
PRESS RELEASE – THE WESTSIDE PROJECT

City Council – Cookeville, TN

September 22, 2025

The City Council of Cookeville, TN voted last week to retain a collaborative design team to provide a comprehensive Master Plan for the Westside Commercial District, including the recently purchased Wilson and Shanks Hotel property.

City Mayor Laurin Wheaton explained, “We interviewed four consulting firms, some of which were nationally recognized. We were looking for a team that could deliver a concept which would be creative, strategic, functional, historically sensitive, and provide economic and tourist impact.

Following the interviews, the City selected a team led by ASA Engineering & Consulting, Inc. and Tinker Ma, a Chattanooga-based architecture, interiors, and planning firm. Led by Cookeville resident Kevin Tucker, ASA Engineering contributes deep local insight, while Tinker Ma offers innovative ideas and extensive expertise in hospitality and placemaking. “The team presented some exciting concepts for a multi-use park around the Depot, traffic solutions, and parking concepts. They also emphasized how they would implement public input of local merchants and citizens in the design process,” said Mayor Wheaton.

In total, this project will encompass approximately ten acres and feature Cookeville’s historic Train Depot as the centerpiece of a park space. Plans include an event plaza, green spaces, tree-lined pedestrian walkways, a pavilion, and a convenience building, which would include restrooms, an information booth, a security station, and shelter from the elements, while preserving the existing elements of the Depot and train display.

The first phase of this project will include a parking lot with a minimum of 150 spaces and additional temporary parking and a green space where potential development is contemplated. This parking lot will be designed for adaptability to be converted to a parking garage should potential development and demand warrant.

The design team will also review options for the soon-to-be-vacated Gas Department buildings on Oak Street and innovative connectivity concepts to link pedestrians and cyclists to other city elements such as the Leslie Town Center, Dogwood Park, Cookeville Performing Arts Center, and to the hospital/medical campus and TTU.

“Our Council is so excited about this project.” Said Mayor Wheaton. “We believe it will be a game-changer for our citizens and tourists while providing an environment to promote more business for our local merchants and restaurants. We are also encouraged that our ‘malfunction junction’ will be fixed at Cedar and Broad.”

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This project has been fast-tracked to begin immediately. Survey and environmental teams will begin their work this week to provide critical data to support the design effort, which will commence in mid-October.

Simultaneously, this week will also mark the launch of the public input process, which will include a questionnaire, interviews, and focus groups, culminating in a town hall presentation to share a preliminary concept shaped by community participation. Announcements will follow concerning opportunities for how anyone who desires to participate can get involved.

Ultimately, the construction objective is to initiate with the construction of the parking lot in the first quarter of 2026 and commence construction of road improvements before the end of the third quarter of 2026.