

THE BEACON

YOUR VISION, YOUR VOICE

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

**Let's Do Something-
BIG!**



Take a stroll or drive through North Memphis and you'll likely see a new Habitat for Humanity home going up. We sat down with Habitat's CEO and President, Dwayne Spencer (pictured left) to chat about one of our most vital partnerships. "Some people think we build little houses and give them to people for free, but that's not true." Habitat removes the barriers in homeownership so that more people can enjoy a decent place to live. "We do this work all over the city, but our partnership with CRA provides the funding Habitat needs to go beyond building affordable homes. We can now strategically invest in the longevity of North Memphis."

Habitat homebuyers have more than proven themselves as good neighbors with a less than 1% foreclosure rate while faithfully paying more than \$550,000 in property taxes each year. "When we started working with the CRA, our original goal was to build 50 new homes. Our goal then increased to 100, and we're nearing the completion of that goal now." By the end of 2020, Habitat will have made homeownership possible for 27 new families this year alone and expects to exceed its 100-homes goal next year.

Arthur Miller, Sr., a North Memphis resident of over 60 years, watched as Habitat staff and volunteers erected new energy-saving homes across the street from his home, "My wife cried when she saw that house bulldozed. Longtime neighbors passed away and newcomers didn't keep things up. I'm just glad someone will live there and I hope they take care of it." And that's the plan, says Spencer, "We are building homes for families who will treasure them for a lifetime."

"When I talk to Rosalyn (CRA President)," Spencer says, she'll say, "Let's do something big!" When asked what that big thing is, Rosalyn responded, "Stewardship. Because of our partnership, 27 moderate to low income families now own homes and that's a big thing."



**To learn more about Habitat visit memphishabitat.com
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HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION



Black Seeds: A New Urban Farm Coming to Uptown

In the last newsletter you read about the number of vacant lots CRA inherited. We asked our greatest advisors, the community, “What do you want to do with the land?” That’s how we met Bobby and Derravia Rich. They responded, “We want a farm!”

These two backyard urban gardeners turned serious farmers, are heavily driven by the needs of Memphis’ community. Co- Founder Derravia Rich said, “When the average person looks at these vacant lots, they see blight- something unkept and unmaintained- but, when we look at it, we see opportunity. We see the future.”

Black Seeds will not only provide organic fruits and vegetables, but also a space to disconnect from the noise and relax, or even host events. “Technology has us so disconnected with nature, but we want to provide a space where people feel connected to the land” said Bobby. Originally set to open May 2020, the couple is eager to get started, but plans have been postponed due to the pandemic. However, the CRA is working closely to ensure that the Rich’s have everything they need to open and stay open!

“One of the greatest things about the CRA is that they are reimagining an area that’s been here forever,” says Derravia, “We had this dream to grow a public urban farm and we didn’t know how we would do it, but then, we found the CRA. We were looking for them and they were looking for us.”



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THE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER

In each edition of The Beacon we will highlight someone we call a lighthouse keeper. Lighthouses ensure that ships stay on track and play a vital role in providing guidance during a sea rescue.

Historically, the person in this essential role would keep oil lamps burning by trimming the wicks, replenishing fuel and other maintenance. Likewise, North Memphis has hundreds of lighthouse keepers, lighting the path of others.

This month, we celebrate Ms. Mary Wainwright (pictured right), affectionately known as Ms. Mary. She is a proud resident of Smokey City and has cared for her family home her entire life. She makes sure Smokey City residents know about every CRA resource available.



She became active in the Smokey City CDC many years ago and also assists any non-profit or development agency looking to bring support to Smokey City. She works for her community like it's her job.

Tears came to her eyes as she explained why she does it, "I was raised to help people. We live in a society where elderly people have gotten left behind. I had a momma and a grandmomma- I would have wanted someone to help them. I get tired, frustrated and impatient, but I won't stop until our community gets everything we need."

Man on Fire



We got the opportunity to take a walk in Bearwater with long time resident Glen Lloyd (pictured left). Lloyd lives just steps away from the house he grew up in and has seen the neighborhood evolve. "People talk about how things are changing and say these developments are not for them, but I see it differently. We have to take advantage of the resources made available to us."

Lloyd runs a landscaping business to maintain CRA's vacant lots and those of other clients. He takes great pride in his community saying, "I wouldn't want to live anywhere else." And why would he?

As we walked throughout the neighborhood, Lloyd spoke to every visible person, mostly by name. If they weren't sparking up a conversation, they were inviting him over for a meal.

"This is my home and through CRA and other organizations I've been able to build my business, employ others and advocate for our neighborhood. I think it's good that the CRA is asking what we want and need, but honestly, it's going to boil down to what is the community going to do to support the CRA. What are we going to give? These resources won't last forever, so how are we going to optimize the blessings so that they last?" And that's our hope too. We want to see North Memphis and its people thrive for generations to come!

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Breaking the Box



In an area that's already a food desert, Covid-19 brought complex challenges to many when it comes to getting healthy food. In response to this reality, CRA teamed up with local growers and 275 Food Project to provide weekly fresh groceries for 70+ North Memphians.



In true North Memphis fashion, neighbors shared their food with one another, ultimately feeding about 200 people every week. Neighbors all over Bearwater, Smokey City, Uptown and New Chicago received boxes. Ms. Betty Jones in Smokey City commented, "I love cooking, so I make it a priority to get around the city to find the very best produce, but it was very helpful to have the boxes CRA provided for 8 whole weeks. It was especially a relief for some of my neighbors who have more of a challenge getting around."

Uptown resident Greg Williams found the produce a welcomed supplement to his flourishing garden, "Gardening is therapeutic to me and it makes for a cleaner environment. We should all consider growing at least one thing regularly and share it with each other."

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