

The background of the slide features a photograph of a large, multi-story brick building with classical architectural elements like columns and a pediment. In the foreground, several flagpoles are visible, flying the United States flag, the state flag of Tennessee, and other regional or institutional flags. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

UT Center for Local Planning Overview

County Officials Orientation Program

August 25, 2026



Center for
Local Planning

INSTITUTE *for* PUBLIC SERVICE

Josh Suddath, Executive Director, UT Center for Local Planning



Josh Suddath

Executive Director

(615) 379-3572

josh.suddath@tennessee.edu



A photograph of a rural farm scene. In the foreground, a green tractor is pulling a red trailer along a dirt path. To the left, there is a large barn with a red roof. The background is filled with trees and a cloudy sky. The text "Agency Background" is overlaid in the center in a large, white, sans-serif font, flanked by two horizontal orange lines.

Agency Background

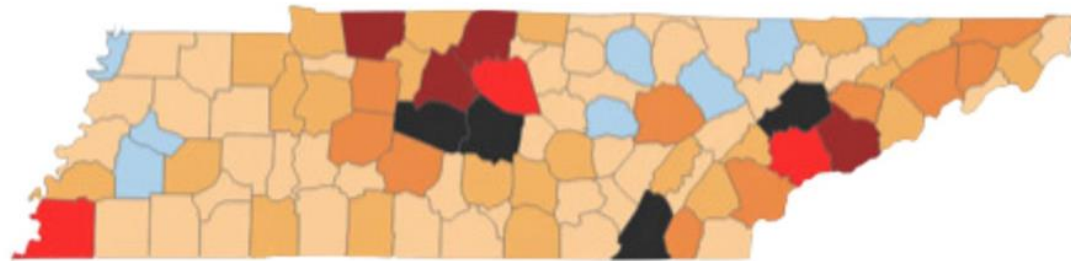
Farm Loss

- In 2022-2023 the TN Department of Agriculture began seeking accurate data on losses of agricultural and forestry land to development.
- With support from the UT Institute of Agriculture and UT-IPS, data was collected, analyzed and presented to stakeholders.

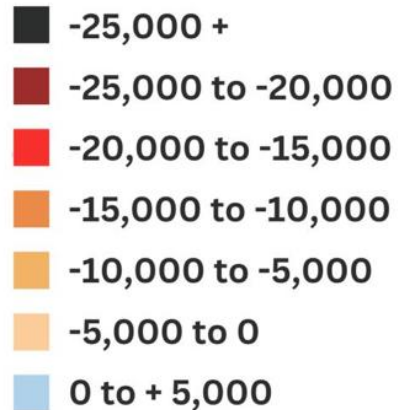


Farm Loss

AG LAND CHANGE BY ACRE



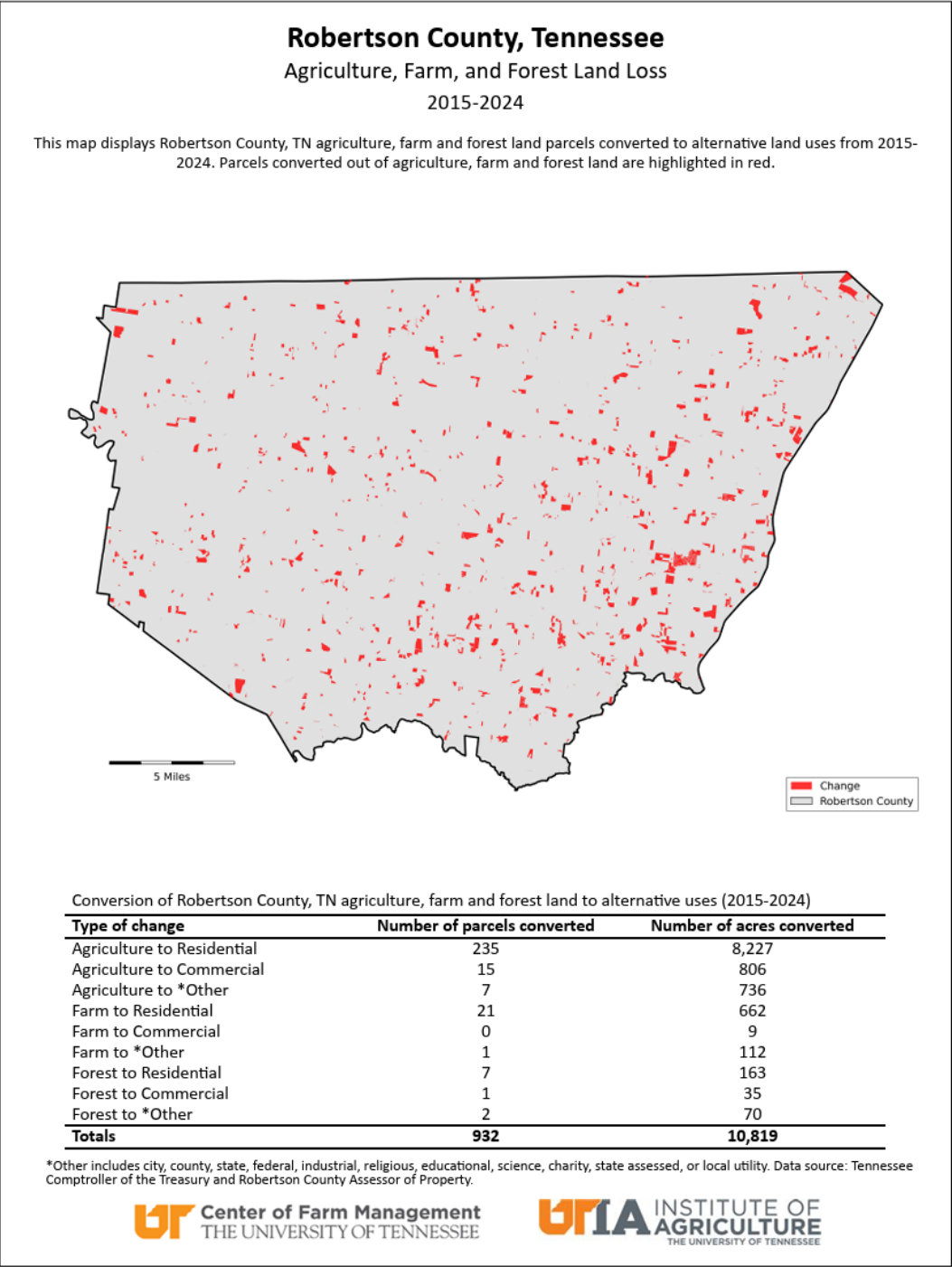
UF Center of Farm Management
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE



