Govlaunch provides innovation resources for local governments

By KATE COHL
TML Communications Specialist

A new website is highlighting government innovation and encouraging government officials to share their resources and ideas to provide better outcomes for citizens.

Govlaunch is a free, wiki-style website for government organizations. They can showcase their own projects and stories, and connect with others in the same community. Communities are lacking the tools to share their own technology, Lindsey Pica-Alfano, co-founder of Govlaunch, said. The platform was the idea to provide a technology product director for local governments.

“We quickly expanded the focus of the website to include new local governments and sister organizations learning more about innovative tools, but also ideas and problem solving,” Pica-Alfano said. “Once we understand what our target audience needs, we understand what the need of their citizen base, we are working on and build the first-of-its-kind wiki for local government innovation—a platform that connects the government community with technology and driving innovation in citizen service delivery.”

Pica-Alfano said the goal of the website is to connect government resources and innovation for local governments.

“We hope that local governments no matter their size or budget come to Govlaunch first when looking for solutions to the issues they are facing,” Pica-Alfano said. “We also hope that governments continue to contribute their own projects’ resources to the site to share what worked and what didn’t so content remains current and not lost to flood waters or being implemented by their peers so other governments can learn from the experience.”

Govlaunch can find a variety of topics on the site relating to different aspects of government innovation.

“We have tools that curate content based on interest,” Pica-Alfano said. “We’ve also recently expanded our content search through the Govlaunch Pod to allow us to invite innovators who have shared innovation projects to talk about their work. Our goal is to expand this to incorporate match-ups and conversations across multiple cities and towns to boost the important work being done by individuals and groups to innovate and improve quality of service for the community.”

Governments can add their own projects to the database as well. Presently, Memphis has shared information on the project to develop 316 indoor maps for first-responders. Chattanooga has also added its site to demonstrate its notification system that targets emergency alerts to the entire city.

Projects are added to the wiki by communities, evangelists from Govlaunch’s user base,” said Pica-Alfano. “After Govlaunch users have contributed to the innovation projects have been added to GovLAUNCH on Page 3.”

In winning the All-America City designation, the city of Franklin, Tenn. presented three projects that used inclusion and equity to create healthier and well-being.

The first of these projects is Franklin Tomorrow, an organization designed to engage residents, foster collaboration, and advocate for a shared vision for the city. Beginning in 2018 the organization has held an annual On The Table event in which residents come to community conversations in their homes, bringing in experts ways for improving the community.

For the second project, the city earned the Fuller Story, an effort in which several local non-profits encourages residents of the city to develop an initiative to deal with an issue of concern. A group of New York-based community organizers met with the city about its programs, and the program was selected and then branded for a shared vision for the city. The city featured the Fuller Story in beginning in 2018 and included an annual On The Table event in which residents conducted community conversations in their homes, bringing in experts ways for improving the community.

For the third project, the city earned the Project Paul, an effort in which several local non-profits encourages residents of the city to develop an initiative to deal with an issue of concern. A group of New York-based community organizers met with the city about its programs, and the program was selected and then branded for a shared vision for the city. The city featured the Fuller Story in beginning in 2018 and included an annual On The Table event in which residents conducted community conversations in their homes, bringing in experts ways for improving the community.

Residents and city officials gathered outside Franklin City Hall for a Walk with the Mayor, one of the programs from the Get Fit Franklin initiative. Get Fit Franklin is one of the programs that helped earn the city an All-America City designation from the National Civic League.

By CAROLE GRAVES
TML Communications Director

As part of the ongoing webinar series offered by TML and Public Officials Partners, Dr. Eric Stuckey, director of the Howard and H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy at the University of Tennessee, was the moderator for the webinar on Sept. 14, which focused on how COVID-19 has been affecting the economy. The webinar was sponsored by the Tennessee Municipal Bond and Investors Agency.

March, April, and May looked like the beginning of a recession. But we have seen some fairly decent economic growth this summer.

July taxable sales increased by a robust 4.6 percent after falling steeply the previous three months. Nearly three of Tennessee’s counties saw sales taxes rise in July.

The second quarter was particularly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent shutdowns, reduced spending, and reduced layoffs. When everything is considered down, that numbers may fall short of our expectations.

