

# Memphis Regional Design Center

## July 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: Midtown Overlay	Page 1
NEW: Regional Planning Grant	Page 1
Program Update: Urban Design 101 - Spring/ Fall 2010	Page 2
Project Update: South Memphis Farmers Market	Page 2
Regional News	Pages 3-4
1. Growing Community Gardens	Page 3
2. 2010 Airport Cities World Conference in Memphis	Page 3
3. Enhancement of I-55/ Crump Blvd. Interchange	Page 4
Upcoming Events	Page 4

### NEW: Regional Planning Grant

The Memphis region is coming together to apply for a HUD Sustainable Communities Grant up to \$5 Million primarily for regional planning.

*Per HUD, the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program will support metropolitan and multijurisdictional planning efforts that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments in a manner that empowers jurisdictions to consider the interdependent challenges of: (1) economic competitiveness and revitalization; (2) social equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity; (3) energy use and climate change; and (4) public health and environmental impact.*

The application deadline is August 23rd, 2010. Considering the short deadline and competitive nature of the grant, the grant committee composed of several stakeholders in the region deliberated and decided it wise to hire an experienced consultant to help us apply for the grant. Memphis Regional Design Center (MRDC) is proud to be instrumental in this endeavor. MRDC is in the process of contracting with Gateway Planning based in Fort Worth, TX and

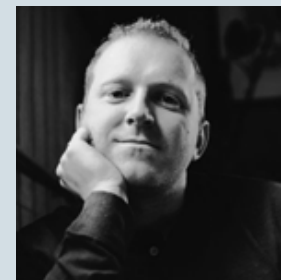
their consultants to help craft a spirited application. Scott Polikov from Gateway Planning and Rick Hall were in Memphis earlier in April to speak on "Great Streets/ Healthy Communities".

MRDC expects this effort to hopefully pay off in more than one way. The discussions resulting from this grant application is expected to start a dialogue on regional issues, and jump start a regional outlook in planning for the future. Planners and related professionals,



... Cont'd on pg 2 [Planning Grant]

### Message from the ED - Midtown Overlay



From our previous newsletter, many of you may be familiar with our efforts at preparing a Midtown District Overlay to provide specific design requirements aiming at preserving the character of Midtown Memphis, while providing predictability to developers interested in infill development in the area. We have made significant progress meeting as a group of stakeholders in the form of the Midtown Plan Committee to prepare an initial draft of the Overlay.

The draft is available online on our homepage to download and includes text amendment to current zoning ordinance, and new frontage designations to dictate building setback, build out, transparency, and other important details on commercial lots to provide an appropriate pedestrian feeling at the street level. The overlay also includes new height map designations for the Overlay area to limit building height to an appropriate level based on existing street width. This draft has been presented for feedback in three public meetings and other stakeholder meetings to various groups, and is being

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

UD 101 - Spring/ Fall 2010



The Memphis Regional Design Center had yet another successful session of Urban Design 101 this past Spring. This was the fourth since its inception in the Fall of 2008. Eight weekly sessions included interactive presentations by experts in various areas of Urban Design that culminated in the class coming together to brainstorm ideas with neighbors in a South Memphis neighborhood for enhancement of South Parkway and reusing an existing structure as a future Farmers' Market.

With this planning workshop, UD 101 has made a significant leap from being merely an educational tool for introducing local leaders and professionals to emerging design concepts, to being a viable resource in the community where the class

gets to "give back" to the community by testing these concepts.

Classes for Fall 2010 will be offered starting September thru November, and are typically scheduled every Tuesday evening from 5:00 to 7:00 pm (subject to change). Limited scholarships are available on the basis of need, and are subject to attendance requirements. To express your interest, please contact Chooch Pickard at [cpickard@mrdcinfo.org](mailto:cpickard@mrdcinfo.org).

Please look forward for an email notification regarding actual dates and location. If you are not on our email list, please visit our website at [www.mrdcinfo.org](http://www.mrdcinfo.org) and click on Constant Contact to sign up for our emails.

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

revised to reflect community concerns.

The revised document (please look for the date of revision to keep current) will be available online for your review on our website. In case you missed all three meetings or have some more issues on your mind, we would like to hear from you before Aug 12, which is when we are tentatively scheduled to go before the Land Use Control Board. It will be helpful to have a good turnout in support of the Overlay to ensure its timely adoption.

For more information on the Midtown Overlay, visit us online at [www.mrdcinfo.org](http://www.mrdcinfo.org).