- From 1997 to 2017, 1.1 million acres, or the equivalent of 4 counties, were converted out of ag and forestry production.
- Since 2017, the loss has equaled:
 - 86,588 acres per year,
 - 237.2 acres per day
 - 9.8 acres per hour.

Farm Loss

- The projected cumulative loss is estimated to be roughly 2 million acres, the equivalent of 8 counties, lost to production by 2027.



Formation of Farm Loss Working Group

- Considering these data, the Dept of Agriculture assembled a working group to study and determine steps to minimize farmland loss.
- Two recommendations:
 - Education Program for landowners
 - **Creation of new statewide office within UT IPS to provide local planning assistance (the CLP)**





Center for Local Planning
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About Us

UT-IPS Center for Local Planning: About Us



- Standalone agency; sister agency to CTAS, MTAS, CIS, LEIC, NCEL, TLC
- **“Like CTAS but for Planning”**
- Headquartered in Nashville.
- Professional planners located in each of the state’s three grand divisions.
- Will strengthen local planning capacity and provide direct support to cities, counties, and Development Districts.



Center for
Local Planning

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Working Mission Statement

“The UT Center for Local Planning provides cities and counties with technical assistance, training, policy guidance, and applied research related to land use planning.

The Center serves as a resource to help communities plan for growth and infrastructure needs, preserve rural character, and comply with requirements established by the Tennessee General Assembly.”



Center for Local Planning
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Core Functions



UT-IPS Center for Local Planning: Core Functions

1. Rural Preservation & Growth Management

- Assist local governments with compliance related to state mandated Comprehensive Growth Plans (Public Chapter 1101)
- Work with local governments to balance agricultural preservation with economic and residential development.

UT-IPS Center for Local Planning: Core Functions

2. Technical Assistance

- Provide advice to cities and counties dealing with complex land use questions and decisions.
- Assist in the preparation and updating of comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and subdivision regulations.
- Internal consulting for UT partners working with state/local governments



A close-up photograph of a desk with a pair of glasses, a tablet displaying a budget chart, and a pen.

UT-IPS Center for Local Planning: Core Functions

3. Policy Research and Guidance

- Publish best-practice manuals, model ordinances, and policy briefs.
- Provide local guidance regarding legislation and court rulings impacting planning and zoning policy and procedure (in conjunction with IPS legal staff)
- Advise state agencies on local planning implications.

