

BLOUNT COUNTY BUSINESS NEWS

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Developers, city leaders bet on downtown growth

Mathaus Schwarzen
Business Reporter

When Maryville completed its Downtown Master Plan in 2024, the research painted a picture of the downtown business landscape. The business mix included mostly restaurants, government services and health care. Businesses in the study area numbered around 280, with 7,400 workers and only a few hundred residents.

In other words, Maryville's downtown was a source of work. Now, property owners, developers and city officials are leveraging capital to revitalize the once office-heavy daytime employment district into a mixed-use urban district — and experts say the city center may be entering a new phase of redevelopment.

Public planning is paving the way

The city of Maryville has spent just under \$6.5 million in public investments downtown since 2023 and continues to invest in the area. The work, which addresses multiple projects identified in the city's Downtown Master Plan, is aimed at streamlining the development process for businesses and increasing downtown's attractiveness to visitors.



Photo by Robert Berlin

Greenway Village development is nearing completion as more businesses move in. DB Provisions opened its signature restaurant in February.

Angie Luckie, public services director for Maryville, said the city wanted to capitalize on increasing downtown interest from the private sector. Branding meetings led to a bid for a downtown study and master plan in 2023. The city spent \$142,000 on the plan, and by January 2025 had begun to implement the findings.

Key changes, Luckie said, include consolidating the downtown zoning

map. The city collapsed the previous five-zone map into a three-zone version.

"It hopefully makes it more simple for people when they're trying to figure out what they can and can't do," Luckie said.

The city has also installed wayfinding signage on block after block to help visitors find key locations and contributed \$2.5 million to construction of the Holiday Inn hotel under

way on Broadway Avenue. The project will add nearly 100 hotel rooms downtown and include an additional parking garage underneath.

In the future, Luckie said the city plans additional streetscaping and beautification work, particularly around downtown parking near Bluetick Tavern and Bella.

Developers are following

James Tomiczek, a local developer now deeply invested in downtown Maryville, said local leadership gave him the confidence to get started when he saw interest in downtown growing. When he put together a list of downtown projects for a presentation in 2023, he said he could think of 23 projects off the top of his head.

"Now, I look at it and we're up around 50, with most of them having been done," he said.

Downtown lease rates are on the rise, too.

"You used to come downtown and find places at about \$12 per foot all over the place," he said. "Now, you're in the mid \$20s."

New construction, such as Tomiczek's projects, usually falls in the \$30 range. He is nearly finished with Greenway Village — a mixed-use development near West Lamar

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Tennessee program helps businesses tap grants, tax credits for hiring

By Robert Berlin
Editor

A new state employment incentive program launched in November 2025 seeks to make it easier for employers to access business incentives, tax credits and fund talent pipeline development.

"Basically, TNWorks creates a no-wrong-door approach to workforce development for any size business," explained Tyler Asher, assistant commissioner for the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Asher believes the new program helps small and midsize businesses cut through the complexity of workforce programs, access financial incentives, and build stronger pipelines of talent — especially by connecting employers with motivated workers from underutilized populations.

"Small businesses often miss out on workforce incentives simply because the programs are spread across multiple agencies," said Gregg Bostick, director of the Tennessee Small Business Development Center at Pellissippi State Community College.

Bostick pointed out there are programs that help offset salary costs for employers who hire youth, people with disabilities and provide Work Opportunity Tax Credits for hiring veterans and justice-involved workers.

But he admits those programs have in the past been challenging to initiate.

Youth Employment Program

Tennessee's Youth Employment Program is one opportunity local employers can tap into that links young adults ages 14–24 with employers while the state pays up to a total of \$3,500 of their wages.

Jessica Belitz, Blount Partnership Director of Workforce Development, said tapping into programs like the Youth Employment Program helps small businesses acquire workers but also builds the community.

"Programs like YEP help us develop a skilled talent pool and help us retain our local talent for the long-term success of our community and region," Belitz said.

Each of the high schools in Blount County have work-based learning coordinators who help identify eligible youth workers and connect them to local employers.

"They're getting real world experience," Sara Bell, workforce development coordinator at William Blount High School, explained. "They're seeing what the field is like. And that takes a partnership from a business owner."

Greg Newman with Roger L. Newman Co. Heating and Cooling said his company has participated in YEP for several years.

"We've got three (students) right now who come in and work part time

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MAKING MOVES



WAYLON'S PLACE REOPENS IN TOWNSEND WITH NEW MANAGEMENT AND VISION

Townsend family restaurant Waylon's Place reopened March 1 under new general management, according to owners Keith and Shawna Freant.

Missy Loveday has worked in the restaurant business for more than a decade and brings experience from Riverstone Family Restaurant, Good Vibes & More in Townsend, as well as several restaurants in Gulf

Shores, Alabama.

"I believe in what this restaurant can be," Loveday said about Waylon's Place. "I'm going to give it 180 percent."

The season kicked off with a soft launch Feb. 28 with six kitchen staff members and 10 floor staff members.

The Freants assumed the lease in April 2025 and made significant im-

provements to the building, where Dead Beat Pete's, Country Steak and Eggs, and Good Vibes & More have been located in the past. It is their first restaurant venture.

"Family, faith and community are woven into everything here," Shawna said. "We want to be a place where good food, warm hospitality and a relaxed atmosphere come together."



SIEMENS BREAKS GROUND ON PELLISSIPPI PLACE MANUFACTURING FACILITY

Leading German multinational technology conglomerate Siemens AG has begun construction of an 82,000-square-foot medical device research, development and manufacturing facility at Pellissippi Place, according to Jeff Muir, communications director for the Blount Partnership.

Construction is expected to take 18 months to complete.

Founded in 1847, Siemens employs

more than 318,000 people worldwide, but estimates for how many employees will work at this facility are not yet available.

Pellissippi Place is a 450-acre, Blount Partnership-owned research and development park, technology hub, business park and live-work-play destination located on East Broadway at the Pellissippi Highway interchange.

Medical equipment manufacturer

ProNova Solutions opened its \$20 million research and manufacturing facility at the park in 2015.

Nashville-based Ramston Capital also plans to construct a 400-unit apartment complex called Pellissippi Lofts beginning this year or early next year, according to Muir.

Remaining mixed-use businesses are expected to begin construction as the Pellissippi Place project develops over the next few years.



MARYVILLE COLLEGE LAUNCHES ONLINE ALUMNI BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Maryville College has launched a public-facing alumni business directory to promote Scott-to-Scott support after graduation. The free listing service offers alumni-owned businesses the opportunity to connect and display branding at their workplaces.

"We've been working to make sure alumni are connected with students, connected with the Career Center to offer mentorship, internships, job

opportunities and all of those different ways they can connect," said Maryville College Director of Alumni Affairs Jennifer Triplett.

For local operators, it provides brand signaling to a concentrated base of 3,000 local alumni. Triplett said they want the directory to foster loyalty among alumni and give new graduates a place to look for potential employment connections.

She said the directory, launched in

recent weeks, has 18 listings so far. Participation requires an application and a light review process. Personal data remains private, and members receive a window decal for their businesses. The school will continue social media features and event promotion to grow the directory.

The directory is available on the Maryville College Alumni Association website at maryville.link/alumni-businessdirectory.



SELLARS BECOMES SUPERINTENDENT OF GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS PARK

Charles "Charlie" Sellars has been named superintendent of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park after more than a year as acting superintendent, park spokesperson Katie Liming announced in late February.

Raised in Clyde, North Carolina, Sellars became acting superintendent in January 2025 after former superintendent Cassius Cash re-

signed to become CEO and president of the Yosemite Conservancy in San Francisco.

Sellars began his federal career in 1985 as an engineering draftsman on the Blue Ridge Parkway, according to a statement from the independent non-profit organization Friends of the Smokies.

Over the next 40 years, he served as superintendent of Andersonville

National Historic Site, Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, Gauley River National Recreation Area and Bluestone National Scenic River.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the most visited national park in the United States, with more than 11.5 million recreation visits in 2025, according to park statistics.



BRUMIT RESTAURANT GROUP, INC. TO OPEN ARBY'S RESTAURANT ON U.S. 411

Multi-brand restaurant company Inspire Brands will open its 134th Arby's store this month at 2107 U.S. Highway 411 South, near the Waffle House and where Secure Self Storage is under construction, according to District Manager Rebecca Clark.

Clark said she is seeking management staff and that construction on the building should begin this month.

The store will be owned and oper-

ated by franchisee Brumit Restaurant Group Inc., based in North Carolina, which owns 64 Arby's restaurants in South Carolina, North Carolina and Tennessee.

While Blount County has only one other Arby's (owned and operated by Inspire Brands), Knoxville has the highest concentration of Arby's stores in the state with 12. Nashville has six, while Chattanooga has five.

Arby's was founded in 1964 and

the company has since undergone multiple ownership changes. It is currently owned by Inspire Brands — formed in 2018 by private equity firm Roark Capital Group, which also owns Buffalo Wild Wings, Sonic Drive-In, Jimmy John's, Dunkin', Rusty Taco and Baskin-Robbins.

The company reports \$32 billion in annual global sales from more than 33,000 restaurants and employs an estimated 650,000 people.

TN GENERAL ASSEMBLY UPDATES

The 114th Tennessee General Assembly re-convened at the State Capitol January 13 for the second half of the 2025-26 legislative session. Here is a brief roundup of business-related legislation that may impact Blount County:

HB 1901/SB2339 - Taxes, Exemption and Credits - As introduced, authorizes an excise tax credit for brewers that donate spent grain byproducts for agricultural use. - Amends TCA Title 43; Title 57 and Title 67.



HB0298/SB0242 - Housing - As introduced, enacts the "Homes not Hedge Funds Act"; prohibits certain business entities from purchasing more than 100 single-family homes in certain counties in this state for purposes of renting the purchased properties; establishes a state and private cause of action and establishes damages for violations. - Amends TCA Title 13; Title 47 and Title 66.



