

Memphis Regional Design Center

March 2010 Newsletter

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.



In This Issue

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Message from Executive Director: Overton Square | Page 1 |
| Project News: Midtown Plan | Page 1 |
| Program Update: Urban Design 101 - Spring 2010 | Page 2 |
| Project Update: SoMe RAP | Page 2 |
| Regional News | Pages 3-4 |
| 1. Memphis: America's Metropolis | Page 3 |
| 2. \$52.5 Million grant to NS Intermodal Facility in Fayette County | Page 3 |
| 3. Memphis Regional Chapter of USGBC | Page 4 |
| 3a. Green Building - Open House | Page 4 |
| 4. Unified Development Code (UDC) - Update | Page 4 |

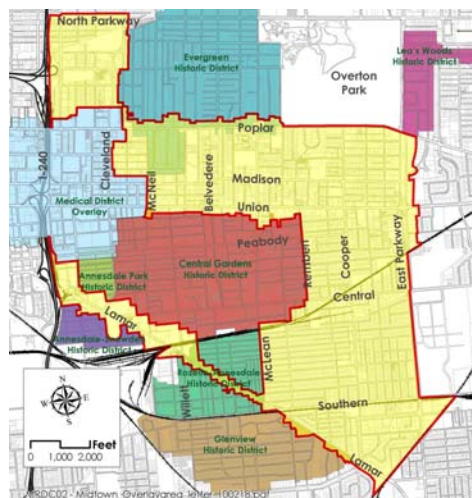
Midtown Plan

The Memphis Regional Design Center (MRDC) in conjunction with the Memphis & Shelby County Division of Planning and Development (DPD), the Midtown Memphis Development Corporation (MMDC), the Cooper Young Development Corporation (CYDC) and the Cooper Young Business Association (CYBA) is pleased to announce the launch of efforts to develop a plan for the future of Midtown Memphis.

The Midtown Plan will include an overlay district that will cover areas of Midtown that are not currently covered by the Medical District Overlay or the various Historic District overlays indicated on the adjoining map. The area highlighted in yellow with a red border indicates areas of Midtown that are currently being studied to develop guidelines that will help direct redevelopment in the area. While providing specific design requirements, the plan will ensure that infill development in Midtown is appropriate in character. The plan will also give developers some predictability, increasing the vitality and economic stability of the area. The Midtown Overlay will be similar in nature to the Medical District Overlay and the University Dis-

trict Overlay that have been recently adopted by the City Council. The study will include review of the Heart of the Arts Redevelopment Study done in 2005 for part of the Midtown Area.

The Midtown Plan committee, composed of representatives from the MRDC, City Council, DPD, MMDC, CYDC, CYBA, and representatives from the development community, is currently working on a first draft. The first draft is merely a



... Cont'd on pg 2 [Midtown]

Message from the ED



Since our last newsletter, the proposed Overton Square Development has fallen through. According to the potential developer, Sooner Investment, the grocery store pulled out of the deal. Although I am disappointed that we did not have a chance for the public to review the final plans with the developer, this gives Midtown a unique opportunity.

While the MRDC was already working on a potential project with the Midtown Memphis Development Corporation called the Midtown Plan, Councilman Shea Flinn asked the MRDC to work with the Office of Planning and Development on overlay zoning for portions of Midtown. This overlay will put some guidelines in place that will provide developers with some direction from the public as to the type of development they'd like to see throughout Midtown and particularly at Overton Square. While the overlay will not protect the existing buildings on the site, it will put some restrictions on any buildings that would replace existing structures. The overlay

... Cont'd on pg 2 [ED]

UD 101 - Spring 2010

The Memphis Regional Design Center (MRDC) is getting ready to start another exciting session of Urban Design (UD) 101 in Spring 2010. 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.

The course will introduce attendees to the basic concepts, vocabulary, and techniques of urban design as reflected in a variety of contemporary place-

making initiatives in Memphis and across the country, presented by local and out of town professionals. UD 101 will also examine the transformative impact that innovative physical planning and design of the "public realm" are having upon the quality and success of urban life. This semester will include a session with local design professionals in a mini-charrette setting to brainstorm innovative ideas geared towards enhancing quality of life in a South Memphis Neighborhood. The classes are scheduled on Thursdays from 5:00 to 7:00pm for 8 consecutive weeks starting April 01 and ending on May 20, 2010.

The class will meet at the Center City Commission Bldg, 114 N Main Street where the MRDC has its office. Limited scholarships awarded on the basis of need are available.

To express your interest,

contact Chooch Pickard at cpickard@mrdcinfo.org. If you are not already subscribed, please visit www.mrdcinfo.org, and click on Constant Contact to be added to our email list to receive future updates on the program.



[ED] cont'd from pg 1...

will also address particularly offensive uses and building materials that are currently allowed in Midtown. While giving Midtowners some assurance that future development will be the right development for Midtown, this overlay will also provide predictability for developers who want to protect their investments in Midtown. They will be assured that if they build to a higher standard, the next developer to come along will be required to do so too.

For more information on the Midtown Overlay and the Midtown Plan, see the article in this newsletter or visit us online at www.mrdcinfo.org.

