About ULI Memphis

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.

Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)

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.
South City is the name chosen by community stakeholders for the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative development. South City is part of the section of Memphis traditionally known as South Memphis. South City is best known for its culture and historical significance, particularly in the African American community. The South City neighborhood has produced some of Memphis’ most notable businessmen, politicians, artists, and athletes. It is home to schools, churches, businesses and housing developments that have had a positive impact on the community and the City of Memphis.

The redevelopment effort consists of developing new mixed-income housing, investments in early childhood education, neighborhood parks, healthy food initiatives, health & fitness facilities, economic development, and community development initiatives to create a vibrant community that offers sustainable amenities where children and residents can live, thrive in a safe and healthy environment.

South City has several strengths, including its African American history and culture, walkable community, and the availability of land. The vision for South City is to leverage its unique strengths to re-create a vibrant community that offers sustainable amenities where children and residents can live, thrive in a safe and healthy environment.

The panel’s charge was to provide a comprehensive review of the South City neighborhood, including its history, current challenges, and potential for future development. The panel was tasked with developing recommendations for revitalizing the neighborhood, including new housing developments, community facilities, and economic opportunities.

South City is located directly southeast of the city’s Central Business District. The general boundaries of the South City redevelopment area are Front Street on the west, Crump Boulevard and the Railroad ROW on the south, Walnut on the east, and Union Avenue on the north. The area is characterized by substandard housing, high unemployment, and limited opportunities for economic development. The neighborhood is in need of new housing developments, community facilities, and economic opportunities.

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PANEL’S CHARGE

As an invested community builder in South City, the City of Memphis Housing & Community Development office turned to the TAP to address the following challenge in the South City project area:

The MLK Student Transition Academy, Georgia Avenue Elementary School, and the land to the east of the school are all currently vacant. The panel is to understand the current uses, the public’s interest and desires, and propose what types of tenants will best complement the existing users and future plans for the surrounding neighborhood and South City Development plans.

TAP PROCESS

The TAP was held on-site at STREETS Ministries. On Tuesday, June 26th, the City of Memphis Housing & Community Development Office held a public input meeting that consisted of updates on the area, breakout sessions, and a brief report of recommendations from each breakout group.

Ashley Cash gave an update on the Memphis 3.0 Comprehensive Planning Effort. Ellen Eubank with the Memphis Housing Authority provided an update on the current six-phase housing redevelopment initiative. Paul Young offered a general update on the neighborhood. And Patria Johnson with the Women’s Foundation shared that improvement in the local economy had benefited the South City residents and pushed the employment rate from 26% to 55% today.

To kick-off the public breakout session portion of the meeting, Archie Willis with ComCap Partners (part of the South City development team) described several potential uses for the schools and shared examples of completed projects from across the country. With around 40 local residents in attendance, Ashley Cash then facilitated a feedback session to share their interests and ideas for each school addressing 3 questions for each site. The notes from those sessions are captured below:

At Georgia Avenue:

1. What use do you recommend in the open space behind the building?
   a. Community Gardens or Greenhouses
   b. Youth soccer and/or football (keep uses that are already there)

2. What organizations or types of services would you like to see occupy the vacant building?
   a. Literacy Initiatives for all ages
   b. Technology/Computer lab
   c. Social Service Agencies
   d. Urban Strategies Office
   e. Commercial Kitchen
   f. Fitness Facility
   g. Shelter and Services for disasters/refugees
   h. Incubator for small business/non-profits
   i. Community meeting/banquet/party space
3. What should the buildings look like?
   a. Modern
   b. Not like a school
   c. Update the balconies
   d. Increase security measures (lighting, cameras, containment barrier, speed bumps)
   e. Colorful façade
   f. Mid-Century modern
   g. New windows
   h. Outdoor community space (for fish/ponds)
   i. Structural for non-profits
   j. Community health clinic
   k. Wi-Fi park
   l. Fresh/clean/freshness center
   m. Grocery store/farmers’ market
   n. 10 years from now?

2. What types of services, businesses or community facilities would you want/use in long term?
   a. Grocery store/Farmer’s Market
   b. Fitness/health/wellness center
   c. Programs designed and designated for seniors
   d. Wi-Fi park
   e. Incubator for non-profits
   f. Any ideas that could sustain from #1
   g. Any ideas that could sustain from #1
   h. After school programs
   i. Arts/cultural enrichment/community theatre
   j. Bring back boys & girls club
   k. Youth sports programs
   l. Entrepreneurship training programs for youth business development
   m. Programs designed and designated for seniors
   n. Grocery store/farmers’ market

1. What activities could happen in the building short term?
   a. Incubator for small business/start-up
   b. Grocery store or Farmer’s market or place for fresh produce
   c. Office space for rent/strategic tenants
   d. Multi-use (e.g., Crosstown) with retail food
   e. Food truck lane (short-term)
   f. After school programs
   g. Arts/cultural enrichment/community theatre
   h. Bring back boys & girls club
   i. Youth sports programs
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Archie Willis adjourned the public meeting by explaining how the TAP would assist the City of Memphis with recommendations on next steps for the two blighted properties.