MTAS has seen new projects and published new numbers based on what we were seeing.

The Tennessee Department of Revenue recently released the numbers for the first quarter of 2020 for the state’s IMPROVE Act. MTAS tracked those numbers and prepared a report on what was expected.

• Sales tax ended February 2020 at $401.7 million based on a budget increase of 5.4%.
• Gas and motor fuel taxes finished February 2020 at $16.5 million with a 3.3% increase.
• Gas tax
tax was expected to increase in March 2020 due to the end of the fiscal year from the State’s IMPROVE Act.

The 2019-20 fiscal year was the second quarter of 2019 due to decreases in the hospitality and tourism industry.

The first quarter of 2019-20 fiscal year showed declines in the hospitality and tourism industry. Dr. Matt Murray provided an update for the first quarter of 2019-20 fiscal year.

Dr. Murray is the former director of the Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy at the University of Tennessee. He was the moderator for the webinar.

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ASHLAND CITY
What began as a quarantine project has become a new brewhery plans to open in Ashland City bringing a brewer to join the main Manor House Brewing Company by the end of this year. Ashville Crunch and family friend Ryan Jenkins, the two brewers, will be moving to 801 South Main Street in the city and received a new business permit from the city’s beer board. The company plans to produce a combination of year-round and seasonal options on tap with the front half of the building being used for a taproom and store with the back half being used as a production area.

CHATANOOGA
A nine-acre historic property that dates back to the founding of Chattanooga has been preserved. The American Battlefield Trust purchased the 500,000-square-foot facility in Chattanooga, investing $21 million and will expand its Cookeville operations to include their Cookeville operations. The facility was built in Cookeville since 2002. Aphena employs more than 400 people. The company also has facilities in Kingsport.

DAYTON
Master Manufacturing Group (MMG) will relocate its headquarters and manufacturing operations in Dayton from Russad Cordova, Calif., creating 72 new jobs in the next three years. The company will invest $3.9 million to renovate and expand the existing manufacturing facility in Dayton as well as undertake extensive retrofitting in order to install building tanks, key, key st, Jody Sadek, Sr. Richard Band, Sherry Bull and Robert Bonito. But Bonito is the most recent officer to die in the line of duty meeting. The new fire station will honor Master Patrol Officer Spencer Brau, a 21-year veteran who died in 2013. The city will continue to work with developers to utilize the names. The stations were built with the National Incident Management System standards meaning that it should be adaptable to a variety of situations and forms.

HENDersonVILLE
Five fallen Hendersonville police officers will be honored with the naming of future streets. Hendersonville Mayor Jamie Clary said that he had arranged for Summitt Sun Rain Communications to commemorate the fallen officers for future streets when they are ready. The city will also work with developers to utilize the names. The stations were built with the National Incident Management System standards meaning that it should be adaptable to a variety of situations and forms.

KINGSPORT
Kingsport sees new green space as Dollywood offers a $1 million renovation and construction of the new downtown pedestrian mall. The plan calls for the relocation of the city’s Cloud Park at the Kingsport Landing area as well as a new expanded Scott Adams Memorial Skate Park at Brickyard Park. The city plans to spend $500,000 toward the construction of the skate park, which will be located across North Greenhill Road from the former city train station that will be developed into a picnic park for biking and hiking. Dollywood will also be involved in purchasing the old city train station that will be renamed as Dollywood.

LEBANON
The Lebanon Police Department announced they have moved into new offices after two years of construction. The new 28,000-square-foot facility is located on Sparta Pike near the Wilson County Government Center, and double the size of the 14,000-square-foot square building previously used by Middle Tennessee Electric City and the city’s water department. The facility was built to FEMA standards to be able to withstand natural disasters like earthquakes, tornadoes, and floods. The facility also includes a theater-style briefing room and large conference room.

Manchester
The Manchester Board of Mayor and Alderman has approved a $125,000 Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant for the U.S. Department of Justice. The grant will primarily fund an additional officer for the Manchester Police Department. The city will be required to match $57,337 to the grant and maintain the position with the department for four years. The city will also contribute to the officer’s salary and benefits each year for those four years. The grant is the first step in the development of a Diabetes Initiative Grant from the Tennessee Department of Health. While most of the obstacles are designed for youth and adults over the age of 15, younger children may enjoy some of the smaller obstacles.

