

# THE VANCE AVENUE COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION PLAN

A Resident Conceived Strategy for Achieving  
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Vision of the Beloved Community  
in a Historic African American Neighborhood in the South

Prepared by the University of Memphis Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy  
For the Vance Avenue Collaborative

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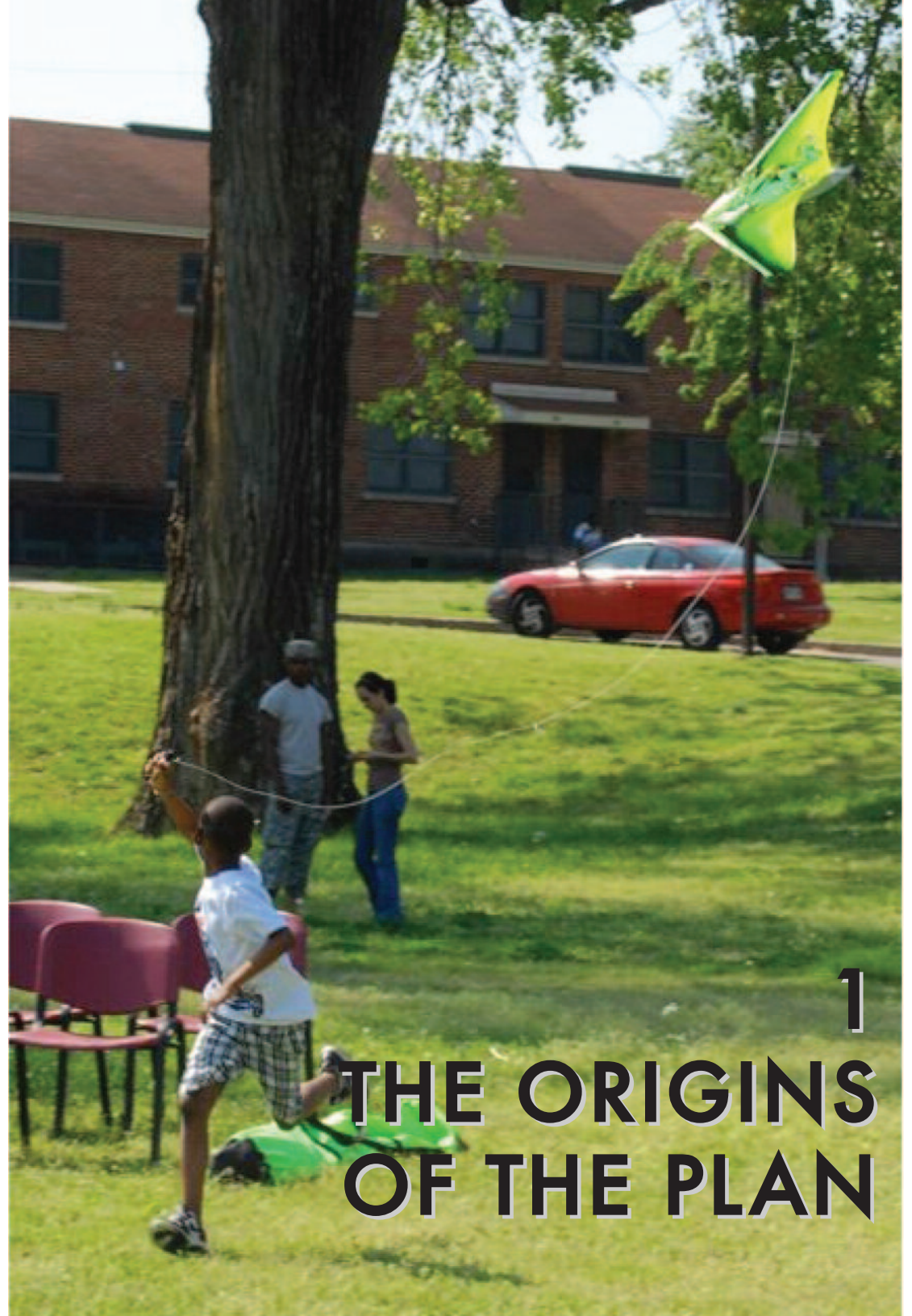
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*Playing with Kites in  
Foote Homes park during  
Spring Festival 2011*



