



THE BEACON

YOUR VISION, YOUR VOICE

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 6

WE'VE MOVED!

CRA MAKES NEW HOME AT HISTORIC PORTER LEATH'S GOULD COTTAGE

The CRA has a new home right in the heart of North Memphis. We have moved into the Gould Cottage on the Historic Porter Leath campus. Established in 1850 and built in 1854, the campus was the first safe haven for widows and orphans in the Memphis area.

For 160 years, Porter Leath has served children through family disruptors like the Civil War and Yellow Fever or modern circumstantial and socioeconomic issues.

This space remains a healing balm to the community and the CRA seeks to carry on the legacy of the land by coming alongside neighbors to elevate their voice and execute a communal vision.



The CRA office was formerly located Downtown, making it challenging to provide accessible, physical resources to the community like: easy access to program applications, important classes or information to assist residents, a space for our food drive and other events, or a simple community meeting. We look forward to opening our doors for gatherings and being good neighbors!

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HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

There's a rumor circulating that Memphis' economy will see massive growth over the next several years. It's not baseless. In recent years, development agencies and companies have made a concerted effort to bring attractive and affordable housing, gainful employment and entertainment to Memphis.

However, such development is an uphill battle without expanding the infrastructure to support that growth. Infrastructure consists of, but is not limited to, the roadways, bridges, water supply, tunnels, railways, technology, and electricity to support a modern society. The CRA has been privileged to fund and manage several infrastructure projects in North Memphis (Uptown TIF) over the last two years.

We want to introduce you to a few consultants who are making the CRA's work possible!



Jeremy Simpson
Senior Consultant
Systems Technologies

Have you ever gotten a new phone and pleaded with your cellular provider to transfer all of your data like pictures, texts, and apps to your new phone? It's a pain when they can't execute this request. It means you have to start over.

Imagine the consequences of losing all the information for an entire organization? Luckily, we don't have to imagine that at the CRA.

Thanks to **Jeremy Simpson** and his team at Systems Technologies, all of the CRA's vital data, programs and systems made it safely to our new location. With the big move, it was essential that the CRA had an IT infrastructure separate from the City of Memphis.

"Technological independence will give the CRA more visibility in the specific communities they serve," says Jeremy. And he's right, the City of

Memphis serves the entire city while the CRA supports just over 5% of the population.

Jeremy continued, "With their own infrastructure, the CRA is free of city-wide standards or limitations and able to customize their systems however they need."

Jeremy has 20+ years of experience in this work and hopes to one day see Memphis become a Smart City. Smart cities use technology to optimize security, transportation, electricity, water supply, sanitation, e-commerce and citizen involvement.

"We want to see Memphis thrive and one way to accomplish that is through tech," says Jeremy.

To learn more about Systems Technologies visit **www.systemsllc.net**



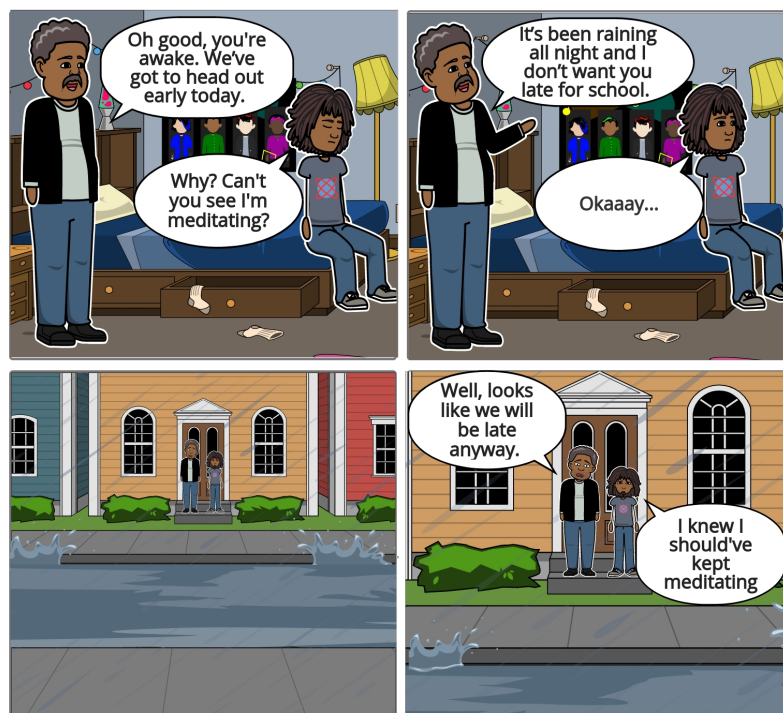
WHERE DOES STORM WATER GO?