MOUNTAIN CITY
The town of Mountain City will receive $1.5 million in federal funds to upgrade wastewater collection system infrastructure improvements and future expansion of the wastewater collection system. The project will also support the ongoing operation and maintenance of existing businesses in the area. An estimated 10,000 new jobs and $240,000 in private investment are anticipated. The $6.225 million, 28,000-square-foot new facility has moved into its new headquarters.

Kingsport Public Library has installed a new Story Walk in the city’s Glen Bruce Park to encourage families to both read and walk. The new walk, named the book is “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt” by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury. The library has installed a new Story Walk in the city’s Glen Bruce Park to encourage families to both read and walk. The walk was constructed to meet ADA standards and includes rubber surfaces to provide safety for visitors and funding from the Dog Park Grant program.

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KingsportPublicLibrary,parks,walks,freeadvertising

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News Across Tennessee

TENNESSEE TOWN & CITY/SEPT. 21, 2020

James Wakin and his fellow members of Boy Scout Troop 60 worked to repair more than 60 fire hydrants across the town of Signal Mountain as part of Wakin’s Eagle Scout Project. The group used different colors to show the whereabouts of minute water supplies to firefighters from each hydrant, updating each hydrant’s pressure which has changed in the past years. As a result, a fireresource with the Signal Mountain Fire Department will have a more up-to-date guide when facing emergency situations throughout the community.

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Step Three – Build the Form of one that we use regularly and is to your website. However, this is a major investment. Pick one area or department to start with and flow this 5-step process:

Step One – Identify Form Paper Opportunities

A good form is an ideal choice for your first exercise in digitizing the process. To identify a strong opportunity, you need to balance ease of change with impact. Start by compiling a list of your current forms. If that’s too broad, pick one department or area and create a comprehensive list within that small team. Then ask these questions:

• How often used – daily, weekly, monthly, annually?
• Is there ticket payment required?
• Once submitted, how many changes are involved, in the process to finalize it?
• Does the form contain sensitive information that requires special security?

Step Two – Explore Options

It may be tempting to dive into the implementation of your forms. But chances are you already have or quickly add one out. Does the form you have now meet your needs to be done fairly easily with the right operations. In some instances, it can be done fairly easily with the right tools. In other cases, it requires a highly-skilled technology team to create the desired results.

Step Four – Publish and Publicize

Once you’ve finalized it, you’ve identified a prime candidate. You’re now ready to build the simplest form to achieve those requirements. Keep in mind that you are always able to add and improve upon this form later.

Step Five – Analyze and Make Adjustments

Once submitted, how many different users have seen it? If their feedback is similar to yours, you could try to make it easier to view. Everything was built with you in mind.

A Real-Life Case Study

Our first client, outside of Atlanta and a population of 220,000 residents, are investing in digitizing services for the public to help them save time and money. We needed to be able to view the form in its entirety, as a whole, not just pieces. This was the first exercise in digitizing the process. You can take a look at your next project!

Small Business Loan Application

In order to support small business owners in their community as they struggled with COVID-19, Decatur quickly setup a temporary loan program to offer access to the small businesses who needed funds. They named it V3C to help put together a secure digital application process.

With the process already identified and a pre-existing tool in place, we began building the form. The requirements included the ability to upload documents, a defined internal user group, strict data security, and the ability to close off access to the form once the program ended.

The approval process for the form was fairly complicated with multiple people and several steps. V3C automated the notifications and worked with Decatur to ensure that the appropriate people were notified. Finally, the workflow also needed to be customized internally as many of Decatur’s employees were working from home.

The result was an online form created to support the business community in a time of crisis. Many businesses applied and took advantage of this needed support.

Alcoholic Beverage License

In 2018, Decatur engaged VC3 to streamline their alcohol beverage beverage-licensed by making it digital. The process was fairly complicated with multiple steps, multiple people, and the need to track renewals.

We went through the process with each step well thought out to get the forms working on the form fields, the way they work together, and the notifications. Everything was built from scratch. Once Forms and the process is automated to move from person to person for approval.

