

Technical Assistance Panel

McLemore/Soulsville USA

Memphis, TN



Panel Recommendations to
Community LIFT
September 2015

COMMUNITY
LIFT Leveraging
Investments
For
Transformation

Soulsville USA **TVA**
THE NEIGHBORHOOD



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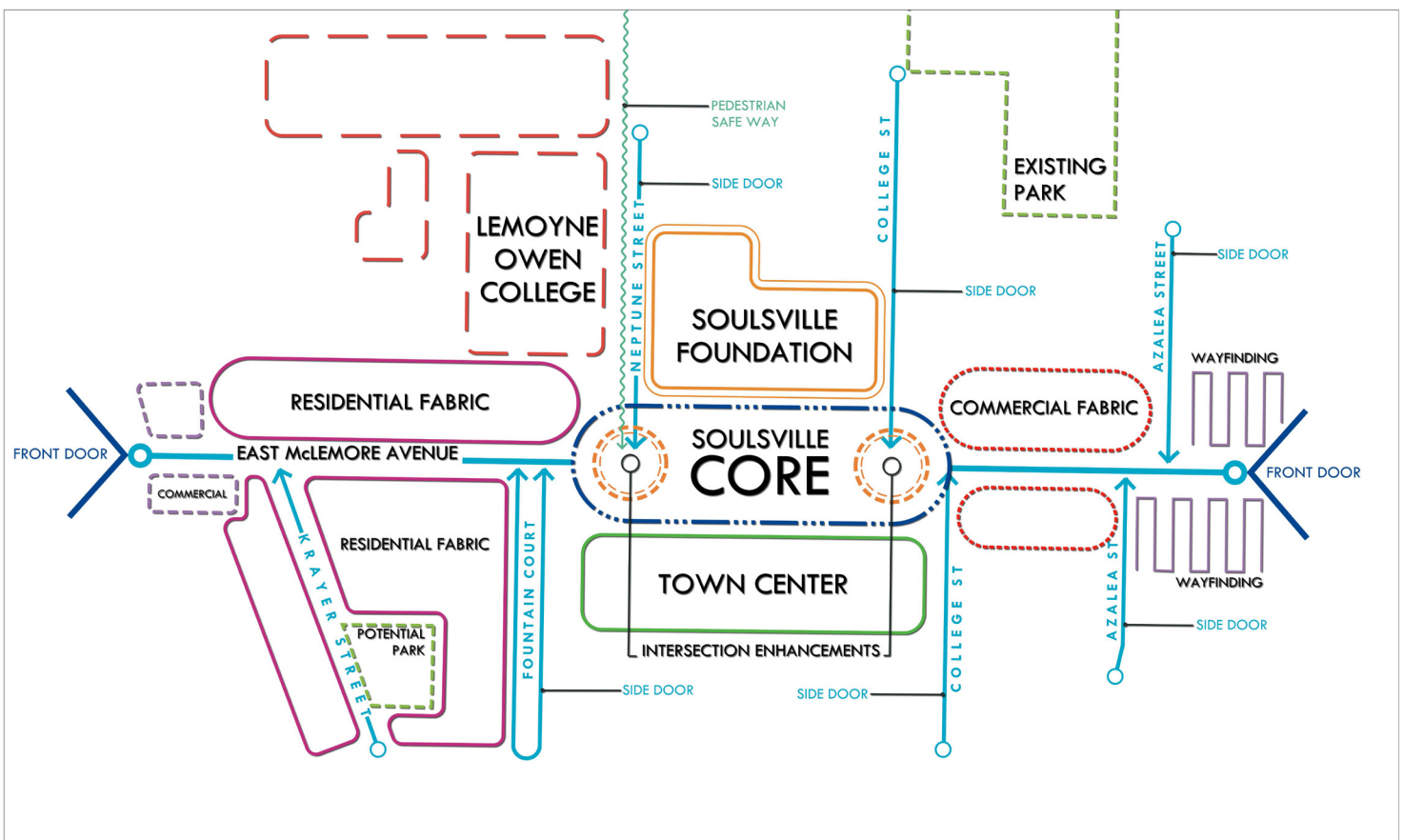
The mission of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. As the preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information and experience among local, national, and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places.

