

# CITY OF TUPELO

## PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Date:** March 2, 2026, 6:00 P. M.

**Location:** City Council Chambers, City Hall, and 71 East Troy Street, Tupelo, MS

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### CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Victor Fleitas called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

- **Invocation:** Mr. Aaron Washington.
- **Pledge of Allegiance:** Ms. Patti Thompson.

Board and staff introduced themselves for the record.

### Committee Members Present:

Chairman Victor Fleitas, Mr. Mark Williams, Mr. Aaron Washington, Ms. Leslie Mart, Ms. Patti Thompson, Ms. Scott Davis, Mr. Lindsey Leake (arrived after approval of prior minutes), Ms. Pam Hadley (arrived during Item Flex 2603)

### Staff Present:

Mr. Tanner Newman, Director of Development Services, Mr. Ben Logan, City Attorney, Mr. Pat Falkner, Planning Consultant, Ms. Kim Rushing, Community Development and Outreach Coordinator

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### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **Action:** Mr. Mark Williams moved to approve the February 2, 2026 meeting's minutes, seconded by Ms. Leslie Mart.
  - **Vote:** All present at that time (Williams, Washington, Mart, Fleitas, Thompson, Davis) approved by show of hands. **Motion carried.**
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### REPORT OF COUNCIL ACTION

Mr. Newman reported no updates from the City Council regarding prior Planning Committee actions.

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## **NEW BUSINESS**

Chairman Fleitas outlined four items for consideration and explained public comment procedures.

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### **Flex 26-03: 1 Otis Boulevard (Parcel 089L-32-016-00)**

#### **Location: 1 Otis Boulevard**

**Request:** Flexible use approvals to allow (a) church use in former Tupelo Automobile Museum building; (b) 0–4 preschool/daycare; (c) alternate parking (<50%); and (d) compatible social/community services center, all within the Downtown Overlay (Gateway East).

**Notices:** Mr. Newman confirmed that adjoining property owners had been notified; staff received two letters in opposition. Ms. Rushing read the letters for the record.

- **Ms. Stephanie Coomer**, Executive Director, CVB (concerns re: tourism/adjacent property impact).
- **Mr. Kevan Kirkpatrick**, Executive Director, Cadence Bank Arena & Conference Center (concerns re: event parking conflicts and public safety).

These letters were read into the record and will be attached to the minutes.

**Applicant: Jeff Robbins, Lead Pastor, King City Church, current address 359 RD 1233, Plantersville, MS, will be residing at 24 Blue Ribbon Dr., Tupelo, MS in the next month.**

- Mr. Robbins described church growth currently approximately 2,000 attendees each Sunday, proposed auditorium (~1,550 seats), and weekday activity (preschool academy, family activities).
- Stressed commitment to not conduct homeless outreach/food distribution at this site, willingness to address parking via building adjustments or adjacent land acquisition (~8 acres).
- Stated the primary hurdle was not zoning or parking but the Downtown Overlay focused on entertainment and the building being in the leisure and recreation department and district.
- Stated they were not a traditional, quiet, Sunday only church. They would have weeklong activity, higher foot traffic, family friendly environment that would be an asset, not an obstacle.

## Committee Questions:

- **Mr. Williams asked** why the church was no longer relocating to the Cliff Gookin property and whether that site was still viable. **Mr. Robbins responded** that the church pursued the automobile museum site because it better suited their ministry vision. They believed it had been sold twice, paused negotiations, and later returned when it became available again.
- **Mr. Williams asked** whether anything made the Cliff Gookin property unsuitable for their ministry. **Mr. Robbins responded** that building from the ground up would cost roughly four times more and take significantly longer than renovating the Otis Boulevard building.
- **Mr. Williams asked** how the church would address parking needs, given Sunday attendance (2,000) and weekday activities. **Mr. Robbins responded** that their services do not typically overlap with Cadence Arena events, and they intend to work with the city on strategic planning to avoid conflicts.
- **Mr. Williams asked** for additional clarification on the parking issue and how the church would manage increased traffic throughout the week. **Mr. Robbins responded** that Sunday remains the peak day, their service times do not conflict with Cadence Arena events, and they are committed to strategic planning with the city to avoid problems.
- **Mr. Williams asked** whether the church would consider purchasing additional land to address parking needs. **Mr. Robbins responded** that eight adjacent acres are available and the church has already been in negotiations for that property.
- **Mr. Williams asked** whether the church intends to provide homeless programs in future years. **Mr. Robbins responded** that they do not plan to operate homeless programs now or in the future and remain committed to their “hand up, not handout” philosophy. **Mr. Williams asked** what services would actually be provided to the homeless. **Mr. Robbins responded** that the church partners with outside organizations offering long-term housing and job-training programs, but they do not and will not host homeless services at their facility.
- **Mr. Williams asked** whether the church’s stance on homeless ministry was consistent and whether earlier comments meant something might change in future years. **Mr. Robbins responded** that their position is permanent (“day forever”) and that they do not intend to create or operate homeless programs at the proposed site.
- **Mr. Williams asked** what solutions the church proposes for homelessness in the community. **Mr. Robbins responded** that they support organizations outside the city that provide long-term job training, housing, and rehabilitation. He described successful programs they partner with that have moved individuals from homelessness into permanent employment and housing.
- **Mr. Williams asked** about the potential loss of city tax revenue and whether the church’s presence would offset that impact. **Mr. Robbins responded** that he believes the church’s presence would not be neutral but beneficial, offering greater overall value to the city than the lost tax revenue.