The result is a totally online application process. The process has seven hundred hours of time for businesses and internal staff.

It’s Your Turn to Go Paperless

Many businesses who have started on-streamline services, keep up with other demands, and have a seamless workflow. In some instances, it can be done fairly easily with the right tools. In other cases, it requires a highly-skilled technology team to create the desired results.

Governments provide innovative resources for local governments

The wiki for local government innovation

Governmental websites provide a one-stop-shop for officials to showcase and be inspired by government innovation.

GOVLAUNCH

From Page 1 to the wiki links and pages is growing around 80 projects per month. We welcome anyone in local government working on something innovative or curious about innovation to sign up at Govlaunch.com. Once they join, we will share their connection to a local government through LinkedIn. After verification, which typically takes only a few minutes, users can share projects and search the full directory of projects, products, as well as connect with others in local government.

Pica-Alfano said Govlaunch is eager to hear from local governments.

“We want to hear about any project that is helping local governments with their work,” said Pica-Alfano. “We’ve made the process of submitting a project to Govlaunch easy and painless.

In fact, innovators from Tennessee have already added some exciting projects to the wiki for local government innovation. There are also options for governments to provide some publicly accessible data on their projects while still maintaining a private community.

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Fo rmer Association of County Mayors director Congdon dies

Fred E. Congdon, former executive director of the Association of County Mayors of Tennessee, died Sept. 9, 2020, at the age of 71. Congdon made his mark on Tennessee’s municipal landscape while serving in both East Tennessee and Statewide roles.

Beginning in 1978, he served in a variety of roles with Unicoi County government including county clerk, county probate judge, and county executive before becoming executive director of the Association of County Mayors from 1990 until 2010.

A lifelong musician and performer, Congdon was the co-owner of Rich-R-Tone Records, one of the country’s oldest bluesgrass labels, and co-wrote “The Peak of Tennessee,” which became one of the state’s official songs in 1996. He also performed in several rock, soul, and bluegrass bands.

Beginning in 2010, he was also employed as the executive vice president of Atlanta-based Latimer Lighting, a manufacturer of energy efficient lights for both commercial and residential use.

Congdon is survived by his wife of 44 years, Ernie, their two sons Evem and Tom, and eight grandchildren.

First commissioners elected under new Nolensville charter

Janney Alexander, who was first elected mayor of Nolensville in 2010, did not run for a seat on the new commission. Russell Gill, who was appointed to fill the term of the mayor vacated by the death of longtime alderman Larry Falts, also did not run for office.

The referendum changed the town’s charter from a mayor-and- alderman minimum commission to a city manager-commission charter, rescinding the re-election of all board members. Nolensville had held its mayor-alderman charter since 1966. Rather than electing a mayor and four aldermen, the citizens now elect five commissioners who then appoint a mayor who acts in a more ceremonial position. The 5-2 commission is supported by a city manager and is headed by the new town manager.

Brittany Vick, a Democrat, was elected to fill the vacant position left by the death of Nolensville’s longest-serving alderman, Boyd Bell. Vick earned her bachelor’s degree at the University of Tennessee-Sarah段时间，and her law degree at the Nashville School of Law. Vick last practiced in Newport in 2014 and served for several years as a paralegal for the office of Grizzlies attorney until 2009.

Brittany Vick has been selected as the new municipal judge for the city of Newport. Vick will take over the position left vacant after the death of previous municipal judge Vida Bell.

TML needs contact information

We need help maintaining our database with the most up-to-date city information. Whenever we have a wrong address, the U.S. Postal Service will automatically change it. Fortunately, when the Legislature is in session, you could mess up on vital information. That is why it is so important to keep your up-to-date city information. Please send your updates to Jackie Gupton at jgupton@TML1.org, or Debbie Kilb at dkluth@TML1.org by phone at 615-253-0456.
Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee and Department of Economic Development Commissioner Bob Rolfe announced today that approved more than $27.6 million in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), which will assist communities with infrastructure improvements, housing rehabilitation, and health and safety initiatives.