The ULI Memphis District Council Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program – the local version of ULI’s national Advisory Services Panel – provides expert, multidisciplinary advice to organizations facing complex land use and real estate issues

in the Memphis metropolitan area. Drawing from its extensive membership base, ULI Memphis conducts TAP programs to offer objective and responsible advice on a wide variety of land-use challenges ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions and is intentionally flexible to provide sponsoring organizations with a customized approach to a solution. ULI Memphis members from across the region participate as panelists, volunteering their time and expertise for the process.

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INTRODUCTION

After a vibrant development period in the early 1900's with 44 businesses open in the neighborhood due in large part to the streetcar that connected the area to Downtown Memphis, much of Soulsville's population growth was due to African American professionals and businesses that relocated to the neighborhood. Once the streetcar closed and the automobile allowed people to easily re-locate to the suburbs, McLemore Avenue and neighborhood conditions in the 1960s were in a constant state of change. Once an affluent and racially integrated community, the neighborhood became predominantly poor and African American. With the opening and success of Stax Records, a racially integrated company during an era of segregation, the area experienced a revival spanning more than a decade until Stax Records permanently closed in 1975 due to bankruptcy.

The McLemore Avenue business corridor was also impacted when the area evolved from a strong commercial area to being dominated by light industrial. By 1990 the number of businesses that comprised the McLemore Avenue Business District had fallen to 9.

In the late 1990s the City of Memphis' Division of Housing and Community Development (HCD) demolished a significant portion of what was once a vibrant and bustling commercial strip. Presently, many of the properties that comprised the MABD are now vacant, abandoned or demolished.

Today, Soulsville USA neighborhood where the McLemore corridor is a major thoroughfare, is considered one of the poorest Memphis neighborhoods due to a high unemployment rate, low educational attainment and few living wage employment opportunities at the neighborhood level.

The primary purpose of developing the McLemore corridor is to restore the area to its former self as a vibrant center that supports the daily needs of neighborhood residents, local students, stakeholders and tourists by attracting and supporting new businesses.



Soulsville Foundation Campus includes:

Soulsville Charter School
The newly constructed multi-purpose gym
Stax Academy
Stax Museum of American Soul

PANEL'S CHARGE

As an invested community builder in Soulsville, CommunityLIFT turned to the TAP for answers to the following questions:

1. What is the best “anchor strategy” for the McLemore corridor – education, music, tourism, etc.?
2. Based on that anchor strategy, what is the best land use development concept for the McLemore commercial corridor -- between College and Mississippi?

TAP PROCESS

The TAP was held on-site in the Memphis Slim Collaboratory. The panelists started the morning with a briefing from the sponsor. Ashley Cash gave an intro to CommunityLIFT and the neighborhood. The organization’s goal is to facilitate the process to create and support a thriving Soulsville community. Eric Robertson shared that through conversations with interested developers the neighborhood is clearer on what they don’t want (e.g. another gas station) than their vision for what the neighborhood does want. The TAP offers them an opportunity to clarify and demonstrate their desired vision and an anchor strategy for the corridor.

The panel then went on a walking tour of the McLemore Corridor led by Eric Robertson, Soulsville Resident and President of CommunityLIFT. The panel’s general observations from the tour included:

