



## **Taking the Initiative to Brand and Develop the City of Fayetteville**

**Tennessee Certified Economic Developer Capstone Project**

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**Kristi Gentry**  
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**Mentor: Greg Lowe**  
**TCED Staff Advisor: Dr. Dave Kolzow**  
**TCED Capstone Coordinator: Martha Kelley**

## **Background-Taking the Initiative**

Established in 1809 by Mr. Ezekiel Norris, the City of Fayetteville is the largest city in Lincoln County Tennessee. Fayetteville basks in the glory of its natural beauty, which includes the Elk River, rural countryside, and a well preserved historic downtown square. Along with Fayetteville, Tennessee being a picturesque small town full of antique stores, gift shops, and a state of the art movie theater, its actual location is one of the best qualities this town has to offer. Fayetteville, Tennessee is approximately 70 miles south of Nashville, Tennessee, 30 miles north of Huntsville, Alabama, and 15 miles from Lynchburg, Tennessee, which is home to one of the most recognizable brands in the world, Jack Daniels.



Fayetteville’s historic downtown square is the focus of the small town, and it houses several iconic landmarks which include the courthouse, the Pythian building, and the Lincoln Theatre. Many types of merchants occupied the downtown square in the 1800s, including butchers, bakeries, department stores, hardware stores, and local saloons. At that time, the square was the center hub for all retail and business dealings. Today, the square is a mixed use area and home to antique shops, clothing boutiques, furniture shops, insurance agencies, and lawyer offices. Although Fayetteville, Tennessee was plagued with many natural disasters over the years, including fires and tornadoes, many of the historic buildings are still standing and are occupied with merchants.

The City of Fayetteville and Lincoln County has faced many obstacles over the last five years. One of the first big blows was announced in January 2015. Daiken Industries, Ltd. announced that it would be closing the local Goodman plant and relocating all operations to a site in Houston, Texas. The local facility employed 1,800 people at its peak in annual operations of manufacturing residential and light commercial air conditioning, heating, and indoor air quality products and systems. (Elk Valley Times, January 13, 2015) In February 2018, another historic announcement was made. Sir's Fabrics, an icon in Fayetteville and known throughout the Southeast, was destroyed by fire. Sir's Fabrics served Fayetteville since 1948. (Elk Valley Times, February 11, 2018) Between the loss of a major employer and the loss of an iconic business, there was no doubt that work needed to be done to bolster the economy. A process was necessary to solicit ideas quickly to help the residents and to attract visitors to Fayetteville, Tennessee.

Fayetteville, Tennessee has many "untapped" resources and opportunities to offer. The scenic Elk River winds through the center of Fayetteville. This resource is attractive to tourists and residents who want to spend the day relaxing in its beauty. One can also float up to the banks of the newly developed Camp Blount Historic Site to gain some knowledge about the first volunteer in Tennessee. Fayetteville can also provide the opportunity for a new business or industry at the recently vacated Daikin location. On another note, the City of Fayetteville has recently completed Phase I of the greenway connecting the historic downtown square to Stonebridge Park. This phase of the greenway has given residents and visitors alike the opportunity to enjoy a relaxing stroll to the park or the Elk River. However, the key to success is to figure out how the City of Fayetteville can package this quaint town to make it recognizable and appealing to tourists as well as something that is appreciated by residents.

According to Bill Baker, the character, reputation, and enduring essence of this town represent its distinctive promise of value and sense of place. Most importantly it is a valued promise that must

be grounded in truth and reality. It is sometimes referred to as a “community brand” because it refers to a location that engages multiple, diverse resident, business and organizational interest to form a unified and democratic approach to presenting a place. There are several entities that solely work to bring recognition and development to the City of Fayetteville, but it was quickly realized that there was no more enthusiastic and effective cheerleader for Fayetteville than the city government itself. This realization was clearly brought to the forefront after the last election, in which a new Mayor and three new Aldermen were elected. The new Board of Mayor and Aldermen knew that Fayetteville could not simply wait for industrial and retail development and tourism to decide to locate and visit here. All were in agreement to hire consultants who could perform the research and provide a concise plan that could then be implemented.