A total of 66 local government entities received funds with 88 notications sharing in the funds. These funds play an important role in helping communities across Tennessee provide economic development opportunities and continued growth," Lee said. "I applaud each community for investing in themselves and taking the necessary steps to improve their assets, verdade systems and safety initiatives."

"Community Development Block Grants are an important tool set to communities across the state and Tennessee as a whole," Rolfe said. "The 66 communities receiving CDBG funding will be better prepared for economic growth, which will in turn help Tennessee continue to succeed. Hook forward to the futures each community will see in the years to come."

The allocation of CDBG funds is based on the public meeting process at the state level. The CDBG program is funded through HUD. The Department of Economic and Community Development Funds are available for water and sewer systems, housing rehabilitation, and safety projects.

In addition to the grants awarded to municipalities, funds were also awarded to the state for things like education, tax credits, community development block grants, and more. More information on the Community Development Block Grant program, including how to apply for grants, can be found at the link below.

https://buff.ly/3k14u7V

Tennessee revenue. While the state saw a 5.7% increase in direct tax revenues for August, state and local government agencies also garnished $1.92 billion in state and federal unemployment benefits. The grant requires claimants to pay $575 before federal withholding and $275. Combined with the $300 federal unemployment benefit, in addition to current state unemployment, the state will be able to offer $1,152.57 to unemployed workers.

The state’s revenue exceeded expectations for the month of August and exceeded estimates by a net of $6.5 million. The state’s revenue was 6.5% over the prior year due to the economic impact of COVID-19. Gasoline tax revenues for the month of August were $303.5 million, which is $22 million more than August 2019 and $13.1 million more than the budgeted estimate. The gasoline tax is 3 cents of gas tax and 3 cents of diesel tax.

State corporate taxes, which are the franchise and excise taxes, decreased compared to last year; apparel stores, many small retailers, restaurants and bars have been affected by the economic impact of COVID-19. Gasoline tax revenues for the month of August were $303.5 million, which is $22 million more than August 2019 and $13.1 million more than the budgeted estimate. The gasoline tax is 3 cents of gas tax and 3 cents of diesel tax.

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CIVIL ENGINEER/INSPECTOR

The City of Tullahoma is seeking a professional with extensive experience in the discipline of civil engineering to fill this position. This position reports to the Director of Community Development.

Salary: $37,000 - $52,000, depending on qualifications.

This position is responsible for the coordination of the City’s engineering services and the evaluation and construction supervision of all projects. The ideal candidate will have a minimum of five years of experience in the design phase of construction projects, a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering, and must hold a P.E. license in the state of Tennessee. The position will be open until filled. For more information, please contact: Jeff Clawson (jeff.clawson@tullahomatn.gov) or by mail: 1101 Oak Hill, attention Jeff Clawson (jeff.clawson@tullahomatn.gov), Oak Hill, TN 37360. Resume and an online application on the city website. EOE. No phone calls.

ENGINEER

The City of Tullahoma is seeking a professional with extensive experience in the discipline of civil engineering to fill this position. This position reports to the Director of Community Development.

Salary: $37,000 - $52,000, depending on qualifications.

This position is responsible for the coordination of the City’s engineering services and the evaluation and construction supervision of all projects. The ideal candidate will have a minimum of five years of experience in the design phase of construction projects, a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering, and must hold a P.E. license in the state of Tennessee. The position will be open until filled. For more information, please contact: Jeff Clawson (jeff.clawson@tullahomatn.gov) or by mail: 1101 Oak Hill, attention Jeff Clawson (jeff.clawson@tullahomatn.gov), Oak Hill, TN 37360. Resume and an online application on the city website. EOE. No phone calls.

CIVIL PLANNERS

The City of Tullahoma is seeking a professional with extensive experience in the discipline of urban planning to fill this position. This position reports to the Director of Community Development.

Salary: $37,000 - $52,000, depending on qualifications.

This position is responsible for the coordination of the City’s planning services and the evaluation and implementation of all projects. The ideal candidate will have a minimum of five years of experience in the planning phase of construction projects, a bachelor’s degree in urban planning, and must hold a P.E. license in the state of Tennessee. The position will be open until filled. For more information, please contact: Jeff Clawson (jeff.clawson@tullahomatn.gov) or by mail: 1101 Oak Hill, attention Jeff Clawson (jeff.clawson@tullahomatn.gov), Oak Hill, TN 37360. Resume and an online application on the city website. EOE. No phone calls.