- Organic Development will be the solution that allows the neighborhood to retain its authenticity
- We want to honor our history but not be trapped by it.
- There is a need for visual reinforcement of the neighborhood’s identity to create a sense of arrival. (More signage, murals, etc.)
- There needs to be more creative thinking about what belongs in the neighborhood.
- New development should keep the existing neighborhood scale a maximum of 2-3 stories.
- Lemoyne Owen is noticeably absent from the McLemore corridor
- There is a lack of connectivity between anchors
- We need to create continuity within the corridor by filling the gaps
- The black windows at STAX are uninviting
- What’s Missing: Healthcare, Eateries, Convening spaces, Neighborhood amenities (pocket parks), Campus connectivity, Public gardens, Live music venues, Fitness facilities and a Growing population
- Existing Anchors are: Lemoyne Owen College, STAX Museum, STAX Music Academy, Soulsville Charter School, Hollis F. Price High School, Southwest Prep School, Town Center/New Iteration, Neighborhood Churches, Four Way Grill and Tyler’s Grocery



*Eric Robertson touring Panelists
through McLemore Corridor/
Soulsville*

Following the tour, they participated in six stakeholder interviews with residents, business owners, leaders of anchor institutions and a new investor in the neighborhood. The panel identified the following themes from the interviews:

- Residents want Soulsville to offer the same things as other neighborhoods so the next generation will connect and return to Soulsville
- There are people who want to build businesses here and hire locals
- People want ice cream, coffee, and places to interact with their neighbors
- This is a neighborhood of choice
- Accessibility & walkability are important
- LeMoyne Owen is growing in terms of physical site and collaborations with partners in the neighborhood
- STAX wants to be relevant to the current generation – planning for programming and filling the gap of arts & humanities in our schools
- The New Town Center’s mission is to heal through meals, art, mentorship and more. What St. Jude is to physical cancer, they will be to the physical & spiritual needs of the greater community.



Presentation to the panel from Tom Shadyac & Crew

*Panelists (left to right):
Bert Crenca, Everlena Yarbrough, Bob Dalhoff,
Rob Norcross, Jim McCullough, Brian Whaley, Josh Poag*



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PANEL

After their review of the briefing book, the guided tour, and presentations from neighborhood stakeholders, the panel decided the best strategy for the McLemore corridor is to focus on three aspects of the area for growth:

Authentic Music, Food & Family.

The panel felt the neighborhood has the opportunity to honor its music history roots and make history at the same time. Supported by tourist traffic from STAX, they believe more local eateries should be established offering authentic Memphis food, music and hospitality. These establishments would meet several needs:

1. Those of the residents looking for places to convene
2. Extend the stay of tourists that visit STAX Museum.
3. Support off-campus life for students and staff at LeMoyne Owen College. It was suggested that Lemoyne Owen & STAX would be good partners to preserve the story of the music history of the neighborhood and activate it for future generations.



The panel also had many design recommendations to support the theme of **Authentic Music, Food & Family.** Those recommendations are as follows:

1. It is important that the anchor tenants and citizens determine a shared community vision that they can clearly articulate what types of businesses and residences they want in their neighborhood.
2. The panel believes it is important that future developments honor the existing neighborhood scale.
3. Additional neighborhood identity and way finding signage is important so people will know when they have arrived.
4. A Soulsville sign on the bridge over I-40 would be a great identification for those traveling on I-40.
5. More residential developments for affordable housing are needed.



Left: Example of Highway Signage



Right: Soulsville signage over this I-40 Bridge

6. Pedestrian accessibility & walkability are important and should be given priority consideration.
7. Engage artists to paint abandoned structures.



