

# Muletown *{local}*

COLUMBIA & MAURY COUNTY

JULY 2024

A man with short brown hair, wearing a white long-sleeved button-down shirt, stands with his arms crossed and a friendly smile. He is wearing a black smartwatch on his left wrist. The background is an office or home workspace with wooden shelves holding various items like books, a small American flag, and framed pictures. One framed picture prominently displays the number '225'. A green plant is visible on the right side of the frame.

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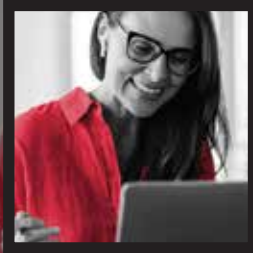
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# Inside {local} July '24



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## CHARTING THE PLANS FOR GROWTH

Wil Evans leads the Maury County Alliance plans for growth



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## LOCAL FOCUS SERVICE DIRECTORY 20, 21, 22 COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS 26

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**ON THE COVER:** Will Evans, President and CEO of the Maury County Chamber and Economic Alliance, says people have discovered this part of the state has much to offer. Photo by Michael Tedesco

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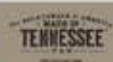
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This fully supported ride promises a spectacular route, ensuring an exciting journey for all participants.

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Bike MS boasts an impressive lineup of 50 rides across the country, each offering a unique and unforgettable experience. Two of these rides have earned the prestigious title of best road cycling events by USA Today.

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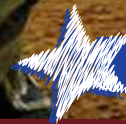
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Wil Evans and the team at the Maury Alliance. Photography by Michael Tedesco

# MANAGING MAURY'S GROWTH

## PAM WINDSOR

Maury County is a proven hotspot for people moving to Tennessee. Like other counties surrounding the fast-growing city of Nashville, it's felt the ripple effect of people moving farther out from the bigger city. Over the past five years alone, the population here has grown almost 19 percent, with experts predicting a similar increase between now and 2025. Businesses are also gravitating to the area. Wil Evans, President and CEO of the Maury County Chamber and Economic Alliance, says people have discovered this part of the state has much to offer.

"We have access to everything that Nashville has to offer such as world class entertainment, world class travel out of the airport, and all of that," he explains. "But we also have a very genuine sense of place with our own unique shopping, dining, entertain-

ment, quality healthcare, and so forth. Then, when you drill down into the various cities, whether it be Spring Hill, Columbia, or Mount Pleasant, you get a different feel, all positive but different. You can go from more suburban to rural depending on what you would like to have in your community."

Nashville isn't the only nearby metropolitan area influencing Maury County's population boom.

"What differentiates us from some of the other Nashville MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) counties, is we're also uniquely positioned next to Huntsville, Alabama," says Evans. "So, that provides additional opportunities for our residents, whether it be professional job opportunities or additional entertainment opportunities."

Evans and his team are on the front lines of helping Maury

**PAGE 12 >**

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# MAURY COUNTY

Chamber & Economic Alliance



Photography by Michael Tedesco

## < FROM PAGE 10

County's economy grow, attracting new businesses, and supporting existing businesses as they evolve or expand. They have a strong track record over the past decade.

"2014 is when the tide started to turn for Maury County, and we started to see growth and new companies come to town. If you look back over that ten-year period, our partners at the local and state level have announced forty-three new companies or current companies expanding. That totals over six thousand new jobs and \$5 billion dollars in new investment in the county."

As they've worked to attract new businesses and industries, it's been important for them to get strategic input from local business owners, city and county government leaders, investors, and others.

"When it comes to recruiting businesses in the county, we spent the better part of 2022 and 2023 engaging with our community stakeholders," Evans says. "We wanted to know what they would consider a successful economic development project. What would they be excited for us to announce, as a new company coming to our community."

He says it gave them a lot of insight and helped narrow their focus. They came away with three priorities: higher wages (higher than the average county wage), a diversification of industries and job opportunities, and a responsible use of the community's resources."

Attracting new businesses requires a strong workforce. Evans says they realize the need to pool resources to help train and prepare the local workforce for the technical job skills some of these companies will require.