Well, if it's going where it's supposed to, most don't even think about it. But, when there is a flood on your route to work, or worse, right at your front door, everyone wants to know how to get rid of it.

Last fall the CRA started working with **Willie A. O'Neal, Jr.** and his team at SOL Engineering to answer this and other questions through The Front Street Infrastructure Improvements Project.

This project will provide upgrades to the sewer, storm and electrical infrastructure for the Snuff District Development, Burkle and Main Multifamily Development, Saffarans Avenue, Front Street, Keel Avenue, Second Street, and Chelsea Avenue.

Sanitary sewer improvement upgrades will happen along North Front Street and Keel Avenue.



Willie and his team will be working to upgrade the outfall that moves stormwater runoff from the Uptown District, directly into natural waterways like the Gayoso Bayou that empties into the Wolf River. This will prevent flooding and erosion where the water sets after heavy and fast rains.

This work will cover about 42 acres of land. To put the area into perspective, a football field is 1.32 acres and about 5-6 single family homes could be built on that amount of land. So, this storm drainage line could serve 200+ families and businesses. That's a lot of people!

"We desired to be a part of the renaissance taking place in Memphis right now," says Willie. He continued, "In our 19 years of being in business, we have developed the team, experience and expertise to effectively deliver best practices and innovative solutions required to make the City of Memphis' infrastructure assets more resilient, robust and sustainable; we're fortunate and ecstatic about the opportunity to be partnering with the CRA to do this critical, invaluable work."

Based in Jackson, MS, with an office located in Downtown Memphis on Front Street, Willie and his team hope to continue making meaningful contributions to the development and improvement of infrastructure throughout the city.

To learn more about SOL Engineers visit www.solengrs.com.

LIGHTING THE PATH



Most drivers have experienced a 'close call' on a poorly lit street while driving at night. More often than that, pedestrians have literally seen life flash before their eyes walking at night. In fact, according to a study performed by the National Safety Council in 2019, pedestrian fatalities occur 4.5% times more in poor lighting conditions vs. at daylight or dusk. So, what is the solution? Should we demand that our local government spend millions of dollars on bright LED lights?

Not before you contact **Janine Heiner**, Executive Director of Safeways.



Janine Heiner
Executive Director
Safeways

Safeways collaborates with law enforcement, property managers, and social service providers to promote improved community safety and quality of life in Memphis apartment communities. And while their work focuses mostly on apartment communities, the CRA has enlisted their services in its plan to address blight in North Memphis.

Janine may not wear a cape, but on the job, she and her team could be mistaken as a group of vigilantes or more accurately, superheroes. She has walked the streets of the Uptown TIF District at night with a brigade of team members and a MPD escort to assess community safety and infrastructure needs. She makes note of broken sidewalks, vacant properties, evidence of drug use, bad lighting, graffiti/vandalism, bad sight lines, overgrown trees and

shrubbery that block lights, and any other safety hazard.

The team uses GPS enabled equipment to measure lighting. Janine uses the information gathered, years of experience and her CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) Professional Designation to compile findings for the CRA. The information is used to strategize and prioritize improvements that literally prevent crime by design. "I'm impressed with the CRA because they do their homework and they do things in a very thoughtful way," said Janine.

The overall goal is neighborhood walkability. When people are physically present, walking throughout their neighborhood, they distract anti-social or criminal activity, Janine calls it "territorial reinforcement". She says, "If I walk around a neighborhood and see 5 ft. weeds and vacant spaces, I know that I can do whatever I want around here." Essentially, clean and hazard free streets are roadways to more walkable, safer streets.

Janine is passionate and committed to reducing blight and crime throughout Shelby County using her expertise. "Friends will say to me, gosh Janine are you really going to take your team out there," and Janine is adamant, "I am! Walking street to street is the only way to do this work."

Janine is from Baltimore, MD by way of San Francisco; she never saw herself residing in Memphis. But, she says, "I'm grateful to have found work that I love while I'm here."

And Janine, Memphians are grateful that you've made Memphis your home.

"Safety and security don't just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear."

-Nelson Mandela



NOW OPEN IN UPTOWN

BLACK SEEDS URBAN FARM

**580 N. 4th Street
Memphis, TN 38105**



Bobby and Derravia Rich, owners of Black Seeds Urban Farm were all smiles for their Grand Opening. “We are excited to bring a new type of business to an area that does not have enough options,” said Derravia.

