



BETSY HENDERSON
for **COUNTY MAYOR**

The Crossroads Plan

A Conservative Blueprint for Knox County

Leadership Matters.
Policy Matters.

COURAGEOUS CONSERVATIVE.

FIGHTING FOR FAMILIES.

Friends,

When I was sworn in to serve on the Knox County School Board in December 2020, our community faced a crisis: COVID. In that moment, I stood with families, not hysteria. In the face of attacks and intimidation, I fought to keep schools open and opposed mask mandates because parents, not politicians, should make decisions for their children. Such leadership experience matters because when you choose an executive, the next challenge remains unknown but is likely right around the corner. It is important to choose a leader who shares your values, has the judgment to make tough decisions, and has the courage to stand firm under pressure. Being Mayor is not about speeches or slogans, but rather, it is about leadership when it counts. When tested in a crisis, I did not back down, and I will bring that same resolve and decision-making to the mayor's office.



I am a conservative Republican, wife and mom, and native East Tennessean who loves this community and is proud to call Knox County home. I am running for Mayor to keep taxes low, stop out of control growth, ensure good roads and world-class schools, and deliver real results for the hardworking families who make this county such a special place. My family's story is one of hard work, sacrifice, and opportunity, and it shaped my deep respect for families and small businesses who put everything they have into building a better future. I would be honored if you would take a moment to learn more about me and my priorities at www.betsyhenderson.com.

I developed the Knox Crossroads Plan because Knox County is at a crossroad, and we must ensure our best days are still ahead. County government should be a good steward of your tax dollars and a partner to families, not a burden. As chair of one of the largest school districts in Tennessee, I worked to reduce bureaucracy, invest more directly in classrooms and control spending, and return to the basics, which has resulted in improved outcomes for our children. That experience matters.

With a county budget exceeding \$1,000,000,000s, we have the resources to provide safe communities, strong infrastructure, and reliable services while respecting the people who make it all possible. My Knox Crossroads Plan lays out a clear, conservative path forward focused on accountability, responsible growth, and leadership that puts families first.

I hope you will join my team as we work together for a strong future for Knox County.

Sincerely,



Betsy Henderson

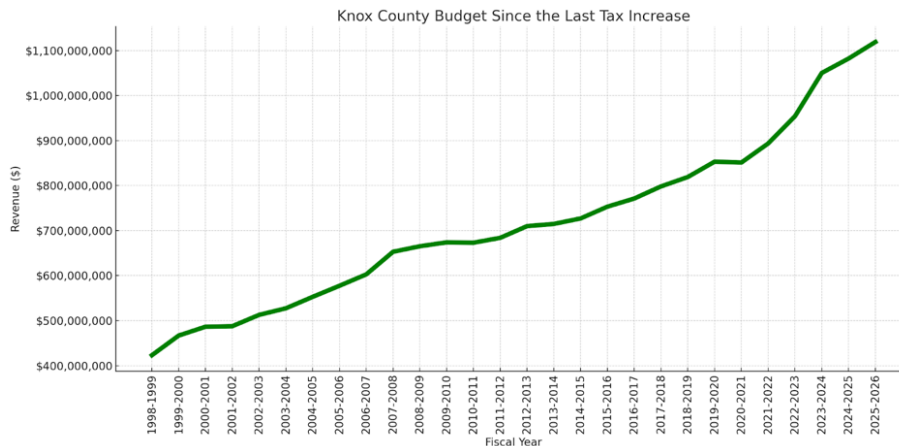
GOVERNMENT THAT LIVES
WITHIN ITS MEANS

Government should serve the people—not the other way around. As your Mayor, I will ensure our local government is accountable, fiscally responsible, and focused on delivering efficient and effective essential services.

No Tax Increase

Families and businesses have an opportunity to thrive when the government lives within its means. I will oppose tax increases and work to keep your tax burden low. This requires us to invest wisely in the infrastructure and services that matter most.

Since Knox County’s last property tax increase in 1999, the county budget has nearly tripled from about \$423 million to more than \$1.1 billion today. With responsible budgeting and natural growth, we can fund our roads, schools, public safety, and essential services without asking families to pay more.



