

# Memphis Regional Design Center

## December 2009 Newsletter

MRDC wishes you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year in 2010!



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### Project Update: Overton Square

If you've been keeping up with articles in the Commercial Appeal and stories on the evening news, you know that the controversy over the future of Overton Square is far from over. As indicated in our last Newsletter, the existing buildings on the south side of Madison Avenue are slated for demolition. This has groups like Memphis Heritage and Save Overton Square very concerned about the future of the Square. Memphis City Council passed a resolution in October denying the issuing of a demolition permit prior to review of new plans for the Square. While the MRDC and Looney Ricks Kiss Architects have been working closely with Sooner Investment (the potential developer) on improving the plan and elevations of the new buildings, the current owner of the property, Fisher Capital/Univest has approached City Council about receiving a demolition permit prior to Sooner Investment submitting their plans for review.

In response to outrage by Memphis Heritage, Save Overton Square and other concerned citizens, Councilman Shea Flinn held a public meeting for all interested parties to discuss the issue. In a show of good faith, Fisher

Capital/Univest agreed to postpone their request for a demolition permit for an additional 60 days while further input from the community can be obtained. Councilman Flinn asked the MRDC to lead the efforts to hold additional public meetings which will be held on **January 16 and 23** in conjunction with the Office of Planning and Development and Memphis Heritage. We are currently in planning stages for these meetings, so please keep your eye out



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### Message from the ED



I recently had the opportunity to spend three full days in training classes with staff of the Memphis and Shelby County Division of Planning and Development (DPD). As much as I enjoy their company, at first glance this may not sound like a fun opportunity. The truth, however, is that I thoroughly enjoyed my time with them. The three day class, hosted by DPD was taught by the National Charrette Institute (NCI). DPD brought NCI in from December 2<sup>nd</sup> through the 4<sup>th</sup> to train planning and design professionals from DPD, Housing and Community Development, the cities of Germantown and Collierville, Desoto County, and myself to plan for and hold charrettes.

A *charrette* is a multi-day collaborative planning event that engages all affected parties to create and support a feasible plan that represents transformative community change. The training involved a series of exercises to help a charrette team with identifying stakeholders, scheduling activities, etc. It was evident to everybody from the training that a lot of lead time is required to plan activities before the charrette to make it successful. The process could be applied to different scales of projects ranging from site specific to

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neighborhood to regional projects. The reason this was such a great opportunity for me is because one of the MRDC's goals is to facilitate collaboration of stakeholders, design professionals and the general public in design and planning issues across the region. Teaming up with DPD will be crucial to the success of future MRDC projects and I look forward to working with their staff. Our first opportunity to use some of our new skills will be to plan additional public meetings for Overton Square which you can read about in this issue of our newsletter.

Charles "Chooch" Pickard, AIA  
Executive Director/  
Chief Design Officer

## SoMe RAP

The **South Memphis Renaissance Collaborative (SMRC)**, after a little over an year of persistent hard work by an interdisciplinary team of faculty and students from the University of Memphis working closely with community residents and 22 local institutions, has delivered the **South Memphis Revitalization Action Project Plan (SoMe RAP)**. The plan has strategic recommendations in seven areas (different from the draft version) – Enhancing the Environment, Community Based Crime Prevention, Housing Improvement, Economic Development, Public Health and Family Wellness, Child and Family Development, and Public Transportation. These are further divided into Immediate Projects (Years 1-2), Short-Term Projects (Years 3-5), and

Long-Term Projects (Years 6-7). Some of the recommendations are as following:

- 30,000 S.F. of new commercial is proposed at Lauderdale and South Parkway.
- BFI volunteered for a major cleanup in the area.
- A car wash near Kerr and S Parkway is proposed to be redeveloped as a farmers' market that would also be the site for a mobile clinic for health and awareness.
- The greenway belt loop in the form of the Parkway system is recommended to be reevaluated and redeveloped to better connect South Parkway.

The complete plan and its executive summary (13 pages) is now available online at [http://www.memphis.edu/planning/student\\_projects.htm](http://www.memphis.edu/planning/student_projects.htm).

Next, the plan will be presented to the Land Use Control

Board early next year, and then taken to the Memphis City Council for adoption in the following months. The plan appears to have overwhelming support from elected representatives in the city.

SoMe RAP by SMRC is MRDC's first project. It was initiated in the Fall of 2008 as a joint venture with The University of Memphis, St. Andrew's AME Church, The Works, Community Development Council, Self-Tucker Architects, and the MRDC, supported, in part, by the Hyde Family Foundations.



## Greenways

The grass roots movement for a **Regional Greenways** initiative in the Mid South area received a big boost with a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating four new FHWA National Scenic Byways (NSB) on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November at Harbor Landing on Mud Island River Park in Memphis, TN. The ceremony was the second of two Forums organized thus far by a Regional Greenways Steering Committee. The group's mission is to advocate for regional thinking in the planning of Greenways and to study the connections needed for a comprehensive greenprint map and plan. This day-long Forum was attended by approximately 140 people and included a list of 20 significant national and regional speakers.



