



The Guardians of the Gap, a Non-Profit LLC

Meeting/Event Notes

Date: 08 July 2022

Project: Tennessee Downtowns

Meeting: Tennessee Downtowns Preliminary (“Getting to Know You”) Visit

Attendees

State of TN personnel: Nancy Williams (TN Main Street; TN Downtowns), Bridget Jones (TN Downtowns Consultant)

Town of Cumberland Gap personnel: Neal Pucciarelli (Mayor), John Ravnum (City Council Alderman)

CG TN Downtowns Steering Committee members: Amber Chadwell (Virtual), Kimberly Kotlar, Tony Maxwell, Bradley Smiddy

Discussion Notes

Topic	Notes
Program Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nancy and Bridget are “blown away by this special place.”• We could be a “sister town” with Bell Buckle, KY (focused on history, but also has an eclectic/fun side. Benchmark what they’ve done.). Should also benchmark with Madisonville.• Main difference between TN Downtowns and Main Street program = designated warrior (paid staff)• The mission of the TN Downtowns program is to “keep the heart of the town beating.”• 4 Main Points of the Main Street program<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Design○ Organization○ Economic Vitality○ Promotion
Other Grant Opportunities for the TN Downtowns Steering Committee to investigate & pursue	<p>We learned about 7 potential grants that are available to us and how Nancy & Bridget could support <u>the Committee</u> in exploring these grants. The Committee now needs to plan the work required to pursue these.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. TN Historic Development Grant Program

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 70/30 match (owner will need to pay 30% of project, up to a maximum match of \$300k); HOWEVER, b. Additional federal tax credits are incrementally available since we are a “Tier 4” county. This provides another 20%, for a maximum potential benefit of 90% of the project costs. c. Structure must be a contributing structure of a “historic district” or on the register by itself. 50-year look back period. Cumberland Gap needs to update its paperwork/registry information. It’s possible that additional structures can now be added. <p>2. Downtown Improvement Grant (Façade Grant)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Structure does not have to be on the National Register b. Up to 150k c. Committee would need to have a plan in advance of applying for what the \$ will be spent on <p>3. Placemakers Entrepreneurship Fund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Federal & State funds for small business development b. Helps put 9-15 people through a business class c. \$25k towards training; \$75k on buildings (pop-up or collective retail space, community kitchen, etc.) <p>4. BERO/TN Smart Start Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Need to identify & define 3 community member roles (Smart Start Representatives). b. Individuals work with any interested individuals to help them explore business opportunities (new, expansion, etc.) in town. Individuals are link between entrepreneurs and available resources & programs. Individuals provide guidance and direction. <p>5. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Water/sewer, Daycare centers, bus shelters, housing rehab, sprinkler systems, etc. <p>6. Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. \$75k per town b. Focus on outdoor recreation economy & regional tourism projects c. Keep talking about the group around the KY/VA/TN (regional) area; GOTG will have to pull groups together. d. Appalachian Gateway Community Initiative 3-Day Workshop – only for communities that are next to a National or State Park.

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	7. American Recovery Act (ARA)
Appalachian Gateway Community program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only available to towns/organizations that border public lands The Guardians would send a team of people to attend. Team requires someone involved in management of the public land, an artist, a community leader.
The TN Main Street Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guardians can sign up and make sure “Cumberland Gap, TN” is obvious
Potential Areas of Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop underutilized properties Address dilapidated structured that are bringing down property values and costing \$\$ (opportunity costs) Develop plan for “Streetscape” Develop marketing tools (website for town tourism specifically, rack card, map; leverage professionals e.g., graphic designer). They referenced Damascus & Rogersville Main Steet as specific marketing and website benchmarks (ref. Bob Hillburn). Implement formal tourism tools (governing body, funding, personnel) TriState Area Hiking Map Way Signage (“tommy the sign guy”)
Potential “Top 5”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Destination Branding & Marketing Historic Preservation Incentives & Adaptive Reuse of Downtown Properties Tourism Organizational Development & Staffing Wayfinding Signage Plan (includes pedestrian & business signage) Streetscapes (in combination with park work)
Other Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TN doesn’t have an official “trail town” – KY does. We should consider establishing an official TN Trail program in the Gap. A tourism director is needed. Multiple ways to go about setting this up. Committee to explore and guide the town. Make sure the town is ultimately receiving short term rental taxes Consider enlisting the help of East TN Community Development Partners with grant work
Collaboration is key, but remember....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Work with the willing” People are either “in on it, up on it, or down on it” Identify the “town voices” that are helpful and will be listened to
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TN Downtowns will send the Steering Committee a “Preliminary Report.”

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee to review & finalize edits on report and return it to TN Downtowns personnel Webinars (2) Offsite workshop in Cookeville, TN with other TN Downtowns cities (Steering Committee members) 2023 Project Planning (\$15,000 grant) 2023 Project Execution

Action Items (tasks are documented here and tracked separately in the TN DT Action Tracker)

Term (SHORT)	Task	Due Date	Responsible
Short (30-60 Days)	Apply for Appalachian Gateway Community Program	22 Aug 2022	Kotlar
	Post Event Comms on town website	30 Aug 2022	Kotlar
	Join National Main Street Center (mainstreet.org)	30 Aug 2022	Kotlar
	Update TN DT Project Plan	30 Aug 2022	Kotlar
	Secure various website domain names (.coms)	30 Aug 2022	Mahieu

Term (MEDIUM)	Task	Due Date	Responsible
Medium (>60 days but <1 year)	Launch trail town website and secure partner website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trail maps - Businesses - Lodging - Bike program 	TBD	TBD
	Research & apply for TN Historic Development Grant Programs (explain & invite participation)	TBD	TBD
	Reach out to MTSU to see if they will help us update the historic district listing	TBD	TBD
	Benchmark Damascus & Rogersville websites	TBD	TBD

	Benchmarking (esp. branding experiences) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bell Buckle, KY - Madisonville, TN - Lynchburg (newspaper) - Rogersville, TN - Damascus, VA 	TBD	TBD
	Benchmark “tear off” sheet from Columbia, TN	TBD	TBD
	Initiate contacts with Nancy Barker (sp?)	TBD	TBD
	Create map for local hiking (tri-state) w/reverse side a walking map for the town (hike, eat, shop, stay, play)	TBD	TBD
	Create and launch a Tennessee Trail Town Team	TBD	TBD
	Signage Storytelling – outdoor recreation tourism + historical tourism	TBD	TBD
	Dr. Kennedy in Jonesboro – speak to him to obtain contact info for Karin (in the U.K.) as someone who could possibly assist with historical record / storytelling (for branding & marketing signage) ; advice re: “how” to package the story of Cumberland Gap	TBD	TBD
	Launch trail town website and secure partner website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trail maps - Businesses - Lodging - Bike program 	TBD	TBD

Term (LONG)	Task	Due Date	Responsible
Long (>1 year?)	Create digital GIS map	TBD	TBD