Responsible Spending & Debt Reduction

Just like hardworking families balance their checkbooks, our local government must do the same. Knox County has debt, but we can address it with current revenue, controlling spending, and natural growth.

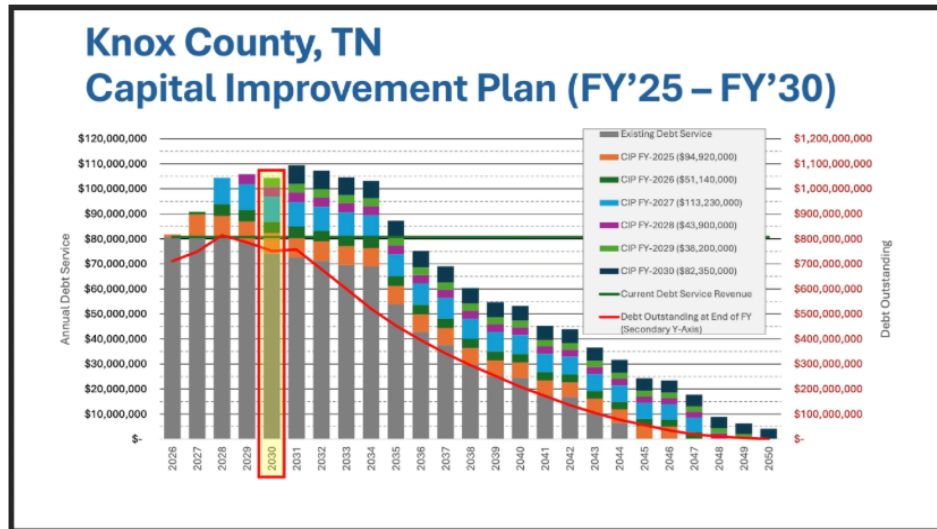
This fiscal year, Knox County budgeted \$84.4 million for debt payments. Over the next few years, our annual debt repayment will increase with a peak in fiscal year 2030-31 of \$110 million. The difference is \$25.6 million in debt service, which is ~2.3% of our total budget. This debt arises from bonds issued in 2003, 04, 05, 07, and 08, so county officials have known about this for decades. This debt is not a balloon payment as has been described but rather payments of principal over the next few years.

The county maintains an AA+ bond rating from Standard & Poor’s and an Aa1 rating from Moody’s Investor Services. We enjoy these high ratings because we have the capacity to meet our obligations.

I will push for a lean, efficient budget that prioritizes needs over wants, eliminates wasteful spending, and avoids unnecessary debt that burdens future generations. I will end the game

politicians play to run up debt, increase spending, and when the debt comes due, make families pay for it with a tax increase.

With a budget of more than a billion dollars, we can pay our debt and still deliver great roads, schools, public safety, and services taxpayers deserve without raising your taxes.



Transparency & Accountability

Trust in government is built on honesty and openness. I will ensure local government decisions are made in the public eye, not behind closed doors. That means easy access to budgets, spending reports, and meeting records, so you always know how your tax dollars are used. I will also work to cut through government bureaucracy, making it easier for residents to get answers, voice concerns, and hold leaders accountable. A government that is truly for the people must always answer to the people.

Efficient, Effective Services

Government should focus on delivering core services—roads, public safety, and essential infrastructure—not expanding bureaucracy. I will work to streamline operations, cut red tape, and ensure that taxpayer dollars are directed toward programs that truly benefit our community.

STAR Commission (Spending, Taxpayer Accountability & Reform Commission)

To ensure Knox County lives within its means and delivers real results for taxpayers, I will establish the STAR Commission (Spending, Taxpayer Accountability & Reform Commission). This commission will conduct a top-to-bottom review of county spending, debt obligations, and government operations to identify waste, improve efficiency, and strengthen long-term financial stability all without raising taxes. The STAR Commission will be made up of Knox County citizens from all walks of life including small business owners and operators who know how to balance budgets, deliver results, and provide quality customer service at an affordable price. The commission will deliver clear, practical recommendations to make county government leaner, smarter, and more accountable to the people it serves.

PRESERVING OUR WAY OF LIFE

East Tennessee is special, a place of deep-rooted values, strong communities, and a way of life that people from across the country are drawn to. We are blessed to live in a community where people want to come and live, but with that growth comes the responsibility to protect what makes our home unique. This is our community, and we—not outside interests or bureaucrats—will determine its future.