HB2181/SB2261 - Corporations, Not for Profit - As introduced, requires a nonprofit organization that receives state or federal grants to compile, maintain, and publish in a publicly available location the salaries of the nonprofit organization's employees. - Amends TCA Title 4; Title 10, Chapter 7; Title 35; Title 48 and Title 50.



HB1468/SB1807 - Consumer Protection - As introduced, prohibits an entity from setting the price of a specific good or service using personalized algorithmic pricing; designates a violation as an unfair or deceptive act or practice affecting trade or commerce in violation of the Tennessee Consumer Protection Act of 1977. - Amends TCA Title 29; Title 45; Title 47 and Title 66.



HB2552/SB2237 - Local Government, General - As introduced, requires a local government to approve, deny, or identify deficiencies in a development application, development plan, or a site inspection submitted by a developer within 30 days; requires changes in contracts between local governments and contractors or developers to be in writing; requires a local government to release a contractor or developer from its required bond within 30 days of receiving a determination from an independent inspector that the contractor or developer has completed all work required by the contract; makes other related changes. - Amends TCA Title 7.



HB0952/SB1185 - Economic and Community Development - As introduced, enacts the "Small Business Growth and Empowerment Act"; authorizes business tax credits for small businesses hiring locally or providing workforce training; creates grants for minority-owned and women-owned businesses in underserved areas. - Amends TCA Title 4, Chapter 3, Part 7 and Title 67, Chapter 4.



HB2248/SB2495 - Employees, Employers - As introduced, requires employers to pay employees an hourly wage of at least \$20 beginning January 1, 2027, with annual adjustments by the commissioner of labor and workforce development based on increases in the consumer price index; establishes posting mandates, civil liability for violations, and a two-to-three-year statute of limitations for recovery actions. - Amends TCA Title 4; Title 5; Title 6; Title 7; Title 9; Title 13; Title 29; Title 47; Title 50; Title 57; Title 58; Title 65; Title 67 and Title 68.



HB1959/SB2040 - Pharmacy, Pharmacists - As introduced, enacts the "Freedom, Access, and Integrity in Registered Pharmacy (FAIR Rx) Act." - Amends TCA Title 63.



HB1916/SB1786 - Real Estate Agents and Brokers - As introduced, exempts an affiliate broker or broker licensed under the Tennessee Real Estate Broker License Act from the additional licensure and classroom hours in training programs requirements for a vacation lodging service firm's designated agent; requires that vacation lodging services be under the supervision of the principal broker of an affiliate broker, broker, or firm. - Amends TCA Title 62, Chapter 13.



EXPERT ADVICE

Lessons from the leadership learning lab

By Trevis Gardner
 Founder & Principle of
 Blockhouse Services
 Group



Leadership is often described as the secret sauce of success. As we look at businesses, churches, governments, organizations or practically any collection or assembly of people who are linked by a common purpose, we can see examples where strong leadership enabled success in circumstances where failure might have otherwise been expected.

Visionary, exemplary leaders have left their mark on history because they brought the personal ability to influence others to achieve great things. Sometimes these "great things" involved winning wars, rescuing national economies, or helping others overcome adversity and survive — perhaps even thrive — in the face of dire circumstances.

The study of the traits and qualities of leaders — how they influence, encourage or organize others — can be examined as a science, an art, or even as a series of coincidences that are recognized and leveraged for a favorable outcome.

My personal leadership abilities have been marinated, broiled, baked and roasted through formative influences from other leaders. I have learned from both their successes and their failures. I am now blessed to be able to look back, reflect, make observations, offer critiques and praise these experiences from what has been, for me, a leadership learning lab. I can see the patterns and nuances of leadership techniques and practices, and I enjoy pondering their impact and effectiveness in real-world scenarios. It is a pleasing and satisfying opportunity to share these lessons with others. I share these thoughts with a sense of responsibility — to be a positive influence on others, just as my mentors, teachers and leaders have influenced me.

A few of the most important points I've learned about leadership include:

- Systems, processes and assets are managed. People are led.
- It is a very rare individual who is both a highly competent or gifted leader and also an equally skilled manager or technical specialist. This combination is extremely uncommon — so rare, in fact, that I believe it runs contrary to human nature.

- If you must choose between a highly skilled leader with a proven track record and a highly skilled manager of equal but differing expertise, choose the leader. A truly gifted leader will be self-aware, equipped with the emotional intelligence required to listen to others, recognize their own shortcomings or gaps and then quickly take action to fill that void by seeking out or developing someone around them to fulfill that management need within the organization.

- Leaders are selfless. They naturally put the needs of their team and mission ahead of their own interests. This often comes at a personal cost. They may burn out or deplete their own energy, attention and well-being in service to others. Good leaders take care of others. Great leaders take care of others and themselves, ensuring they can continue to lead and serve into the future.

- Leaders view their responsibility to lead a team as a personal challenge. They measure their own success by the success of those they lead. They constantly look for opportunities to develop those around them through time, energy and influence. They see mentorship as one of their greatest responsibilities — and one of the most essential tools for making a team stronger, more capable and more resilient.

- Leaders create confidence in others. Yes, they develop their team's technical skills and abilities, but the most important — and often overlooked — trait they foster is confidence. Confidence to overcome adversity. Confidence to outperform competitors. Confidence to lead others. Confidence to remain resilient when the unplanned occurs, when mistakes happen or when the seemingly impossible must be overcome. Perhaps the most valuable expression of confidence is the ability to learn equally from both successes and failures. It takes humility and discipline to learn from successes, but it takes confidence to learn from failures.

A technique for evaluating events, operations, campaigns or projects involving people, teams, organizations is "Trev's Three Cs of Teamwork and Leadership." These three concepts are succinct, identifiable and measurable in nearly any circumstance: Character, Capability and Communication. Those three concepts will be explored in greater detail in a future column.

MAKING MOVES



AYOKA RANCH TO OPEN 10,000 SQUARE FOOT VENUE NEAR TAIL OF THE DRAGON

After four years of planning and construction, Alyssa and Brendan Nickle will host their first event at Ayoka Ranch in April.

The event center sits on 58 acres near the Tail of the Dragon and includes a 10,000-square-foot event barn, groom's lounge, bridal suite and plans for 19 onsite rental cabins. "We're wrapping up construction

and we've been getting bookings," Brendan said. "Ultimately it's a place where families can come enjoy East Tennessee and a beautiful view of the Smokies."

Originally from New York, Alyssa and Brendan, along with Brendan's parents, relocated to East Tennessee in 2019, bringing general contracting, real estate, finance and

construction experience.

With the vision quickly becoming a reality, Brendan said they have big plans for the future.

"In addition to private events, we are going to host some public events out here on the property," Brendan explained, adding that the first public event will be a veterans fundraiser May 23.



MARYVILLE COLLEGE GRAD EARNS PARTNER ROLE AT LE CONTE WEALTH

Maryville College graduate Alex Willard has been promoted to partner at Le Conte Wealth, where he will serve as director of Purpose-Built Planning and client advisor.

"Alex has earned this through his passion for helping clients, embracing our team-first culture, and developing into a leader in both internal

and community endeavors," said Kevin Painter, managing partner.

He joined the company after graduating in 2017 with a Bachelor of Arts in finance and accounting and a minor in sociology. Since then, he has passed the Uniform Investment Adviser Law Examination (Series 65) and the Special Enrollment

Examination. These credentials allowed him to earn the Enrolled Agent designation from the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Willard also serves on the United Way of Blount County Board of Directors, is treasurer of the Blount County Youth Court board and is a 2023 Leadership Blount graduate.



RAGE ROOM ADDS FRANKEN DOGS RESTAURANT TO SERVICE OFFERING

Rocky Top Rage Room owners Brittany Willis and husband Tim Williamson expanded their Maryville business in February by opening Franken Dogs at 1811 W. Broadway Ave.

Franken Dogs operates next door to the rage room and serves customizable hot dogs and specials,

along with canned and bottled beverages. About 95% of the menu centers on hot dogs.

First opened in 2021, the rage room is a controlled space where people can safely break and destroy objects to release stress or frustration.

Willis said the food addition responds to larger bookings seeking

space to gather before and after sessions.

The restaurant and rage room operate in separate suites.

A live video feed of rage sessions is available inside Franken Dogs, and the rage room has expanded to allow walk-in sessions on slower days.



MAC'S PHARMACIES CONSOLIDATES LOWE'S DRUG STORE, CITY DRUGS

After almost 100 years of operation, Lowe's Drug closed its East Broadway location last month to consolidate with City Drugs on Lamar Alexander Parkway.

"There were a number of factors that came into play," explained Mac's Hometown Pharmacies CEO Morgan Hunnicutt. "One of the biggest factors was the battle against Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBM) like Caremark, which owns CVS."

Hunnicutt described how independent pharmacies in Tennessee are required by insurance company contracts to dispense medications at less than cost, while large Pharmacy Benefit Manager-owned pharmacies were shown to reimburse themselves at rates as high

as 16,500% above cost, according to a 2026 Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance investigation.

Tennessee legislators are considering HB1959/SB2040 that if passed would prohibit the licensure of a pharmacy in which a PBM has an ownership or beneficial interest, eliminating self-dealing and preferential treatment.

To survive economic pressures, however, Hunnicutt said they were forced to look at ways to provide pharmacy services more efficiently.

While both Lowe's and City Drugs are owned by Knoxville-based Mac's Hometown Pharmacies, Hunnicutt said it made more sense to keep the location with a drive-thru window

and close proximity to the hospital.

"We did not lay off any staff and increased delivery availability," he added. Currently, there are two pharmacists, six technicians and several part-time employees.