In the morning session, Cindi Ptak, Manager of the FHWA National Scenic Byways Program in Washington DC, announced the new designations and opened up a panel discussion with Byway leaders from five states. The NSB designation for the entire stretch of the ten-state Great River Road along the Mississippi River is now complete. The newly designated states are Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi and Louisiana. Diana Threadgill, executive director of the Mississippi River Corridor - Tennessee (MRCT), noted that several of the national attendees were amazed to see the Greenways Forum taking advantage of the relationship between scenic byways and greenways in their regional planning efforts. This is one unique perspective, she said, that is very often overlooked. The combination of these valuable assets will bring in additional stakeholders and funding.

The afternoon session included other keynote presentations by expert speakers from across the country about greenways and related issues. The list included Tom Woiwode, Direc-

tor of GreenWays Initiative for the Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan; David J Yocca, principal landscape architect/ planner and Gerould Wilhelm, principal ecologist/botanist from Conservation Design Forum ([www.cdfinc.com](http://www.cdfinc.com)); Kim Chapman, principal ecologist and Mark J O'Leary, VP – consulting and senior ecologist from Applied Ecological Services, Inc.; and Pam Monjar (TDOT) and Jennifer Spence (TN Tourism Development) in partnership for a Tennessee Trails & Byways Program. Frank Ricks, committee chair of ULI Memphis' Regional Dialogue Initiative, moderated the progress on the preparation of a Regional Greenprint, a web based interactive map of greenways in the region. Lauren Taylor with the Hyde Family Foundations provided closing remarks. Mayor Jeff Huffman of Tipton County and Mayor Chip Johnson of Hernando, MS also spoke at the Forum.

MRCT and Hyde Family Foundations were the Presenting Sponsors. ULI Memphis provided support and Forum coordination for the event. Other members of the Regional

Greenways Steering Committee include Memphis Regional Design Center, A. W. Bouchillon Institute for Community Planning, City of West Memphis, Coalition for Livable Communities, Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, DeSoto County Greenways, Greater Memphis Greenline, Memphis Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, and Wolf River Conservancy.

For more information, contact Andrew Trippel, ULI Memphis District Council Coordinator at [Andrew.Trippel@ULI.org](mailto:Andrew.Trippel@ULI.org) or 901.568.4423.

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for future email announcements about locations of the meetings. While the final plan is mostly complete and can be seen here (page 1), we are hoping to have final elevations of the new development available for review by the public prior to these meetings. In the meantime, feel free to leave comments on the website that MRDC set up for this project at [SquareTalk.org](http://SquareTalk.org)

## UD 101

The Memphis Regional Design Center (MRDC) had yet another successful session of Urban Design (UD) 101 in Fall 2009. A diverse mix of 25 students including professionals, community leaders, realtors and journalists completed the program made of 8 weekly sessions with presentations by seasoned local and out-of-town professionals.

MRDC's UD 101 has been created to introduce local leaders to emerging design concepts that are guiding our nation's most exciting neighborhood stabilization, downtown development, waterfront revitalization, new town planning, public spaces, historic revitalization, and mass transit projects. UD 101 will also examine the transformative impact that innovative physical planning and design of the "public realm" are having upon the quality/ success of urban life.

Classes for Spring 2010 will be offered in March, and are typically scheduled every Tuesday evenings from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm (subject to change), at the Center City Commission Bldg, 114 N. Main Street where the MRDC has its office. Limited scholarships available on the basis of need are available. To express your interest, please contact Chooch Pickard at cpickard@mrdcinfo.org.

As the time and dates are finalized, an email notice will be

sent out to all who are subscribed to our email newsletter. To subscribe, please visit our website at [www.mrdcinfo.org](http://www.mrdcinfo.org) and click on Constant Contact.



## REGIONAL NEWS

### The Future Arkabutla Lake Wildlife Rehabilitation and Nature Center ( The Ark)



The Arkabutla Lake Wildlife Rehabilitation and Nature Center (The Ark Center) is a collaborative effort between the United States Army Corp of Engineers, Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation, Inc. and the DeSoto County Greenways.

When constructed within next two to three years, the 27,000 square feet LEED certified facility located on 154 acres of Corp land located just West of Hernando will offer the following:

- 1. Classroom space and multi-purpose spaces for

- large group educational opportunities.
- 2. A trail system which has several Learning Centers, Exhibit Cages and Amphitheaters located in various microenvironments to enhance the Educational experience.
- 3. A desperately needed regional facility for rehabilitation of injured native wildlife.
- 4. A central location would provide resources that would enable more consistent care for orphaned or injured native species of wildlife.
- 5. Almost 2 miles of woodland walking trails currently under construction and a future handicap accessible wildlife demonstration trail. In addition, the site is shown as a node on the

future Desoto County Greenways plan. 6. By providing opportunities for active recreation, construction of the ARK will help combat one of the most significant of the nation's health problems: lack of physical activity.