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

SoMe RAP

Update: The City Council passed a referendum in January directing Division of Planning and Development (DPD) to work with the University of Memphis and local residents to prepare the **South Memphis Revitalization Action Project Plan (SoMe RAP)** for adoption.

On February 11th, the plan was presented to the LUCB who voted unanimously to support the DPD staff's recommendation to bring the plan to the City Council.

[Midtown] cont'd from pg 1...

first crack at the overlay, and is intended as a starting point for a number of meetings with various neighborhoods in the area. These neighborhood meet-

The plan was unanimously approved by the City Council on March 9th. Residents and members of the South Memphis Plan Steering Committee Donna Owens and Karen McGee presented the plan to the Council along with Rev. Kenneth Robinson, who hailed the plan as an unprecedented grass roots effort in the community. Over a 1000 residents have been engaged. More than ninety students from the University of Memphis assisted the residents with the plan under the able guidance of Dr. Ken Reardon and Dr. Katherine Lambert Pennington.

Curtis Thomas, Deputy Executive Director of The Works, Inc said the South Memphis group will meet at the scheduled monthly meeting to identify short term projects to pursue with funds currently available. The complete plan can be viewed online at www.memphis.edu/planning/student_projects.htm



ings will inform the direction of the planning process as well as the overlay and will be critical in eventually coming up with a vision for the community.

Please be sure to visit our website at mrdcinfo.org to sign up for the MRDC

mailing list by clicking on the Constant Contact icon on the left so you can be notified of upcoming public meetings. The website also has links to a map of the study area and other relevant documents.

REGIONAL NEWS



Memphis: America's Aerotropolis™

As more cities realize the importance of airports as “key nodes in global production and enterprise systems offering speed, agility, and connectivity”, distinguished professor Dr. John Kasarda asserts that they are and should be looked upon as “powerful engines of local economic development, attracting aviation-linked businesses of all types”, which is almost everything today. Memphis International Airport has over \$28 Billion of economic impact on the Memphis Region. This puts Memphis at the forefront of a competition between cities to present themselves as an Aerotropolis City.

After receiving a report by Dr. Kasarda, who now heads up the Center for Air Commerce at North Carolina's

Kenan-Flagler Business School Institute of Private Enterprise, a steering committee charged with overseeing the implementation of the report recommendations established four work groups – Transportation & Access, Corridor Development, Gateways & Beautification, and Marketing & Branding. These work groups developed action plans with measurable results and are driving the agenda.

The major focus of the Transportation & Access Work Group is the coordination and improvement of connections between all modes of transportation. Other objectives include - reduction of current and future congestion; support of Aerotropolis corridor initiatives; support of freight

movements with infrastructure development; improvement of visitor perception and support of economic development.

The Corridor Development Group defined three geographic areas for consideration: the Airport premises; the Airport City representing an area within a five-minute drive from the airport; and the Aerotropolis which includes portions of the three-state area and within a thirty-minute driving time. Based on predefined criteria, two corridors have been selected as priority corridors – i) Airport West containing Brooks Road, the bioscience cluster of Medtronic and Smith Nephew, the major office cluster at Nonconnah Corporate Center, and also Elvis Presley Enterprises' Graceland, and ii) Airways Boulevard from Stateline Road to South Parkway extending to East Parkway.

The Gateways and Beautification Work Group coordinated with Memphis-based

landscape architects Ritchie Smith & Associates to develop a \$1.6 Million master plan. The first phase of the plan for a large scale cosmetic revamp to the main entry way to and from the Airport is moving forward, with improvements scheduled to literally take root within weeks.

The Marketing/Branding Work Group, who worked to develop logos and taglines, is charged with developing presentation points for promoting Memphis as America's Aerotropolis.

The Steering Committee and Work Groups meet on a regularly scheduled basis to develop new strategies and implement various projects and plans. To learn more about the Aerotropolis Initiative, please contact Jim Covington, Vice President of Logistics & Aerotropolis Development with the Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce at jcovington@memphischamber.com.

\$52.5 Million grant to NS Intermodal Facility in Fayette County

The State of Tennessee announced a grant of \$52.5 Million in federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) discretionary grants for Norfolk Southern Railroad to build a \$112 Million intermodal facility in Rossville, TN located in Fayette County. This is only half of the \$105 Million the railroad company was awarded for the Crescent Corridor Rail Initiative to develop a 2,500 mile high-speed intermodal freight rail route linking the Gulf Coast to the Northeast.

This was not exactly a walk in the park for either the railroad company or the community. The first site

chosen by the railroad company was north of Tenn. 57 between Rossville and Moscow near the Wolf River. Local residents, opposed to the site because of the potential negative impact on the scenic highway and property values, formed the South Fayette Alliance to fight it out. The Wolf River Conservancy was also not happy with the potential contamination of the stream resulting from runoff from the proposed rail yard and truck traffic.

Jeff Bing, Senior Vice President of the Bank of Fayette County, and Treasurer of the Alliance said that after several petitions to the railroad

company and elected representatives, the railroad company listened to their concerns and offered to move their proposal if the community was able to find an alternate sizable location in the vicinity. They then struck a deal on land owned by former insurance mogul William Adair.