"It hurt really bad to close Lowe's Drug," Hunnicutt admitted. "Our goal is now for City Drugs to be that trusted source of people's day-to-day needs as far as pharmacy service goes, ease of access, and be able to really serve the Blount County area."

Mac's Pharmacies is a privately held company that has operated since 1989 and has five locations in Knoxville, Maryville, Oak Ridge and Townsend, as well as one location in Gulf Breeze, Florida.



NAVY VETERAN OPENS BACK NINE GOLF FRANCHISE IN SPRINGBROOK PARK

Local entrepreneur and recently retired U.S. Navy aviator Antonio Alemar is set to open his first Back Nine indoor golf facility next month in Springbrook Park near Just Love Coffee Cafe.

The Back Nine is an indoor golf simulator franchise that allows members to play golf year-round in a climate-controlled setting. The Alcoa location features four private simulator bays equipped with

monitors that track ball speed, spin, trajectory, and other swing data, while displaying virtual versions of world-famous courses like Pebble Beach and St. Andrews.

The facility operates largely on a self-service model, Alemar explained. Members book tee times through an app, receive automated door access, and use the bays without staff present, making locations accessible 24 hours a day.

The Utah-based franchise, owned by Wil Bangerter, opened its first location in 2020 and began offering franchise ownership in 2022.

It now boasts more than 250 locations in 29 states.

Bangerter also signed a strategic partnership with Full Swing Golf, according to a franchise spokesperson, establishing it as the official golf simulator technology partner across all Back Nine locations.

State streamlines job incentives

Continued from Page 1

during the day," Newman said. "The only hard part about it is it depends on their schedule as to when they can come in and work. One of them can't get here until 1:30 in the afternoon, so that doesn't leave you much time."

But he said the company has offered full-time employment to students who finished the YEP program.

Bell said employers who are interested in hiring youth through the program should build relationships with the workforce development coordinators to help identify students who are ideally suited for the work situation.

Veterans Programs

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit program is a federal program that provides income tax reduction incentives for employers who hire veterans. The program expired in 2025, but S. 3265/H.R. 6231, the Improve and Enhance the WOTC Act, has been introduced and would extend the credit through 2030, increase the credit amount and add additional credits for military spouses.

The previous WOTC program included the Returning Heroes Tax Credit, which provided up to \$2,400 for hiring veterans who have been unemployed at least four weeks and up to \$5,600 for veterans who have been unemployed longer than six months.

There is also the Wounded Warrior Tax Credit, which provides up to \$4,800 for veterans who have service-connected disabilities hired within one year of their discharge, and up to \$9,600 for disabled veterans who have been unemployed for more than six months.

Re-Entry Programs for Justice-Involved Workers

Another source of qualified labor that many employers miss out on is workers who have served prison

time or have legal records that make it difficult for them to find employment.

Justin White, Transition Coach with the Tennessee Office of Reentry's Tennessee Higher Education in Prison Initiative pointed out that approximately 110,000 people in Tennessee are incarcerated or on community supervision today.

"Let's be real," he said, "we need to have a pipeline for those individuals to actively come back into the workforce here in Tennessee."

White said many of those who are incarcerated participate in a program called the Lincoln Employment Activities Pre-Release that provides skilled trades training and helps inmates earn certification and college degrees while serving their sentences.

The Apprenticeship Training Grant supports Tennessee employers that are interested in starting an apprenticeship program. It provides on-the-job training assistance for eligible workers entering an apprenticeship as a new hire, classroom training for first or second-year apprentices, and classroom training for pre-apprenticeship participants.

White admits working with justice-involved employees does require additional effort; however, he points out that when employers commit to helping them reenter society in a healthy, supportive way, the risk of re-offending goes down — which means the community is safer.

How to Get Started

The best way to get started, Asher said, is to complete an intake form on the TNWorks website at www.tn.gov/tnworks/lets-connect.html where employers can explain their needs and initiate the process of getting assistance.

Employers can also call the American Job Center in Maryville at (865) 324-5482 to learn more.

LOUISVILLE

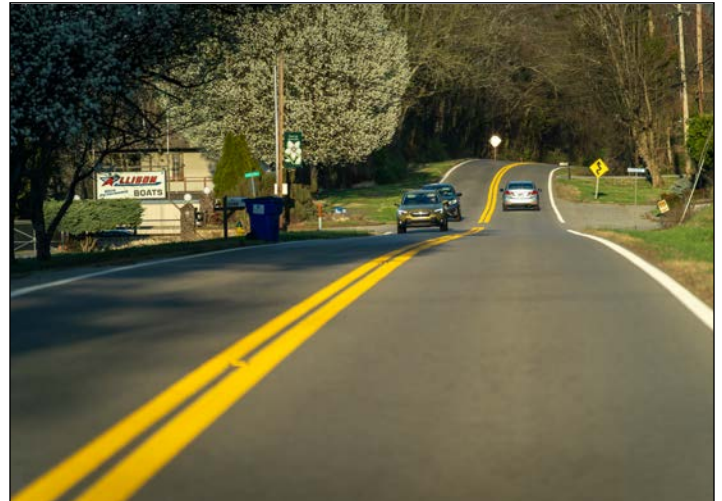


Photo by Robert Berlin

Plan aims to support future development

Louisville will spend \$30,000 to create a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan to unlock the potential for future infrastructure improvement grants ahead of anticipated regional growth.

According to staff with the East Tennessee Development District, the plan would help town officials identify infrastructure in need of upgrades and repairs to improve local road safety.

Chris Oelgotz, a planner for the East Tennessee Development District, has been working with Louisville to help the town secure grant funding. He said the funding will not cover construction. However, with a Safety Action Plan in place, the town would become eligible for grants covering a number of the U.S. Department of Transportation's approved safety countermeasures.

"That could be for new stoplights, stop signs, roundabouts, or if you need to realign a road. It can be used to put in a sidewalk, bike lanes or essentially anything except paving as part of routine maintenance," Oelgotz said.

He said town officials are eyeing culverts related to the local road network, especially as the town anticipates future growth.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Louisville had a population of about 4,400 in 2020, up from 2,300 in 2010. As the town adds housing, officials will need to update infrastructure to accommodate access. Updating culverts protects the road network from potential washout and erosion.

The action plan process will identify specific locations the town wants to address, allowing officials to get ahead of construction needs.

Louisville will pay a \$30,000 share, or 20%, of the \$150,000 project cost. The remainder will be covered by funding allocated through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The entire process, once underway, varies by government but typically takes about eight months.

Oelgotz said Louisville is waiting to contract for services related to the process and added that contract wait times can be extensive. Some 2024 awardees are still waiting for contracts.



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Planners work to turn downtown into a mixed-use urban environment

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Alexander Parkway that includes housing, restaurants and entertainment. He is also working on The Mill House at Pistol Creek, a townhome development that will add 20 residential units to the downtown landscape.

On Broadway Avenue, he is planning an "elevated Mexican concept" just across from the site of the future 98-room Holiday Inn.

That project was initially supposed to include additional townhomes, but foundation constraints took a multi-story development off the table.

Other projects are introducing a lean toward hospitality and entertainment, particularly adding nightlife options to the office-heavy downtown.

To the east, work is already underway on Scottish pub Wells Tavern, which will bring a rooftop bar to the downtown scene.

On East Broadway Avenue, across the street from the Downtown Maryville Alliance's offices, developer PWA Properties is finishing work on what will become a mixed-use development featuring a Kilwins Ice Cream shop, a retail option and housing units upstairs.

In the southeast corner of downtown, Southern Cross Real Estate is developing a connected pair of restaurants — Pinchy's Lobster and Rawbar and Jersey Hustle Pizzeria. A few hundred feet away, Southern Cross plans to complete the entertainment venue The Armory by the end of summer 2026.

That trio of developments will bring a variety of entertainment and dining options to a corner of downtown previously occupied mostly by offices.

Jeanette Beaverson, who is working on that development, said the decision to group the buildings was purposeful. Maryville College's proximity was a key factor.

"Those are the entertainment pieces, the ones with outdoor areas, and that's strategic to tie in the college to downtown," she said.

Events are drawing traffic

Amanda Gillooly is the executive director of the Downtown Maryville Alliance — a group dedicated to revitalizing the area and fostering downtown business growth. She said the organization has focused its energy on downtown events because those events drive foot traffic and generate potential extra revenue.

Gillooly said retail-oriented programming such as the downtown



Holiday Market generates more revenue than passive entertainment options like Summer on Broadway.

"The Holiday Market is the biggest day of the year for Dandy Lions, J. Danforth and Neighborly Books," she said, adding that for Summer on Broadway, "It was like your normal farmer's market. People didn't shop for the most part. They didn't eat in the restaurants. They just wanted to use the bathroom, so it really was not an economic boost."

The goal, she said, is to bring more visitors downtown at a time of day that encourages them to spend

money at local businesses. An evening concert, for example, could lead to dinner before and dessert after.

The DMA hosted monthly "3rd Thursday" art walks last summer and plans to recreate them this summer. The organization is also launching a weekly concert series for the next three years thanks to grant money from the Levitt Foundation.

It is hard to estimate the exact number of dollars downtown events generate, she said. But a point-in-time estimate based on cellphone

data during one of the art walks puts the visitor count at around 2,000 people.

Program organizers plan to survey downtown businesses at the end of the 2026 season to gauge economic impact.

Gillooly said the concerts won't feature any household names. She is unsure how many visitors they will bring, noting that it is difficult to predict without precedent.

"Maybe it's 300 or 400 people. Maybe it's not even that. I have no idea," she said. But she and other

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Photos by Robert Berlin

Downtown development includes retail, like Neighborly Books (left), says Amanda Gillooly, executive director of the Downtown Maryville Association (above).

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business owners downtown are hopeful.