- **Mr. Williams asked** why the same economic benefits would not also apply at the Cliff Gookin location. **Mr. Robbins responded** that although the Cliff Gookin site could work, it would cost roughly three times more and take significantly longer to develop.
- **Mr. Williams asked** how much of the church’s congregation resides within the City of Tupelo. **Mr. Robbins responded** that specific percentages were not readily available but confirmed the church draws from both Tupelo and surrounding counties.
- **Mr. Washington asked** whether the church had additional comments regarding the parking concerns mentioned earlier in the letter that was read. **Mr. Robbins responded** that the church has multiple parking solutions under consideration, including acquiring eight adjacent acres, removing part of the existing building to create parking, or reducing the size of the auditorium. He emphasized that parking is solvable and not the main hurdle.
- **Mr. Washington asked** whether the church has any measures in place to prevent homeless individuals from congregating at the proposed site. **Mr. Robbins responded** that occasional walk-ups happen at their current site, just as with other churches. He suggested that a coordinated effort among churches could help manage such situations, but emphasized that the church needs to clear this initial approval step before implementing larger strategies.
- **Mr. Newman** clarified that questions from committee members were focused on the homeless ministry due to the “support for homeless ministries, food, clothing and supplies” stated in the application submitted by the church. **Mr. Robbins responded** that the church does not feel called to operate food or feeding ministries and has not done so in ten years. He reaffirmed their “hand up, not handout” approach and noted they assist organizations like the Hunger Coalition when needs arise.
- **Mr. Logan asked** how the church would reconcile the application’s description of a community services center with the pastor’s statements that homeless services would not be located at the Otis Boulevard site. **Mr. Robbins responded** that any unclear or misleading parts of the application could be amended. He clarified that, because the church will operate a preschool and academy, the facility is not appropriate for foot traffic associated with social-service functions.
- **Ms. Mart commented** that although she supports the church’s mission, she is concerned that locating the church in the downtown leisure district could limit businesses, including those serving alcohol, and that the larger Cliff Gookin property appears more suitable. **Mr. Robbins responded** that they are comfortable with the district’s vision and have discussed neighboring uses with city leadership. He reiterated that the Cliff Gookin site would take far longer and cost significantly more to develop.
- **Mr. Leake commented** that he appreciated the church’s efforts and noted his primary concern was how the proposed use aligns with the existing overlay district and previous city investments.
- **Ms. Thompson asked** about the age and condition of the Otis Boulevard building and expressed concern about the cost of renovating an eight-year-vacant structure, as well as concerns about limiting nightlife-oriented businesses downtown. **Mr. Robbins responded** that contractors, architects, and an experienced project manager thoroughly

evaluated the building and confirmed that renovation would cost significantly less and take about one-third the time of new construction. He noted that the church does not intend to restrict district development.