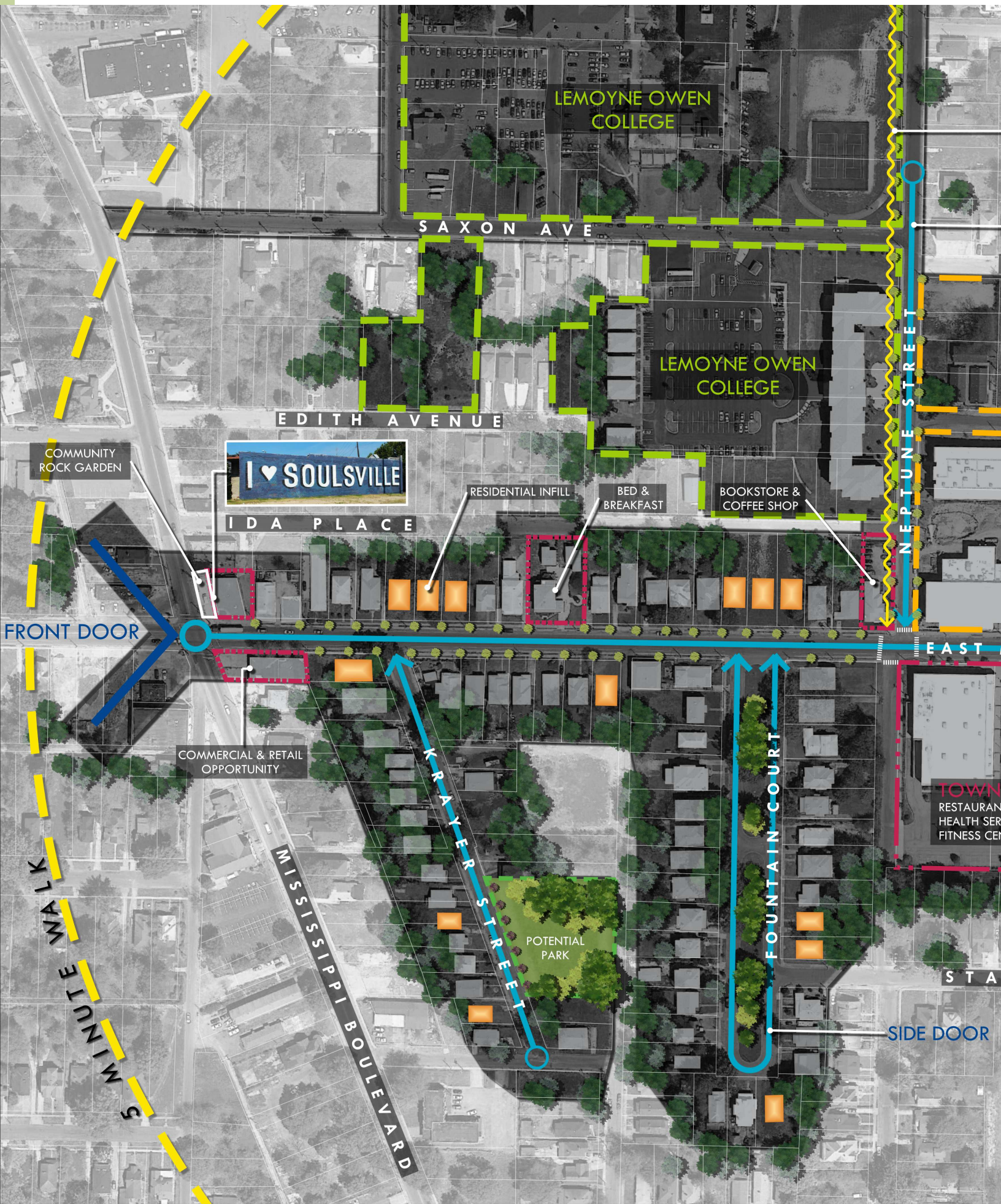
8. Complete the bike lanes to downtown.
9. Adopt complete streets principles for future development.
10. The black windows at STAX were discussed in depth. The panel learned the windows were designed to match the history of STAX recordings in the building and they screen a museum exhibit. It was suggested that if the windows were opened to create visual transparency to the Museum gift shop that would add to the vitality of the street. All agreed a plaque or signage should be erected to explain the historic reason of why the windows at the STAX museum are black.
11. Incorporate sculptural seating at the Rock Garden at corner of McLemore & Mississippi.
12. Need to activate the empty lots on corridor. Ideas: more community gardens, little free libraries, sculptural games such as checker tables, or performance venues.



Examples of activities to utilize to fill empty lots

The panel had organizational recommendations to support the theme of **Authentic Music, Food & Family**. Those recommendations are as follows:

1. Community LIFT to facilitate conversations & continue the dialogue.
2. Community LIFT will advocate for the existing businesses.
3. Establish a Soulsville design review board for future development.
4. Acquire and land bank existing lots and buildings.
5. Establish a special zoning district and/or historic neighborhood designation.