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

## South Memphis Farmers Market

Memphis Regional Design Center is proud to be part of the team helping establish a Farmers Market temporarily at the Northeast corner of South Parkway and Mississippi Blvd. Establishing a Farmers Market is one of the short term recommendations by the South Memphis Revitalization Action Plan prepared by the South Memphis Renaissance Collaborative. The planning process was led by the University of Memphis under the leader-

ship of Dr. Ken Reardon and Dr. Katherine Lambert-Pennington.

The proposed Farmers Market will provide access to healthy local food at affordable rates in a walkable distance, and is also expected to be a weekly gathering place to bring neighbors together. The community involved in the planning process voted to have it open on Thursdays from 2:00 thru 6:00 pm.

The application was presented to the City Council on July 6th, 2010 and was unanimously approved. The farmers market is now expected to open on Thursday, July 15th. For more information, join South Memphis Farmers Market on Facebook, or contact Chooch Pickard at [cpickard@mrdcinfo.org](mailto:cpickard@mrdcinfo.org).



[Planning Grant]  
continued from page 1...

elected representatives, other large stakeholders in the region will get together with the consultants leading discussions to brainstorm on the regional is-

suess important to us to be included in the application.

Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in collaboration with Rural Planning Association (RPO) and West Memphis MPO will be the primary applicant for this region. For

more information, please contact Chooch Pickard, Executive Director of MRDC at [cpickard@mrdcinfo.org](mailto:cpickard@mrdcinfo.org), or Maura Sullivan, Deputy Director of the Division of Planning and Development at [Maura.Sullivan@memphistn.gov](mailto:Maura.Sullivan@memphistn.gov).

## REGIONAL NEWS

## Growing Community Gardens



Community gardens (CGs) are springing up all across the nation. Neighbors concerned about rising food costs and reduced income are coming together to take matters into their own hands. Others are doing it for environmental reasons. A vegetable gar-

den on the White House lawn planted by the First Lady is definitely a boost to the Local Food movement.

Since 2007, Grow Memphis of the Mid South Peace and Justice Center has helped establish fifteen CGs in the Memphis Area, and five

more are in the pipeline. Josephine Williams who heads up the operations at Grow Memphis says she observed an explosion in the number of CGs since 2009. This certainly holds true across the nation.

In her opinion, having a good organizational structure is key to successful community gardening, and that is exactly where Grow Memphis makes a difference. They help neighborhoods with structuring the garden group, or in some cases, simply supplement by representing the garden group in legal agreements, which are an integral part of such activities.

Ms. Williams offers a host of benefits in establishing CGs. To list a few impor-

tant ones, CGs provide opportunities for intergenerational and cross cultural connections by stimulating social interaction, and thereby reducing crime. They connect urban kids with growing food. They also reduce the bottom-line for individual families by cutting family food-bud-gets, not to mention the healthy exercise that comes out of it. Building CGs seems like the new mantra for taking back neighborhoods one neighborhood at a time.

To read about other benefits of community gardens and to get information on how you can start one in your neighborhood, visit the Grow Memphis website at <http://www.midsouthpeace.org/>

## 2010 Airport Cities World Conference in Memphis

Memphis will host the 2011 Airport Cities World Conference & Exhibition to be held on April 11-13 next year. The Memphis International Airport was officially awarded the designation at the conference this year held in Beijing, China attended by about 400 attendees from around the world. This opportunity to showcase Memphis on an international stage comes at a time when cities across the nation are vying to present themselves as the best place to do business in and reasserts Memphis' place as America's Aerotropolis. Memphis has quite a reputation to hold in the area of logistics as the world's busiest cargo airport for the past 18 years, in addition to being the 4th largest inland port

in the US, the third busiest trucking corridor in the US, and the 3rd largest railroad center in the US.

According to Jim Covington, Vice President for Aerotropolis Development at the Greater Memphis Chamber, the committee responsible for planning the conference is working to attract about 1000 attendees next year. Attendees typically include airport representatives, government officials, real estate developers, consultants, vendors and other businesses involved in the development of an airport city or Aerotropolis. Many design professionals such as engineers, architects, landscape architects, specialized consultants, etc are in some way related to and benefit from development

opportunities around the airport. Some of the topics under consideration involve Aerotropolis Masterplanning, Mixed Land Use around the Airport, Airport Cities - Ripple Economy, Nodes in Global Enterprise, etc. Mr. Covington encourages related local and national professional associations to take advantage of

the occasion as well as showcase their accomplishments to a world audience.