- **Mr. Davis asked** how the church would address being several hundred parking spaces short of requirements. **Mr. Robbins responded** that current capacity provides 244 spaces but a 1,550-seat auditorium would require 610. Options include reducing auditorium size, removing part of the existing building to create parking, or using adjacent property through purchase or agreement.
- **Mr. Davis asked** whether reducing building size or auditorium capacity would hinder church growth. **Mr. Robbins responded** that it could, but the church is willing to adjust and would consider using satellite campuses if needed.
- **Ms. Mart asked** whether the church planned to develop or demolish parts of the building or parking lot. **Mr. Robbins responded** that they have development plans but this location would serve as their primary “hub” campus, not an annex.
- **Mr. Fleitas asked** whether a signed contract exists between the church and the seller of the Otis Boulevard property. **Mr. Robbins responded** that there is no signed contract, only a verbal agreement contingent on the city’s approval.
- **Mr. Fleitas asked** whether the church’s choice of the downtown site shifts financial burden to the city (police, fire, traffic management, and loss of taxable commercial property). **Mr. Robbins responded** that the church has not yet had those detailed discussions with the city but is open to reviewing how costs and benefits balance out.
- **Mr. Fleitas asked** whether the church has any agreements in place for additional parking or if related costs were included in their planning. **Mr. Robbins responded** that no contract has been signed for adjacent land, but demolition of building space for additional parking has been factored into their cost estimates.
- **Mr. Fleitas asked** about the variance needed for parking and whether the additional parking on the east side of the property was included in their calculations. **Mr. Robbins responded** that creating more parking through demolition or land purchase is included in their planning and would support the needed variance.
- **Ms. Mart asked** for clarification about the location of the new jail and whether the church referenced it when discussing adjacent land. **Mr. Robbins responded** that the referenced eight acres is adjacent to the new jail site.
- **Mr. Fleitas asked** what role visibility plays in the church’s preference for the downtown Otis Boulevard location over the Cliff Gookin site. **Mr. Robbins responded** that visibility is not a priority and has never been a factor in their growth. Their current location is not visible, yet the church has grown significantly.
- **Mr. Fleitas acknowledged** the pastor’s responses and asked **Ms. Hadley** whether she had questions.  
**Ms. Hadley responded** that she had no questions.
- **Mr. Logan asked** about the renderings provided—specifically, the purpose of the Care Center depicted in the drawings. **Mr. Robbins responded** that the Care Center would be used for offices, meeting rooms, training, and counseling—not for housing or services that could compromise safety near the preschool or staff.

- **Mr. Logan asked** how many square feet the Care Center involved and whether it was related to homeless services. **Mr. Robbins responded** that it was planned for the building's second floor and was originally intended as a one-stop location for foster-care and family-support training, job-skills programs, and counseling—not for homelessness services.
- **Mr. Bry Robbins (111 Clairmont Court, Tupelo, MS) added** that the Care Center also included counseling offices.  
**Committee acknowledged** the clarification.
- **Mr. Williams asked** whether the proximity of the new jail could create legal or safety issues, including firearm-related distance restrictions between jails and churches. **Mr. Logan responded** that the jail will have limited access from Commerce Street and is located on county property in a different use district; a larger map would be required to determine any legal restrictions. **Mr. Newman added** that the matter would need further research.
- **Ms. Mart asked** which property the 2023 elevation drawings were originally prepared for. **Mr. Robbins responded** that they were prepared for 1 Otis Boulevard and later duplicated for the Cliff Gookin site at a different time.
- **Ms. Mart asked** for confirmation that the drawings provided to the committee reflect the Otis Boulevard site. **Mr. Robbins responded** that the drawings in the packet are indeed for 1 Otis Boulevard.

Mr. Newman presented the staff analysis that stated the Downtown Overlay standards: insufficient evidence of special conditions, lack of on-site/shared parking agreements (approx. 376 additional spaces needed for 1,550 seats; site has ~244 existing + potential ~61), pedestrian safety concerns crossing major streets, non-taxable use impacts, and **failure to meet required 6 of 8 compatibility criteria**. Staff recommended **denial** of the flexible/compatible use requests.

**Public Hearing:** Chairman Fleitas opened the public portion of the meeting.

- **Ms. Lucia Randle (Executive Director, Downtown Tupelo Main Street Association)** thanked the committee for the opportunity to speak and acknowledged the positive work of King City Church. She provided an overview of downtown economic activity, noting
  - In 2025, downtown saw 19 new business openings and 57 new full- and part-time jobs.
  - Public investment totaled \$3,383,558; private investment totaled \$10,000,860, for a combined \$14,251,425 invested in 2025.
  - There were 19 commercial and residential construction projects, 6 public improvement projects, 2,208 volunteer hours, and 13 quality-of-life events.
  - Since 2020, total downtown investment exceeded \$111 million in the overlay district.
  - She reiterated that the mission of Downtown Tupelo is to enhance the district through events, retail, restaurants, recreation, and tourism.
  - She noted concerns that a church of this size would lack sufficient parking, require shared-use agreements with TRA for adjacent lots, and potentially conflict with arena and conference center events due to overlapping use patterns.

- **Ms. Mart** asked for confirmation that the \$111 million investment figure represented spending since 2020. **Ms. Randle responded** that the figure reflects combined public and private investment over the past five years (2020–2025). **Ms. Mart** noted that total downtown investment since 1998 is in the hundreds of millions of dollars. **Ms. Randle acknowledged** that this is correct and thanked the committee for their continued work.
  