The TAP re-convened Wednesday morning, June 26th, and began with site tours of each property and the surrounding neighborhoods led by Archie Willis, Paul Young, and Chris Ahrenson. The panel’s general observations from the tour include:

- Each property is highly vandalized.
- Each property has unique architectural significance that should be maintained in renovation.
- Each property is underutilized.
- Each property is highly vandalized.
- Every property was undergoing a major renovation.

Traffic flow improvements – walkable, bikeable, safe parking, gathering areas. Licensing issues in system incapable of measuring.

Two schools, going 9–12. Keep ambience.

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Two schools, going 9–12. Keep ambience.
MLK is on a transit route
MLK is more connected to the new community – the panel noted that the MLK site
is adjacent to completed new housing as well as sites that are being prepared for additional new construction.

Each site has access to green space

MLK is a central point of redevelopment

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PANEL

After review of their briefing book, hearing the public ideas, walking the properties, and listening to different community interest presentations from stakeholders, the panel organized each property into Campus Development Themes. The panel was inspired by themes from the community: food, community, and education.

GEORGIA AVENUE
Themes: Education, Food, Farming and Hospitality Training

Some noted ideas from the panel for immediate action at Georgia Avenue included a pop-up farmer’s market, testing plots for gardening/outdoor farms, and partnering with the community to organize early-morning exercise programming (tai chi, yoga, etc.) in the park for seniors. The panel was told that Girls, Inc. is planning to occupy one building at this site, and an Early Childhood Education Center would occupy the former school building. The park is an Empty Kids Environment.

In conclusion of the tours, the panel returned to STREETS to hear three stakeholder presentations from Bishop David Hall of Temple Church, Rasheedah Jones with Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and Sheleah Harris from Living Grace, Inc.

Bishop Hall expressed interest in the gymnasium on the MLK school property. His church has been active in the neighborhood since the 1930s and located directly across the street from the gym. They envision utilizing the gym as resource to bring hundreds, if not thousands, within the community together for entertainment, fitness and other types of fellowship.

Rasheedah Jones’ local sorority chapter has over 500 members and is interested in using a portion of the MLK school (3,000-6,000 sq ft) as an outreach hub to enhance their existing programs for women, youth, young girls, and girls. She sees the gymnasium as an opportunity to access a new space.

Sheleah Harris said her organization is interested in space at the MLK School. Living Grace, Inc. serves homeless youth ages K-12 and is looking to expand its space to ages 16-20. They see opportunities for the space to be a resource center for health and environmental and global impacts.

Living Grace’s current location is 4,000 square feet, but they desire to move to a larger space. They see the site as a potential location for their current programs but also envision the site as a resource center for the community's overall health and well-being.
• Adult Education & Entrepreneurial Training
• Business Incubator
• Training partnership opportunities with Booker T. Washington High School

Outdoor Features included:
• Place for small Farmer’s Market
• Walking & Wellness Trails with outdoor seating
• Installations/space set aside for urban gardens
• Ample outdoor lighting
• Wi-fi Park
• Public art

Examples of school buildings turned to mixed-use:
• Classrooms converted to apartment space
• Place for small Farmer’s Market
• Walking & Wellness Trails with outdoor seating
• Installations/space set aside for urban gardens

Theme: Community, Live, Work and Culture & Heritage Center

Panel recommendations for this property included:
• Front building (facing Lauderdale)
• 1st floor to be used for mixed-use: retail, commercial, office
• 2nd floor – Apartments
• 3rd floor – Apartments

Examples of school buildings turned to mixed-use:
CLASSROOMS CONVERTED TO APARTMENT SPACE
• Back Building
• 1st floor – Community Meeting Space/Art Gallery; Include a small self-serve coffee bar

• 2nd floor – South City History Museum
• Gym – retain use as a gymnasium in partnership with local organizations
• Small Gym – adult & senior wellness (amenity for apartments)

Consider adding a small police sub-station in a front portion of the larger gym

- Small 8FV – act as a security office/surveillance

Overall the panel felt the key to redeveloping the two blighted schools is to focus on its neighborhood community. The neighborhood’s history, residents, and current redevelopments are integral to this strategy.