Although the City Administrator, tried to initiate an Economic and Community Development team with the previous Board of Mayor and Aldermen, it was not until this current Board was elected in fall of 2018 that his vision would take effect. The five member team was established in the spring of 2019 after getting the Board of Mayor and Aldermen’s approval at their annual Strategic Planning. The ECD team is made up internally with City employees, which include the City Administrator, IT Director, Planning and Codes Coordinator, Property Maintenance Inspector, and the HR Coordinator. Getting the City of Fayetteville’s ECD team established laid the groundwork to get these first two big projects greenlit, which was to do a Branding Initiative and to complete a Downtown Master Plan. This decision came about after years of discussion about these two projects. The City Administrator appointed the City’s ECD team and after numerous meetings and study sessions, the team decided these two projects were imperative to move forward with economic development in the City of Fayetteville.

Defined in the proposed scope of services, the purpose of a Branding Initiative is to develop

a long term, multi-year marketing strategy to increase business recruitment, tourism, and livability factors in the City of Fayetteville. The Downtown Master Plan’s intent is to provide a framework for the development of future public policy pertaining to development, redevelopment, infrastructure improvement and expansion, streetscape design, and provision of community services.

In April 2019, the City of Fayetteville sent out “Request for Proposals” to select companies to complete a Branding Initiative and a Downtown Master Plan. The City of Fayetteville’s ECD team extensively looked over the proposals and had many meetings to discuss who would be the “right fit” to hire for these milestone projects. In May 2019 at the regular board meeting of the Mayor and Aldermen, a motion was passed to approve \$62,400 to complete a Branding Initiative and \$74,370 to complete a Downtown Master Plan project. Chandler Thinks, from Franklin, Tennessee, was hired for the Branding Initiative, and The Walker Collaborative, from Nashville, Tennessee, was hired for the Downtown Master Plan.



The Branding Initiative and the Downtown Master Plan has the potential to benefit the economy and the community of the City of Fayetteville upon implementation. Steve Chandler, with Chandler Thinks, stated in his proposal, “The fact that you have assembled a group of leadership to consider a branding process indicates there’s a collective and collaborative desire for Fayetteville, Tennessee to stand out in attracting tourism, business recruitment, and resident satisfaction.” Phil Walker, with the Walker Collaborative, stated in his proposal, “I was very

impressed with the fact that, unlike many downtowns across the country, Downtown Fayetteville is still the heart and soul of the community. It was great to see so many historic buildings preserved and restored, as well as the numerous thriving businesses located inside them.”

Although the City of Fayetteville has many notable festivals and events to draw visitors, such as the Slawburger Festival, Cruzin’ Downtown Fayetteville, and the Host of Christmas Past, most people do not see Fayetteville as a destination spot for all year round. Currently, it appears that most people are driving through Fayetteville on their way to Jack Daniels but nothing is attracting them to stop in this community or stay for the weekend at one of newly renovated hotels or bed and breakfast. The Branding Initiative project was chosen to help establish the story of Fayetteville so that eventually Fayetteville will be seen as a destination spot. The Downtown Master Plan is needed to help build the grid for future development. Most local residents want to make sure that the historic downtown is preserved, but in turn, they need to see that preparation is taking place for future growth and development too. Essentially the Branding Initiative will be used to help attract visitors and build community awareness and pride for residents. The Downtown Master Plan will benefit the residents of Fayetteville and visitors with the new wayfinding signage, refurbished sidewalks, and outdoor entertainment districts. Hopefully, these two projects will lay the groundwork for future development, generate more revenue from tourism, and foster the idea among local residents that their hometown is open to change. Conversations around town, especially from long-time residents, are sometimes filled with considerable negativity towards the City. A lot of those residents will say that the City is keeping a restaurant or retail store from locating here, or the city government’s leadership does not want this small town to change.

One of the main issues that the City of Fayetteville’s ECD team is trying to overcome is to bridge the gap and lack of communication between the entities that service and help to maintain and develop the City of Fayetteville. The City needs to have strong cooperative relationships with

the Chamber of Commerce, Fayetteville Main Street, and the Industrial Development Board. If each entity continuously works on separate agendas, the City of Fayetteville will continue to grow and develop at a slow pace, but if all entities band together, the City of Fayetteville has a much better chance to land a development and sell the story of Fayetteville, Tennessee effectively.

After embarking on the Branding Initiative and the Downtown Master Plan projects this past year, the Tennessee Certified Economic Development courses became even more relevant. Specifically, the marketing, branding, and strategic planning classes were extremely helpful in preparing the steering committee and the ECD team for the roles of each project. Networking with professional consultants and having applicable course information available gave the ECD team a clearer understanding of the process of these two projects.

