Joe W. Barker

Joe Barker has served as Executive Director of Southwest Tennessee Development District (SWTDD), a regional planning and economic development organization, since 2007. He has a diverse background in public service in both state and local government. Barker has served as both Mayor of the City of Savannah and Hardin County, Tennessee.

In 2003, Governor Phil Bredesen appointed Barker to the position of Assistant Commissioner of the state Department of Economic and Community Development. In 2006, Governor Bredesen appointed Barker to lead Tennessee Tomorrow, a public/private partnership focused on rural economic development.

During his tenure as assistant commissioner, Barker represented the Governor on the Delta Regional Authority and Appalachian Regional Commission. He oversaw the Tennessee “Best Practice Model” Three-Star Program and launched the Tennessee Main Street and Retire Tennessee Programs.

During his tenure at SWTDD, the highly successful Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI) was launched which is a collaboration of eleven rural West Tennessee counties. REDI focuses on education/workforce development, technology, entrepreneurship, and capacity building. REDI has received national accolades for its impact in rural communities.