, he never knew much about the motivations behind Venture. Those with money and influence eventually abandoned the program. So he assumed its big talk about changing local culture and giving voice to all Chattanoogaans had never been genuine.

Over the years, though, he found other local stories that did move him. The fights, some won and some lost, for workers' rights. The black attorneys who argued for due process in the face of mob violence. The civil rights protests. The federal cases, instigated by everyday citizens, that forced government to change.



Michael Gilliland grew up in Chattanooga but says he felt no pride in the city's renaissance narrative. He and others are working to create a citizen-led planning movement with similar aims to that of Chattanooga Venture. STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG STRICKLAND

“Those are the more inspiring stories,” he said.

And they led him into community organizing and activism, he said. They taught him that history doesn't just bend for the Jack Luptons of the world. Ordinary people who share a vision can change the course of a city, too.

The Venture era was certainly not the first time Chattanoogaans had organized and fought to be heard, although it may have been one of the only times the fight was endorsed, to a certain degree and for a short period, by those with money and power.

“I believe in democracy and consensus, the best of what Venture hoped for,” Gilliland said.

Venture may be dead, and the memory of it long faded. Still, its original call for a diverse city to come together and cast a vision for the future is relevant, especially today, Gilliland said.

And he and many others are working to make it happen, again.

In Nashville, a group called Nashville Organized for Action and Hope has made impressive strides organizing community groups and building consensus around issues such as affordable housing. Turnout in the most recent mayoral election significantly spiked, thanks in part to the group's work, news articles show.

While its efforts have been stalled at the legislative level, its success engaging the community offered hope to Gilliland and others, who have seen many efforts to address local problems fail to arouse action.

So, in September of 2016, a handful of Chattanooga Organized for Action members, local union members and local clergy formed Chattanoogaans in Action for Love, Equality and Benevolence and began working with the Gamalial Foundation, the faith-based nonprofit in Chicago that trained the

group in Nashville.

In the past, Gilliland said, Chattanooga Organized for Action had never reached out to churches or asked their congregants to engage in local social and political issues, but Gamalial challenged the Chattanooga nonprofit to begin building bridges. Gilliland is learning more and more, he said, that a successful movement requires partnerships across race, class, age, geography and political parties.

Since last fall, organizers of the new grassroots nonprofit, through one-on-one meetings, have been working to build a coalition of 20 organizations that can begin meeting to discuss a vision for the future of Chattanooga. At publication, eight organizations, including several black churches, had signed on.

They don't know what will bubble up from their efforts, Gilliland said. Those working to create a critical mass of interested groups aren't setting an agenda, right or left, much like the first leaders of Venture. They want the agenda to come from the whole, as the whole learns together and builds trust and community.

But, unlike Venture, the group isn't

courting the rich to fund their efforts.

It's a risk. Without big names and big foundations and big money, many will say their efforts are doomed. Gilliland knows that much is true.

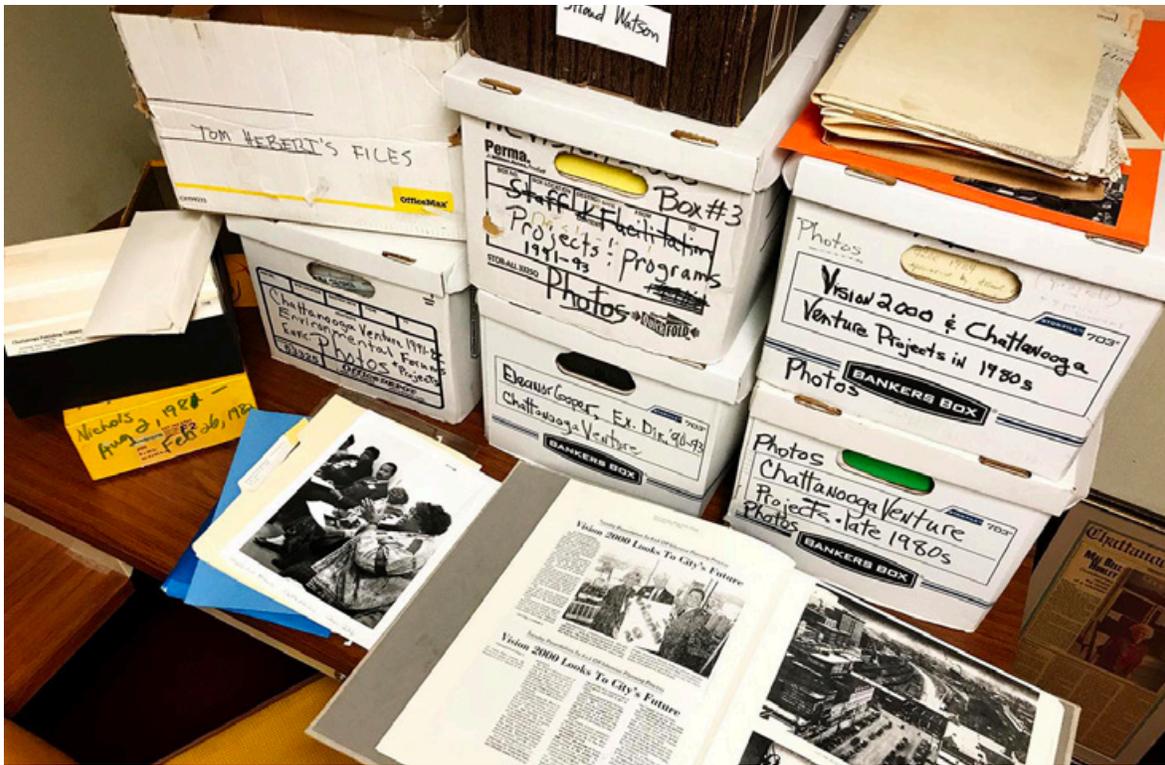
Still, there is a sense among the group that anything is possible. Just like those who toiled to birth Venture, those working to grow a new grassroots planning movement want to help the city avoid a damning crisis and offer real hope to communities that remain bitterly divided and politically log-jammed.

Along the way, those leading this new effort may be burned by their ambition, said Montague, reflecting on his own efforts decades ago. They may fail. Or they may succeed. Regardless, though, they must care, he said, and they must try, no matter how daunting the feat.

Such audacity has always found fertile ground in this breathtaking river valley. Perhaps, in many ways, this boldness is the true Chattanooga Way.

"Maybe the secret is, to hell with the story," said Montague. "Start over!"

"We want to have a community that is informed and inspired by history, but not a slave to it.



ABOUT THE REPORTING

T HIS SERIES WAS REPORTED for more than a year. To have a full grasp of the Chattanooga renaissance and the history of Chattanooga Venture, reporters Joan Garrett McClane and Joy Lukachick Smith surveyed dozens of academic case studies on Chattanooga's rebirth, read six books and studied thousands of documents, culled from a variety of sources.

Many of these documents were reviewed and copied during two trips to the Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where the Lyndhurst Foundation's records from 1970 to 2013 live. Records — including pamphlets, studies, letters, financial

statements, newspaper archives, photos and government filings — from the Chattanooga History Museum collection and the Chattanooga Public Library's Chattanooga Venture collection also were used to write this historical narrative. In addition, reporters traveled to Atlanta to review Coca-Cola records in the Robert W. Woodruff collection at the Rose Library at Emory University.

Personal letters from Jack Lupton, Eleanor Cooper, Rick Montague and Jack Murrah and the personal journal of Cooper, which are not part of the public record, also were used to build the narrative.

To verify facts found in the records, more than 50 people were interviewed or consulted.

CREDITS

Visit timesfreepress.com/thelostway
for all citations and references.

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