- **Mr. Troy Peck (Chief of Code Enforcement)** stated that his comments were based on the written application submitted, not the verbal statements made during the meeting. Mr. Peck explained that his responsibility is to evaluate how proposed uses affect the health, safety, and welfare of the entire community. He emphasized that while compassion for individuals experiencing homelessness is widely shared, public safety and long-term impacts must be considered. Mr. Peck highlighted several concerns related to locating homelessness-related outreach activities in high-traffic downtown corridors:
  - Increased pedestrian foot traffic in areas lacking adequate sidewalks, crosswalks, and controls could elevate vehicle-pedestrian conflicts and create hazardous driving conditions.
  - Concentrated service points in other municipalities have resulted in increased litter, bedding materials, clothing, and debris when on-site waste systems and restrooms are insufficient.
  - Improper waste disposal can create public health concerns, attract pests, block drainage systems, and strain city cleanup resources.
  - Centralized gathering areas often lead to informal encampments forming near wooded or vacant areas, lacking sanitation, fire safety measures, and environmental protections.
  - These patterns have already been observed locally in the Carnation Street area.
  - Increased loitering or sidewalk congestion may negatively affect nearby businesses that depend on safe and accessible streets for commerce. Mr. Peck stated that these concerns do not diminish the value of helping vulnerable populations; instead, they highlight the need for coordinated, citywide strategies using proper facilities, infrastructure, and service partners.
  
- **Mr. Peck then read a letter from Ms. Ali Whitaker, Asset Protection Investigator at the Walmart Neighborhood Market**, which described ongoing safety and security challenges associated with homeless individuals at that location, including:
  - Trespassing, panhandling, theft, property damage, harassment, and threats of violence.
  - Use of store restrooms for bathing or sleeping.
  - Associates feeling unsafe, some resigning, and customers choosing to shop elsewhere.
  - Theft or removal of shopping carts from store property.
  - Incidents involving weapons, including knives and thrown objects, causing property damage and endangering employees. Mr. Peck stated that the letter was shared with him specifically in connection with the application under consideration.

**COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:** Chairman Fleitas opened the floor for committee discussion.

- **Ms. Thompson** stated that all major points had already been discussed and she had nothing further to add.
- **Mr. Williams** expressed appreciation for the church’s goals but stated that the proposal raised too many uncertainties regarding the district’s purpose, long-term planning, and future impacts. He noted concerns about compatibility with the entertainment district and the potential negative effects on its established vision.
- **Mr. Davis** stated that multiple required findings for approval were not met. He noted that out of the findings read into the record; only two of eight appeared to be satisfied. He added that the proposed location is not an appropriate site for a church use based on the city’s planning efforts for downtown.
- **Ms. Mart** agreed with Mr. Davis, stating the downtown area has been intentionally divided into functional sections after years of planning, and that this location is not suitable for a church. She also referenced concerns about parking, loss of tax revenue, and the availability of alternative locations elsewhere in the city.
- **Mr. Williams** reiterated that the proposal fails key criteria related to use compatibility and flexibility, stating it clearly does not meet at least two of the required standards.
- **Mr. Fleitas** stated that downtown redevelopment has been a consistent, long-term civic vision supported by multiple administrations for decades. While expressing respect for the church’s work and concern for the homeless, he stated that the proposed use is inconsistent with the established purpose of the entertainment district. He pointed to issues including pedestrian safety, traffic congestion, cost-shifting to the city, and conflicts with existing event activity at the conference and arena facilities. He concluded that the location is not appropriate for the proposed use.

Motion was made by Mr. Scott Davis to **deny Flex 26-03** in full—specifically **denying**: (1) social/community services compatible use; (2) church flexible use; (3) preschool/daycare flexible use; and (4) alternate parking flexible use. The motion was seconded by Ms. Leslie Mart.

- **Vote: Approved** by show of hands. **Motion carried** (denial).

**Appeal Notice:**

- Mr. Newman announced a three-day appeal period, beginning the day after the meeting, for any party wishing to appeal the committee’s decision to the City Council.

**Flex 26-02: 407 Eason Boulevard (Parcels 088V-34-039-03 & 112T-03-020-00)**

**Location:** 407 Eason Boulevard

**Request:** Replace a non-conforming trucking company use with light manufacturing/metal fabrication (cutting, welding, grinding of steel beams, pipe, and plate), with building addition and site changes.

**Notices:** Mr. Newman confirmed that adjoining property owners had been notified; no responses were received.

**Applicant Representative: Chris Winders (TRI Commercial)** 1476 Country Wood Cove. Representing Nashville Fabrication who submitted the application.

Mr. Winders stated he did not have a presentation but welcomed any questions. Chairman Fleitas asked the committee for questions, there were none.

**Public Hearing:** Chairman Fleitas opened the public portion of the meeting.

- **Mr. James Davis (1715 Tulip Road)** stated that he and his brother own multiple lots in the immediate area. He expressed concern about noise impacts based on his experience with the Gibson Corrugated facility, approved approximately 10 years ago.
  - He noted that Gibson did not originally operate at night, but later added a second shift, resulting in significant nighttime noise detectable even inside his home.
  - Despite replacing windows with double-pane glass, nighttime machine noise remains a persistent disturbance.
  - He fears a similar pattern could occur with the proposed light-manufacturing facility, even if it initially operates only during daytime hours.