The couple received a grant through the Lots Reimagined Program and have been working diligently to bring their vision to life for the last two years. The new development has been well received by Greenlaw neighbors and the surrounding community.

Derravia says, “We look forward to educating people on the importance of sustainability and food. Thanks to organizations like the CRA, we are able to start an unconventional business in a much needed part of the city of Memphis.”

Black Seeds will offer fresh food subscriptions, event space, private picnic packages, yard to garden transfers/ garden consultation, garden programs and raised garden boxes.

**VISIT [BLACKSEEDSURBANFARM.COM](https://blackseedsurbanfarm.com)
FOR MORE INFORMATION**



Phase 1 of Malone Park Commons, a new pocket neighborhood in Uptown, is now complete. Jones Urban Development purchased the land for this project from the CRA.

CRA staff and partners attended the recent Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and people are really excited about this project. “There’s been a lot of great feedback from neighbors, tenants and stakeholders. People have commented on the thoughtfulness of the design elements” says Andre Jones, Principal of Jones Urban Development.

This unique project and community is only the beginning for Malone Park Commons, “We are preparing for Phase 2,” says Andre.

Learn more at maloneparkcommons.com.



Brothers, Andre and Curtis Jones, of Jones Urban Development principals with their niece, Taquita Jones, Site Supervisor at new multi-unit development, Malone Park Commons

NEW HOME, NEW STAFF



Terrence Hammons
Senior Community Builder



Vivian Ekstrom
Community Redevelopment Specialist
and Chief Sustainability Officer



Kenneth Halt
Junior Community Builder

Terrance Hammons grew up in the South Memphis neighborhood of LeMoyne Gardens and remembers a time when neighbors genuinely cared for one another. He's seen the impact of blight in communities that were once Memphis' strongest and longs to see those neighborhoods restored. Terrance said, "Living in a disinvested community wears on a person's mental and emotional health." A desire to see North Memphians experience genuine joy and pride in their community is what led him to the CRA. "I attended the CRA's Vision 2020 event and I was impressed with the organization's hands-on interaction with residents."

Terrance's role as Senior Community Builder focuses on compliance in governmental relations. He works with contractors, government, and code enforcement to ensure that the CRA abides by redevelopment industry standards and government regulations. While that sounds like rigid work, Terrance is all about getting to know people and their concerns to motivate his work. "When I was growing up, [these] neighborhoods were clean, nice and sought-after places to live. I want to see that again in North Memphis."

If you live in the TIF District and need assistance with overgrown lots, blighted properties, or other infrastructure related issue please don't hesitate to reach out to terrance.hammons@cramemphis.org.

Vivian Ekstrom may be new to the CRA but not to Memphis. This native's passion for planning began during her youth in Midtown where she witnessed the redevelopment and renewal of her neighborhood after the defeat of the I-40 route through Overton Park. That spark took her to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she obtained her Masters in City and Regional Planning. After working as a planner in Raleigh, NC, Vivian made her way back to Memphis where she managed the City's Sustainability and Resilience office the last 5 years. "I'm attracted to the CRA's commitment

to communities. I like the focus on improving housing, maintaining affordability, and making improvements that will benefit residents directly." Vivian is in the right place! She will work on property acquisitions and returning vacant and blighted properties to productive use. Vivian will also work with the CRA team and community to integrate environmental sustainability and resilience into projects.

If you have a unique use idea for a vacant space or sustainability-focused project in the Uptown TIF District, you can reach out to Vivian at vivian.ekstrom@cramemphis.org.

Kenneth Halt grew up in a low income and predominantly Black community in Pittsburgh, PA. When his family relocated to an affluent area, he was ridiculed by peers because of his old neighborhood. Seeing his own privilege, Kenneth knew he wanted to dedicate his life to combating racism and systemic inequality through Urban Planning. He said, "Implicit bias is dangerous. Seeing the differences in the communities that I grew up in left an indelible impression on me."

Kenneth's role will focus on community building through effective implementation of the Block Wellness program. Kenneth will also work with the CRA's GIS (Geographic Information System) and mapping for community development. With a double degree in Urban Planning and Political Science, as well as his work with 2 master city plans in Flint, MI, Kenneth is well prepared for his new role with the CRA. He says, "[Community redevelopment] has challenged me to put my words and passion for communities to action. I'm excited to join an organization like the CRA who has the resources to make a real difference in communities."

If your block has immediate blight removal or remediation needs, you can reach Kenneth at kenneth.halt@cramemphis.org.

Visit www.cramemphis.org. Follow us on social media @cramemphis

Community Redevelopment Agency

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Cozy Corner

Danny Thomas Pl