Jeff Muir, communications director for the Blount Partnership, an organization helping coordinate the concert series, said the program is not intended to compete with other, larger events like those hosted at the Townsend Event Center.

"These aren't events that are going to draw tourists to the area," he said. Instead, he said the series should provide programming for people already visiting or living in the area, increasing regional appeal.

Part of the goal in revitalizing downtown, he said, is to retain the region's youth — a sentiment echoed by Beaverson.

Maryville is seeing a growing number of high school graduates leaving the area, she said. It is worth it to groups like Massey Electric, which she also works with, to invest in downtown improvement to avoid the region becoming a "retirement town."

"So we switch gears for a couple of years, remove some of our industrial focus and put some of our eggs in the downtown basket," she said. "It's never the most profitable, it's not ever the easiest, it's the most difficult work that we do, but it's the most rewarding and it has the long play with it."

Residential demand is mixed

To that end, some developers are investing in housing projects. Tomiczek's townhome development, The Mill House at Pistol Creek, is nearing completion on the eastern side of downtown. He said the project is "doing well; not killing it."

Homes in the project are currently selling in the \$350,000 to \$450,000 range.

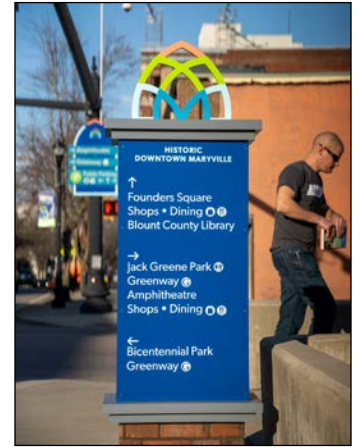
Gillooly, who said she feels downtown needs more housing, admitted it is hard to sell downtown living to the general public unless they are "drawn to that pedestrian life." Downtown is missing a grocery store, she said — an element that could be a dealbreaker for some people.

Although residential demand may be mixed, Tomiczek said he is seeing heavy demand to create Airbnb property in the downtown area right now.

He is not certain if that will change when the hotel is finished, but he is fairly confident the local market for downtown stays will still include demand for something more private.

Downtown is constrained

Downtown Maryville technically ranges as far as Peaceful Side Social on the east side of Washington Street, but Gillooly said residents



Photos by Robert Berlin

Workers continue exterior work on The Army on Ellis Avenue (above). This entertainment and food venue is scheduled to open this spring. A total of 25 wayfinder signs (right) have been placed throughout the downtown area to help visitors identify parking and points of interest as part of a \$200,000 grant and city-funded project in 2025.

usually think of only the core area as "downtown." The DMA studies a smaller "Main Street District" that includes 79 parcels, Gillooly said. Within that study sample, 38 of 54 buildings are fully occupied. Two buildings are entirely vacant and nine are partially vacant.

There are 11 ground floors with vacancies and 12 upper floors with vacancies.

Gillooly said the downtown region is naturally bounded by Lamar Alexander Parkway, Pistol Creek and Washington Street. These boundaries limit room for expansion, meaning future development will likely have to occur in existing buildings.

In some cases, that can mean prohibitively expensive repairs before a building can be considered tenant-ready.

Beaverson said many of the buildings downtown have not been well-maintained.

"Until you get that engineering survey and you truly take everything down and get down to the dirt, you don't know what you're working with," she said.

Case in point: The Armory occupies the site of a historic armory, but developers have opted to construct a new building paying homage to the original rather than work with the aged, potentially unsafe structure.

Maryville is turning a corner

Kim Parks, director of the Tennessee Main Street program, said those kinds of signals — rising investment, increasing activity and coordinated local leadership — are typical of downtown districts entering a new phase of development.

Downtown revitalization efforts generally unfold in stages, she said. The first phase focuses on organizing stakeholders and developing a strategy. The next phase, often lasting five to 10 years, is when rehabili-

itation projects accelerate, fundraising expands and the public begins to understand and support the program's goals.

"I would characterize the program as just moving into the Growth Phase," Parks said. "Maryville's program is a strong Tennessee Main Street program."

For Maryville's developers, the long-term goal is to change the balance that once defined downtown — a place where thousands came to

work each day but few stayed after hours.

If current projects continue to build momentum, local leaders say Maryville's downtown may be entering the phase where investment begins reshaping the district's economics. That means adding residents, extending activity beyond the workday and gradually shifting the area from a daytime employment center into a more balanced urban district.



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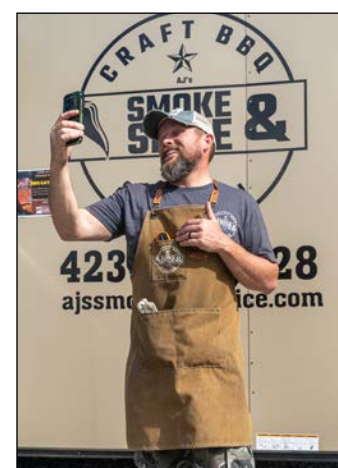


BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

One week in the life of a Greenback family working together to build a popular barbecue food truck business



MONDAY
Cristie and AJ begin the week (above) with menu planning and creating a shopping list for the coming weekend event. They also do a quick inventory (right) of what they already have in the truck before they finalize their list. Both have full-time jobs and have three sons, so food truck work must be squeezed into their already busy schedules.



SATURDAY
It's the moment of truth for the Jenkins family. Will people show up? Will they make a profit? AJ posts a quick video to social media encouraging people to come out (left). Before long, the parking lot fills with people (above). By 2 p.m. they had sold out of most of the food they prepped, making this a good day. Back at home, AJ and Cristie now tackle a stack of dishes (below) and on Monday, start the process all over again.



WEDNESDAY
"You're about to see how fast we go shopping," Cristie says as they enter the Food City grocery store on US Hwy. 411. With printed shopping list in hand, they load a cart full of supplies for the weekend (above).

FRIDAY
As the sun rises, fires are started in two smokers while AJ seasons brisket and butts (right). The team spends the next 12 hours cooking barbecue (main photo) to serve the next day.



Photos and Story by Robert Berlin
Editor

It's tricky to figure out how many food trucks are operating in Blount County. However, just the city of Maryville reports more than 35 are permitted to operate within city limits. There could be many more in the county.

But in 2024, when AJ Jenkins started telling his wife, Cristie, sons Jayden, 17, Caleb, 18, and Isaiah, 25, that he dreamed of starting a barbecue food truck, instead of thinking he was crazy, they jumped on board.

This was in spite of knowing that many studies suggest most food truck businesses fail in the first year.

Of course, they had been eating his barbecue for years and understood that food that good should be shared with others and that AJ had a better-than-average chance of success.

Caleb thinks he understands why barbecue is different from any other kind of food: "You put a little bit more heart into cooking barbecue," he said as he lit the fire in the first of two smokers as the sun rose Friday morning.

But getting a food truck business started required more than a history of making good food.

There were the normal business requirements: limited liability corporation paperwork, business licenses, permits, insurance, a point-of-sale system and social media setup. But they also had to buy a specialized barbecue food truck from a company in Georgia that focuses on serving food truck businesses nationwide.

Another surprise was how high the fees are for setting

up at events. Cristie said event fees range from \$150 to \$700 per event, which makes it even harder to break even.

But the biggest surprise was how little profit they could get from high-priced brisket.

"You try to shoot for 25 to 30 percent on food costs," AJ said. "But with brisket it's more like 50 percent."

What's their biggest week-to-week challenge?

"Knowing how much to bring for each event," Cristie said. "And you're never going to know. You have to guess and hope that people will show up."

But they do have a rule of thumb.

"We'll usually go through two briskets a day," AJ said. "We've had one brisket and ran out, but did three and didn't sell enough. Two seems to be the magic number."

But a whole 15-pound packer brisket can cost anywhere from \$80 to \$120 each from the processor.

Food costs are not the only overhead. There is debt payment on the trailer, which can cost anywhere from \$85,000 to \$200,000 for a fully equipped, custom-fitted truck or trailer. Despite these challenges, AJ and Cristie admit business is getting better every month.

"(AJ's) the best we've eaten," said Greenback native George Tipton as he waited for his food Saturday at Pope's Nursery.

This relationship with his customers is payment enough for AJ.

"They've become friends — almost like family," AJ said. "We look forward to seeing them every time. They get excited about it; we get excited about seeing them."



News Briefs

ALCOA



Photo by Cole Ford, ZC Productions

Alcoa seeks vendors for June FreedomFest

Alcoa will accept vendor applications to join its annual Independence Day celebration, FreedomFest, until March 31. City staff said vendors will know whether they have been accepted by April 2.

The event, scheduled for June 27, promises visitors music, entertainment and a professional fireworks show. Emily Assenmacher, public information officer and event coordinator for Alcoa, said a core group of vendors returns every year.

"From what I understand, most people sell out by the end of the evening," she said, although she noted that the city does not track vendor sales data.

Alcoa requires separate applications for food and craft vendors. For craft vendors, the fee to operate a single 12-foot-by-12-foot booth is \$100. A double booth is \$175.

Pricing for food vendors varies based on location. Spots on Springbrook Road, which come with electricity, are \$450. Marconi Boulevard slots are \$300 and require a generator.

Food vendors can also purchase an additional cart or walking option with their stationary location for \$225.

Attendance at the annual celebration has varied through the years, but Assenmacher said on-site estimates usually range from 5,000 to 8,000 people. Total attendance, including off-site viewing areas, reaches as high as 20,000.

Vendor count increases by three or four each year. In 2025, the festival accepted 29 food vendors, although only 26 opened. It also included 15 craft vendors. Assenmacher said application volume this year is trending higher than in previous years, with 15 applications already submitted and a month remaining.

She said Alcoa may limit duplicate offerings after seeing multiple vendors selling the same items last year.