**Ms. Mart** asked where he lives; **Mr. Davis** identified his home near the former Shelton's Trailer Park with farmland behind it.

- **Mr. Fleitas** asked his distance from Gibson; **Mr. Davis** estimated less than a quarter-mile.
- **Mr. Davis** clarified that the proposed new facility would be slightly farther from his home than Gibson, but still close enough for noise to be a concern.
- A map was reviewed; **Mr. Davis** identified both his home and his brother's property for the committee.

- **Mr. Mohammed Gamil (373 County Road 373, Tupelo)** stated that he owns a business across from the proposed site. He expressed initial confusion regarding the discussion about a trucking company and asked for clarification on which business previously operated there.
  - Committee members clarified that Penske Trucking previously occupied the site. **Mr. Gamil** stated he has no objections to the application and supports approval. He noted that the area has remained underused for many years, with little activity other than small-scale farming. He believes the proposed project would have a positive economic impact, create employment opportunities, and activate an area that has long been stagnant. He stated the project would also benefit nearby businesses, including his own.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE APPLICANT’S REPRESENTATIVE:

- **Ms. Hadley** asked whether fabrication operations would be daytime only or could run at night. **Mr. Winders** (Applicant Representative) responded he could not confirm shift schedules but stated the work involves cutting, welding, and grinding steel, not stamping. He noted that stamping is significantly louder and typically requires industrial zoning.
- **Ms. Mart** asked for clarification of the proposed use. **Mr. Fleitas** clarified that the current trucking facility would be converted to light industrial use. **Mr. Winders** stated the noise level should be comparable to, or less than, the air tools currently used in the truck service center.

Mr. Falkner presented the staff analysis and noted corridor conditions (limited commercial growth, proximity to industrial uses, low-density residential to the east/outside city limits). Staff found the proposed use in harmony with the area; recommended **approval**, suggesting sound mitigation via landscape buffering.

- **Ms. Mart** asked whether evergreen screening could be required between the new parking area and the road to help mitigate noise. **Mr. Falkner** confirmed this could be imposed as a condition during site-plan review.
- **Mr. Fleitas** asked about the former trucking operation; the applicant did not know how long the business had been inactive. He noted that an increase in ambient noise is likely and that reasonable mitigation would be within the committee’s purview.

## Committee Discussion:

- Discussion focused on evergreen screening between new parking and the street (to dampen noise) and broader “reasonable noise mitigation efforts.”

**Motion** was made by Ms. Leslie Mart to **approve Flex 26-02 with conditions:**

1. Applicant to implement reasonable noise-mitigation measures (in coordination with city staff), and
2. At a minimum, install evergreen shrubs/landscape screening between new parking and the street sufficient to mitigate sound; screening to count toward required landscaping percentage.

Motion was seconded by Ms. Patti Thompson.

- **Vote:** Motion **carried**; **Mark Williams opposed** stating it was regrettable there may be noise but putting restrictions on a low-density area would put a restriction on progress, a vacant building and economic growth.

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**RZ 26-01: Locust Lane Area (Parcels 079L-32-005-02 and 079L-32-005-20 through -23)**

**Location:** Locust Lane Area

**Request:** Rezone from **Agriculture/Open Space (AO)** to **Medium Density Residential (MDR)** to unify split-zoned tract for future residential development (~25 acres).

**Notices:** Mr. Newman confirmed that all surrounding property owners had been notified; no responses were received prior to the meeting.

**Applicant:** Mr. Dylan Speck, 381 Willena Circle

- Mr. Speck stated the request is to rezone the property for future residential development.

**Public Hearing:** Chairman Fleitas opened the public portion of the meeting.

- **Mr. Jeff McCord** (2046 Birmingham Ridge) stated that he owns property immediately south of the site. He is not opposed to the rezoning but sought clarification on the proposed zoning type and potential drainage impacts.

– Chair clarified that:

- The rezoning is to Medium Density Residential.
  - Drainage and subdivision details will be addressed under a separate application.
- Mr. McCord confirmed he had no objection to the rezoning.

No additional public comments were offered; public hearing was closed.

Mr. Newman presented the staff analysis and explained that the property is split-zoned; a portion is already Medium Density Residential. Rezoning the remaining acreage to MDR would provide consistent zoning across the parcel. The surrounding property includes existing MDR zoning. Staff found the **request appropriate and had no objections.**

**Committee Discussion:**

- No further questions were raised by committee members.

**Motion:** Motion was made by Mr. Davis to **approve** the rezoning request. Mr. Williams seconded the motion.

- Recusal: Mr. Leake recused himself from discussion and voting due to his real estate license.
- Vote: **Motion carried.**

**Next Steps:**

- Mr. Newman stated the rezoning requires City Council approval.
- A public hearing will be scheduled for the first City Council meeting in April.
- Staff will coordinate with the applicant regarding the next steps.