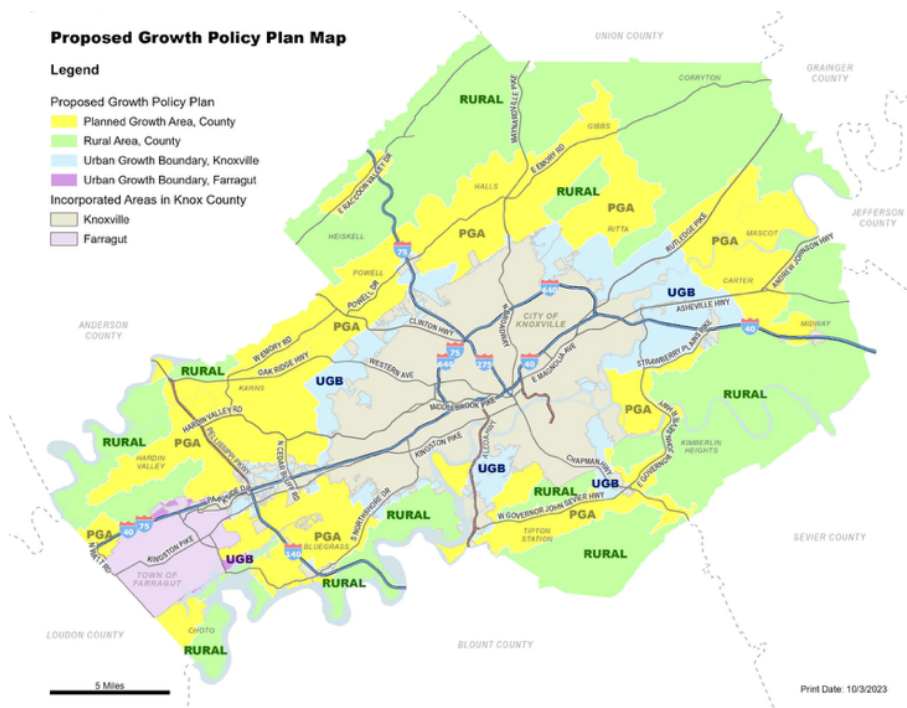
As your Mayor, I will ensure that East Tennessee remains a place where families can thrive, businesses can grow, and our traditions are honored. I will listen to the people and stand firm in preserving the character of our community.

Smart, Conservative Growth

A growing and thriving community is a blessing, but reckless, unchecked development is not. We must take a proactive, conservative approach—one that ensures economic opportunity without sacrificing our identity. That means supporting responsible expansion while maintaining the charm that makes East Tennessee home.

The County is going through a process to develop plans for the next 20 years of development. I sat on the committee that reviewed the growth plan called Advance Knox. I did not vote for that plan because it opened up over 9,000 acres of rural land for development across Knox County. The yellow areas on the map below were expanded to include the over 9,000 acres that were once rural and now more intensive development. I have heard from people across Knox County that they don't support this effort, but the politicians keep pushing it forward.

We are blessed to live in a community that people want to join, but this is our community and we get to determine its future. As your Mayor, I will listen to the people to ensure we grow in a way that protects what we love about East TN.



Infrastructure that Works for Us

We deserve infrastructure that supports families, neighborhoods, and local businesses.

As mayor, I'll prioritize the projects that matter most to our residents and I'll do it with responsible conservative budgeting. No wasteful spending. No tax hikes.

Many of Knox County's biggest road challenges are managed by the City, the State, or the Federal Government. That's why relationships matter. I've already built strong partnerships with our state and federal delegation to fight for Knox County, and I'll keep doing it to secure every dollar we deserve.

We will cut red tape, streamline government, and make sure your tax dollars go where they belong into better roads, safer neighborhoods, and reliable services for our families.

Responsible conservative budgeting. Prioritizing infrastructure that works for the people who call Knox County home.

Development That Reflects Our Community

East Tennessee has a unique character that should not be replaced by generic, urban sprawl. I will work to ensure that new development respects our history, traditions, and rural landscapes while fostering job creation and business growth. That means supporting policies that encourage local businesses, preserve our natural beauty, and uphold the values that make our community great.

With strong, principled leadership, we will preserve our way of life for generations to come.

PROSPERITY &
OPPORTUNITY

A thriving community is built on economic freedom, hard work, and opportunity for all. East Tennessee has always been a place where people take pride in earning their success, and we must ensure that tradition continues. As your Mayor, I will champion policies that create an environment where small businesses can flourish, families can prosper, and future generations have opportunities to build their lives right here at home.

Bringing in High-Paying Jobs & Recruiting Companies

Our community deserves more than just growth—we deserve good-paying jobs that support families and create long-term stability. I will work to attract industries that align with our values, offering meaningful employment without sacrificing our way of life. By cutting red tape, keeping taxes low, and investing in workforce development, we can ensure that our residents have access to careers that provide security and upward mobility.

Supporting Small Businesses

I was blessed with parents that started small businesses. I saw first-hand the amount of work that went into turning an idea into reality. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, creating jobs, driving innovation, and keeping our community strong.

As Mayor, I will work to cut unnecessary regulations, streamline the permitting process, and reduce government interference so that small businesses can grow and thrive. By keeping taxes low and ensuring a level playing field, we will make East Tennessee the best place to start and sustain a business—where hard working entrepreneurs can succeed without the government getting in the way.

Recruiting Companies That Share Our Values

East Tennessee is a place of opportunity, and with the right leadership, we can build a future where our children and grandchildren can prosper without having to leave home to find success. Not all businesses are the right fit for East Tennessee. We must be strategic in attracting companies that respect our community, our workforce, and our way of life. I will work to recruit employers who prioritize hard work, personal responsibility, and local investment—ensuring that economic growth benefits our people, not just corporate interests.

EDUCATION
PUT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FIRST

In December 2020, I was sworn in to serve on the Knox County School Board. From day one, my focus has been clear: put students first and deliver real results. Knox County Schools is the third largest school district in Tennessee. We educate nearly 60,000 students and represent approximately two thirds of Knox County's overall budget. I had the honor of serving as Chair for two years, leading during a time when our schools, families, and teachers needed steady leadership.

We did not just talk about improvement. We made tough decisions and took action.

Together, we reduced central office staffing to push more resources into the classroom. We brought in strong new leadership to move the district forward. We invested directly in classroom teachers to remain competitive and stop the loss of talent to surrounding districts. We expanded career and technical training opportunities so students can graduate ready for college, trade school, or military service.

While we can never rest, the progress is real:

- ✔ Tennessee Department of Education recognized Knox County as an “Advancing” district, one of the highest designations in the state.
- ✔ 18 schools earned the state's top honor as Reward Schools for strong achievement and growth.
- ✔ For the fourth consecutive year, KCS made gains in every tested subject, ELA, math, science, and social studies.
- ✔ TCAP results show students scored proficient in ELA across tested grades, up 4.9 points compared to 2021 to 2022.

These gains did not happen by accident. They happened because we focused on classrooms, empowered teachers, and insisted on accountability.

I am grateful for our teachers, principals, staff, parents, and students who make this progress possible every single day. In the Crossroads Plan, we will build on this foundation and ensure Knox County continues moving toward world class schools while maintaining fiscal discipline and strong parental involvement.

World-Class Education

A strong education system is the foundation of a thriving community. Parents deserve choices, students deserve opportunities, and our schools should focus on preparing young people for success—not political agendas. As your Mayor, I will support policies that give families more control over their children's education, strengthen career and technical training, and ensure that schools prioritize academic excellence.

The Basics: Academic Excellence

Our schools should focus on the fundamentals—reading, writing, math, and critical thinking. I will continue to push for policies that emphasize academic achievement, discipline, and personal responsibility while rejecting politically driven agendas that distract from real education.

By prioritizing strong values, real-world skills, and parental choice, we can ensure that every child in East Tennessee has access to an education that prepares them for success in life.

Strengthening Career & Technical Education (CTE)

College isn't the only path to success, and we must do more to prepare students for high-paying, in-demand careers. I will work to expand partnerships between local businesses, trade schools, and high schools to provide hands-on training in fields like construction, manufacturing, healthcare, and technology. By investing in CTE, we can equip students with real-world skills that lead to good jobs and strong futures—without saddling them with unnecessary debt.