In return, they gained the support of the community as well as the elected representatives and won a substantial grant to help with the construction of what is dubbed as the Memphis Regional Intermodal Facility. When built, the facility will relieve increasing load from the current landlocked facility at



Forrest Yard near the Mid-South Fairgrounds.

Per a press release on their website, Norfolk Southern CEO Wick Moorman is quoted as saying “the facility will create jobs, eliminate long-haul trucks from highways, and create economic development opportunities in the Memphis Region”. The jobs that will be created are touted as green because one train can haul as much freight as nearly 300 trucks

... Cont'd on pg 4 **[Rail yard]**

Memphis Regional Chapter of United States Green Building Council (USGBC)



The USGBC Memphis Regional chapter continues to evolve and grow in 2010 while staying committed to its mission to educate the mid-south in the art and science of sustainable design and construction and to guide the community toward implementation of these practices.

In 2010 this means educating the design and construction community on the technical changes that have come with the upgrade of the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system to its current version. The LEED AP (LEED Accredited Professional) credential has also been updated to include specialization in specific in-

dustry niches and continuing education requirements have been outlined.

These changes have been a source of many questions from the design community, but seek to keep both the LEED ratings systems and the LEED AP credential held by many of its implementers current and valuable.

In the past year project tours have been a popular and important step in showcasing sustainable design locally. This will continue as there is nothing better to inspire sustainable design in our city than showing designers, politicians, and the general public what is possible first hand.

A final goal for this year is increased advocacy on the local and state levels for sustainable design. Since last year a statewide advocacy committee between the Memphis Regional, Middle, and East TN chapters of the USGBC has been meeting to track legislation that pertains

to construction practices ranging from development and planning to updating the energy code. A specific local goal will be pushing to further advance Mayor Wharton's Sustainable Shelby Initiative beyond a report into actual policy.

If you are interested in learning or teaching about sustainable design please contact Matt Coulter, 2010 Chair of the USGBC Memphis Regional Chapter at mcoulter@allenhoshall.com or visit their website for more info at <http://chapters.usgbc.org/memphis/>

USGBC-Memphis and the Sierra Club presents
**GREEN BUILDING
OPEN HOUSE & TOUR**
Thu, March 18th
5:00—7:00 pm

Big River Engineering & Manufacturing (LEED Silver)
85 N. Fourth Street
Memphis, TN
Appetizers and refreshments will be available.
Questions? Contact:
Peter Warren
peter@anfa.com

MRDC Sponsors/ Donors

Hyde Family Foundations
The City of Memphis
The State of Tennessee
Becky Wilson
American Institute of Architects
The Reaves Firm
Memphis Center City Commission
Urban Land Institute
Memphis Tourism Foundation
Riverfront Dev. Corp.
LRK Architects
Henry Turley in memory of Mel O'Brien
Askew Hargraves Harcourt & Associates
The Crump Firm
Urban Art Commission
UM Dept. of Architecture
LRK in memory of Mel O'Brien
Johnnie Amonette
Lee Askew
Ron Belz
Ann Coulter
John Dudas
Bill Ferguson
Hugh Fraser
Keith Ingram
Andy Kitsinger
Lou Loeb
Paul Luker
Jim Lutz
Ken Reardon
Charles Shipp
Ritchie Smith Associates
Diana Threadgill
Emily Trenholm
Sonia Walker
Ron Walter

Subscribe to our email newsletter at www.mrdcinfo.org

Memphis Regional Design Center
114 North Main Street
Memphis, TN 38103

Phone: 901.575.0565

Fax: 901.575.0541

E-mail: cpickard@mrdcinfo.org

**Memphis
Regional
Design
Center**

Unified Development Code (UDC) - Update

Memphis & Shelby County Unified Development Code (UDC) is now a step closer to being adopted. On February 11th, the Land Use Control Board voted to support the UDC and recommended taking it to the City Council for adoption pending a couple of friendly amendments in re-

sponse to concerns raised by Memphis City Schools.

The Division of Planning and Development is preparing to host a series of meetings with developers and their representatives to show how the UDC would work before they take it for adoption to the City Council and County Commission.

The 1st meeting is scheduled for March 16th between 3:00

to 5:00 pm in the Council Committee Room (5th Fl.) in City Hall. To attend, RSVP to Mary Baker, Deputy Director of Land Use Controls at Mary.Baker@memphistn.gov and Don Jones, Principal Planner and Project Coordinator for UDC at John.Jones@memphistn.gov. Future meetings will be during the same time on March 30th, April 6th, and April 20th in Conference Room A (4th Fl.) in City Hall.

[Rail yard] cont'd from pg 3

easing the load on highways, and thus cutting down on CO2 emission and fuel consumption. The terminal will utilize the latest in gate and terminal automation technology, which will reduce the

waiting time to get into the terminal, thereby further reducing emissions.

There still remain some naysayers in the community that question whether selecting a rural site, against other urban sites on the table, is the

greenest choice possible by the railroad. Who knows if the railroad company could get some additional financial assistance if they listened to these folks and selected an urban site that everyone seems to be pointing to?