Branding and/or marketing are key items that the City of Fayetteville has been lacking. The City needs this push on branding and a master plan in order to move Fayetteville forward, attract visitors, and improve the quality of life for the hometown residents. These courses have painted a picture of how other communities in Tennessee are developing economically and attracting growth, development, and tourism. The courses also made it very evident that many other Tennessee communities face the same issues and dilemmas too.

### **Implementing the Plan**

After selecting Chandler Thinks and The Walker Collaborative, the City of Fayetteville's ECD team began to work quickly on kicking off both projects. One of the first tasks was to determine the key stakeholders in this community because those people and their ideas would potentially benefit and contribute greatly in developing both projects. The ECD team selected the stakeholders based on their interest and contributions in the community. The stakeholders participated in one-on-one interviews and focus groups. Research by Chandler Thinks and The

Walker Collaborative was conducted on businesses and interests to determine what Fayetteville needed and desired for economic and community development. Both consultant groups also conducted site visits to discuss their desires and goals for moving Fayetteville forward.

### **Key Stakeholders**

Elected officials, community leaders, local developers, business owners, and residents were all included because they all are invested in this community. Each one, in their own way, has given time, money, and heart to Fayetteville, Tennessee. According to [nextgeneration.co.za](http://nextgeneration.co.za), “A **“stakeholder”** can be defined as: Any individual, group or institution who has a vested interest in the natural resources of the project area and/or who potentially will be affected by project activities and has something to gain or lose if conditions change or stay the same.”

There were obstacles to overcome including a “disconnect” between some of the merchants. Some of the downtown merchants have been unhappy with lack of economic and community development for the businesses in the downtown area. In order to help build unity, these merchants were selected to tell their story and their perspective of what they thought needed to be changed or implemented in Fayetteville. They are an important part of the community and sharing their ideas and concerns to the consultants was the perfect unbiased platform on which to be heard. The ECD team embraced having a variety of stakeholders because all stories and ideas deserved to be heard, both good and bad. This group became a wonderful asset during the process of completing the plan for these two projects. Now, these ideas have been gathered into one centralized project, which will benefit the entire City of Fayetteville and the Lincoln County community.

The current Board of Mayor and Aldermen is very passionate as well as visionary. If it had not been for their approval, neither the Branding Initiative nor the Downtown Master Plan projects would have received the green light. They were very eager for the story of Fayetteville to be told

and heard. Many new developments are occurring in the surrounding communities, and they realized that, if big moves are not made, potentially Fayetteville, Tennessee could be left behind.

Between both projects, almost 100 community leaders/business owners participated in the focus groups. They came from all walks of life, but all shared one common thing, which was passion and love for their community. This group of individuals put a lot of the puzzle pieces together for the consultant groups. They brought fresh ideas and gave a true sense of direction as to what they hope that the future of Fayetteville, Tennessee will become.

### **Trials and Tribulations**

There are many trials and tribulations to overcome when implementing community projects such as these. Oftentimes when small communities try to implement them, it can create conflicts and backlash throughout the town because people lose sight of the big picture and put too much personal gain and their own agendas into their thoughts.

Bill Baker stated, “Last week I was reminded of the fragility of place brands and how they need to foster deep community roots from the start of their brand planning process. The marketing manager of a small destination marketing organization (DMO) told me that his city had completed a brand strategy during the past two years which had been well received. But with the election of a new mayor, they had abandoned the strategy. Fortunately, this was not one of our clients. This discussion brought home to me that from time to time people who are essential to the vitality of a destination brand move on. The result can be that their replacement wants to “do things their way”. It goes without saying that community-based brands have to be built following a highly consultative and transparent process - along with broad buy-in and a shared sense of ownership. The brand does not belong to any one person or organization.” The current Board of Mayor and Aldermen highly supports moving forward with these two projects.

Thankfully, the Board does not completely change during the election cycle every two years “as only” three elected officials could potentially change. This vision would not be completely lost with a new Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

The ECD team also wanted to give some of the residents a chance to participate and voice their opinion. The team selected long-time residents, individuals that moved away and returned, and some new residents. The purpose of this was to see why they picked Fayetteville and/or why they have stayed here. It gave a true insight on where Fayetteville stands currently and what needs improvement. First, the ECD team has to be able to sell “Fayetteville” to the residents before it can become truly attractive to visitors and tourists.