UT-IPS Center for Local Planning: Core Functions

4. Education and Training

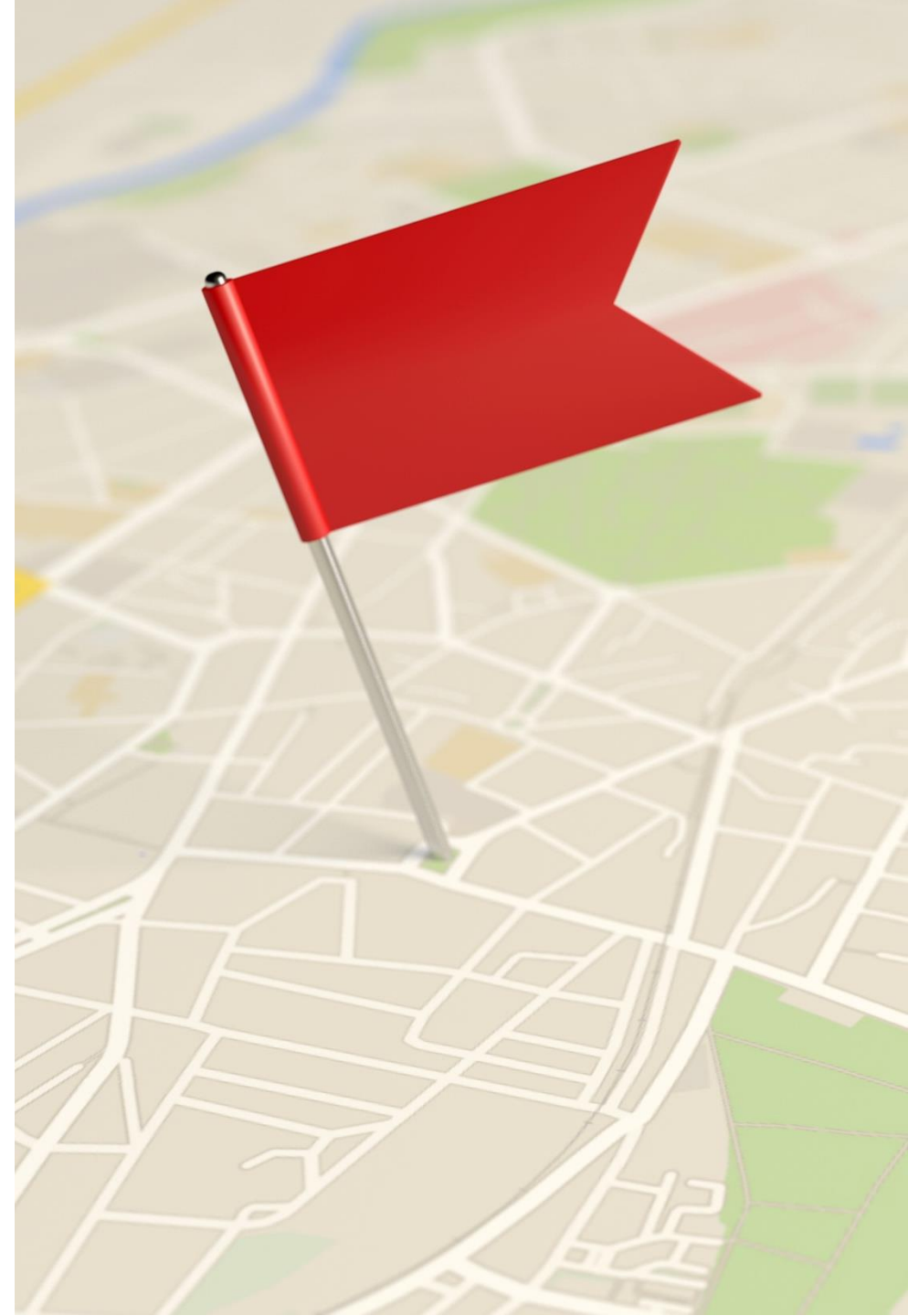
- Conduct training programs, workshops, and webinars for planners, planning commissions, boards of zoning appeals, and elected officials.



UT-IPS Center for Local Planning: Core Functions

5. Data and Mapping

- Work to build a statewide repository of local land use plans, zoning maps, and growth policies.
- Work with state agencies to serve as repository for land use/local road data
- Assist local govts with mapping projects and updates.





UT IPS Center for Local Planning: Core Functions

6. Higher Education Partnerships

- Provide institutions with support to advance the planning profession across the state.
- Facilitate internship opportunities with local governments and (eventually) within the Center for Local Planning



