

March 9, 2009
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PRESS RELEASE

The City of Knoxville is holding a public meeting on its new Downtown Knoxville Wayfinding Project at 6 p.m., Thursday, March 12, in the Small Assembly Room of the City County Building.

The meeting has a two-fold purpose: to describe what wayfinding is and to receive input on, among other things, what destinations should be included in the project and where signage should be located.

The goal of the wayfinding effort is to make it easy for visitors to navigate around downtown Knoxville as well as highlighting its attractions and offerings in an appealing and informative manner.

“What we want to do is create a well-designed and consistent signage system with pedestrian-scale signs, maps, KAT trolley signs and signs directing drivers to and from the parking garages and major traffic arteries,” said Madeleine Weil, deputy director of the city’s Policy & Communications Department.

Weil directed the consultant selection process and Anne Wallace, the city’s Cumberland Avenue Project Manager, will manage implementation of the planning and design process.

“Often the first interaction between a visitor and downtown is a sign”, Weil added. “A good signage program can play a major role in letting someone know that downtown is a vibrant, diverse, well-managed and easily navigated place,” Weil added.

The city has already been working on the Downtown Wayfinding Project for several months. Earlier this year it selected MERJE, a Philadelphia-based firm with extensive experience in wayfinding and branding work, from among more than 20 companies that submitted proposals to lead the public process for input, create a design, establish sign locations and create a manual for maintenance of the signs and system.

City Council approved the contract last month and MERJE representatives will make their first public presentation at Thursday’s public meeting.

In addition to the public meeting Wallace and MERJE representatives have scheduled a series of short meetings during the day on Thursday and Friday with various downtown stakeholders.

“This gives downtown stakeholders the opportunity to provide specific input from their perspective and highlight the needs and desires of their clientele,” Wallace said.

The stakeholder groups include representatives from Market Square and the Old City, the downtown theaters, historic preservation groups, the Arts & Cultural Alliance and various city departments among others.

The project area encompasses all of downtown including World’s Fair Park. The general boundaries are the Norfolk Southern Tracks on the north, the Tennessee River on the south, Hall of Fame Drive on the east and 11th Street on the west.

The city currently has some directional signage but much of it is inconsistent, inadequate or in poor repair.

Part of the planning and design process will be the development of a comprehensive long-term management plan to make sure signage is kept up-to-date and well-maintained.

“We believe this process will provide an exciting opportunity to help define and brand downtown Knoxville for both visitors and residents, while offering clear, directional signs to key downtown locations,” Wallace said.