# 1 THE ORIGINS OF THE PLAN

## THE RISE AND FALL OF MEMPHIS' MOST ICONIC HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD

In every large and old City in the US, there are one or two neighborhoods that are known for their significant contribution to local and/or national history and culture. Often these are the most celebrated and visited neighborhoods of the city, and their more or less famous residents are recognized and celebrated by plaques and signs, and studied in local school-curricula. For Memphis, this is Beale Street – the birthplace of Rhythm and Blues music and mid-south African-American culture. However, the “Beale Street” that is celebrated today, and visited yearly by thousands of people from all the world over, is a small portion of what was once a broad, storied, and extremely vibrant community; one that has played a major role in the history of American Civil Rights Movement and, in general, African-American culture. It is a neighborhood that was the home of civil rights pioneers like Ida B. Wells and Julie and Benjamin Hooks, of blues icons like Rufus and Carla Thomas and B. B. King, and of the headquarters site of the 1960s sanitation workers strike (Clayborn Temple), a labor movement that drew the concentrated gaze of the nation. Today, beyond the small, special tourist district, where the celebration of black history, culture, and music is an economic engine that unfortunately no longer includes many black business owners, the neighborhood is struggling to survive.

The neighborhood was first established in the 19th century as a White, upper-class residential area of the new city of South Memphis. It then transitioned stages of coexistence between different races and classes and ended up becoming the core of Memphis' African-American life in the 20th century. In fact, it was the center of black business, commerce, education, etc.; its role as the black “Main Downtown” contributed, in periods of high racial tensions and inequalities, to making Vance one of the most “Urban Renewed” communities in the City. Between 1935 and 1968 a steady and determined demolition campaign erased more than half of the original structures

of the neighborhood – in large part upper and upper-middle class houses and businesses –under the flags of “slum clearance” and “Urban Renewal.” In particular, between 1939 and 1954, 85 acres south of Vance Ave., east of 4th St., north of Mississippi Blvd. and Georgia Ave., and west of Orleans St., were cleared for the construction of Memphis' largest concentration of Public Housing “for negroes:” Foote and Cleaborne Homes. Following this, in the late 1950s, 47 acres have been cleared within the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Project. Again, between 1965 and 1968, all but 65 of 625 buildings on 270 acres of Beale Street and its surrounding area were demolished for the unrealized purpose of building a “downtown” mall.

Resident testimony describes a once vibrant neighborhood, “where black residents had everything they need,” that after 1968, the year of the sanitation worker strike and Dr. King's assassination, “was never the same.” Inner-city resident flight and the falling value of inner-city housing and businesses, accompanied by the shrinkage of national funds for Public Housing management and maintenance (worsened by the fact that the local Housing Authority has been twice listed, in the 80s and the 90s, on HUD's most troubled and dysfunctional agencies), factored into the decline of one of Memphis' most historically vibrant communities. Despite its location between three districts – the South Main Business District, the Beale-FedEx Forum Entertainment District, and the Medical District – where significant public and private investments have promoted urban renaissance over the past three decades, the imperfect storm of factors has lead Memphis' most vibrant community to hold the status of the poorest and most distressed neighborhood of the city.

Since the early 90s, after decades of conflict between tenants' associations and the City Government, MHA began a period of significant internal re-organization under the leadership of Memphis' first elected black Mayor. Over the past two decades, the issue

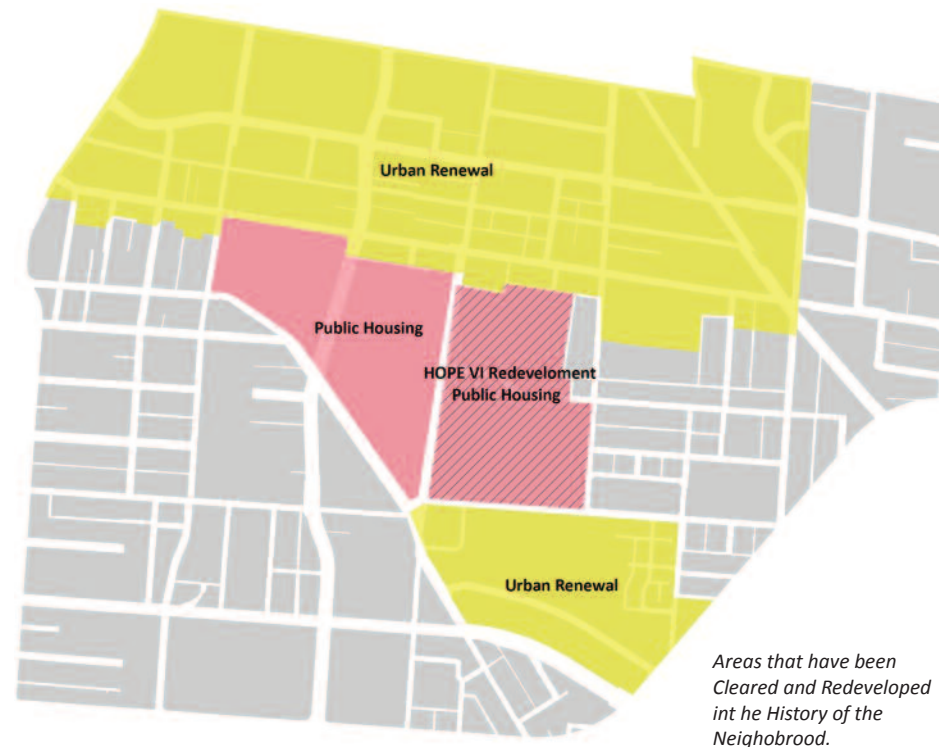
*Panoramic View of the neighborhood looking west.*