FRIENDSVILLE



Concept Drawing provided by City of Friendsville

Contract awarded for LPRF grant project

The Friendsville Board of Mayor and Commissioners awarded a \$340,246 contract to Oak Ridge-based Nitzschke Communications, Inc. at its March 5 meeting to complete a Tennessee Local Parks and Recreation Fund grant-funded project.

Although the Tennessee Office of Outdoor Recreation Grants awarded the funds in 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the project and increased material and labor costs requiring the scope of the project be updated.

The original project proposal included a splash pad, public restrooms, two paved parking lots and a 40-by-60-foot pavilion on West Hill Avenue; however, when Miami-based engineering firm Adurra Group, Inc. began planning the project it became clear the scope would have to be revised to remove the restrooms, one of the two parking lots, a sidewalk down Hill Avenue and change the pavilion to be 30-by-70-foot, City Administrator Kim Rogers explained.

Following a multi-year review and approval process, bids were opened in February. Construction is expected to begin immediately and be completed by fall 2026, Rogers said.

This project is also aligned with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Appropriation Grant-funded project that began construction in 2025 to install sidewalks throughout downtown and connect to existing walkways. Once completed, that project creates approximately one mile of continuous pedestrian walkways.

This is the latest of multiple grant-funded projects the city has in the works, Mayor Steve Cardwell said.

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News Briefs

ROCKFORD



Concept Drawing by Trudy Woods, Blount County School District

Community unites to transform Rockford School courtyard outdoor space featuring gardens, amphitheater and reading area

Rockford Elementary School officials, city leaders and area businesses have partnered to convert an underutilized central courtyard into an outdoor center focused on giving students a place to read, gain hands-on gardening experience and gather for small events.

"We're calling it our Reading and Exploration Center," explained Principal Chad Tipton.

The idea for the project began last year when school staff applied for grants to improve the courtyard. They were unable to secure funding, Tipton said, so the school organized a fundraiser in December and raised \$18,000 for the project. The City of Rockford agreed to match those funds dollar for dollar up to \$20,000.

The concept includes an outdoor amphitheater, a reading area with hanging chairs, raised garden beds and a picnic area where Rockford's 430 students can participate in science, technology, engineering and mathematics learning opportunities, Tipton said.

"We're gonna have raised flower beds and raised gardens so kids from pre-K all the way through fifth grade will have an opportunity to literally get their hands dirty in their STEM classes," Tipton explained.

The list of area businesses providing money, time, materials and labor for the project is long, Tipton said, and includes Vulcan Materials, AI Blankenship Enterprises & Concrete, Specmat Technologies, Rockford Masonic Lodge, 2 Girls & a Cricket, Aubrey's, Massey Electric, CBBC/Meagan Byrd, Championship Karate, Bailey Landscaping, Foothills Church, Blount Community Church, Stock Creek Baptist Church, Food Lion, Texas Roadhouse, Artistic Bean, Alpha Phi Alpha, Clayton, New Providence Church, Art of Cakes, Legends of Tennessee Reading and Leadership Program, Crumb Cookie of Maryville, Kid Konnections, Daughters of the American Revolution, Blount County Eye Center and Junior Service League.

"There's a real sense of community at that school," Rockford Mayor Carl Koella said. "And, you know, the business leaders and everyone else in town are behind it and support Principal Chad Tipton's efforts to improve the quality of life for all of the students."

While proposals and total project costs are still being calculated, Tipton said they hope to begin construction this summer while students are on break. Planners agree the project may need to be completed in phases to achieve the desired results.

"If we need to go a little slower to get a little bit higher quality," Tipton explained, "I'd rather take our time to do it right."

Once construction is completed, city and community leaders plan to organize a maintenance and improvement endowment to ensure the courtyard is consistently cared for in the future, Koella said.

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SCAN TO BOOK



BUSINESS BY THE NUMBERS

AIRPORT			
	Nov-25	Dec-25	+/-
FLIGHTS			
Air Carrier	2,924	2,861	-2%
Air Taxi	2,220	1,908	-14%
General	4,023	3,393	-16%
Military	317	426	34%
PASSENGERS			
Enplaned	147,398	147,013	0%
Deplaned	142,063	143,496	1%
FREIGHT			
Enplaned (lbs)	1.41M	1.64M	16%
Deplaned (lbs)	2.42M	2.82M	17%

Source: Metropolitan Knoxville Airport Authority as of: 2/1/2026. Note: Numbers are delayed until FAA Audit is complete.

TOURISM/HOSPITALITY		
Hotel/Motel Taxes (Gross)		
Feb-26	\$275,679	
Jan-26	\$491,099	
% Change	-56%	
Hotel/Motel Taxes Collected (Gross)		
Alcoa	\$2,362,647	
Maryville	\$279,193	
Townsend	\$1,588	
GSMNP Visits & Overnight Stays		
	Visits	Overnight Stays
JAN-26	435,207	2,378
DEC-25	714,902	3,660
Total Visits	2025	2026 YTD
	11.54M	0.44M

Source: Blount County Clerk's Office & U.S. National Park Service as of 3/9/2026. NOTE: Does not include AirBNB tax collections, which are reported once annually.

LABOR			
Total Unemployment Claims			
	Blount	Knox	Loudon
Feb. 21, 2026	345	959	88
Jan. 17, 2026	349	1029	98
Initial Unemployment Claims by Age Group			

Source: TN Dept. of Labor & Workforce Development as of 3/9/2026

LOCAL STOCKS			
CIRRUS AIRCRAFT LTD (CRRSF)			
\$8.16 -1.69% (-0.14) 1M			
Market: OTC			
Mkt. Cap	22.69B	52-wk Low	\$4.00
Avg. Vol.	240.00	Outstanding	365.99M
Volume	40.00	Employees	3K
52-wk High	\$8.87		
DENSO ADR (DNZOY)			
\$14.28 +2.07% (+0.290) 1M			
Market: OTC			
Open	\$14.65	52-wk High	\$15.85
High	\$14.65	52-wk Low	\$10.96
Low	\$14.28	Beta	1.01
Mkt. Cap	6.55T	Outstanding	2.91B
Avg. Vol.	80.93K	Employees	158K
Volume	62.85K		

REAL ESTATE				
New Home Construction - February 2026				
> \$200k	\$200-399k	\$400-699k	+\$700k	
13	19	4	1	
Building Permits Issued in February 2026				
Permits Issued	Total Est. Value	Total Permit Fees		
70	\$12,452,661	\$62,843		
Source: Blount County Development Services as of: 3/1/2026				
Blount County Housing Market Data			Real Estate Transfers	
	Jan. 2026	M/M Chng	February	YTD
Median List Price	\$459,450	-0.01%	216	405
Active Listings	431	-0.01%	Open mobile-friendly and searchable list of real estate transfers	
Median Days on Market	76	-0.03%		
New Listings	138	-0.16%		
Price Reduced	162	0.13%		
Source: BC Register of Deeds as of 3/9/2026				

MORTGAGE RATES	
Mortgage Rates	
15 YEAR FRM	
Rate	5.43%
1-YR Chg	-0.36
52-WK Avg	\$5.67
52-WK Range	5.35% - 6.03%
30 YEAR FRM	
Rate	6.00%
1-YR Chg	-0.63
52-WK Avg	6.45%
52-WK Range	5.98% - 6.89%
Source: Freddie Mac as of: 3/5/2026	

Newell Brands (NWL)			
\$4.55 +4.84% (+0.21) 1M			
Market: NASDAQ			
Open	\$4.54	Qtrly Dividend	\$0.07
High	\$4.57	52-wk High	\$7.02
Low	\$4.44	52-wk Low	\$3.07
Mkt. Cap	1.90B	EPS	-\$0.68
Avg. Vol.	5.50M	Beta	0.93
Volume	5.78M	Outstanding	419.20M
Dividend	6.15%	Employees	22K
Smith & Wesson Brands (SWBI)			
\$11.90 +7.01% (+0.78) 1M			
Market: NASDAQ			
Open	\$11.78	P&E Ratio	53.63
High	\$11.93	52-wk High	\$12.15
Low	\$11.75	52-wk Low	\$7.73
Mkt. Cap	529.92M	EPS	\$0.22
Avg. Vol.	452.40K	Beta	1.06
Volume	454.47K	Outstanding	44.49M
Dividend	4.37%	Employees	1K
Qtrly Dividend	\$0.13		
Vulcan Materials (VMC)			
\$310.00 +1.33% (+4.08) 1M			
Market: NYSE			
Open	\$305.71	P&E Ratio	38.05
High	\$311.77	52-wk High	\$331.09
Low	\$304.68	52-wk Low	\$215.08
Mkt. Cap	40.48B	EPS	\$8.15
Avg. Vol.	1.15M	Beta	1.07
Volume	1.79M	Outstanding	130.58M
Dividend	0.67%	Employees	11K
Qtrly Dividend	\$0.52		