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What We're Working On

1) Building Organizational Capacity



Senior Division Planner - IPS

Nashville, TN, United States **and 9 more**

JOB DESCRIPTION

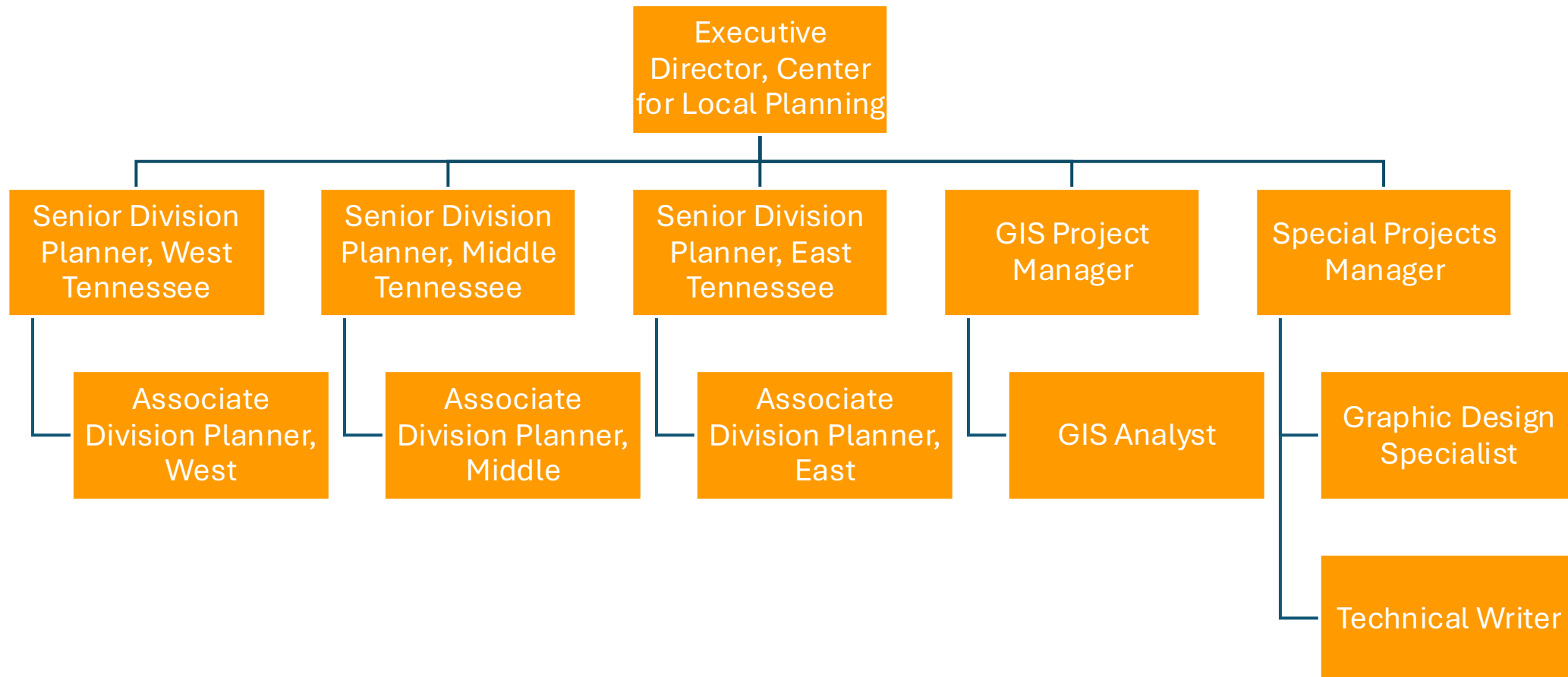
In this new position, the Senior Division Planner is responsible for performing complex and highly responsible professional planning activities for the University of Tennessee's Institute of Public Service, Center for Local Planning. Work will occur in cooperation with local partners in a specific Grand Division of the State. The position supervises and directs assigned staff and carries out technical assignments including project management, research, data analysis, oral presentations, and development of policy and plan recommendations. The role requires professionalism, tact, and diplomacy in working with a wide range of stakeholders. Reports to the Executive Director of the Center for Local Planning.





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Proposed Organizational Chart

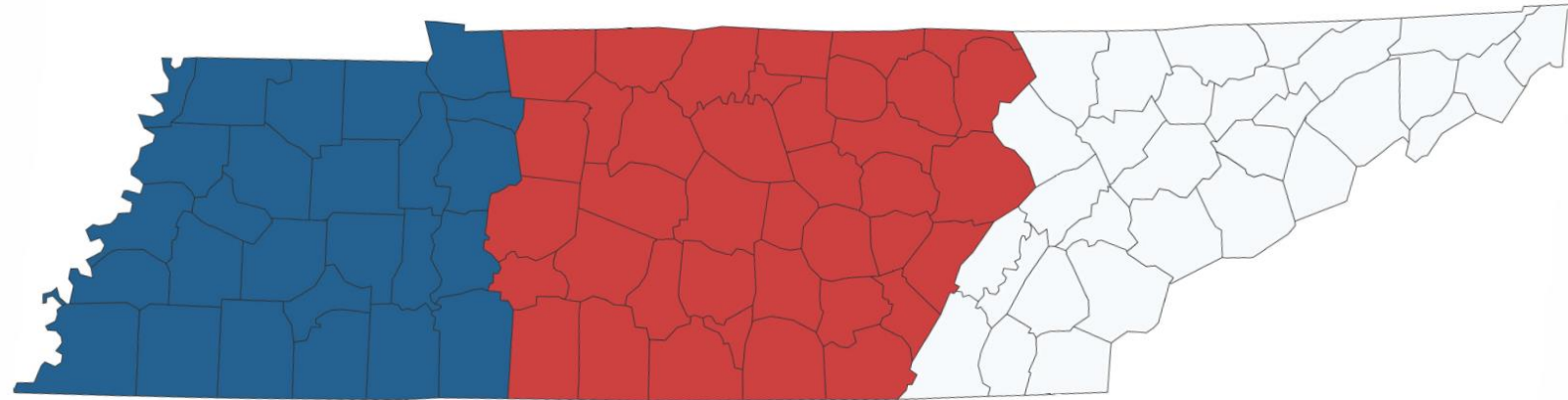




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Division Planning Offices, County Assignments

UT-Center for Local Planning, Grand Division Assignments



■ West Tennessee:

Benton, Carroll,
Chester, Crockett,
Decatur, Dyer,
Fayette, Gibson
Hardeman, Hardin,
Haywood,
Henderson, Henry,
Houston,
Humphreys, Lake,
Lauderdale,
Madison, McNairy,
Obion, Perry,
Shelby, Stewart,
Tipton, Wayne,
Weakley

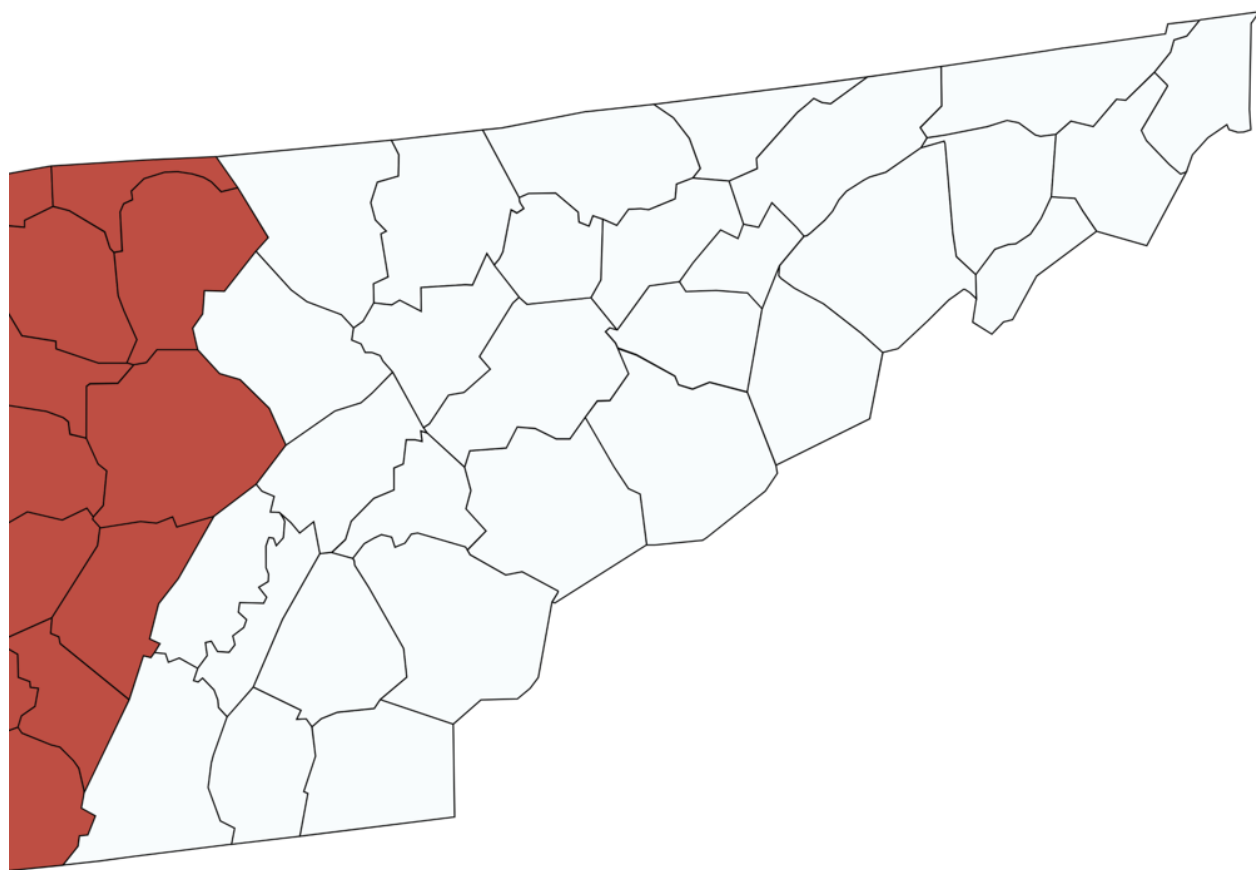
■ Middle Tennessee:

Bledsoe, Bedford,
Cannon, Cheatham,
Clay, Coffee,
Cumberland, Davidson,
DeKalb, Dickson,
Fentress, Franklin, Giles,
Grundy, Hickman,
Jackson, Lawrence,
Lewis, Lincoln, Macon,
Marion, Marshall, Maury,
Montgomery, Moore,
Overton, Pickett,
Putnam, Robertson,
Rutherford Sequatchie,
Smith, Sumner,
Trousdale, Van Buren,
Warren, White,
Williamson, Wilson

□ East Tennessee:

Anderson, Blount,
Bradley, Campbell,
Carter, Claiborne,
Cocke, Grainger,
Greene, Hamblen,
Hamilton, Hancock,
Hawkins, Jefferson,
Johnson, Knox,
Loudon, McMinn,
Meigs, Monroe,
Morgan, Polk, Rhea,
Roane, Scott,
Sevier, Sullivan,
Unicoi, Union,
Washington