of poor maintenance of public housing has been aggressively addressed. Between 1995 and 1997, \$27 million in federal funds were spent in Foote Homes to “de-densify” the complex and rehabilitate remaining units and, since 1994, more than \$155 million of federal funds have been spent to transform all the other public housing complexes in the city into privately managed, mixed-income neighborhoods. With the exception of Lauderdale Courts, which has been preserved, all of the original structures of the other complexes have been redeveloped following a “new traditional” aesthetic agenda. In all of these cases, the majority of public housing residents have been relocated to different neighborhoods throughout Memphis with Section 8 “Housing Choice Vouchers,” with the purpose of “de-concentrating poverty” and encouraging higher income residents to repopulate the impoverished downtown areas.

In 2010, the City received its fifth HOPE VI Grant to carry out a similar process of transformation at Cleaborne Homes, which is within the Vance Avenue neighborhood. Residents of this complex were relocated and construction is currently underway to rebuild a one for one ratio of housing units, one third of which will be subsidized to meet the financial needs of the public housing population. While many city officials and private sector leaders have celebrated the impacts of these redevelopment projects, many former and current MHA residents have voiced mixed feelings about the lauded benefits. In particular, residents have lamented that the redevelopment generated few jobs or contracts for residents and their neighbors under Section 103 and they have enabled few residents to return to their former communities despite the efforts of the City’s much-heralded consolidated case management program, Memphis HOPE.





These concerns, along with other economic and community development challenges related to the nation's ongoing recession, have led residents and neighborhood organizations to collaborate on an ongoing basis in what is today called the **Vance Avenue Collaborative**. Established in 2009, the collaborative has promoted a new wave of resident-led problem solving, planning, and development and through a bottom-up process the community has been able to:

- complete an initial strategic plan for community revitalization called The Preliminary Framework for a More Vibrant, Sustainable, and Just Vance Avenue Community;
- establish a neighborhood-wide coalition for community renewal and development;



- create the Common Ground Community Garden;
- expand the Foote Home Annual Spring Fair;
- organize Teaching Youth Entrepreneurship (TYE) as a new business training program for youth;
- initiate a city-wide campaign to establish a mobile food market to provide residents of “food deserts” with access to high quality fresh foods; and,
- mobilize community and campus volunteers to successfully undertake six community clean-ups.

*On the left, images from the participatory planning process promoted by the Vance Avenue Collaborative in 2009-10 (a Winter clean-up initiative, the Affordable Housing group at work, and the cover of the planning framework completed in June 2010).*

*Below: UofM Students cleaning beds and turning soil at the Common Ground Community Garden during a Vance Avenue Collaborative Clean-Up initiative on February 28th, 2011.*



## 1.2 Securing Funds for Community Planning and Development

*“This (grant) is not just about a housing complex. It’s about building homes and that takes more than bricks and mortar. This grant is about building families and strengthening this community, eliminating the perception of public housing and moving toward the reality of affordable housing.” Mayor A. C. Wharton, Vance Choice Neighborhood kick-off meeting, July 12th 2011*

In the spring of 2011, the Memphis Housing Authority (MHA) and the City of Memphis’ Division of Housing and Community Development (HCD) announced plans to apply for a Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant (CN), sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development (HUD). Like HOPE VI grants, CN Grants are used to “transform distressed neighborhoods and public and assisted projects into viable and sustainable mixed-income neighborhoods;” however, unlike HOPE VI, CN grants “provide support for the preservation and rehabilitation of public and HUD-assisted housing” and require “linking housing improvements with appropriate services, schools, public assets, transportation, and access to jobs.” Within a CN planning grant, Housing Authorities are expected to partner with “local governments, non-profits, and for-profit developers in undertaking comprehensive local planning with residents and the community.” (source: <http://portal.hud.gov/>)

With the assistance of Cathy Marcinko, a consultant with the Alliance for Non Profit Excellence, the City formed a Steering Committee representing various neighborhood-based and city-wide organizations with a history of service in the Vance Avenue community to review and comment on the grant application prior to its submission. This body was also expected to serve as the Management Committee, the future advisory board for the project, in the event that it received funding. Among the groups represented on the Steering Committee were: Foote Homes Tenant Association, Vance Avenue Collaborative, First Baptist Church on Lauderdale, Saint Patrick Catholic Church, and the Memphis City Schools.