"We've been spending a lot of time with what we call Align Maury," Evans explains. "It's our workforce program where we've brought together the education partners, the technical colleges and community colleges, and employers in the county to figure out what we can do to fill those gaps and really develop some strategies to help the employers find the workforce they need."

It's an exciting time for Maury County, and Evans says he and his staff are currently working on the plan for the next five years. The goal is to embrace growth but maintain a balance.

"We know we're growing, but how can we grow responsible, and how can we make sure the entire community's input is sought in determining where we want to go as a county in the future."

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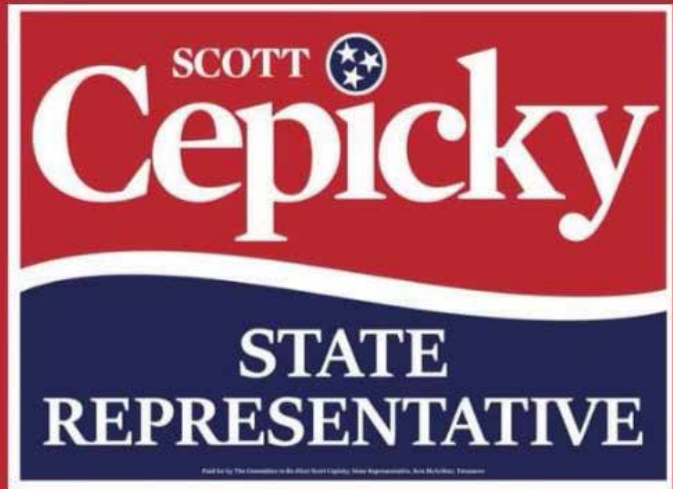


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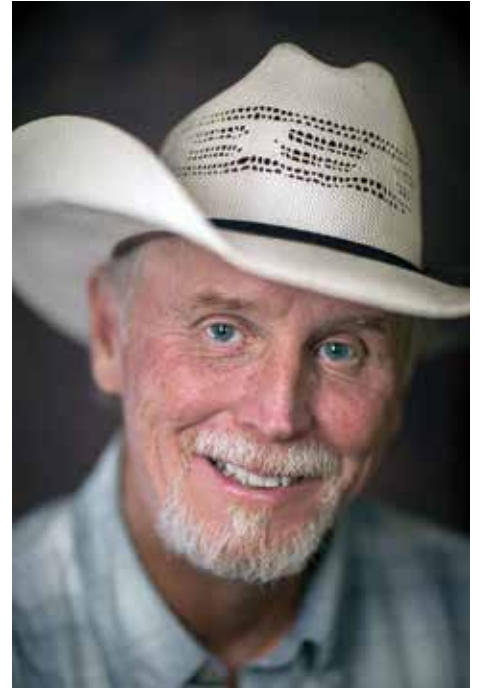
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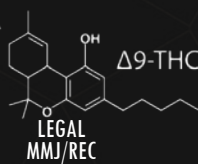
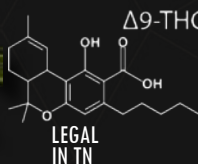
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The Homes at 4th and McGuire in Columbia are marketed by realtor, April Gardner. Photography by Robbie Mathis.

# A UNIQUE VISION FOR COLUMBIA

## JASON ZASKY

“I got into real estate when I was 18 years old, right out of high school,” begins real estate agent April Gardner, who has spent the better part of the last three decades working in the real estate business. But it wasn’t until she moved from Morrisville, Vermont, to Columbia in the spring of 2014 that she went beyond buying and selling and into design and development.

“Not being from here, I see things differently,” explains Gardner, who came to Columbia to care for an ailing grandmother, but saw tremendous opportunity in the local marketplace and got her Tennessee real estate license in 2016.

“I thought the east side of Columbia was untapped, especially at the time,” she says, and started selling houses on that side of town, noting that “the potential was great because it’s the only part of Columbia that is walking distance to the square without a

major highway being involved.”

Meanwhile, more and more people started moving to Columbia and the rest of Maury County, inspiring her to partner with a developer to sell luxury properties costing a half-million dollars or more on the city’s west side.

“A lot of musicians and artists and younger families were coming to Columbia, so I thought: Why don’t we give them a little piece of Nashville, but without the Nashville pricing. I wanted to create a little community with a really cool vibe,” she says about the group of new homes currently being built at 4<sup>th</sup> & McGuire, which stand in sharp contrast to the “cookie-cutter houses” she sees being constructed elsewhere in the area.