Source: Google Finance as of 3/1/2026

LOCAL GROCERIES	Aldi Alcoa		Food City Springbrook		Food Lion E. Broadway		Kroger Alcoa		Publix Foothills Mall		Walmart Hwy. 411	
	Price	Chg	Price	Chg	Price	Chg	Price	Chg	Price	Chg	Price	Chg
Bacon/lb	\$3.99	-14.6%	\$7.99	0.1%	\$4.79	0.0%	\$5.30	-3.5%	\$6.99	0.0%	\$4.12	-11.8%
Chicken/lb	\$3.29	-33.7%	\$2.99	-25.1%	\$2.69	-29.0%	\$2.99	0.0%	\$5.39	8.0%	\$2.57	-30.4%
80/20 Ground Beef/lb	\$5.49	3.8%	\$5.58	-6.8%	\$6.59	0.0%	\$8.99	0.0%	\$8.99	50.1%	\$7.43	7.2%
Whole Milk/gal	\$2.22	0.0%	\$2.99	-25.1%	\$2.49	0.0%	\$2.39	0.0%	\$3.55	0.0%	\$2.22	0.0%
Eggs/dozen	\$1.66	-15.3%	\$4.29	0.0%	\$1.89	-34.6%	\$2.09	0.0%	\$3.09	47.8%	\$1.67	-15.2%
White Bread/loaf	\$1.45	4.3%	\$1.99	-31.1%	\$2.39	0.0%	\$1.49	-25.1%	\$2.99	50.3%	\$1.48	0.0%
Carrots/lb	\$0.95	0.0%	\$1.75	45.8%	\$1.00	0.0%	\$1.15	-6.5%	\$1.59	6.7%	\$0.96	0.0%
Potatoes/lb	\$0.40	8.1%	\$0.60	-50.0%	\$0.84	-30.0%	\$0.70	6.1%	\$0.70	41.7%	\$0.49	-38.0%
Gala Apples/lb	\$0.73	10.6%	\$1.40	-29.6%	\$1.39	-6.7%	\$1.49	0.0%	\$1.59	0.0%	\$0.94	-36.9%
Coffee/lb	\$8.66	0.0%	\$7.98	0.0%	\$9.32	-17.7%	\$10.16	45.4%	\$19.68	-7.5%	\$9.30	-4.4%

Methodology: Our reporters visited each location in person to gather prices for common items families purchase. We select the lowest priced items (typically store brand) compared to last month's prices. Prices may have changed since publication. This table is for general price awareness only. As of 3/1/2026.

GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

ALCOA

Mar. 17 | 5:30pm
Alcoa School Board
 Alcoa High School, 1205 Lodge St., Alcoa
www.AlcoaSchools.net

Mar. 19 | 5:30pm
Alcoa Regional/Municipal Planning Commission
 City Building, 223 Associates Blvd., Alcoa
<https://www.CityofAlcoa-TN.gov/AgendaCenter>

Apr. 21 | 7pm
Alcoa Board of Commissioners
 City Building, 223 Associates Blvd., Alcoa
<https://www.CityofAlcoa-TN.gov/AgendaCenter>

BLOUNT COUNTY

Mar. 18 | 4pm
Metropolitan Knoxville Airport Commission
 McGhee Tyson Airport - Henrietta Grant Board Room (3rd Floor), Alcoa
<https://FlyKnoxville.com/Airport-Authority/Board-Staff/>

Mar. 24 | 6pm
Blount County Board of Commissioners
 County Courthouse, 345 Court St., Maryville
<https://BlountTN.Legistar.com>

Mar. 24 | 6:30pm
Blount County Soil and Water Conservation District
 1217 McArthur Rd., Maryville
www.BCSWCD.org

Mar. 25 | 9am
Blount County Solid Waste Authority Annual Meeting
 Alcoa-Maryville-Blount County Landfill Office, 123 Sparks Rd., Friendsville

Mar. 26 | 5:30pm
Blount County Planning Commission
 County Courthouse, 345 Court St., Maryville
<https://BlountTN.Legistar.com>

Mar. 31 | 12:30pm
Blount County Education Committee
 Friendsville Elementary School, 210 E. 4th Ave., Friendsville
<https://BlountTN.Legistar.com>

Apr. 2 | 5:30pm
Blount County School Board
 District Office, 831 Grandview Dr., Maryville
www.BlountK12.org/Board_of_Education

Apr. 2 | 6pm
Blount County Board of Zoning Appeals
 County Courthouse, 345 Court St., Maryville
<https://BlountTN.Legistar.com>

Apr. 7 | 9am
South Blount Utility District
 Main Office, 320 Partnership Pkwy., Maryville
www.SouthBlountUtility.org/Community/Calendar

Apr. 7 | 11am
Blount County Public Services Committee
 Maryville Operations Center, 332 Home Ave., Maryville
<https://BlountTN.Legistar.com>

Apr. 8 | 4:30pm
Blount County Veterans Affairs Committee
 Blount County Courthouse, 345 Court St., Maryville
<https://BlountTN.Legistar.com>

Apr. 9 | 5pm
Blount County Budget Committee
 County Courthouse, 345 Court St., Maryville
<https://BlountTN.Legistar.com>

Apr. 16 | 5:30pm
Blount County Technology (IT) Committee
 County Courthouse, 345 Court St., Maryville
<https://BlountTN.Legistar.com>

FRIENDSVILLE

Mar. 16 | 6pm
Friendsville Planning and Zoning Commission
 City of Friendsville, 213 W. College Ave., Friendsville

www.FriendsvilleTN.gov/Boards-Committees

Apr. 2 | 6pm
Friendsville Board of Commissioners
 City of Friendsville, 213 W. College Ave., Friendsville
www.FriendsvilleTN.gov/Boards-Committees

Apr. 2 | 7pm
Friendsville Utility Board
 City of Friendsville, 213 W. College Ave., Friendsville
www.FriendsvilleTN.gov/Boards-Committees

GREENBACK

Apr. 10 | 7pm
Greenback Board of Mayor and Aldermen
 Greenback Community Center, 6889 Morganton Rd., Greenback
<https://Greenbackgov.com/Agendas>

LOUISVILLE

Mar. 17 | 6pm
Louisville Planning Commission
 Town of Louisville, 3623 Louisville Rd., Louisville
<https://TownofLouisvilleTN.sites.thrillshare.com/page/events>

Mar. 24 | 6pm
Louisville Recreation Advisory Board
 Town of Louisville, 3623 Louisville Rd., Louisville
<https://TownofLouisvilleTN.sites.thrillshare.com/page/events>

Apr. 14 | 6pm
Louisville Board of Mayor and Aldermen
 Town of Louisville, 3623 Louisville Rd., Louisville
<https://TownofLouisvilleTN.sites.thrillshare.com/page/events>

MARYVILLE

Mar. 16 | 5pm
Maryville Municipal Planning Commission
 Maryville City Municipal Building, 400 W. Broadway Ave., Maryville
www.MaryvilleGov.com

Mar. 19 | 5pm
Maryville Board of Zoning Appeals
 Maryville City Municipal Building, 400 W. Broadway Ave., Maryville
www.MaryvilleGov.com

Mar. 23 | 5:30
Maryville School Board
 Montgomery Ridge Intermediate School, 835 Montgomery Ln., Maryville
www.Maryville-Schools.org/School-Board/Meetings

Apr. 7 | 7pm
Maryville City Council
 Maryville City Municipal Building, 400 W. Broadway Ave., Maryville
www.MaryvilleGov.com

Apr. 13 | 5pm
Maryville Downtown Design Review Board
 Maryville City Municipal Building, 400 W. Broadway Ave., Maryville
www.MaryvilleGov.com

Apr. 13 | 6pm
Maryville Historic Zoning Commission
 Maryville City Municipal Building, 400 W. Broadway Ave., Maryville
www.MaryvilleGov.com

ROCKFORD

Apr. 9 | 7pm
Rockford City Commission
 Rockford City Offices, 3719 Little River Rd., Louisville
www.RockfordTN.com

Apr. 16 | 7pm
Rockford Planning Commission & Board of Zoning and Appeals
 Rockford City Offices, 3719 Little River Rd., Louisville
www.RockfordTN.com

TOWNSEND


Mar. 17 | 5pm
Townsend Community Plan Advisory Committee
 City Building, 123 Tiger Dr., Townsend
www.CityofTownsend.com

Mar. 17 | 7pm
Board of Commissioners
 City Building, 123 Tiger Dr., Townsend
www.CityofTownsend.com

Apr. 9 | 6pm
Townsend Planning Commission
 City Building, 123 Tiger Dr., Townsend
www.CityofTownsend.com

Apr. 14 | 6pm
Townsend Parks & Recreation Board
 City Building, 123 Tiger Dr., Townsend
www.CityofTownsend.com


Subscribe to the Blount County Business News Government Meetings Google Calendar to easily add meetings to your calendar.



BUSINESS BY THE NUMBERS

CONSUMER/RETAIL

Fuel Costs



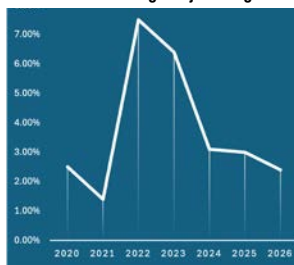
		National Average	
		Regular	Diesel
		\$3.478	\$4.656

		Knoxville Metro		Tennessee Avg	
\$/gal		Reg.	Diesel	Reg.	Diesel
FEB		\$2.427	\$3.290	\$2.501	\$3.337
MAR		\$2.955	\$4.467	\$3.035	\$4.592
+/-		22%	36%	21%	38%

Source: AAA as of 3/9/2026

Consumer Price Index

12-Month % Change Major Categories



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics as of 3/9/2026

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NEW BUSINESSES

113 **103** **216**
JAN **FEB** **YTD**
2026 **2026** **2026**

Minimal License = \$3,000 - \$99,999 Gross Receipts
 Regular License = \$100,000+ Gross Receipts
 Source: Blount County Clerk's Office as of: 2/5/2026

ALCOA (8)

Blunt Smokeshop LLC | 209 N. Calderwood St., Alcoa, TN 37701 | Hapep A. Abuzahra | Regular
 Elux Blanc Nail Bar | 1143 Franck St., Unit 102, Alcoa, TN 37701 | Hoang Van Chien | Regular
 Hayes Alignment & Tire Services, LLC | 2709 N. Wright Rd., Alcoa, TN 37701 | Christopher Harris | Regular
 Legacy Elite Courier | 1605 Centennial Park Blvd., #331, Alcoa, TN 37701 | Kingdom Staffing | Minimal
 Legacy Elite Transport, NEMT | 1605 Centennial Park Blvd., #331, Alcoa, TN 37701 | Kingdom Staffing | Minimal
 Roy Young Painting | 300 Rose Ave., Alcoa, TN 37701 | Roy Young | Minimal
 Silver Dollar Candle Works, LLC | 3143 Regal Dr., Alcoa, TN 37701 | Amy Ferry | Regular
 Uber Quality Painting | 1605 Centennial Park Blvd., APT A207, Alcoa, TN 37701 | Larry Uber | Minimal