Outdoor Features:
• Connectivity to the other site
• Connectivity to the area during development
• Utilize MEMIX to activate the area/streets – low cost solution changes to streets or buildings to connect to the area during development
The Division of Housing and Community Development works every day to improve Memphis and the lives of Memphians. Its broad range of services include fighting homelessness, giving children safer homes, providing affordable housing, strengthening neighborhoods, and growing the economy with major projects like Bass Pro Shops at The Pyramid and the Memphis Cook Convention Center. To do this, HCD provides loans and grants, education and expert advice, and direct and indirect services to our entire community.

**Panelists Professional Biographies**

- **Panel Chair/Legal:** Richard Spore, Bass Berry & Sims
  - Richard Spore is a member of the law firm of Bass, Berry & Sims PLC, where his practice focuses on business planning and transactions, particularly in commercial real estate. Richard has worked on transactions and projects involving a number of landmark buildings in the Memphis area, such as the Crosstown Concourse, the Overton Square redevelopment, the Central Station redevelopment, International Paper Tower 4, Clark Tower, and the Crescent Center. He has been involved in a variety of community development initiatives, recently chairing a ULI committee that assisted the Shelby County Schools with a “best practices” analysis for closed school facilities and also assisting Shelby County Schools with a pending overhaul of the Memphis Schools Board. Richard is a member of the Board of Directors of the Shelby County Schools Foundation.
  - Richard graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Sewanee, the University of the South, and is a graduate of the University of Virginia Law School.

- **Commercial/Retail Broker Rep:** Steve Guinn, Highwoods Properties
  - Steve Guinn is a Vice President/Relationship Manager in the Commercial/Industrial Division of SunTrust Bank, where he oversees a portfolio of existing relationships and manages a team of Relationship Managers. Steve also assists the Memphis, Shelby County, and the Shelby County Schools with a pending overhaul of the Memphis Schools Board. Prior to joining Highwoods in 2004, he was a Senior Vice President of Trammell Crow Company, overseeing the Memphis Office Brokerage and Leasing Division. Steve received the Pinnacle award as Memphis’ Top Office Sales Broker in 2002 and 2004 and was named Commercial Broker of the Year by the Memphis Real Estate Association in 2012 and 2014. He is a Certified Public Accountant, an active member of the Society of Industrial and Office REALTORS, a Certified Commercial Investment Member, and an associate member of Urban Land Institute. Steve is a LEED Accredited Professional and a member of the Memphis Real Estate Association. Mike is a member of the Board of Directors of the Shelby County Schools Foundation.
  - Steve graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles, and is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, School of Business.

- **Real Estate Finance:** Jean Morton, SunTrust
  - Jean Morton is a Senior Vice President/Relationship Manager in the Commercial/Industrial Division of SunTrust Bank, where she oversees a portfolio of existing relationships and manages a team of Relationship Managers. Jean also assists the Memphis, Shelby County, and the Shelby County Schools with a pending overhaul of the Memphis Schools Board. Prior to joining Highwoods in 2004, she was a Senior Vice President of Trammell Crow Company, overseeing the Memphis Office Brokerage and Leasing Division. Jean received the Pinnacle award as Memphis’ Top Office Sales Broker in 2002 and 2004 and was named Commercial Broker of the Year by the Memphis Real Estate Association in 2012 and 2014. She is a Certified Public Accountant, an active member of the Society of Industrial and Office REALTORS, a Certified Commercial Investment Member, and an associate member of Urban Land Institute. Jean is a LEED Accredited Professional and a member of the Memphis Real Estate Association. Mike is a member of the Board of Directors of the Shelby County Schools Foundation.
  - Jean graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles, and is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, School of Business.

- **Public Sector or Nonprofit:** Chet Jackson, Memphis Medical District Collaborative
  - Chet Jackson is the Executive Director of the Memphis Medical District Collaborative, a leader in the development of the Memphis Medical District. He has 20 years of experience in urban development, public/private partnerships, and nonprofit management. Prior to joining the Memphis Medical District Collaborative, Chet served as the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Memphis Regional Chamber of Commerce. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Shelby County Schools Foundation.
  - Chet graduated from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, School of Business.

- **Public Sector or Nonprofit:** Nidia Logan-Robinson, Innovate Memphis
  - Nidia Logan-Robinson is the President and CEO of Innovate Memphis, a leader in the development of the Memphis Medical District. She has 20 years of experience in urban development, public/private partnerships, and nonprofit management. Prior to joining the Memphis Medical District Collaborative, Chet served as the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Memphis Regional Chamber of Commerce. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Shelby County Schools Foundation.
  - Nidia graduated from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, School of Business.