Education is critical to the mission of ARK. Last year the Wildlife and Rehabilitation Center conducted programs reaching over 10,000 children in 24 counties. With the construction of a Nature Center, ARK will concentrate on education programs that provide more consistent access to nature through repeated outdoor experiences to foster a sense of appreciation and of stewardship for the environment.

Economic Benefits resulting from construction of the ARK would increase the amount of area visitor

spending and make the center a tourist destination for Desoto County, Mississippi.

Environmental Benefits derived from the recreation experiences will increase motivation to learn more about the environment; understanding and awareness of environmental issues; and sensitivity to the environment. The ARK will become an integral part of the Desoto County Greenways (DCG) program whose mission is to establish a greenway system that connects public and private open and green spaces throughout DeSoto County Mississippi while protecting, restoring and linking the natural features and their functions in order to achieve a healthy natural environment and ecological diversity. Visit Desoto Greenways online at [www.desotogreenways.org](http://www.desotogreenways.org).

### West Memphis Gateway

As a follow up to one of our previous news articles on the West Memphis Gateway Project at the intersection of I-40/I-55 and Missouri Street, the LED accent lighting on the underside of the overpass are on as of the evening of December

01, 2009. Residents and visitors are equally thrilled with this latest project to enhance the visual appearance of one of the major gateways into West Memphis. "This is a dramatic first step", said Paul Luker, Director of Planning and Development at West Memphis. "Future efforts

will look at landscaping to make it look more inviting and nicer during the day".

Rob Norcross of LRK Architects is the design consultant for the project, and the project

cost was about \$330,000 including cleanup and painting of the piers.



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### Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Memphis has partnered with a group of Associates and Students of Architecture to design sustainable energy efficient homes.

It started about a year ago in September of 2008, when Jon Dimayuga, an Associate Architect at Askew Nixon Ferguson Architects, was looking to volunteer for Habitat in order to give back to the community while getting real hands on experience building. Greg Webb, Director of Construction at Habitat, had just attended a national conference hosted by Home Depot on Sustainable Building process. As part of a PILOT program, he was looking to "greenup" their buildings to meet the current energy efficiency standards. It was a perfect match. Not too long since then, Jon gathered a group of 20 Associates and students of architecture to help with this mission. The volunteer team includes - **Associate Architects:** Jon Dimayuga, Jenna Thompson, Elli Mascioli, Brian Martinelli, Jim Davis, Anne Lorenz, Collette Reid, Kevin Barns, BJ Agnew, Kartiki Deshpande, Joseph Yester, Sarah Nelson, Bert Mitchum, Ada Sung; **Interior Designers:** Liz Engel, Emily Rolwing, Anna Ellis; **Architecture Students:** Kate Bidwell, Kelly May, Heather Burkeen, Robert Paulus, Anika Munshi, Hai Lai; **Interior Design Students:** Melissa Pope, Jennifer Gunter, Lauren Papageorgeon.

Soon they worked to beef up the energy efficiency of nine houses on Pershing Avenue in Binghampton Area to meet the Eco-Build standards of MLGW. They also applied for LEED accreditation. Following that, the group brainstormed on ideas for two sites on Haas Street in Nehemiah neighborhood. With a restricted budget and the skill level of construction volunteers in mind, the group put together their ideas to successfully build the two houses. Although Webb was prepared, there was not any substantial increase in the price tag.



Furthermore, improvements were made on the fly to tailor them for the end user. These houses feature ADA-accessible porte-cocheres and high ceilings to get diffused natural light in. Some in the above team may continue to help Habitat with building a sustainable community with 20-25 units called Cypress Gardens in Memphis, TN.

Another of those sustainable communities built by Habitat, designed by Looney Ricks Kiss Architects, Inc., called Trinity Park is expected to be built in Oakhaven neighborhood in Spring of 2010. This project includes 38 units.

### Modern Buildings in Memphis (1940-80)



A survey of Modern Public Building constructed between 1940 and 1980 will be presented at the January 21<sup>st</sup> luncheon meeting of AIA Memphis. The survey was developed by Keith Kays, Lee Askew, Marty Gorman and Louis Pounders in response to a growing concern about the ongoing demolition of significant Modern buildings.

The survey was developed as a pro-bono effort in the hope of enhancing the stature and understanding of Modern Architecture. The team initially identified, visited and photographed approximately 100 buildings and selected 82 as being representative of the decade by decade evolution of Modern Architecture in Memphis.

The survey includes comments concerning the influence of early modernist architects, the evolution of architectural styles and the leaders of modernism in Memphis. The project descriptions are arranged chronologically and include photographs as well as written descriptions of the architectural concept and intrinsic value of each building. When complete the survey will be available through AIA Memphis.

**AIA Luncheon Presentation at the University Club. Thursday, January 21, 2010. 11:30am. RSVP to [info@aiamemphis.org](mailto:info@aiamemphis.org)**

Memphis Regional Design Center (MRDC) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization formed with a mission to increase vitality and economic stability by promoting excellence in urban design and planning. More information about the MRDC is available for you to view at [www.mrdcinfo.org](http://www.mrdcinfo.org)