

THE BEACON

YOUR VISION, YOUR VOICE

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BLOCK BY BLOCK



Kimani Shotwell (center), Director of Community Building, Engagement, and Impact with Block Crew Leaders



James and Juanita Currie, Leath Street

The Block Wellness Program is CRA's street by street and block by block approach to addressing infrastructure, overgrowth and safety needs in the TIF District. Each month 5 companies clean the entire Uptown TIF District, that is 102 streets. Every quarter the CRA gives special attention to a few streets in dire need. Most recently both Leath Street and Leon Place.

CRA staff speaks with each homeowner to see what work is needed. Services include removing fallen trees, cutting down dead or dying trees, landscaping, and installing a chain link fence.

92 year old neighbor Louella Kerr commented on her gratitude for the clean

up, "I've lived here 50 plus years and I used to get out there and do my lawn, but I can barely stand to be outside now."

Neighbor James Currie said, "Mostly senior citizens live around me and either we're not able to do this kind of work, or we can't afford it, but we sure would like to say thank you to CRA for looking out for us. Thank you, thank you, thank you."

The clean up was celebrated by neighbors, workers and CRA staff with lunch for the entire block from local food trucks.

This service is free to residents living in the Uptown TIF District. To find out if you live in the district call us at 901-435-6992.



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HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Big Changes Ahead for Morris Park

The CRA recently broke ground on the redevelopment of Morris Park located adjacent to Lebonheur Children's Hospital on Poplar. The catalyst for this development is the Community Plan created by neighbors and community leaders in 2018. The CRA, is contributing \$1.5 million dollars towards the completion of the park and partnering with the Memphis Medical District Collaborative and the City of Memphis to continue improving the quality of life for area residents.

The park, scheduled for completion in Spring 2022, sits on approximately 4.8 acres of land. Improvements will include new benches, picnic tables, drinking fountains, basketball courts as well as a new playground, ADA compliant walkway, amphitheater, shade structure, and plenty of open space for relaxation, walks and picnics.

Barnes and Brower General Contractors will complete the construction for the park. The company has done a number of high profile projects for the city. "This park is heavily used by the people in the the community. The existing facilities were in dire need of replacement. The design for this park was done over a decade ago but obtaining the funding for the park was the problem.



Renderings show what Morris Park in Memphis will look like after renovations. *Ritchie Smith And Associates*



We delight in the beauty of the butterfly
but rarely admit the changes it has gone
through to achieve that beauty.

Maya Angelou

The CRA was able to provide this funding and a new park is on its way to being done," said Keith Brower, Vice President.

Andrew Murray, CRA Director of Planning and Community Development said, "This is exciting because it is something people in the community have wanted for quite some time. We're glad that the funds were approved and we can get started."

The Morris Park redevelopment is also a part of a larger City plan called 'Accerlate Memphis', a \$200 million dollar investment into a variety of capital projects to "improve the quality of life, drive equity and inclusion, improve connectivity, and solve stubborn problems that are deeper than any single capital budget can solve."



Grind City Cyclist Club President Derek Hosey and Spokesman Kevin Woods.

BE THE LIGHT

Many of us remember life at the height of the pandemic. There was a lot of hearsay about Covid-19 and very little predictability. People experienced a wide range of symptoms from loss of taste and smell to death. Everyone and their uncle had a remedy and to make matters worse, you couldn't find toilet paper or rubbing alcohol for weeks. Things were scary.

Many spent more time at home and less time doing things outdoors. That life can't last long. A band of brothers developed out of that time, the Grind City Cyclist Club (GC3).

"Gyms were closed and several of us were looking for ways to stay physical, safe and be outdoors. It started out as a collective of friends meeting up for that purpose, but last summer we decided to make ourselves an official group," said GC3 spokesperson Kevin Woods.

