

## Participant Feedback from the Ninth McKee Learning Lunch

# Chattanooga Values II

April 7, 2016

This learning experience was co-sponsored by Chattanooga  
Organized for Action and the McKee Chair of Excellence  
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### Introduction

The core values of a community provide the fundamental base upon which the culture of that community is built. On September 17, 2014, McKee Learning Lunch participants discussed the topic of Chattanooga's core values. We call that discussion *Values I*. Following that learning lunch, several participants expressed concern that the group had not represented the broad socio-economic spectrum of the Chattanooga's citizens. As a result, we scheduled this follow-up Learning Lunch, *Values II*, about Chattanooga's values, paying particular attention to inviting a more-representative group to take part in the discussion. This is the report for *Values II*.

The idea that Chattanooga actually is two cities—one made up of the affluent management element and the other made up of the relatively poor cultural element—is of growing concern to the city's citizens and government officials. Even though members of both groups may hold similar core values, the results of the first learning lunch on this topic suggested that the city is traveling two different societal roads toward an uncertain future.

Are the findings of *Values II* consistent with the findings of *Values I*? Do the findings from both learning lunches support the idea that Chattanooga actually is two cities? What can we conclude from the responses?

*Note:* In order to gain a comprehensive view of the core values that participants identified, we suggest that you review the responses from the September 2014 McKee Learning Lunch—either before or after reading the responses from the April 2016 Learning Lunch, presented here. We also should mention that we found it difficult to reduce the responses to specific core values from the *Values II* (2016) discussion.

### Assignment 1

**Post-presentation Questions.** Following the discussion, participants posed questions about Chattanooga's values. The questions are listed below.

#### Educational and Economic Equality

- Given the considerable popularity of private schools here, how do we ensure that certain populations of children not be left behind?
- How do we break the culture of private schools—and, therefore, of segregation?
- What will we do about poverty and education?
- Why aren't more people talking about the lack of equality in the distribution of our economic progress?

## A Divided City

- Are we prepared to address the issue of “the two Chattanooga”?
- How can the [differing] values of the “the two Chattanooga” be connected in order to join the two cities into one?
- Chattanooga values. Is it about the acceptance of an “us-and-them” reality?
- How can the city bridge the gap in racial divides?
- How do we challenge values that aren’t inclusive of all Chattanoogaans?
- How can we bridge the divide between different values in Chattanooga?
- How do we get more African-Americans on the boards of corporations and bank?
- Do we value and celebrate the diversity in all of the neighborhoods of Chattanooga?

## Developing and Adhering to Values

- Has anybody ever articulated Chattanooga’s core values? If so, are they used to guide decisions about the community at all levels?
- Are there predominant values that exist here that should be maintained?
- Who determines Chattanooga’s values?
- What are Chattanooga’s values?
- Who does Chattanooga value?
- What makes the defined values correct?

## Including Everyone’s Viewpoint

- How can outsiders get a voice in Chattanooga? How long do you have to be here before you’re not an outsider?
- How can we include the viewpoints of all sections of Chattanooga in this conversation?
- How does Chattanooga engage and nurture millennial talent?

## Values: Idealism Into Practice

- Can we agree on the Chattanooga values, and are we courageous enough to live by them?
- How can the city promote the awareness and understanding of Chattanooga’s values to everyone?
- What is the effect of stated values on individuals who do not share them?
- Does our current condition in Chattanooga reflect our claimed values?
- What personal relationships are necessary to identify and change values?
- How have core values changed over the past 20 years? How do we see them changing in the next 20 years?
- Where are Chattanooga’s values going to take us in the future?

## **Assignment 2**

**Discussion Question: Values are defined as (a) enduring beliefs about the way things should be done or about the ends we desire, (b) principles that are intrinsically important to us and that we are unlikely to easily change, and (c) the underlying principles that guide decisions.**

**After the presentation, participants, in groups of four, discussed three assigned questions.**

**Questions and responses are listed below.**

### **Question 1. What Primary Values Define Chattanooga?**

- Silos, generosity, and entrepreneurship.
- Education.

- Greed, two-class society, segregation, natural resources, opportunity [but only] for those who have access to it.
- Rugged individualism leading to social exclusion and class division.
- Religion (although segregated).
- Faith, control and order, cliquish city, fear of losing power or influence.

**Question 2. What Behaviors Exemplify Each of Chattanooga’s Values?**

- No investment in the problem, ignoring the problem, give out plenty of fish without teaching [people] how to fish.
- Longstanding segregation, low pay, inequality in wealth distribution.
- “Largess” vs. self-sustaining, grassroots activities but no equal representation.
- Organization and widespread community support through faith; for minorities, lack of access to resources.
- Leaders protecting their positions when solving problems.

**Question 3. How does Chattanooga ensure that values are maintained?**

- Technological divide, lack of strategies for workforce development, need for education along with money from non-profits, hesitation from non-profits to work together owing to funding competition.
- Dislocation, inaction to focus on bettering school systems.
- Little discussion among those who matter; “power people” [in charge].
- Attitudes toward outsiders, closed-mindedness, decisions made before discussions.
- Placing faith-leaders at the forefront of civic discussions.

**Assignment 3**

**Post-discussion Question: After the discussion, we asked participants to respond, in writing, to two additional questions. The questions and responses are listed below.**

**Question 1. What is the most important thing you learned today?**

**Common Concern**

- There are people who have the same passion about the needed change in our community at large, our neighborhoods, and our city.
- A wealth of people want to make Chattanooga a better place.
- Other people have had similar experiences to those that I have had.
- General agreement exists about the challenges we face to bridge our perceived cultural values with our real cultural values.

**Discrepancies**

- The notion of the values we claim vs. the values that we practice.
- The [apparent] values of Chattanooga are not the shared values of all people of Chattanooga.

**Education**

- Prisoners in Hamilton County jails have no access to books.
- Some public schools are succeeding in raising academic skills.
- School failure is a pipeline to the prison pipeline.
- Everyone is thinking about education.

- A concerted effort to improve education is key.
- Other people understand the need to focus on and innovate education.
- An interest in education exists across different cultures.

### **Necessity for Change in Approach**

- How pervasive are concerns about the preservation of the status quo.
- The need for greater conversations about the pertinent issues.
- One of the barriers to achieving successful diversity outcomes in education.
- Chattanooga is being open and honest about what our problems are.
- The way we approach problems in Chattanooga.

### **Question 2. What unanswered question(s) are you leaving with?**

#### **Next actions**

- How do we move forward?
- What are the next steps to fix the issues within the other school systems?
- What actionable solutions exist to confront these challenges?
- How to bring community leaders together to solve these problems?
- How do we get our leaders to put boots on the ground?

#### **Division Remediation**

- How do we make the two Chattanooga one?
- What do we do about white supremacy and white privilege?
- Who will be the agent of change responsible for Chattanooga inclusive of all Chattanoogaans?
- How do we build power behind the narrative of a divided Chattanooga?
- What is Chattanooga doing to encourage millennials to live, work, and stay here?

#### **Foundation-building**

- What differences exist between what we claim and what we do?
- How do we develop a methodology for needed change?
- How do we strengthen the best values that our city holds?
- Are education and philanthropy two sides of the same coin?

## Participants

We would like to thank the following participants for their interest in and contribution to this McKee Learning Lunch.

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