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**MAJSUB 26-01: Major Subdivision – Locust Lane (Parcels 079L-32-005-02 & 079L-32-005-20 through 00523) (80 lots)**

**Location:** Locust Lane Area

**Request:** Preliminary major subdivision plat for **80 lots** with internal street network.

**Notices:** Mr. Newman confirmed adjoining property owners were notified.

- Multiple inquiries were received regarding the subdivision application.

**Applicant: Mr. Dylan Speck, 381 Willena Circle**

- Stated the intent is to develop the parcel for residential housing.

**Committee Questions to Applicant:**

- **Mr. Williams** asked whether the applicant had been informed of the City’s ingress/egress requirements for an 80-lot subdivision and whether the current layout complies. **Mr. Speck** stated that based on a February 10 meeting with City staff, he believed the proposed design met both fire code and development code standards.
- **Ms. Mart** questioned how the subdivision could meet code when one of the proposed roads terminates without a connection (“a road leading to nowhere”). **Mr. Speck** stated that the intent is to connect through the West Wind neighborhood, and he believed that process was underway. – Upon further questioning, he confirmed that no formal agreement, contract, or approval for that connection currently exists.
- **Ms. Mart** further noted the presence of a substantial watershed ditch running directly through approximately 10–12 proposed lots. She asked how homes could be placed over an active drainage feature. **Mr. Speck** responded that the engineering phase would address the issue. – **Committee members** observed that the plan, as submitted, shows building lots and proposed homes situated directly over the stream corridor, which is not permissible.
- **Chairman Fleitas** asked how the proposed road would cross the ditch and whether the crossing requires Army Corps of Engineers approval. **Mr. Speck** stated he believed Corps approval would be required and reiterated that staff in the earlier meeting emphasized fire access as the primary concern.
- **Mr. Davis** expressed concern that the plan shows structures and a roadway crossing a marked waterway, stating the committee cannot approve a subdivision that places homes “on top of a stream” or over unresolved drainage features. **Mr. Speck stated** it would never be their intention to build on top of streams.
- **Mr. Newman** noted that if the applicant intends to obtain secondary fire access by extending a road through the West Wind subdivision, that subdivision is already platted. – Routing a street through a platted lot would require re-platting West Wind, which is a legally separate process and has not been initiated. – He stated this was the first time staff had been informed of such an access proposal.

## **Public Hearing:**

Chairman Fleitas opened the public portion of the meeting.

- **Mr. Mark Utley Jr., 2480 Red Fox Lane, Hernando** stated he was the Developer of Shady Oaks and involved in West Wind expansion. He stated no discussions have occurred with the applicant and himself regarding access through West Wind/Shady Oaks.

- Confirmed the area is already platted; any new roadway would require re-platting.
- Expressed concern that the applicant's current plan shows only one point of egress.
- Indicated Shady Oaks' own extension is adding egress via Lauren Lane, but the applicant's plan does not coordinate with ongoing development.
- Confirmed this was his first time seeing the subdivision plan.

- **Mr. Speck** stated he believes an easement exists within West Wind providing access to a lift station and potential fire truck route.

- Acknowledged miscommunication with adjacent developers and apologized for the oversight.
- Mr. Newman stated major components of the current plan will not work and a compliant redesign is required.

In the staff analysis portion, Mr. Newman stated the application **cannot be approved** in its current form. He recommended either:

- Denial, which triggers a one-year waiting period before resubmission; or
- Tabling, allowing the applicant to revise plans and work with staff.
- City Attorney Mr. Logan recommended tabling to avoid the one-year bar, noting staff had previously communicated necessary revisions to the engineering team.
- Committee and staff clarified that tabling requires the applicant to complete the Plan Review process, including approvals from:
  - Fire Department
  - Public Works
  - Water & Light
  - City plan review staff
- Revised plat must resolve:
  - Fire access
  - Second required egress
  - Watershed/ditch impacts
  - Engineering feasibility
  - Coordination with existing platted subdivisions

Mr. Speck requested the application be **tabled**, not denied. He noted for the record: ICM is not involved in this project.

- Committee reminded applicant to address flood-impact concerns on adjacent properties

Motion was made by Mr. Davis to **table** Maj Sub 2601, with the condition that the applicant complete the full Plan Review process and obtain all required departmental approvals prior to

resubmittal to the committee. Ms. Hadley seconded the motion.

- **Recusal:** Mr. Leake recused himself from consideration and voting.
- **Vote: Motion carried;** the matter was **tabled**.