Chief Building Inspector

TULLAHOMA. The city of Tullahoma is seeking a professional with extensive experience in the discipline of building engineering to fill this position. This position reports to the Director of Community Development.

Salary: $37,000 - $52,000, depending on qualifications.

This position is responsible for the coordination of the City’s building services and the evaluation and implementation of all projects. The ideal candidate will have a minimum of five years of experience in the building phase of construction projects, a bachelor’s degree in building engineering, and must hold a P.E. license in the state of Tennessee. The position will be open until filled. For more information, please contact: Jeff Clawson (jeff.clawson@tullahomatn.gov) or by mail: 1101 Oak Hill, attention Jeff Clawson (jeff.clawson@tullahomatn.gov), Oak Hill, TN 37360. Resume and an online application on the city website. EOE. No phone calls.

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www.TML1.org
The United States added 1.4 million jobs in August with the federal unemployment rate declining by 0.5%, to 10.2%. The U.S. Labor Department reported that the jobless rate was lower than August’s federal-unemployment rate increase by 0.3%. August is the fourth consecutively decline in unemployment rates and declining unemployment for the fourth straight month. 23 million Americans lost their jobs due to the pandemic. It’s the nation into its highest unemployment rate since the Great Depression.

The number of Americans who cannot afford food is growing and expected to increase as government benefits expire. According to U.S. Department of Agriculture, 12.3% of U.S. households didn’t have enough food for an entire year. Twenty million people—one in five—will forgo meals or cut back on meals to afford food. Food banks have also seen a surge in need in the past few months with the number of people receiving benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rose 44% in March and April of the year. At the height of the economic Recession, the biggest one-month increase in SNAP assistance. Food banks said the country’s current food problem is that it’s at the peak of the Great Recession and it is likely to get worse as federal benefits, like increased unemployment payments, expire.

From a personal standpoint, how concerned are you about the: 1) Spread of COVID-19 2) Impact of COVID-19 on the US

Visitors coming to your community

B) Extremely or Very

Other noteworthy findings include 69% that they eat a mask in public and 80% say they practice social distancing. For the 0.5% and over crowd that number jumps 85% while wearing masks and 85% are practicing social distancing. And of those surveyed, 75% say they would support a local mask mandate. Survey results help answer questions on a wide variety of topics and how respondents are adapting to new mandates, types of activities people are engaging in and their attitudes toward restaurants or attending in-person church services, as well as other feelings.

The Tennessee Pulse Survey is conducted by the Tennessee Pulse Survey team, the Tennessee Community Polling Initiative and the Tennessee Polling and Survey Research Laboratory at the University of Memphis. To learn more about the Tennessee Pulse Survey and review more recent findings, please visit: https://olympchambers.com/tpl-survey.

ECONOMY From Page 1 electronic services up 17%, home services up 14%, food services up 14% and beverage sales are up 28%.

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We have fewer job openings than we have people looking for jobs in the U.S. Murray said that one area that will now recover faster is the retail market, which was already tight in January and February with a significant employment rate in Tennessee and a 4.7% unemployment rate nationwide. The labor force participation rate was below 10% for the first time since March. The Department reported that overall unemployment rate rose 1% in August, the Fed said, and there have been some increases in production is down for the automotive sector. Murray said that one area that will now recover faster is the retail market, which was already tight in January and February with a significant employment rate in Tennessee and a 4.7% unemployment rate nationwide.

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New development to bring city square to Spring Hill

By KATE COIL
TML Communications Specialist

A major mixed-use development is promising to bring something new to the downtown Spring Hill city square.

While many communities have grown up around downtowns and urban centers, the city of Spring Hill developed in a different way. Founded in 1808, the community lost much of its “old town” area due to the Civil War and natural disasters, eventually becoming a smaller agricultural community.

The city dramatically changed shape in the 1890s when the location of the Saturn automotive plant—now General Motors—quickly transformed the city from a small town into a booming city. Spring Hill’s population went from a little under 1,000 in 1950 to nearly 45,000 today. In fact, Spring Hill was ranked earlier this year as the second-fastest growing city in the state.