- **Architect/Designer:** Curt Pierce, Fleming Architects
  - Curt Pierce is the Principal Architect at Fleming Architects, where he oversees a portfolio of existing relationships and manages a team of Relationship Managers. Curt also assists the Memphis, Shelby County, and the Shelby County Schools with a pending overhaul of the Memphis Schools Board. Prior to joining Highwoods in 2004, he was a Senior Vice President of Trammell Crow Company, overseeing the Memphis Office Brokerage and Leasing Division. Curt received the Pinnacle award as Memphis’ Top Office Sales Broker in 2002 and 2004 and was named Commercial Broker of the Year by the Memphis Real Estate Association in 2012 and 2014. He is a Certified Public Accountant, an active member of the Society of Industrial and Office REALTORS, a Certified Commercial Investment Member, and an associate member of Urban Land Institute. Curt is a LEED Accredited Professional and a member of the Memphis Real Estate Association. Mike is a member of the Board of Directors of the Shelby County Schools Foundation.
  - Curt graduated from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, School of Business.

- **Developer:** Rosalyn Willis, Memphis Shelby County Redevelopment Agency
  - Rosalyn Willis is the President and CEO of the Memphis Shelby County Redevelopment Agency, where she oversees a portfolio of existing relationships and manages a team of Relationship Managers. Rosalyn also assists the Memphis, Shelby County, and the Shelby County Schools with a pending overhaul of the Memphis Schools Board. Prior to joining Highwoods in 2004, she was a Senior Vice President of Trammell Crow Company, overseeing the Memphis Office Brokerage and Leasing Division. Rosalyn received the Pinnacle award as Memphis’ Top Office Sales Broker in 2002 and 2004 and was named Commercial Broker of the Year by the Memphis Real Estate Association in 2012 and 2014. She is a Certified Public Accountant, an active member of the Society of Industrial and Office REALTORS, a Certified Commercial Investment Member, and an associate member of Urban Land Institute. Rosalyn is a LEED Accredited Professional and a member of the Memphis Real Estate Association. Mike is a member of the Board of Directors of the Shelby County Schools Foundation.
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CHET JACKSON  
Chet is a community development professional with over 30 years of experience in affordable housing and economic development, community organizing, program design, implementation and monitoring. Chet is the Program Manager for Real Estate with Memphis Medical District Collaborative. Prior to working with MMDC, Chet was the President of the 712 Initiative a start-up Community Development Corporation. Chet holds an MBA with a concentration in Innovation and Entrepreneurship from The University of Missouri - Kansas City and a B.A. in Sociology with a concentration in Public Policy, Public Service from The City College of New York.

NIDIA LOGAN-ROBINSON  
Nidia Logan-Robinson currently works for Innovate Memphis, a civic leader in creating groundbreaking public-private partnerships and social innovations to address some of Memphis’ most pressing challenges. Her work includes developing bold ideas for enhancing the community development investment system and improving public-sector health service delivery. Prior to Innovate Memphis, she was the Director of Community Impact at United Way of the Mid-South. Nidia earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas and earned a Masters of Public Administration at the University of Memphis, Memphis, TN.

CURT PIERCE  
Curt joined Fleming Architects in 1999 and became a principal of the firm in 2014. As a principal, with 18 years of experience, Curt is responsible for the design of various types of projects as well as project management for various projects involving multi-family housing, Historic Tax Credit and other public-private partnerships. Curt is an adjunct instructor at the University of Memphis School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy and the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance. Curt is active in a number of professional organizations including the American Institute of Architects, AIA Memphis and the Memphis Heritage Society.

ROSA LYN WILLIS  
President of the City of Memphis and Shelby County Community Redevelopment Agency, Willis has served as a vice president and the firm’s project manager for the ongoing South City project. Willis oversees a $210 million transformation of former public housing and the surrounding neighborhood. Willis served as a vice president and the firm’s project manager for the ongoing South City project.

Urban land use, planning, and economic development and revitalization. For nearly a dozen years, Willis has been an active member of the organization, serving in a number of leadership roles. Willis was part of the planning team at the City of Memphis and Shelby County Community Redevelopment Agency. Willis has been involved in a number of projects, including the transformation of former Foote Homes public housing and the surrounding neighborhood.

YOLANDA LOGAN-ROBINSON  
Yolanda Logan-Robinson currently works for Innovate Memphis, a civic leader in creating groundbreaking public-private partnerships and social innovations to address some of Memphis’ most pressing challenges. Her work includes developing bold ideas for enhancing the community development investment system and improving public-sector health service delivery. Prior to Innovate Memphis, she was the Director of Community Impact at United Way of the Mid-South. Yolanda earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas and earned a Masters of Public Administration at the University of Memphis, Memphis, TN.

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