#### **Next Steps:**

- Mr. Newman advised:
    - Rezoning component (from prior agenda item) will proceed to City Council for an April public hearing.
    - Staff will meet with the applicant within the next several days to begin revising the subdivision plat.
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#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

- **Work Session:** Monday, **March 30, 2026** (noted some member conflicts; packet review to occur regardless).
- **Next Regular Meeting:** Monday, **April 6, 2026**.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Action: Motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Leslie Mart, seconded by Ms. Patti Thompson. Passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned.

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#### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. **Letter** – Stephanie Coomer, Executive Director, Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB).
  2. **Letter** – Kevan Kirkpatrick, Executive Director, Cadence Bank Arena & Conference Center.
  3. **Informational Graphic** – Lucia Randle, Executive Director, Downtown Tupelo Main Street Association
  4. **Letter** – Walmart Neighborhood Market (AP Investigator Ali Whitaker) referenced by Code Enforcement.
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These minutes reflect the actions taken and discussions held by the Tupelo Planning Committee on **March 2, 2026**.



February 26, 2026

Mayor Todd Jordan and  
Tupelo City Council  
City of Tupelo  
71 East Troy Street  
Tupelo, MS 38804

Dear Mayor Jordan and City Council members,

Please accept this as a letter of concern about the proposed use of the property known as the Tupelo Automobile Museum. As a highly visible piece of property on a major thoroughfare through Tupelo, it is our wish for the City of Tupelo to consider that property as a prime spot for locating a major attractor to Tupelo. I would also like the City of Tupelo to consider the near future as the CVB's offices are relocated to the Tupelo Hardware building, and how any future development across the street could impact the City's ability to sell the CVB's current building at the corner of Main and Elizabeth Streets.

We desire to see the City of Tupelo grow and prosper, and we believe there is a place for all different types of development. However, thoughtful development of both 1 Otis Boulevard and 399 East Main Street is crucial to the City's appeal as a destination. We ask that you carefully consider the use of each property and the effect it will have on the other and weigh what that could mean to Tupelo as a tourism destination.

Thank you for the hard work you do to ensure Tupelo maintains its reputation as one of the most progressive cities in the South. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 662-871-7801 or email me at [scoomer@tupelo.net](mailto:scoomer@tupelo.net).

Sincerely,

Stephanie Coomer, Executive Director



[tupelo.net](http://tupelo.net)

P.O. Drawer 47 • 399 East Main St. • Tupelo, MS 38802 • #MyTupelo



## CADENCE BANK

### Arena & Conference Center

To: Ben Logan

From: Kevan Kirkpatrick, Executive Director

Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposed Church Use of Former Automobile Museum Site in relation to Arena parking lot

#### Background

The former Tupelo Automobile Museum sits directly across E. Franklin St. from the Cadence Bank Arena and Conference Center, one of Mississippi's premier multi-purpose venues. The arena hosts 100+ major events annually, including concerts, collegiate sports, rodeos, conventions, trade shows, and family entertainment, routinely drawing 5,000–10,000 attendees per event. Its parking facilities (east and west lots) provide free public parking and are fully utilized during peak events. Historically, the museum's own lot served as privately paid overflow parking for sold-out arena events. The building has remained vacant since the museum's closure and auction in 2019.

#### Primary Concerns

##### 1. Interference with Arena and Conference Center Events and Parking Operations

- **Scheduling Conflicts:** Large-church weekend services, mid-week Bible studies, youth events, and special programs (revivals, conferences, holiday services) will frequently overlap with arena event days. Arena events are booked months or years in advance and cannot be easily rescheduled.
- **Parking Shortages:** The arena's lots are sized and managed exclusively for its ticketed patrons. Designating or informally allowing overflow use by hundreds of church attendees would displace arena guests, create chaotic traffic patterns on Franklin Street, East Main Street, Commerce Street, and Otis Boulevard, and generate safety risks (pedestrians crossing busy roadways, blocked emergency access lanes).

- **Revenue and Operational Impact:** Arena management relies on full parking availability to maintain efficient ingress/egress and positive attendee experiences. Any reduction in available spaces could lead to lost ticket sales, negative online reviews, sponsor dissatisfaction, and higher demands for off-site shuttling or law-enforcement traffic control.
- **Precedent:** The museum lot previously generated revenue as paid overflow; shifting that burden onto the arena's free public lots represents an uncompensated subsidy to the church at the expense of the broader community and arena operations.