The panel had retail recommendations to support the theme of **Authentic Music, Food & Family**. Those recommendations are as follows:

1. Radiate development from the success of Slim Collaborative and build galleries and performance venues in the adjacent properties at the Corner of College & McLemore.
2. Music store with space for lessons near McLemore and College.
3. Record shop near McLemore and College.
4. Lemoyne Owen Bookstore/coffee shop at corner of Neptune & McLemore
5. Live/work establishments, e.g. Vision Enterprises - Daniel Watson's Rolls, Cinnamon Rolls



Corner of McLemore & College



Opposite corner of College & McLemore



Corner of Neptune & McLemore



Overall the panel felt the key to Soulsville is to focus on its **authenticity**. The neighborhood's history, residents and anchor tenants are integral to this strategy. The panel agreed that organic development (as opposed to national chains) will be what keeps this neighborhood special and allows for future growth and development. The panel was most impressed by the stakeholders who used words like "it will happen" and "when it does". This indicator that the residents have hope and believe in the neighborhood is a great asset in moving forward.

SPONSOR: COMMUNITY LIFT

Community L.I.F.T. revitalizes neighborhoods through strategic investments in the areas of human capacity-building and economic and community development that result in sustainable thriving communities. Community L.I.F.T., Corp also known as LIFT (Leveraging Investments For Transformation), emerged out of a citywide planning process called Greater Memphis Neighborhoods (GMN). The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Soulsville USA Neighborhood Association also played a strategic role.



PANELISTS & PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHIES

Chair: Robert B. Norcross
Retail Rep: Joshua D. Poag
Real Estate Finance: Jim McCullough
Urban Designer: Robert Dalhoff
Public Sector or Nonprofit: Bert Crenca
Commercial Broker: Brian Whaley
Neighborhood: Everlena C. Tarbrough

ROB NORCROSS

PRINCIPAL OF LOONEY RICKS KISS ARCHITECTS - MEMPHIS, TN

Rob joined LRK in 1992 and became a principal of the firm in 1999. His experience includes all aspects of design and management for public assembly, adaptive reuse, housing, mixed-use and corporate office projects. He has proven himself repeatedly at managing multi-disciplined teams on large, complex projects with fast-track schedules. Rob's design philosophy and that of LRK is the integration of planning with architecture supports and enhances a community's quality of life with design that is sustainable for the future. Rob goes beyond the design of an individual building to the creation of "place," incorporating the architecture, landscape, culture and history of a region in his design. Rob's commitment to design that creates a sense of place gives him the opportunity to improve, complement, and in some cases complete the fabric of the surrounding environment. Rob currently leads AIA Memphis' effort to document a "family tree" of local architects and architectural firms. Rob currently serves on the Memphis/Shelby County Land Use Control Board, is a full member of ULI, and is a LEED Accredited Professional.

UMBERTO "BERT" CRENCA

ARTIST & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/FOUNDER OF AS220 - PROVIDENCE, RI

AS220 is a nonprofit center for the arts in Providence, Rhode Island. In 1992, AS220 bought a desolate city block in downtown Providence, RI and transformed it into a thriving arts and education complex used by more than 50,000 people each year. AS220 is home to community-driven art and performance spaces, a Fab(rication) lab, a printshop, a media lab, a dance studio, a bar and restaurant, and an award-winning youth program. AS220's Empire Street establishment is widely recognized as one of the first significant steps in the creation of the Providence Arts and Entertainment District. AS220's 3 buildings are all mixed use/mixed income and offer affordable housing to over 50 artists. Now in its 30th year, AS220 is looked upon as an international model for access, equity, and sustainability in the nonprofit arts world. Crenca has served on transition boards for the last three mayors of Providence, most recently as Co-Chair of the Economic Development Board for Mayor Jorge Elorza. Crenca is also a board member of College Unbound, served on the Providence School Board from January 2005 to December 2008, and is an active member of the Providence Downtown Improvement District (DID) Board and the Advisory Board for the Providence Warwick Convention and Visitors Bureau. Also an active artist and musician, Crenca's works and performances have been exhibited globally.