The grant application also identified three sets of consultants who, along with representatives of MHA and HCD, would assist Vance Avenue residents, business persons, and institutional leaders in collecting and analyzing the data required to prepare an inspired neighborhood transformation plan. These consultants were selected based upon their ability to contribute to the housing and built environment, people and social capital, and neighborhood and municipal service elements of the transformation plan. The following table identifies the consultant groups the City of Memphis recruited to contribute to this ambitious community organizing, planning, design, and development effort.

Housing Team	People Team	Neighborhood Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PennRose Corporation</li><li>• Community Capital Incorporated</li><li>• Self-Tucker Architects</li><li>• Looney Ricks Kiss Architects</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Consilience Group</li><li>• Urban Strategies Inc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• University of Memphis Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning</li></ul>

In April of 2011, the City of Memphis’ Division of Housing and Community Development and Memphis Housing Authority submitted the Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant Application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requesting \$250,000 to cover a portion of the costs of preparing a comprehensive revitalization plan for the Vance Avenue Neighborhood. In submitting the application, the City committed to providing \$250,000 of its own resources to make a total of \$500,000 available to support a two-year-long, highly participatory planning process.

In May of 2011, the City of Memphis was informed that it was one of seventeen cities chosen by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development from more than one hundred and nineteen applicant cities to receive the Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant. In July 2011, local residents, neighborhood organizations and community institutions, with the assistance of MHA and HCD staff and the abovementioned consultants, began work on the planning process.

This planning document is the culminating effort of more than eight hundred local residents, business persons, educators and principals, clergy and lay leaders, social service directors, and elected and appointed leaders who participated in the organizing, research, planning and design activities of the Choice Neighborhood Initiatives’ Neighborhood Sub-Committee Team during the past fifteen months (see Appendix I for a complete list of participants).

*The Mayor speech at the July 2012 Choice Neighborhood Kick-Off Meeting.*



Moments of collaboration among residents and stakeholders during the participatory planning process coordinated by the Neighborhood Team within the Choice Neighborhood Project. On the left: residents working at the community timeline during the July 2012 Community Meeting. Below: a community mapping activity during the Sept 8th community meeting.



Above: photo analysis during the October 20th community meeting. Left: a participatory design activity during the November 10th community meeting.

### 1.3 Core Planning Values

The following section describes the core planning values that shaped the Neighborhood Sub-Committee's approach this project. Among these are deep commitments to:

- **Resident-led planning** in which the hopes, aspirations, and visions of long-time residents and stakeholders have a determining influence over the content of the plan as well as the future development of the Vance Avenue neighborhood;
- **Asset-based community development** in which the knowledge, skills and networks of local residents, neighborhood associations, and social networks of this historic community, that has generated many of our nation's most influential civic rights leaders, including Robert Church, Ida B. Wells, and Benjamin Hooks, are mobilized to revitalize this long-neglected community;
- **Data driven policy and plan-making** that uses the best available information and generated needed additional information regarding existing conditions, future trends, and best practices to guide the formulation of the plan.
- **Historically informed approach** that builds upon the enduring legacy of innovative place-making, committed scholarship, internationally recognized artistic achievement, impressive athletic accomplishment, and courageous civil rights organizing to inspire current residents and leaders;
- **Highly-participatory process** designed to engage, and empower all segments of the community, especially those who have been previously uninvolved in local civic affairs, to work together to create and implement an inspired community transformation plan;
- **Developmentally-oriented model** that organizes residents to tackle highly visible albeit small-scale projects using the momentum generated by their successful completion to undertake increasingly challenging development projects that enhance the planning, development, and management capacity of local residents and institutions.
- **Partnership strategy** that recognizes the importance of bringing public, private, and non-profit organizations from outside of the community together with community-based organizations from within the Vance Avenue Neighborhood to address the area's most intractable issues such as public safety, school quality, and health care access.
- **Action-oriented approach** that seeks to move people into action around critical issues even before the plan is completed. