

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 9, 2008

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**New Report on Crime Details Increase Across Region
and Concentration in Inner City Neighborhoods**
Chattanooga and Region Lead Benchmarks in Violent and Property Crime

At a press conference today, the Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies released a study of crime in the Chattanooga region. The report, the fourth in a series of seven reports that comprise the *2008 State of Chattanooga Region Report* (SOCRR), examined dozens of indicators related to criminal offenses, arrests, incarceration, prison releases and public opinion on crime. The report provides detailed information on crime at the neighborhood level in Hamilton County.

Major Findings from the Report include:

- In both 2006 (87%) and 2008 (90%), more Hamilton County residents identified safety from crime as very important to quality of life than any other factor.
- Within the region, crime is concentrated in the City of Chattanooga. In 2007, Chattanooga accounted for one-third of the population of the metropolitan area, but 56% of property crime and 60% of violent crime.
- Still, the share of crime in the region committed outside of Chattanooga is growing. Between 2003 and 2007, violent crime increased 1.8% in Chattanooga and 41.8% in the rest of the MSA and property crime declined 4.6% in Chattanooga and increased 5.4% in the rest of the MSA.
- Between 2005 and 2007, crime rate for TBI Group A offenses declined in East Ridge and Lookout Mountain, but increased the most in Chattanooga, Soddy Daisy and Red Bank.
- In Hamilton County, 75% of residents never or rarely worry about their personal safety. Victimization and population data suggest that African Americans and 18 to 44 year olds are overrepresented among crime victims. Survey data suggest that African Americans (43%), 18 to 29 year olds (35%) and persons living in households with incomes under \$50,000 (32%) are also more likely to sometimes or often worry about their safety than the population as a whole (22%).
- African American women and young people were disproportionately more likely than white women and young people to be crime victims. While women accounted for 51% of all crime victims, they accounted for 58.3% of all African American victims. While African Americans represented 29.8% of all crime victims, 43.9% of victims under 18 were African Americans.
- Since 2001, arrests in Hamilton County increased by 26% to 20,923 in 2007: ten offenses (drug violations, simple assaults, DUI, shoplifting, drunkenness, aggravated assault, robbery, disorderly conduct, liquor law violations, bad checks) account for more than half of all arrests in the County.

- While the Chattanooga Police Department was responsible for 64.8% of Group A offense arrests, nearly two-thirds of Group B offense arrests occurred in other parts of Hamilton County.
- Arrestees were disproportionately African American, men and between the ages of 18 and 44.
- 87% of Hamilton County residents rated their local police as very or somewhat fair and very or somewhat responsive
- Not every crime leads to an arrest, not every arrest leads to a prosecution and not every prosecution leads to incarceration. In 2007, there were 20,923 arrests in Hamilton County. In September 2008, there were 1,282 individuals in Silverdale or Hamilton County Jail. In 2006 and 2007, 867 individuals went to state prison from Hamilton County – just over half on new charges. Most individuals going to prison were men (88.5%), African American (54%) and between 25 and 44 years old (63.7%)
- At the MSA level, among 14 benchmarks, Chattanooga had the highest violent crime rate and the second highest property crime rate. For the city alone, Chattanooga had the highest property crime rate and the second highest violent crime rate.
- There are significant differences in crime by subregion within Hamilton County. Five subregions (Ridgedale/Oak Grove/Clifton Hills, Bushtown/Highland Park, South Chattanooga, Downtown and Amnicola/East Chattanooga) accounted for 14.2% of the County population, but 48.1% of robbery complaints, 45.1% of drug/narcotic violations, 37.9% of aggravated assaults, 28.8% of vandalism and more than one-quarter of burglaries and simple assaults in the county in 2007
- Offenders returning from prison are concentrated in many of these same areas. Data from prior State of Chattanooga Region reports indicate that each of these five areas are among the top five in poverty, public school children eligible for free or reduced lunch and births to mothers without a high school degree and are the lowest in public school students meeting attendance requirements. In each of the five subregions, more than one in five births are to teenage mothers and more than two-thirds of births are to single mothers.

“In 2008, more residents of Hamilton County cited public safety as very important to the quality of their life in Hamilton County than any other factor,” said David Eichenthal, President and CEO of the Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies. “While most crime in the region occurs in Chattanooga, increases in crime are greater outside of the city. Still, crime is highly concentrated in just a few areas in Hamilton County.”

The report on crime was authored by Mr. Eichenthal and Dr. Gale Iles of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. The 2008 State of Chattanooga Region Report on the Education can be downloaded at the Ochs Center website - www.ochscenter.org. The development of the State of Chattanooga Region Report was generously supported by grants from the Lyndhurst Foundation, Benwood Foundation, Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga, as well as funding to the Ochs Center from the United Way.