The small group of friends is now 70 men strong offering 4 rides per week. Kevin said, "We've had an overwhelming and positive response from the community." The group, which consists of people from various professions: doctors, lawyers, administrators, entrepreneurs, etc., aims to not only maintain their health and wellness but also make a difference in their community.

On October 30th, 2021 GC3 hosted its 2nd ride in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Paint the Streets Pink partners with our friends at Grind City Brewery. Last year, after just 90 days of existence, GC3 raised \$30,000 for breast cancer research and treatment, donating funds to the Susan G. Komen Foundation and Pink with A Purpose, a local non-profit led by April Hubbard.

The group began and ended the 20 mile ride at Grind City Brewery and rode through much of the

CRA district, Midtown and Downtown.

Kevin emphasized, "It's important for people, especially in communities of color, to see people who look like them investing in their health and wellness. We can't be here for our families unless we are first here for ourselves."

GC3 President, Derek Hosey describe how he and many others in the group have significantly improved their health since joining the group, but the most significant impact has been the bond they've built as a group. "With the losses I have had personally due to COVID, this group has been a true blessing for me," he said.

Donations for Paint the Streets Pink will be accepted through early November. To give or to learn more about GC3, [visit **grindcitycycling.org**](https://grindcitycycling.org).





THE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER

Alan Higdon

the the Uptown Advisory Committee which gives residents the opportunity to provide feedback on the implementation of the community plan.

“I get excited when I see the CRA going through a troubled street addressing overgrowth, handicap access or whatever. It lets renters and homeowners alike know that someone cares. Holding the people in the neighborhood accountable gets contagious.”

Alan, who has stopped counting how many properties he owns, is a DIY (do it yourself) kind of man. He does the maintenance on both his commercial and residential properties: cutting lawns, fixing faucets, toilets, etc. “Government resources are limited, so we must use our own ability where we can to help improve the quality of life,” he said.

Alan hopes that the collaborative effort to maintain Uptown pays off in the coming years in the form of organizations and businesses like churches, grocery stores and companies making their home in Uptown, bringing jobs back to the community.

He said, “If we don’t revitalize what we have, we will end up like other derelict cities in the country and I believe if we invest in people, more opportunities will come to this community.”

This month’s Lighthouse Keeper is commercial and residential real estate investor Alan Higdon. Don’t be fooled by the fancy title, Alan is likely one of the kindest, and most relational landlords in the business. As we sat with him in Uptown, on the porch of the oldest home he owns, neighbor after neighbor stopped to spark up a conversation with him, “The people here are my friends,” he said.

Alan purchased his first investment property on A.W. Willis in an economically depressed Uptown in the early 90’s. At the time, he had no inclination that his investment would perform well. “It was a gamble at the time,” he said, but he believed he was led to the neighborhood.

Over the years people in the community started coming to Alan for various things, some as a confidant and others with serious needs. “I’ve felt like it was my purpose to respond, to help when I could,” he said.

With such a reputation and vested interest in Memphis and especially Uptown, it made sense for Alan to link arms with the CRA. He is a member of



Meet Our New Team Member

Ludora Cooper is a new consultant in the CRA family. She is the Director of the Single Family Homes Rehab Program. The Single Family Homes Rehab Program provides funds and rehab work to keep homeowners in the Uptown TIF district safe, warm and dry. Ludora will work alongside Lisa Ivy to galvanize the response to the more than 200 homes on the program’s wait list.

“I’ve been helping people become homeowners for so long that it just fits that I’m coming alongside the CRA to help homeowners maintain their home now,” she said.

Ludora Cooper is a North Memphis native with a

20 year background as a realtor. She started Prime Realty and Investments in 2005. There, she is the owner and managing broker. She is also a licensed General Contractor.

With this wealth of knowledge and experience, she is looking forward to addressing the needs of homeowners in the TIF District. “I really resonate with the CRA’s mission- sustaining single family homes, addressing blight and providing affordable housing- it’s a good fit for me.”

For more information or to receive The Beacon electronically visit www.cramemphis.org.