

Memphis Regional Design Center

July 2009 Newsletter

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Greetings! Thank you for taking the time to read our second of what we hope to be many newsletters updating you on MRDC programs and other news throughout the region. This newsletter, in addition to updating you on our past programs, features our new "Greenways" project, a collaboration with ULI Memphis and other community stakeholders. The "Regional News" section focuses on several exciting endeavors to improve the quality of urban design and planning in the region.

This is a community organization very dependent on input from all concerned design-enthusiastic neighbors in the region, I urge you to forward this to as many friends and coworkers as possible, encourage them to subscribe to this newsletter, and support the Memphis Regional Design Center.

Message from ED



I recently returned from a trip to Denver, CO for the Congress for New Urbanism's 17th annual conference, CNU17. This four day conference was an amazing and inspiring experience. It may have been the best conference I've ever attended. A growing movement, New Urbanism recognizes walkable, human-scaled neighborhoods as the building blocks of sustainable communities and regions. I attended sessions including "High Tech Facilitation Tools for Charrettes", "Introduction to the Principles of New Urbanism", "Tools for Accessible Communities", "Developing Authentic Places: This Hipster Effect" and others. I had tours around the city on both foot and bike. It is refreshing to know that there are "New Urbanists" out there from around the country dedicated to the same principles that the MRDC prides itself in promoting. The 18th Congress will be held in Atlanta next year and I can't wait to attend!

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

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New Program: Greenways Summit

The Memphis Regional Design Center (MRDC) is collaborating with the Memphis Chapter of Urban Land Institute (ULI) to host a Greenways Summit to provide impetus in an effort to connect all greenways in the region into a regional greenways system. This is also seen as a case for the need for regional planning in the Memphis Region. It is very obvious to all involved that we need to plan for greenways at a regional level, particularly with natural streams and wetlands that typically form the framework for greenways crossing political boundaries. Even utility easements, railroads and other transpor-



tation infrastructure that sometimes share right-of-way with greenways are planned regionally. So why not greenways?

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Memphis Regional Design Center

Urban Design 101

MRDC's Urban Design 101 (UD 101) has been a success yet again this past Spring. 21 community leaders, professionals, and students attended the program made up of 8 weekly sessions. MRDC is now gearing up for the upcoming Fall series. Feedback from the previous two semesters is being reviewed to improve the substance of the program.

UD 101 examines the transformative impact that innovative physical planning and design of the "public realm" have upon the quality and success of urban life. The course introduces a cross

section of our region's civic leaders - representing a mix of public, private and non-profit organizations - 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.

Fall classes are scheduled every Tuesday evening from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm, beginning September 15th through November 3rd at the Center City Commission Bldg, 114 N. Main Street where the MRDC has its office. Tuition is \$200, and seats are lim-



ited. Limited scholarships are available based on need. For more information, please contact Chooch Pickard at 901.491.3354 or cpickard@mrdcinfo.org; or Krishna Kasi at 901.575.0564 or kkasi@mrdcinfo.org.

South Memphis Renaissance Collaborative

On June 4, 2009, the South Memphis Renaissance Collaborative (SMRC), after nine months of working with the community, presented a draft of the South Memphis Revitalization Action Plan (SoMe RAP) at a public meeting. The meeting was well attended by a crowd of 80-100 people comprising of South Memphis residents, business persons, and institutional leaders. Recommendations were made in seven different areas - Youth Development, Jobs & Business Development, Public Safety, Physical Development, Housing Development, Public Health, and Transportation. They were further broken down into Immediate Projects (Years 1 and 2), Intermediate Projects (Years 3 and 4), and Long Term Projects (Years 5, 6, and 7). The meeting was also an opportunity for people to provide feedback. Attendees were pleased with the plan's recommendations. Next, the plan will be reviewed by Memphis and Shelby County Division of Planning and Develop-

ment, and then presented to the Memphis City Council for adoption in the coming months.

SMRC is MRDC's first signature project. It was initiated in the Fall of 2008 as a joint venture with St. Andrew's AME Church, The Works, Community Development Council, Self-Tucker Architects, The University of Memphis, and the MRDC, supported, in part, by the Hyde Family Foundations. SMRC was established to help the community create a comprehensive community revitalization plan through a highly participatory "bottom-up, bottom-sideways" planning process and successfully implement it. The goal is to enhance the overall quality of life for those living, working, worshipping, studying and doing business in the SMRC service area bounded by Trigg Avenue on the North, Interstate 240 on the East, Per-

son Avenue on the South, and Lauderdale Street on the West.

For more information regarding the South Memphis Renaissance Collaborative, interested individuals and organizations are encouraged to email Professor Katherine Lambert Pennington, Assistant Professor in Anthropology at almbtrpn@memphis.edu or Professor Kenneth M. Reardon, Professor and Director of the Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning at kreardon@memphis.edu.