As a result of this boom in industry and residents, Spring Hill City Administrator Victor Lay said the city presently doesn’t have a traditional town square like many of its neighboring communities.

“So much of the area was destroyed by natural circumstances,” Lay said. “There have been one or two fires that came through the town in the early 20th Century and wiped out a good portion of the downtown area. There has been at least one tornado that hit the same area. There are not very many historical buildings left. We have a few antebellum houses, but not a lot of historical commercial buildings. It really wiped the slate clean.

The city sort of developed as a strip with residential homes behind it and not a lot of that character where the old city used to be.”

However, the idea of creating a square to serve as a focal point for commercial and civic activity has long been discussed by city leaders. The project really began to get off the ground when local officials and developers learned that a local landmark was being put up for sale.

“It so happened the Tennessee Children’s Home was looking for a new campus and was debating whether to remain in its current location in the center of town or move off that campus,” Lay said. “They ultimately made the transition into a new campus on the western side of the city limits and decided to move their campus to a brand-new location.

That decision served as a catalyst for our project. People saw it as a great place to create the square we don’t have.”

The new Kenrod Square development will be centered around the former Tennessee Children’s Home campus in Spring Hill. Incorporated in 1909, the religious care facility and former orphanage moved into the historic Ferguson Hall, an antebellum mansion constructed in 1853, after purchasing the property in 1935.

The organization then sold the 120-acre site to the city of Spring Hill in 2019 as the organization began its transition into a new campus, which will be complete by the end of 2021.

Lay said city officials, members of the community, and developers have been exploring various options to create a square that best befits Spring Hill’s development.

“It’s been through a couple of different iterations of what the square will work,” he said. “We are looking at a mix of retail commercial and commercial space as well as possible uses like a hotel. We have even looked at moving city hall to the east of the property. Financial limitations didn’t work for that. The current plan is the third iteration and has plans with a third developer who has put together a plan that doesn’t rely as much on the government moving in and building things in the area, as it does the private sector and retail with public space, green space, and civic space.

We want it to have a commercial space but more of a square type feel.”

Developer Catalyst Design Group has released plans for commercial, restaurant, office, and retail space throughout the area as well as an 81-home public park and historical markers highlighting the history of the city.

The group is working to make the entire development walkable with the hopes of using the residential sections of the development as a built-in customer base for the commercial areas. The historic Ferguson Hall will also be preserved and incorporated into a hotel.

Lay said one of the requirements from the city in the business located in the commercial district cannot have more than 15 franchises located anywhere in the state, encouraging more small businesses to locate in the area.

“Basically, you ask what you want to exist on a town square, what are the things that make it a viable place that makes people want to go there,” he said. “You have to ask if that is commercial areas and what kind of commercial areas those are. It’s not a typical big chain store but more mom-and-pop, single-store owner type businesses.”

Since Kenrod Square is being constructed by a private company, Lay said the project has to be financially viable for developers.

“They have to invest all this money and build this infrastructure, but also recoup their money by making the commercial section successful,” Lay said. “They have to divide the area up into different intensities of commercial and different intensities of residential. They have to look at whether they want apartments or condos, multi-family homes or single-family detached.

They had to have a financial model that supported the square area. The city’s input gets to be in the planning process, but everyone’s interests have to be addressed for the project to be successful. There has to be a balance between the cost of all the infrastructure versus the prebuild for the developers.”

After installing basic infrastructure like streets, sewers, and roadways, Lay said one of the first phases of the project will be the construction of 81 single-family homes and a community park open to the public.

Overall, the construction of the entire project will take in phases over a period of 10 years and is expected to generate roughly $100 million for the city in a 20-year period.

“The commercial area is what excites the most,” Lay said. “The development of the front lawn of the Ferguson Hall and the hotel as well as the square and commercial area in behind that excite us because it gives us something that we currently don’t have. It gives us a style of development we don’t have and a sense of place that we don’t have. That is what those working on the development get really excited about. We think it will be a great addition and focal point to the community. It will also preserve one of the historic homes and make it an integral part of this development.”