For more information, please visit <http://globalairportcities.com/conference/ace-memphis-2011-april-11-13/invitation-to-airport-cities-world-conference-exhibition-2011.html>



photo courtesy of Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority, Phillip Parker photographer

### Enhancement of I-55/ Crump Blvd. Interchange



Anyone who is familiar with traffic backups going North or South on I-55 at Crump Boulevard will attest to the need for reconfiguration of exit ramps at that interchange. I-55 also happens to be an important transit corridor in the nation connecting New Orleans, Memphis, St. Louis and Chicago. It therefore rightly deserves to be on the priority list for TDOT to improve the interchange design to reduce traffic backup and congestion and, in turn, reduce the number of crashes and restore interstate route continuity.

TDOT engineers proposed a couple of alternatives A & B and hosted a number of public meetings in July 2009 to get public feedback. Memphis Regional Design Center (MRDC) helped promote the public meetings. Chooch Pickard, Executive Director of MRDC was present at one of those meetings to get familiar with the alternative and provided his feedback at the meeting and separately with TDOT representatives based on his understanding of the alternatives as well as public concerns at that time.

After careful review of public comments and making adjustments, TDOT representatives were back for another public meeting on June 15th, 2010 to get feedback on a couple of new alternatives Z and Z1 in an attempt to alleviate public concerns presented to them at previous public meetings, while resolving the traffic issue at heart. By large, Alternative Z1 was lauded as the favorable one by attendees as the alternative with many pros and few cons. This alternative does not involve any displacement of homes, and employs a traffic roundabout outside the interstate to connect to Riverside Drive, Crump Boulevard, and the French Fort neighborhood. Traffic roundabouts are relatively few in the United States, but are very common and successful in European cities.

This certainly sets a new tone of understanding between TDOT officials and local citizens working in partnership to come up with a win-win solution. For more information please contact Steve Chipman, TDOT Project Manager Reg. 4 at [Steve.Chipman@tn.gov](mailto:Steve.Chipman@tn.gov).

### MRDC Sponsors/ Donors 2009-10

Hyde Family Foundations  
Memphis Center City Commission  
UM Dept. of Architecture  
Randy Alexander  
Lee & Annette Askew  
Steve Auterman  
Rusty Bloodworth  
Deborah Clubb  
Ann Coulter  
Jim Covington  
David Cox  
Glenn Cox  
John Dudas  
Bill Ferguson  
Beth Flanagan  
Hugh Fraser  
Jeffrey Higgs  
Andy Kitsinger  
Paul Luker  
Macy's Foundation  
Pamela Marshall  
Gretchen McLennon  
William Mitchell  
Michael Oakes  
Dan Poag  
Dr. Ken Reardon  
Dr. Kenneth Robinson  
Frank Ricks  
Eric Robertson  
Ritchie Smith  
Kristi Stanley  
Diana Threadgill  
Emily Trenholm  
Jimmie Tucker  
Sonia Walker  
Ron Walter

Subscribe to our email newsletter at [www.mrdcinfo.org](http://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](mailto:cpickard@mrdcinfo.org)

# Memphis Regional Design Center

#### **Tue. July 13th**, 8 am-1:15 pm **Green Energy Expo**

UT Research and Education Center  
605 Airways Blvd., Jackson, Tennessee  
For more info, visit [www.cis.utk.edu/training/energy/GreenEnergyExpo](http://www.cis.utk.edu/training/energy/GreenEnergyExpo)

#### **Thu. July 15th**, 8 am - 5 pm **Principles and Economics of Sustainable Buildings for Architects, Engineers, and Contractors**

Holiday Inn Select, 160 Union Ave., Memphis, Tennessee  
For registration, visit [http://chapters.usgbc.org/memphis/images/7\\_15\\_2010\\_Workshop.pdf](http://chapters.usgbc.org/memphis/images/7_15_2010_Workshop.pdf)

#### Upcoming Events

#### **Thu. August 26th-27th**, 8:00 am - 6:00 pm

#### **TNASLA State Conference 2010**

Bridges Building, 477 N Fifth Street, Memphis, TN 38103  
For registration, visit <http://www.regonline.com/tnasla>



#### **Thu. July 22nd**, 11:30 am - 1:15 pm

**Center City Commission 2010 Annual Luncheon** The Peabody Hotel Grand Ballroom  
Featured Keynote Speaker: Shirley Franklin, *Former Mayor of Atlanta*



For registration, visit <http://www.downtownmemphis.com/annualmeeting2010.asp>