ROBERT DALHOFF

CHIEF MANAGER OF DALHOFF THOMAS DESIGN STUDIO – MEMPHIS, TN / OXFORD, MS

Dalhoff is responsible for the firm's planning and development activity. He also plays integral part in the clients strategic planning and approvals. He has provided proven planning insight for the firm's clients through overseeing a diverse array of project types ranging from large-scale mixed-use developments to small infill projects. Dalhoff has been involved in the planning and development of approximately 70,000 acres in the Memphis metropolitan area along with other developments across the United States. He has been involved in developments such as Schilling Farms, The Avenue at Carriage Crossing, the Town of Collierville Downtown Plan, Humphrey's Center, Fisherville Farms, Covington Town Square, and the Town of Wilson, Arkansas just to name a few over the past 40 years of his career.

JIM MCCULLOUGH

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE LENDING OF SUNTRUST - MEMPHIS, TN

McCullough is responsible for delivery of SunTrust's platform of products, services and custom financial solutions to privately-owned commercial real estate developers and investors located principally within the Memphis area. Commercial Real Estate transactions have included multifamily, industrial, retail, hotel projects as well as projects with environmental issues and special purpose projects such as theaters, irradiation facilities and cattle ranches as well as review of bank portfolios to be purchased. Jim has been with SunTrust 27 years, all in the Memphis market. Prior to assuming his current responsibilities in 1999, he served as Vice President of National Bank of Commerce's wholly owned subsidiary Commerce Finance, a consumer finance company with offices in Tennessee, Mississippi, Texas and Missouri. Prior to that he was the chief underwriter for the Bank's Equity Credit Line Division. He started his career with SunTrust in 1986 as one of four management trainees.

JOSHUA D. POAG

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF POAG SHOPPING CENTERS - MEMPHIS, TN

Joshua Poag is President and Chief Executive Officer at Poag Shopping Centers. In this role, Poag is in charge of managing the executive team, overseeing key partnership relationships, running the day to day operations of the company, and establishing corporate vision and direction. Poag has previously served as Leasing Manager, Development Manager, Vice-President of Development, Executive VP, CFO and COO. Poag is a member of ICSC, where he serves on the ICSC PAC, and of ULI, where he serves on the Commercial and Retail Development Council. Poag earned his BSE from Princeton University in Chemical Engineering.

BRIAN WHALEY

SENIOR ASSOCIATE OF CBRE – MEMPHIS, TN

Whaley began employment with CBRE | Memphis in June, 2010 and works in Retail Services in the East Memphis office. His primary responsibilities include leasing and selling of retail space, lease negotiations, tenant representation, as well as asset representation. In addition, Brian conducts cold call campaigns, renews existing tenants, procures and qualifies property showings for interested prospects and conducts market research.

ELDER EVERLENA C. YARBROUGH

SOULSVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION - MEMPHIS, TN

Everlena C. Yarbrough (née Calvin) has a long-term stake in the Soulsville neighborhood. Mrs. Yarbrough, daughter of a share cropper and traveling salesman, grew up with her twin Carlena Calvin and later married Terry Yarbrough. They are parents to two beautiful children. Mrs. Yarbrough has worked at Trojan Luggage, Davis Chair Company, and Shilo Incorporated. She is a life-long union member with Local 282. Throughout her activities, she has served as a union and chief steward, board member, vice president of the federal credit union, and a local and international organizer for furniture workers. Mrs. Yarbrough is an involved member of Covenant Restoring Ministries where she sits as an Elder under the leadership of Bishop Michael George. Mrs. Yarbrough has spent most of her life in Soulsville and is excited to be a part of the neighborhood's revitalization.

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