## 2. Potential Increase in Homeless Traffic and Associated Public Safety Issues

- **Large churches commonly operate or partner in outreach ministries (food pantries, clothing distributions, counseling, overnight shelter referrals, etc.).** Locating such activities immediately adjacent to a high-profile public venue is likely to draw transient individuals to the arena parking lots and surrounding sidewalks.
- **Impact on Arena Patrons:** Families, children, and out-of-town visitors attending concerts, sports events, or conventions could encounter increased panhandling, loitering, litter, or open substance use in the parking areas. Past experiences at other mixed-use venues nationwide show these dynamics can reduce attendance and damage a venue's family-friendly reputation.
- **Security and Enforcement Strain:** Additional calls for service would fall on the Tupelo Police Department and arena security personnel already stretched during major events. This could delay response times, increase overtime costs, and create liability concerns for both the city and the arena.
- **Visual and Environmental Impact:** The arena and conference center serve as gateways for tourism and economic activity in downtown Tupelo. Persistent visible homelessness in the shared parking and green spaces would undermine revitalization efforts and the positive image cultivated around major events.

# DOWNTOWN TUPELO

## HIGHLIGHTS 2020-2025

**120**  
NEW BUSINESSES

**325**  
NEW JOBS

**\$ 111**  
MILLION  
INVESTED DOWNTOWN

**5**  
FAÇADE REHABILITATIONS

**11K+**  
VOLUNTEER HOURS

# ECONOMIC IMPACT



Established in 1990, Downtown Tupelo Main Street has led downtown's revitalization with a comprehensive strategic approach. As a prestigious **Great American Main Street Award (GAMSA) winner** and trusted municipal partner, Main Street leverages its expertise to create the right business mix while providing tax incentive guidance, design assistance, and marketing opportunities. Decades of consistent leadership demonstrate how sustained Main Street investment creates enduring economic vitality.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

### Alley Activation Enhances Downtown Experience



Downtown Tupelo Main Street turned forgotten alleyways into assets. ARPA funds were used for outdoor furniture, banners, and a speaker system. Now in the third phase, these corridors feature upgraded utilities, stamped concrete, and inviting furniture. The redesigned spaces provide restaurants with service access and designate alleyways as mural-lined event venues.

## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

# DEPOT INVESTMENT ANCHORS DOWNTOWN



Downtown Tupelo Main Street secured funding for the **\$2.2 million Depot project**, creating a state-of-the-art multi-purpose facility that serves as home to the city's longest-running farmers' market while providing a versatile event venue for the community. The new facility features a pavilion, stage, vendor stalls, electricity, and restrooms designed to support diverse community activities. As the city's economic driver, Main Street recognized the importance of enhancing this beloved community asset that brings residents together weekly and attracts visitors year-round.

**This investment exemplifies how targeted projects in community gathering places generate increased foot traffic and sales for downtown businesses.**

### OUR SUPPORTERS

- City of Tupelo
- Lee County Board of Supervisors
- Tupelo Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Renasant
- Reed's
- Cadence Bank
- BNA Bank
- BNSF Railroad
- FNB Bank
- Coca-Cola of Tupelo
- Mitchell Distributing
- Waste Management
- Mississippi Radio Group
- Super Talk Mississippi
- B & B Concrete
- Visit Mississippi
- iHeart Radio
- Eat With Us Group
- Ross & Yerger
- Century Construction
- BankPlus



### Lucia Randle

Director  
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To whom it may concern,

My name is Alle Whitaker, I am the Asset Protection Investigator for the neighborhood Walmart her in Tupelo and I have been at this store for almost 6 years. I would like to take this opportunity to voice various concerns we face on a daily basis with the local homeless population. During my tenure here, I have met many different types of homeless individuals. Most of the population consist of those with mental illness or drug addiction. And the population continues to grow and change as new individuals are shipped in from other cities and states. The majority of them are trespassed from being on property for the following reasons; shoplifting, panhandling, simple assaults, threats of violence, destruction of property, petty larceny, and harassment of customers and associates. I am the only asset protection we have at this store and every one of the following incidents I just listed has happened way too many times to count.

They also like to use our restrooms as if the sinks were showers, even trimming their hair/beards and sometimes sleeping in the stalls. They like to hang out on or around the premises either in the vestibule or around the outside of the store, resulting in associates being forced to take the time to run them off and in a lot of instances resulting in the police having to be called to assist in removing them from the premises. Most of our associates and a lot of customers are terrified of majority of them due to some run in they have encountered with them in the past, with some associates quitting because they did not feel safe or comfortable being here and customers choosing to shop somewhere else. We can't keep our buggies on property because they like to take them to use so they don't have to tote their personal belongings, which costs the store a significant sum to purchase more to ensure they are available for our customers.

**A few events that have taken place could have seriously injured someone, due to some type of weapon being involved from the individual. For example, knives have been pulled and even having a large piece of asphalt being thrown at a coworker and myself, resulting in a window being broken out and costing the store even more money to have it replaced. I could list numerous other incidents that I have been a witness to over the past few years but you would be here all night. If anyone personally has questions regarding the homeless population please feel to come by the store and ask for Alle and I will be happy to speak with you.**

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