FRIENDSVILLE (9)

360 Industrial, LLC | 1242 Ratledge Rd., Friendsville, TN 37737 | Zachary Powell | Minimal
 Brewster Construction | 271 Shenandoah Dr., Friendsville, TN 37737 | William Brewster | Regular
 Candelaria Aguilar-Serrano DBA CA Painting | 2728 Big Springs Rd., Friendsville, TN 37737 | Candelaria Aguilar-Serrano | Regular
 Conley Home Improvements | 3626 Big Springs Ridge Rd., Friendsville, TN 37737 | Ethan Conley | Regular
 Friendsville Trailer Sales | 129 Big Oak Ln., Friendsville, TN 37737 | Mike McMillan | Regular
 McLemore Lawn Service | 540 W. Vinegar Valley Rd., Friendsville, TN 37737 | Eric McLemore | Regular
 Oni Professional Wrestling | 517 County Farm Rd., Friendsville, TN 37737 | Jonathan Lynn | Regular
 Rocky Top Shed and More | 2803 W. Lamar Alexander Pkwy., Ste. C, Friendsville, TN 37737 | John O'Connor | Regular
 Simply Organized Spaces, LLC | 1222 Bill Wallace Dr., Friendsville, TN 37737 | Ashley Thomas | Minimal

GREENBACK (2)

Heavy Metal Welding and Equipment Repair | 1608 Sheets Hollow Rd., Greenback, TN 37742 | Brian E. Lindsey | Minimal

Robert Kendrick | 5259 Morganton Blvd., Greenback, TN 37742 | Robert Kendrick | Minimal

LOUISVILLE (6)

CD Junk Removal | 3338 Clear Springs Way, Louisville, TN 37777 | Chris Denny | Minimal
 Copains Johnathans Ridge Apartments | 820 Red Hill Dr., Unit E, Louisville, TN 37777 | Pam Campbell | Minimal
 Go Alisha, LLC | 1847 E. Old Topside Rd., Louisville, TN 37777 | Alisha L. Harbin | Minimal
 JB Builders, LLC | 3255 Lowes Landing, Louisville, TN 37777 | Jonathan Leuciuc | Regular
 McCarthy's Market | 3006 Samples Rd., Louisville, TN 37777 | Lauren McCarthy | Regular
 Studio Noble Collective | 3418 Lanyard Ln., Louisville, TN 37777 | Kelsey Hartsook | Regular

MARYVILLE (65)

215 Lovers Lane, LLC | 503 N. Clark St., Maryville, TN 37803 | No owner listed | Minimal
 Aeronest HVAC | 806 S. Everett High Rd., Maryville, TN 37804 | Dalyn Swaggerty | Regular
 AgCentral - Maryville | 1514 W. Broadway Ave., Maryville, TN 37801 | AgCentral Farmers Cooperative | Regular
 Alphonse Schleihau | 1109 Forest Ave., Maryville, TN 37804 | Alphonse Schleihau | Minimal
 AOI Express, LLC | 117 Colt Trl., Maryville, TN 37803 | No owner listed | Regular
 Ashby's Lawn care & Landscaping, LLC | 912 Thunder Creek Dr., Maryville, TN 37801 | David Ashby | Minimal
 Bearly Making It | 3313 U.S. Hwy. 411S, Maryville, TN 37801 | Sam Rue | Minimal
 Beauty By Ayla | 215 Ellis Ave., Maryville, TN 37804 | Ayla Hedrick | Minimal
 Blair's Boars | 1716 W. Lamar Alexander Pkwy., Maryville, TN 37801 | Garner Blair | Minimal
 Buy Gems Wholesale | 1145 Hitch Rd., Maryville, TN 37804 | Ben Mester | Minimal
 Canine Design | 329 Whitecrest Dr., Maryville, TN 37801 | Courtney M. Mullins | Minimal
 Career Change Simplified | 1408 Mountain Quail Cir., Maryville, TN 37801 | Autumn Phillips | Minimal
 Carve, LLC | 3602 Southfork Pl., Maryville, TN 37801 | Isaiah L. Carter | Minimal
 Chuy & Son Construction, LLC | 421 Manning Ln., Maryville, TN 37804 | Christopher Qujas | Regular
 Cornerstone Handyman Services | 3559 Peppermint Hills Dr., Maryville, TN 37804 | Allen Krueger | Minimal
 Cornerstone Outdoor Designs | 308 Blue Sky Dr., Maryville, TN 37801 | Matthew Hurley | Regular
 Curt's Cuts | 726 Walker School Rd., Maryville, TN 37803 | Curtis Marshall | Minimal
 Dale's Handyman & Clean Out | 215 Creekwood Dr., Maryville, TN 37804 | Dale Betzler | Minimal
 Daniel B. Construction | 209 Jeania Ln., Maryville, TN 37801 | Gladys Aracely Saquimux | Regular
 DBS Consultant Group, LLC | 920 Portsmouth Circle, Maryville, TN 37803 | Donald Bart Stinnett | Regular
 E & G Hard and Landscaping, LLC | 1602 Madison Ave., Maryville, TN 37804 | Ervin Pablo Ixquiactap | Minimal
 Edgar Landscaping Services | 1110 Level Dr., Maryville, TN 37801 | Gomez Edgar Francisco Joj Juracan | Regular
 Family Tradition Antiques | 3202 E. Lamar Alexander Pkwy., Maryville, TN 37803 | Brandon Adams | Minimal
 Flynn Gets It Done | 614 Home Ave., Maryville, TN 37801 | Marvin Lima | Regular
 Fudge and Stuff | 197 Foothills Mall Dr., Ste. 59, Maryville, TN 37801 | Tasha Floran | Regular
 Home Solutions and Repair | 1111 Level Dr., Maryville, TN 37801 | Gary Grimmett | Regular
 Honey and Fern Clothing, LLC | 1814 Highland Rd., Maryville, TN 37801 | Kelsey Holtgrieve | Regular
 Huskey's Electrical Services, LLC | 1517 Matlock Rd., Maryville, TN 37803 | James R. Huskey Jr. | Minimal
 JH Framing, LLC | 2547 Cecelia Ave., Maryville, TN 37804 | Juan P. Huete | Regular
 Lawn in Order, LLC | 2705 Druid Hill Dr., Maryville, TN 37804 | Bili Mejia | Minimal
 Liberty Tax Service | 2139 E. Broadway Ave., Maryville, TN 37804 | Ross Hasserott | Regular
 Liberty Tax Service | 311 Foothills Mall Dr., Maryville, TN 37801 | Ross Hasserott | Regular
 Little River Provisions | 6744 Garland Rd., Maryville, TN 37801 | William M. Lotter | Minimal
 M & W Electric, LLC | 3802 Melissa Ln., Maryville, TN 37801 | Christopher Walker | Regular
 Maryville Makers Market, LLC | 1509 Scenic Dr., Maryville, TN 37803 | Debra Dean | Minimal

Max Morales | 2102 Colonial Cir., Maryville, TN 37802 | Max Morales | Minimal
 Maxpro Cleaning Services, LLC | 1312 Esquire Dr., Maryville, TN 37801 | Richard M. Eggers | Minimal
 Micah Bryant | 2434 Alleghany Loop Rd., Maryville, TN 37803 | Micah Bryant | Regular
 Mystical Moon Cleaning Company | 302 West Moreland Dr., Maryville, TN 37803 | Haley Christian | Minimal
 Nails by Ella Shay | 2003 Big Springs Rd., Maryville, TN 37801 | Ella Whaley | Minimal
 Novem Woodcraft | 2511 Old Whites Mill Rd., Maryville, TN 37803 | Kathleen Ward | Minimal
 Optimal Asbestos Services | 910 Windlaur Ct., Maryville, TN 37804 | Jeffrey L. Mull | Regular
 Pistol Posh | 1525 Cherry Dr., Maryville, TN 37804 | Rhonda Michelle Baker | Minimal
 Pop PXL | 410 Lindbrook Way, Maryville, TN 37803 | Jamie Schneider | Minimal
 Prestige Bookkeeping Professionals, LLC | 2114 Post Oak Ln., Maryville, TN 37801 | Brittany D. Gribble | Minimal
 Restored By Design Wellness | 331 Whitecrest Dr., Ste. 2, Maryville, TN 37801 | Michelle Fahidy | Minimal
 Ridge Carpentry and Tile, LLC | 112 S. Long Hollow Rd., Maryville, TN 37801 | Christopher J. Saunders | Minimal
 Rolando Beristain Andrade | 1810 Old Niles Ferry Rd., Maryville, TN 37803 | Rolando Beristain Andrade | Regular
 Rustic Kitchen | 501 N. Cusick St., Maryville, TN 37804 | Amy Fuentes | Regular
 S & L Tree Service | 2551 E. Broadway Ave., Maryville, TN 37803 | Solo E. Colo Botzotz | Regular
 Sanchez & Sanchez Fencing | 2703 Luther Rd., Maryville, TN 37804 | Margarito Sanchez Ramirez | Minimal
 Sandwiches and Stuff | 197 Foothills Mall Dr., Ste. 59, Maryville, TN 37801 | Tasha Floran | Regular
 Smoky Mountain Way, LLC | 105 Ollies St., Maryville, TN 37804 | Barbara Pagodin | Minimal
 Solutions Plus, LLC | 872 Binfield Rd., Maryville, TN 37801 | Linda Mullinax | Minimal
 Southern Darlin', LLC | 1602 Erin Dr., Maryville, TN 37803 | Mikia Fernandez | Minimal
 Spacedust | 3986 Sevierville Rd., Maryville, TN 37804 | Suzanne Satterfield | Minimal

Southwest Airlines completes inaugural flight to McGhee Tyson Airport



Photo by Cole Ford, ZC Productions

Southwest Airlines Flight 3534 from Nashville arrives at McGhee Tyson Airport at 12:23 p.m. on March 5, marking the airline's inaugural flight and the start of regular service to Knoxville. Initial destinations will include Baltimore, Dallas, Nashville and Orlando, with Austin, Denver and Tampa expected to be added in the future. Metropolitan Knoxville Airport Authority President Patrick Wilson said flights to McGhee Tyson have increased 45% over the past three years, with continued growth expected to drive further demand. The flight also marks nearly 20 years of negotiations to bring Southwest to the airport, said Jim Evans, vice president of marketing for the MKAA board of directors.