### **Goals and Objectives**

Telling Fayetteville’s story, increasing tourism, preserving the historic downtown square, and improving quality of life are the top goals of the ECD team for the City of Fayetteville. The team feels that the purpose of the Downtown Redevelopment plan is to provide Fayetteville with a blueprint for revitalizing the historic downtown square. The Walker Collaborative suggests that because “Downtown Fayetteville is a complex and multi-faceted place requiring an equally complex and multi-faceted solution, this plan is holistic in that it will not focus on any one specific aspect of the study area, but rather it will consider it in a comprehensive manner-physical, economic, and social.” According to Chandler Thinks, the brand is intended to support the work of Fayetteville, and be able to achieve the overall goal with it being largely dependent upon the ability to influence a compatible environment in which the existing industry clusters and businesses grow and prosper.

## **Downtown Master Plan**

The City of Fayetteville's ECD team teamed up with The Walker Collaborative in July 2019 for the project kick-off of the Downtown Master Plan project. The project timeline for completion was 10 months, and it was divided into 4 task sections. The task sections are as follows:

- Task 1.0: Project Kick-off and Research
- Task 2.0: Charrette & Concept Plan
- Task 3.0: Draft Master Plan Preparation
- Task 4.0: Plan Presentations & Revisions



The principles for the plan were first created prior to the charrette, then confirmed/refined by the charrette workshop participants. In the plan overview, Mr. Phil Walker said that they will serve as the guiding light for the subsequent plan.

### **Downtown Planning Principles**

1. Preserve and enhance natural and historic resources
2. Land uses should be diverse and physically integrated
3. Downtown's architectural past should be preserved and reinforced
4. Maintain inter-connected streets that are pedestrian-friendly
5. Streetscapes should be attractive, safe, and interesting
6. Accommodate parking without degrading Downtown's appearance
7. Provide a generous amount of public space in a variety of forms
8. Offer a range of downtown housing alternatives
9. Provide a rich mixture of shopping, dining, entertainment, etc.
10. Offer a variety of civic, cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities

The goals and aspirations for the community revolve around preservation, safety, rich variety of culture and livability, and convenience. Whether you are raising a family, are retired, or are simply planning a trip to Fayetteville, all of the planning principles focus on the goals of the community. The rich history of Fayetteville needs preserving, which is mainly found in the historic downtown square area. Streets need to be kept safe for all ages, including attractive pedestrian-friendly crosswalks. Residents and visitors also want a variety of arts and culture available in the downtown area, which include a variety of local restaurants, entertainment, and shopping opportunities. The addition of more rental property or apartments in the downtown area will also increase convenience.

The primary study area for this project was the downtown square and approximately two blocks off the square. There were also three secondary study areas which focused on the gateways leading into the downtown area. Physical conditions were evaluated such as natural features, existing land uses, building conditions, streets, and parking demands. The City's RFP wanted the following four themes to be addressed in the Downtown Master Plan Project; commercial uses, entertainment and gathering spaces, aesthetics/streetscape, and mixed use development. These themes were selected to increase the quality, quantity, and variety of retail, dining, and entertainment options, maintain the area's uniqueness but enhance the wayfinding signage and appearance of public spaces, and create acceptable guidelines for a mixed use development to include commercial, residential, and parking uses.

### **Branding Initiative**

The kick-off visit for the Branding Initiative project with Chandler Thinks was in June 2019. The project timeline for completion was 8 months, and it was divided into 4 phases. The phases are as follows:

- Phase I: Explore- Learning the Fayetteville Story
- Phase II: Evaluate- What is Fayetteville, Tennessee’s most compelling story?
- Phase III: Express- Telling the Fayetteville Story
- Phase IV: Engage-Deliver the Brand Navigator Tourism Action Plan

Both the Branding Initiative and the Downtown Master Plan focus on preserving the historic significance of Fayetteville’s story, sparking new interest in Fayetteville for tourists and new developers, and creating a plan that carries Fayetteville into the future. Both projects will be used for long-range planning, and the first five years of implementation will be the most critical.

### **Fayetteville’s Brand Story**

The Chandler Thinks team, led by Steve Chandler, delivered a compelling brand story for Fayetteville. The story was derived after completing hours of research, interviewing merchants and local historians, and many trips to Fayetteville. The brand story is more than a tag line-it is a story that tells where Fayetteville has been, and more importantly, where it is going. Fayetteville, Tennessee... “Slawburgers, Whiskey, and Tennessee Heritage tell this story.

### **Project Timeframe**

**Branding Initiative-** When the final presentation for the Branding Initiative was given in January 2020, the ECD team immediately went to work determining the goals, the timeframe to implement these goals, and what the “low hanging fruit” or quick victories could be.