Ambre Torbett, Senior Division Planner, East Tennessee



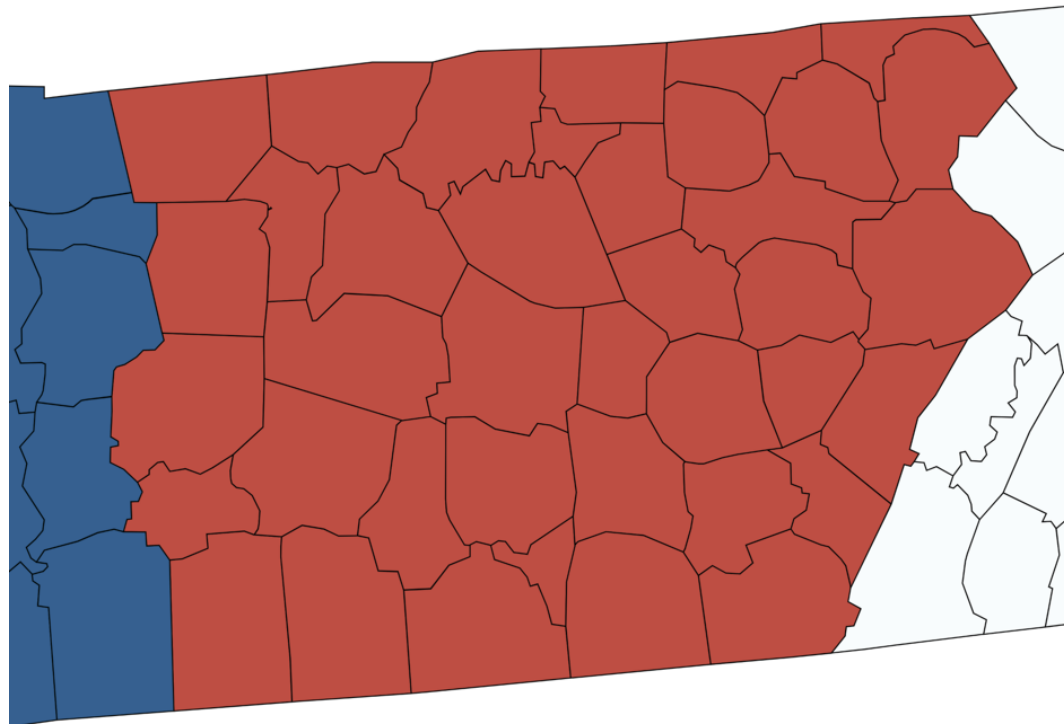
Ambre Torbett

Senior Division Planner,
East Tennessee

(865) 974-8413

ambre.torbett@tennessee.edu

Addam McCormick, Senior Division Planner, Middle Tennessee



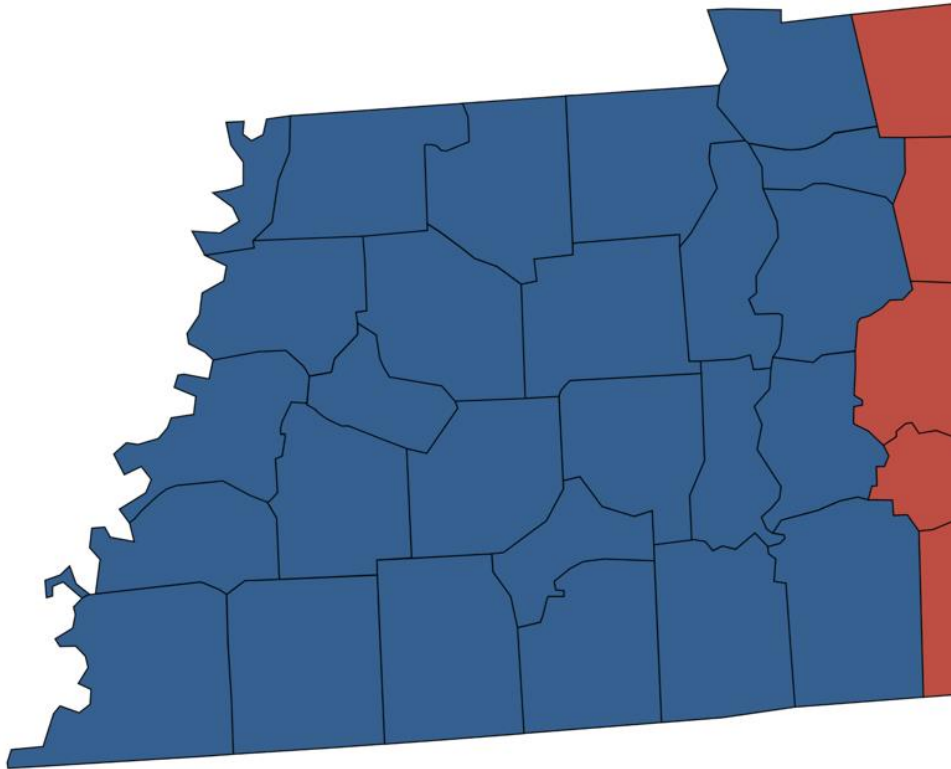
Addam McCormick

Senior Division Planner,
Middle Tennessee

(615) 253-1151

addam.mccormick@tennessee.edu

Jordan McKenzie, Senior Division Planner, West Tennessee



Jordan McKenzie

Senior Division Planner,
West Tennessee

(901) 810-3129

jordan.mckenzie@tennessee.edu

JP Finnegan, GIS Project Manager



JP Finnegan

GIS Project Manager

jp.finnegan@tennessee.edu

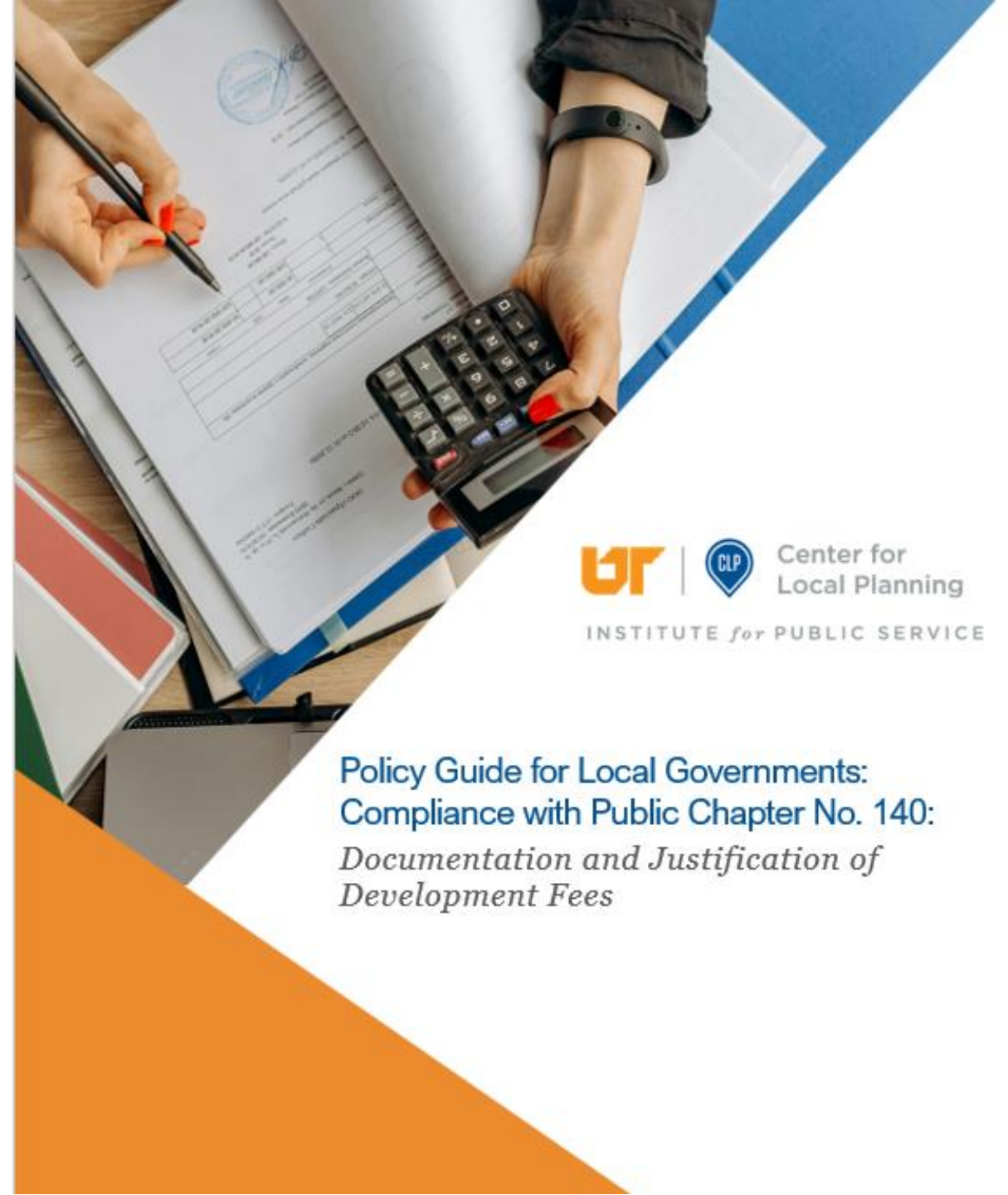
2) Training & Technical Assistance

- CLP has begun providing direct assistance to local governments officials across the state.
 - Answers, in writing, to local planning questions.
 - Assistance with updates to Subdivision Regulations, Zoning Ordinances, etc.
 - Practical advice regarding statutory and other requirements.
 - Planner job descriptions
 - Mapping assistance



3) Statewide Policy Guidance

- CLP publishes periodic advice for local governments related to new statutory or other requirements and best practices.
- 5 policy guides published so far, with more to come.
- We also host webinars focused on these policy guides



**Policy Guide for Local Governments:
Compliance with Public Chapter No. 140:**
*Documentation and Justification of
Development Fees*

Chapter 140, Fees Webinar

- May 20, 2026
- Over 200 attendees

Navigating Compliance: Public Chapter 140 *Free Webinar Announcement*



ARE DEVELOPMENT FEES LIMITED TO \$250?