According to Gardner, the fourth house in Phase 1 of the development is being finished now, and when all is said and done, there will be four houses on 4<sup>th</sup> St. and three others on McGuire.

Phase 2 of the development will be a little different, she says.

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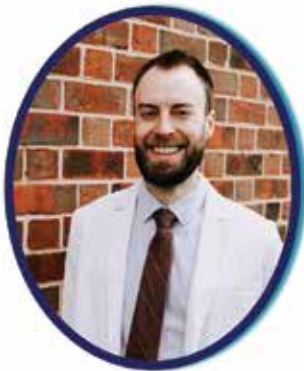
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Photography by Robbie Mathis.



**< FROM PAGE 26**

Gardner envisions what are known as Horizontal Property Regime (HPR) style homes, which will be smaller in terms of square footage and built on a hill overlooking Columbia's downtown while retaining the level of privacy found throughout the 4<sup>th</sup> & McGuire community.

"The area is surrounded by woods, so the homes will be very private but still very close to downtown and central to everything," she says. Notably, she expects the yet-to-be-developed new homes will also be "designed individually," and as unique as those that have already been built.

"I never knew how much I loved designing until I started doing it, and that is my passion now. I love designing and developing and building from the ground up, so that is what I am going to start focusing on," adds Gardner, who says she still plans to continue representing buyers and sellers in Columbia, Spring Hill and beyond. In fact, she recently accepted an offer to work as senior affiliate broker for William Wilson Homes, a boutique firm based

in Nashville, giving her the chance to put even more people into the home of their dreams.

She also looks forward to Columbia's continued growth and evolution, which has progressed greatly since she arrived with her son and daughter ten years ago this June.

"When I first got here, I said, 'Where did I land? There is nothing here,'" she quips. "It has been nice to see all the growth and the new businesses that are coming in. I love the new boutiques and the Little Juice Company and all the breweries," she adds, before noting that Ransom Spirits and Provisions (on S. Garden St.) is her absolute favorite place in town.

"The small business owners here are such fantastic people," she concludes. "Everyone wants to see Columbia at its best, and I love that."

**April Gardner**  
**802-224-6547**  
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## Maple Walnut Cake

### INGREDIENTS

½ CUP UNSALTED BUTTER, SOFTENED  
1-1/2 CUPS PACKED COCONUT SUGAR  
3 LARGE EGGS, ROOM TEMPERATURE  
1 TSP. MAPLE FLAVORING OR MAPLE SYRUP  
2 CUPS GLUTEN FREE FLOUR  
1 TSP. BAKING POWDER  
1 TSP. BAKING SODA  
½ TSP. SALT  
1 CUP BUTTERMILK

### CANDIED WALNUTS

1 TBSP. UNSALTED BUTTER  
1-1/2 CUP COARSELY CHOPPED WALNUTS  
1 TBSP. MAPLE SYRUP  
¼ TSP. SALT

### FROSTING

2 CUPS UNSALTED BUTTER, SOFTENED  
1 TSP. MAPLE FLAVORING OR MAPLE SYRUP  
¼ TSP. SALT  
5 CUPS CONFECTIONERS' SUGAR  
¼ TO ½ CUP HALF-AND-HALF CREAM  
3 TBSP. MAPLE SYRUP, DIVIDED