NEW BUSINESSES

Continued from Page 14

- Stable Plumbing, LLC | 1011 Sandy Ct., Maryville, TN 37803 | Zachary Windgren | Minimal
- Tennessee Bonding Company | 700 E. Broadway Ave., Maryville, TN 37804 | Kenneth B. Holmes | Regular
- Tennessee Hills Landscape Solutions | 2135 Calderwood Hwy., Maryville, TN 37801 | Michael Junk | Minimal
- The Lawn Ranger of Maryville | 216 Wilson Ave., Maryville, TN 37803 | Thomas Didiego | Minimal
- Total Paws Pet Grooming | 3256 Morganton Rd., Maryville, TN 37801 | Tara Griffin | Regular
- V-Twin Daily, LLC | 124 Kirk Patrick Ln., Maryville, TN 37801 | Martin Norris | Regular
- Williams Performance | 944 Mount Lebanon Rd., Maryville, TN 37804 | Corey Williams | Minimal
- Wood's Pro Painting | 707 Shane Dr., Maryville, TN 37804 | Andrew K. Wood | Minimal
- Zeff Gutter | 1830 Sequoyah Ave., Unit B, Maryville, TN 37804 | Zeferino Manuel Martinez | Minimal

ROCKFORD (2)

- Lili's Field of Blooms | 972 Martin Mill Pike, Rockford, TN 37853 | Liliane Hoffman-Buser | Minimal
- S&S Plumbing & Services | 224 Beatress Circle, Rockford, TN 37853 | Fred Stephen Smith | Regular

SEYMOUR (3)

- Alyssa's Doggy Grooms | 6149 Nails Creek Rd., Seymour, TN 37865 | Alyssa Laugherty | Minimal

- Holy Hooves Haulin', LLC | 364 Hidden Valley Circle, Seymour, TN 37865 | Dannu Wyrick | Minimal
- Reid Ridge Farms, LLC | 1450 Old Chilhowee Rd., Seymour, TN 37865 | Bryan Reid | Minimal

TOWNSEND (4)

- Chloe Payne Murphy | 7625 E. Lamar Alexander Pkwy., Townsend, TN 37882 | Chloe Payne Murphy | Minimal
- Foothills Care Management Services | 1205 Carrs Creek Rd., Townsend, TN 37882 | Timber Ridge Holdings, Inc. | Regular
- Smoky Mountain Off-Road Guide | 852 Wears Valley Rd., Townsend, TN 37882 | Derek Hogan | Regular
- Transform with Tanner, LLC | 7949 Old Highway 73, Townsend, TN 37882 | Samuel T. Kerlin | Minimal

WALLAND (1)

- Eric Webb | 4916 E. Lamar Alexander Pkwy., Walland, TN 37886 | Eric Webb | Minimal

OUT OF COUNTY (3)

- Creteworx LLC | 1741 Upper Middle Creek Rd., Sevierville, TN 37876 | Nicholas Nitti | Regular
- Helton's Electrical Corp. | 258 Hwy. 25 E., Newport, TN 37821 | Scotty Helton | Regular
- Pinnacle Air Solutions, LLC | 7595 Baymeadows Way, Ste. 170, Jacksonville, FL 32256 | Duane D. Woodall | Regular

BUSINESS IN HISTORY

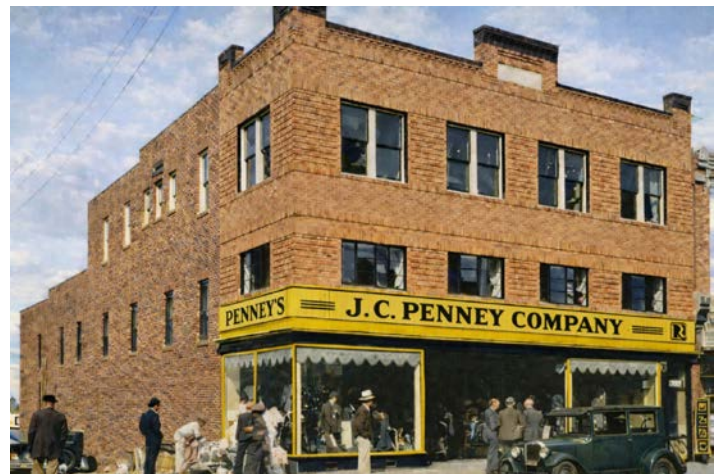


Photo Courtesy Mark Bennett

What Bella restaurant used to be in 1932

By Mark Bennett

Blount County Historian & Maryville City Archivist

This colorized photograph shows J.C. Penney in the Trotter building shortly after its construction in 1935. R.C. Cawood (1887-1979) served as the store's first manager. The lot was owned by John Thaddeus Trotter (1871-1960), who hired local contractor H.C. Fonde (1869-1950) and his sons, Stuart (1901-1980) and Keith (1905-1991), to build the structure. A 3,000-square-foot addition was added in 1940.

The building replaced two earlier structures destroyed by fire in 1934: the J&K No. 2 grocery store operated by Walker Johnson (1887-1947) and a building owned by the heirs of John P. Duncan (1847-1931). Located next to Cedar Springs Alley, the Duncan building had previously housed Edgar Griffith's plumbing shop, Sumner Wallace's fruit stand, and a shoe repair shop.

J.C. Penney first came to Maryville in 1932, opening its initial store in the W.A. Dunlap building, now home to the Capitol Theatre.

The store in the Trotter building remained in operation until 1964, when the company relocated to Midland Shopping Center.

After standing vacant for many years, the building was revived in 2003 as Sullivan's Downtown, which occupied the space until 2021. The following year, the Italian restaurant Bella opened and continues to operate there today.

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BLOUNT COUNTY BUSINESS NEWS

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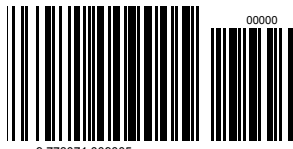
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MARCH 2026

Thursday, March 19 | 9-10am
SBDC Tennessee: How to Increase Your Prices, but Not Lose Your Customers

Blount Partnership, 201 S. Washington St., Maryville

Learn how to use your ideal customer profile, unique market position and strategies to increase prices and maintain business growth. For more information and to register > www.tsdbc.org/training

Thursday, March 19 | 9am-4pm
NAR Military Relocation Professional Certification

East Tennessee Realtors, 609 N. Weisgarber Rd., Knoxville

Learn how to work with former and current military service members, find housing solutions that best suit their needs and how to help military clients take full advantage of military benefits and support. For more information and to register, go to > www.members.etnrealtors.com/education-calendar

Tuesday Mar. 24 | 10am - 2pm
3rd Annual Shred-It Event

REMAX FIRST, 612 Crawford St., Maryville
Free, securing shredding and networking event at REMAX FIRST. Coffee provided.

For more information, go to > www.facebook.com/remaxfirstrealtors

Thursday, March 26 | 7:45-9am
Coffee Club Sponsored by Senior Care Partners

Blount Partnership, 201 S. Washington St., Maryville

Join Chamber members for the monthly Coffee Club where members build relationships and gain exposure for their businesses or organizations. For more information, go to > www.BlountChamber.com/events

Saturday, March 28 | 5-9pm
Rocky Top Veterans Foundation: Bourbon & Bowties Gala

The Skyview at Broadway Social, 101 E. Broadway Ave., Maryville

Bourbon & Bowties Gala Fundraising Event supporting the annual functions and events sponsored by Rocky Top Veterans Foundation.

For more information, go to > www.rockytopvets.org/event-directory

Tuesday, March 31 | 1-2:30pm
TN Apex Accelerator: Simple Access to Surety Bonds

Blount Partnership, 201 S. Washington St., Maryville

Learn how to unlock procurement opportunities by having a strategy for acquiring surety bonds. For more information, go to > www.tnapexcenterdirect.com/events/4513

Wednesday April 2 | 8:30-10am
Veterans in Business

Blount Partnership, 201 S. Washington St., Maryville

Join area veteran business owners for monthly networking, education and business support. For more information, go to > www.BlountChamber.com/events

Wednesday, April 8 | 9am-12pm
United Way of Blount County: Mastering Nonprofit Financials Virtual Event

Looking for Fun Stuff to Do?



www.LetsBeBlount.com

CPA Kim Thomason demystifies nonprofit finance by breaking down concepts like budgeting, financial statements and cash flow. \$10/person. Register at > www.unitedwayblount.org/event/money-matters-mastering-nonprofit-financials

Thursday, April 16 | 9-10am
SBDC Tennessee: What Visitors Tell You, and How to Keep Them Coming Back

Blount Partnership, 201 S. Washington St., Maryville

Learn how to cultivate visitor loyalty in this workshop led by Sherry Dial, founder and CEO of Dial Services, LLC. For more information and to register, go to > www.tsdbc.org/training

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