### **Immediate- (6th Month-1 Year) Priorities-Building a Foundation of Tourism**

- Tourism Department/Person
- Tourism Advisory Council
- Education
- Website
- Signage/Billboards

- Destination Brand Video
- Photography

The City of Fayetteville’s ECD Team chose 4 main priorities to put in place the first year. During the FY 2021 budget, the following items are being proposed, a tourism coordinator position, a Tourism Advisory Council, a separate tourism website and social media page, and new signage that depicts the new brand story and tag line, *Slawburgers, Whiskey, & Tennessee Heritage*. The tagline was created by much research and the “deep dive” into studying why Fayetteville is famous. Slawburgers originated here many years ago. Whiskey is significant to this tagline with the Lincoln County Process and Tennessee heritage comes about with the historic Tennessee downtown square.



**Short-term- Year 2-5 Priorities-Begin to Tell Others about Fayetteville, Tennessee**

- Promotions-Expand Advertising
- State Visitors Guide
- Digital Advertising
- Public Relations
- Welcome Center Development
- More Billboards

**Long-term Priorities**-The long-term goals that the City hopes to accomplish from the Branding Initiative is to make Fayetteville more recognizable for visitors as well as give the residents a sense of community pride. Hopefully, the main long-term goal that will be accomplished from this initiative is the establishment of a TN Whiskey Heritage and Culture Center, which will highlight the local distilleries. Once this is established, the City wants to partner with its neighbors in Lynchburg, Tennessee and make Fayetteville the weekend destination spot for all the tourists who are already in the area visiting Jack Daniels.

### **Downtown Master Plan**

Although the ECD team is awaiting the final Downtown Master Plan document, which will be presented in June 2020, they are using the draft plan to determine the project's goals and identifying the "quick victories."

### **Immediate- (6th Month-1 Year) Priorities**

- Adapt the Steering Committee into an Implementation Committee
- Revise the City's existing regulations to allow and encourage outdoor dining
- Pursue the development of a whiskey distillery or a micro-brewery in the downtown
- Research new regulations/ordinances for the historic district
- Create a cohesive sign package that coordinates with the Branding Initiative

### **Short-term- Year 2-5 Priorities**

- Develop public restrooms & a small visitor's center as part of the proposed Volunteer Plaza
- Enhance existing parking lots
- Enhance the sidewalks and streetscapes in the historic square area
- Update Zoning Ordinances and districts to promote mixed use occupancies
- Look for creative ways to bring in more affordable housing units

### **Long-term Priorities**

The long-term goals that the ECD team hopes to accomplish from the Downtown Master Plan are to lay the groundwork now, through updating ordinances, to truly prepare Fayetteville,

Tennessee for future development. Although it will take many years to see the true outcome from changing the Zoning Ordinance, it will eventually payoff aesthetically for the downtown study area. Some of the changes to the Zoning Ordinance that the Walker Collaborative suggests are implementing special event and entertainment districts that include sidewalk dining and allows consumption of alcohol, adding parking regulations, and updating zoning districts to include mixed use and urban development.

### **Achieving the Results**

To truly achieve results from both projects, the ECD team, Board of Mayor and Aldermen, key stakeholders, and residents must stay focus and invested. Items must be budgeted each year and each project should be reevaluated to make sure that the priorities are still appropriate and on track. Through technology, trends, and new ideas, the plans will change continuously, but the enthusiasm should remain intact.

Over time, the Branding Initiative success on tourism can be measured by tracking lodging trends, evaluating the city website inquiries, and evaluating increases in occupancy tax and revenues. The success of the Downtown Master Plan can be measured by evaluating an increase in development, evaluate positive growth from changes to policies, and determine if there is a decrease in accidents and safety issues following upgrades to sidewalks, streets, and signage. There are many ways that fruition could be determined for both of these plans. However, these measurements are most important at this time during the beginning phases of implementation of both plans.

### **Conclusion**

For many years the Fayetteville community has watched the surrounding towns grow in industry and tourism, enhance quality of life, and appear to always be on the “fast track” for retail development. Local residents always say “Why not Fayetteville?”, and feel that Fayetteville is left

behind. At the 2019 Strategic Planning session, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen pushed the limits to answer that very question. As a Board, they wanted to put the City of Fayetteville in a place to land the retail and industrial development, enhance the quality of life for residents, and attract an increased flow of visitors. The money was budgeted and spent. The plans are put in place. Now, it is time to get to work! Fayetteville, Tennessee has a very bright future, and everyone will be very excited to see these projects evolve for many years to come.

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