In 2025, the General Assembly passed Public Chapter 140 in 2025, which introduces new requirements for development-related fees across Tennessee. These new requirements take effect July 1, 2026. Fees exceeding \$250 must now include documented cost justification, increasing transparency and consistency statewide.

The [Center for Local Planning](#) (CLP), [County Technical Assistance Service](#) (CTAS) and the [Municipal Technical Advisory Service](#) (MTAS) are excited to offer this free webinar on Public Chapter 140.

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- Key provisions of Public Chapter 140.
- What fees are included and what fees are exempt.
- How to document and justify fees.
- Impacts to local government processes.
- Available compliance tools and resources.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

Local officials, planners and staff involved in development fees.

DETAILS

- May 20
- 9:00 a.m. CST
- [Register here](#) or scan the QR code

CONTACTS

Email us with any questions.

- Tom Brashear (CTAS): tom.brashear@tennessee.edu
- John Chlarson (MTAS): john.chlarson@tennessee.edu
- Josh Suddath (CLP): josh.suddath@tennessee.edu



REGISTER

Chapter 1044, Development Review Process Policy Guide

Compliance with Public Chapter 1044: A New Mandate for a Coordinated and Timely Development Plan Review Process

*A Policy Guide for Local Governments and Planning
Agencies*

Addam McCormick, Senior Division Planner
Ambre Torbett, Senior Division Planner
Jordan McKenzie, Senior Division Planner
Josh Suddath, Executive Director

June 2026



Chapter 1044 Webinar

- July 29, 2026
- At least 337 attendees

Free Webinar Announcement

Compliance with Public Chapter No. 1044: New Development Review Timelines for Tennessee Local Governments

WHAT CITIES, COUNTIES AND PLANNING COMMISSIONS NEED TO KNOW BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2027



Public Chapter No. 1044 establishes mandatory timelines for local government review of development applications, site inspections and project surety releases, effective January 1, 2027. Failure to act within the statutory deadlines results in automatic approval of the submitted application. This webinar will walk local government officials and staff through the law's requirements, explain its practical implications and outline concrete steps communities can take now to prepare for compliance.

The [Center for Local Planning](#) (CLP), [County Technical Assistance Service](#) (CTAS) and the [Municipal Technical Advisory Service](#) (MTAS) are excited to offer this free webinar on Public Chapter 1044.

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- 30- and 60-business-day review deadlines for development applications and site inspections.
- How the two-report limit on deficiency notices works and what happens after.
- New surety release procedures, including the 120-business-day timeline and independent engineer inspections.
- When automatic approval is triggered and how to avoid it.
- The 50% fee refund requirement upon application denial.
- Best practices: designating a development administrator, pre-submittal meetings and interdepartmental coordination.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

City and county managers and mayors, planning commissioners, planning and engineering staff, building and codes officials, city and county attorneys, public works and utility department staff, elected officials

DETAILS

- Wednesday, July 29
- 10:00-11:30 a.m. CST
- [Register here](#) or scan the QR code. Registration is free, but space may be limited. A recording will be available to registrants.

POLICY GUIDE

Read our [policy guide on Public Chapter 1044](#).



4) Special Projects

- Planning Commissioner Academy
- Data Centers
- Infrastructure Planning
- Others to come!



Planning Commissioner Academy

From Membership to Leadership

We are excited to offer this collaboration from these UT Institute for Public Service agencies: the [Center for Local Planning](#) (CLP), [County Technical Assistance Service](#) (CTAS) and the [Municipal Technical Advisory Service](#) (MTAS).

The Planning Commissioner Academy is a six-month, blended learning opportunity for local government planning commissioners and board of zoning appeals members. Participants will gain practical skills in planning fundamentals, legal and ethical responsibilities, and decision-making strategies essential for guiding their community's growth.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Exclusive online access to [Planetizen's Planning Commissioner Training series](#)
- Live virtual sessions every other week
- Expert-led facilitation, interactive activities and group discussions
- Certificate of completion for full program participation

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE

This pilot is designed especially for individuals who:

- Currently serve as a city or county planning commissioner or BZA member;
- Are **within the first two years of appointment**; and
- Are ready to strengthen their foundational planning knowledge.

This pilot program is fully funded by scholarships through the generous support of the CLP, CTAS and MTAS. The program provides no-cost access to high-quality training that strengthens local planning across Tennessee.

HOW TO APPLY

Complete the interest form by May 28 at tiny.utk.edu/planning-commissioner-academy. The program is limited to 30 participants.



A MODEL COMPREHENSIVE ZONING RESOLUTION FOR DATA CENTER DEVELOPMENT

County Government Edition

August 2026

By UT Center for Local Planning Staff



Thank you!

UT IPS Center for Local Planning

planning@tennessee.edu

clp.ips.tennessee.edu



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