*From the kitchen of*  
**Michelle Smith**



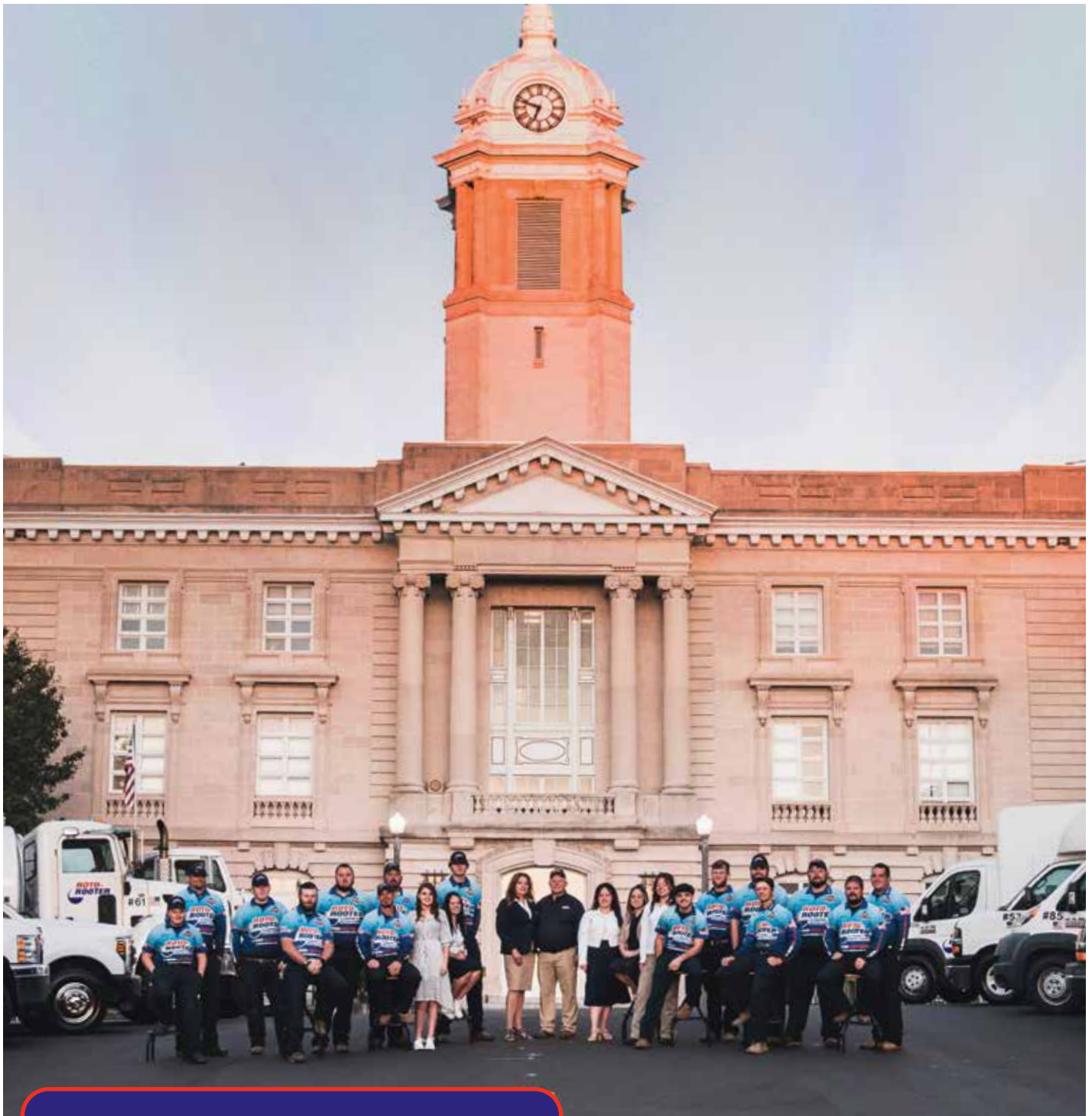
### DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350. Line bottoms of 3 greased 9-in. round baking pans with parchment; grease parchment.

Cream the butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy, 5-7 minutes. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in the maple flavoring. In another bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt; add to creamed mixture alternately with buttermilk, beating after each addition. Transfer to prepared pans. Bake until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 11-13 minutes. Cool in pans for 10 minutes before removing to wire racks; remove paper. Cool completely.

For candied walnuts, in a large skillet, melt the butter over medium heat; saute walnuts until toasted, about 5 minutes. Stir in maple syrup and salt; cook and stir for 1 minute. Spread onto foil; cool completely.

For frosting, beat butter until creamy. Beat in maple flavoring and salt. Gradually beat in confectioner's sugar and enough cream to reach desired consistency. Place 1 cake layer on a serving plate; spread with 1 cup frosting. Sprinkle with ½ cup candied walnuts and drizzle with 1 Tbsp. maple syrup. Repeat layers. Top with remaining layer. Frost top and sides of cake. Top with remaining walnuts and syrup.



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