Partnering with Local Colleges & Universities

We are fortunate to have world-class higher education institutions right here in East Tennessee. I will work to strengthen partnerships with the University of Tennessee, area community colleges, Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs), as well as private and faith-based colleges to create career pathways that connect students with local job opportunities. These partnerships will expand dual enrollment, apprenticeships, and workforce training programs that help our students stay in our community and contribute to our economy.

Parental Rights & School Choice

Parents, not bureaucrats, should have the final say in their children's education. I will advocate for policies that protect parental rights, ensure transparency in curriculum, and expand school choice options. This is what I campaigned on when I ran for the Knox County School Board and this is part of the Republican Party platform. President Trump, Governor Lee, Mayor Jacobs, and Republicans across our state and nation, past and present, have supported the same. Any candidate trying to run as a Republican who opposes education freedom and parental choice should be rejected by voters.

A SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD
FOR EVERY FAMILY

Every family deserves to feel safe in their home, their neighborhood, and throughout our community. Law and order must be a top priority, and as your Mayor, I will work alongside our law enforcement, first responders, and the judicial system to ensure East Tennessee remains a place where criminals are held accountable, families are protected, and emergency services are strong and effective.

Supporting Law Enforcement

A strong community requires strong partnerships between local leaders and law enforcement. I will work hand-in-hand with the Sheriff and District Attorney to ensure we have the resources, training, and support they need to keep our streets safe. I will stand against radical policies that weaken law enforcement, push back against soft-on-crime approaches, and fight for tougher penalties for violent offenders.

I am concerned that we are underpaying and understaffing our Sheriff's Office.

When I was elected to the Knox County School Board, we faced a similar issue with teacher compensation. We were losing talent to neighboring districts and starting each year hundreds of teachers short. As a Board, we conducted a thorough compensation study and created a new salary scale, investing \$41 million to bring teacher salaries up to market rates.

We paid for it in two ways:

- We used additional state dollars wisely by paying down one time debt expenditures to prepare for long term salary increases. These additional State dollars came from the General Assembly through a new funding formula. I was the only school board member in the state to serve on the outcomes funding committee that helped create the new funding formula.
- We saved \$14 million by reducing overhead and cutting bureaucracy.

We can take a similar approach with our Sheriff's Office. There are areas where we can reduce waste and inefficiencies, but we must prioritize what is working. Our deputies keep us safe. Investing in public safety will be a top priority.

Supporting Expanded 287(g) Enforcement to Protect Knox County

I support expanding the Knox County Sheriff's Office participation in the federal 287(g) Task Force model as a responsible step to protect public safety and uphold the rule of law. KCSO already participates in the jail enforcement model, which allows trained deputies to identify individuals who are in the country illegally after they are arrested on other charges. Expanding to the Task Force model would allow limited, clearly defined immigration enforcement during routine law enforcement duties, with ICE oversight and established safeguards. This approach allows law enforcement to be proactive rather than reactive, closing gaps that allow repeat offenders and individuals engaged in illegal activity to avoid accountability.

As Mayor, I will work closely with the new Sheriff to responsibly expand participation in the 287(g) program, ensuring officers receive proper training, clear guidance, and strong oversight.

This effort will focus on public safety, protecting taxpayer resources, and enforcing the law fairly and professionally—while respecting civil rights and maintaining trust between law enforcement and the community.

Emergency Management & Crisis Preparedness

In times of crisis—whether from natural disasters, public safety threats, or other emergencies—our community must be prepared to respond swiftly and effectively. I will work to strengthen emergency management plans, ensure first responders have the tools they need, and improve communication systems to keep residents informed and safe during critical situations.

Protecting Our Families & Neighborhoods

Crime, drugs, and lawlessness have no place in our community. I will support policies that crack down on illegal drug trafficking, hold repeat offenders accountable, and keep dangerous criminals off our streets.

Public safety is the government's most basic responsibility, and I will never compromise on ensuring East Tennessee remains a safe place to live, work, and raise a family.

A Conservative Blueprint for Knox County

Knox County is at a crossroads.
The decisions we make now will shape
the next generation.

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PRESERVING OUR
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