[Greenways] cont'd from page 1...

A steering committee comprised of members from the regional planning community, greenways, and funding partners (Memphis MPO, West Memphis Planning Department, Hernando Planning Department, Desoto Greenways, Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, Wolf River Conservancy, Greater Memphis

Greenline, Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, Hyde Family Foundations, Memphis ULI, and MRDC) is putting together a large list of regional stakeholders to be part of the summit. These stakeholders will include all entities that own or manage different greenways in the region, public officials and decision makers, private and not-for-profit partners, funding or-

ganizations, media, etc. They will all be contacted to determine what the summit will mean to each and what they hope to get out of this summit. MRDC is also working with Memphis MPO to meet the mapping needs of the regional greenways system. For more information, please contact Andrew Trippel, ULI Memphis Coordinator at Andrew.Trippel@ULI.org.

Regional News

Mud Island Study by RDC

Update from Memphis Riverfront Dev. Corp. (RDC):

The public was invited to provide ideas and guidance for a comprehensive land use study of Mud Island, with a focus on the area south of the AW Willis Bridge and past the new RiverTown residential development that includes vacant land around and beneath the I-40 bridge, a maintenance compound, parking lot, the former Belle Pavilion, and other areas of Mud Island River Park (MIRP).

The first two rounds of public input are now complete. Round I meetings in March/ April of 2009 were to gather a very broad range of possible ideas for improving MIRP from as diverse a group of stakeholders as possible; therefore, no constraints were placed on fiscal feasibility, physical limitations, or long-term sustainability. Round II meetings in May of 2009 were to gather citizen and targeted stakeholder feedback to a series of proposed land use scenarios, created based on the first round of input, that will serve as "building blocks" for a land use plan.

Round III meetings will be held in September of 2009 to gather citizen and targeted stakeholder feedback on several overall design scenarios for MIRP that arose based on citizen input in Round II. These scenarios will consider fiscal constraints, physical limitations and long-term sustainability. Information on future activities and results from Round I can be found at the RDC website: www.memphisriverfront.com.

Exploring Main Street Program in Memphis

Thanks to a generous grant from the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, the University Neighborhoods Development Corporation (UNDC) brought national experts on the National Main Street Program Elise Tinsley and Chris Wilson to Memphis from June 17 until June 20, 2009. The UNDC, together with Memphis Heritage, the Community Development Council of Memphis, the Urban Land Institute, and leadership within the Memphis and Shelby County Office of Planning and Development and the City Division of Housing and Community Development, coordinated a series of overview sessions for key Memphis and Shelby County leaders and a two-day, certified "Main Street Basic Training" course for about 20 com-

Shelby Farms

Out of three design teams who presented their initial concepts for the future of Shelby Farms (SF) in the Spring of 2008, 'field operations' was chosen to design the Master Plan for SF Park. The resulting Master Plan, completed in July of 2008, is now available to view on SF website at www.shelbyfarmspark.org

The Masterplan provides a vision and guiding framework for a world class park with a variety of uses. New entrances, pathways, plantings and facilities will provide definition and identity to the Park. The current lake at the center will be expanded to three times its current size to provide for a multitude of non-motorized water sport activities. "Twelve distinctive landscapes will each support certain uses and activities, allowing a coherent 'place' structure for the many varied user groups set within a larger Park setting." Expanding on the agricultural heritage, the new Park will become a large-scale public place for cultivation, production, health and wellbeing.

Approximately a year after completion of the plan, the SF Conservancy is well on its way to implementing the 4-phased plan. The construction of a new restroom facility in the Plough Park, built with sustainable features to conserve energy and water usage is near completion. Also, a

new playground planned in the Plough Park is in its final phase of design. This eco-friendly design put together with important help from 'experts' (local kids) is expected to be unveiled soon and is estimated to be ready for use by Spring of 2010.

Shelby County Mayor AC Wharton, Jr. helped launch the largest tree planting program in the history of Shelby County. The first (few) of one million new trees, proposed in phase one of the plan, were planted on the morning of March 19. Additionally, a feasibility survey is underway for a bridge across the Wolf River. Other Phase One projects, yet to start, include expanded Patriot Lake and a multi-use loop to improve pedestrian access and Park connectivity. For more information, please contact Jen Andrews, Manager of Communications for Shelby Farms at 901.767.PARK or send an email to info@shelbyfarmspark.org



One Step Closer to a New Unified Development Code for Memphis & Shelby County

[The Land Use Control Board unanimously approved Thursday night (on May 28, 2009) a revamp of the zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations that have

guided Shelby County for more than 25 years.

The Unified Development Code, which must also be approved by both the City Council and the County Commission, was approved by a 7-0 vote in a special meeting of the board. The council and commis-

... Continued on Pg 4 [UDC]

munity leaders.

