



The Commercial Appeal reveals its 2026 All-Metro high school softball team

SPORTS, 1B

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2026 | COMMERCIALAPPEAL.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

SALES OFF THE RAILS



Chris Braswell mans the counter at his Downtown Memphis business River City Records, at 101 S Main St., on May 26. PHOTOS BY JACOB WILT/THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

Main Street businesses rebuild customer base in absence of trolley crowd

Jacob Wilt

Memphis Commercial Appeal
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

For nearly two years, Downtown Memphis has been missing a core component of its identity — the historic trolley line.

Locals and visitors alike might have noticed a quieter South Main, absent of trolley cars rumbling down the tracks and ringing their bells.

A downtown staple, the trolleys were taken off the road in August 2024 after the Memphis Area Transit Authority cited issues with the brake system of the trolleys, as well as the need for infrastructure improvements. The takedown was at the request of the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

For Main Street businesses that rely on tourists and foot traffic, the halt has meant slower business and lower revenue. But trolleys aren't the end-all-be-all — local owners and organizations alike are finding creative and fun ways to keep Downtown Memphis an engaging place to live, work and explore.

Foot traffic has dropped, but is recovering

River City Records owner Chris Braswell said he noticed about a 30% decrease in foot traffic once the trolleys were taken off the road.

"We had an immediate drop in foot traffic, literally the day the trolleys stopped," Braswell said. "So the trolleys for us specifically on this pedestrian



Co-owner of Feelin' Memphis, Tawanda Pirtle, is inside her store on May 26.

side of South Main are crucial. I've struggled for what's going on two years now, and it's directly involved with the trolleys."

Tawanda Pirtle, owner of Feelin' Memphis, said the drop in foot traffic was "tremendous", though she has

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A Dem gift in the new maps?

Thinner GOP hold seen in stalwart districts

Vivian Jones

Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Last month, Tennessee Republicans redrew congressional districts in an effort to send nine Republicans to Washington this November instead of eight.

Could spreading Republicans thinner in Middle and West Tennessee backfire? While unlikely, it's possible.

While redrawing Tennessee's maps, Republicans sought to break apart Democrats' voting power in their last remaining stronghold of Memphis — a practice known as "cracking." Democratic strongholds in Shelby, Haywood, Hardeman, Davidson and Rutherford counties were largely spread among four congressional districts.

"In a midterm election with an unpopular president, whether it be this one or a future one, you know, those districts can flip under the right circumstances," said Kent Syler, professor of political science at Middle Tennessee State University.

While Districts 1, 2 and 3 in East Tennessee saw little change, some districts became more competitive.

All the districts favor Republicans, but with slightly closer margins than before.

For example, in 2024 former U.S. Rep. Mark Green defeated former Nashville Mayor Megan Barry in the 7th district with 59% of the vote. In the new district, Republican voting power is projected to be 57%, according to the nonprofit Dave's Redistricting. Freshman U.S. Rep. Matt Van Epps earned about 54% of the vote in a December special election after his opponent state Rep. Aftyn Behn moved the

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State funds to expand sewer at Fletcher Creek could spur more growth

Corey Davis

Memphis Commercial Appeal
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Much needed state grant funds will be used to improve aging sewer infrastructure at the multi-billion dollar Bartlett Industrial Park corridor, opening up almost 300 acres for development in the city.

State Rep. Tom Leatherwood, R-Arlington, announced recently that \$5 million in state grant funding has been secured for essential sewer infrastructure improvements in the Fletcher Creek Sewer Basin, according to a news release.

The appropriated funds are part of the state's \$58.3 million balanced budget

passed by the Tennessee General Assembly in April.

The Fletcher Creek Sewer Basin is touted as a major tributary watershed in the eastern Memphis metropolitan area, which includes portions of Bartlett, Lakeland and ultimately flows into the Wolf River.

Growth causing strain on sewer infrastructure

Continued growth throughout the region has placed increasing strain on sewer infrastructure within the Fletcher

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Memphis Mayor Paul Young, left, shakes hands with Bartlett Mayor David Parsons as he speaks during the opening ceremony for the 2025 World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest, as part of Memphis in May at Liberty Park on May 14, 2025. CHRIS DAY/THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

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Volume 185 | No. 134
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