The Main Street approach is a community-driven, comprehensive method used to revitalize older, traditional business districts. Main Street programs advocate a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of traditional commercial districts based on their unique assets: distinctive architecture, a pedestrian friendly environment, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community. The Main Street Program has been adopted in such cities as Boston, Baltimore, Portland and Washington DC. The comprehensive strategy, known as the "Four Point Approach" of the Main Street Program, includes Organizing, Economic Restructuring, Design, and Promotions.

In one-on-one meetings with Mayor AC Wharton and with HCD Director Robert

Lipscomb, and in group meetings with foundation leaders, community development corporation leaders and developers, national Main Street Program experts were impressed with the level of interest expressed and were optimistic about the possibilities of establishing an urban Main Street Program here. Basic Training participants were enthusiastic about the potential that this proven approach has for revitalizing



Memphis communities. Event organizers have formed a "Memphis Urban Main Street Program Exploration" committee, and expect a full proposal from the National Main Street Program by mid-July. For more information, email amy@memphisundc.com.

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West Memphis Gateway

The West Memphis Gateway Project is a unique bridge lighting and landscape project at the intersection of I-40/I-55 and Missouri Street. I-40 and I-55 travel through West Memphis, and both occupy the same road bed for a portion of the corridor. The intersection of Missouri Street (aka Hwy 77) passing under an overpass for these major interstates offers the main entryway into West Memphis. Hwy 77 is also a portion of The Great River Road paralleling the Mississippi River. Nearly 3,000 miles long - this Great River Road is one of America's national treasures. It runs through 10 states along the Mississippi River and offers a window into the river valley's great history, the blending of cultures and a host of recreational options.

The City of West Memphis recognized an opportunity in 2003 for a community grant to revitalize portions of this Great River Road and to highlight local cultural assets and the history of real river towns. The City engaged Looney Ricks Kiss (LRK) to assist with the preparation of the grant and to develop design ideas that would support the mission of the Great River Road Grant Program. The overpass bridge that spans the intersection is very large,



the bridge supports were badly stained, and the area was unsightly. Community leaders felt that the area needed a facelift. After many meetings with community leaders and the Arkansas Department of Transportation and several years after the ideas were first put forth, the City received a grant to develop ideas to enhance the entryway to West Memphis and to expand on The Great River Road Experience. Working with community leaders in West Memphis, LRK helped develop a new concept for The Great River Road Gateway into West Memphis.

The first phase of work was to clean and paint the underside of the overpass to prepare for an artistic lighting and landscape project to enhance The Gateway. Currently construction documents are being bid for the installation of L.E.D. accent lighting which will have adjustable setting allowing the City to achieve multiple lighting designs promoting current events and river town themes throughout the year. A landscape design is currently being developed to improve the character of the Gateway to West Memphis incorporating local indigenous plants consistent with goals outlined in The Great River Road Grant program. Landscape designs have been developed in workshops with representatives from local city departments, the Arkansas Department of Transportation and the Master Gardeners which is a local not profit group.

[UDC] cont'd from Pg 3...

sion could get the UDC within a few weeks, said Mary Baker, deputy director of the city-county Office of Planning and Development.

The only real dissent heard in the meeting Thursday was from Memphis Light, Gas and

Water Division. A spokesman addressed several parts of the UDC, including the cost of placing utilities underground.] Above is an In-Brief Commercial Appeal article titled 'Changes OK'd in zoning rules' by Jody Callahan dated May 29, 2009.

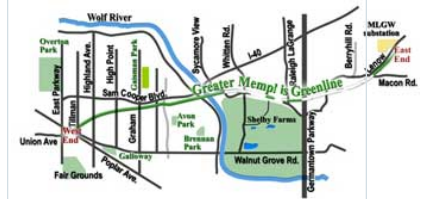
Memphis Regional Design Center (MRDC) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization formed with a mission to increase vitality and economic stability by promoting excellence in urban design and planning. More information about the MRDC is available for you to view at www.mrdcinfo.org

Greater Memphis Greenline

On Monday, July 06, 2009, a joint meeting of Greater Memphis Greenline, Inc. and Shelby Farms Park Conservancy will be held at Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library from 7- 9 pm to gather public input on the design of the western half of the greenline, from Midtown to Shelby Farms Park. Another meeting is set for July 07 at 6- 9 pm at the Agricenter.

Many of you have expressed interest in everything from the surface of the trail to lighting to connections to other trails. This is the time to make your voice heard!

For more information, please visit online at www.greatermemphisgreenline.org/



Register for UD101

Every Tuesday 5-7 pm
Sep. 15 - Nov. 3
114 North Main Street
Memphis, TN 38103

See page 2 for details or visit www.mrdcinfo.org

Email Chooch Pickard at cpickard@mrdcinfo.org

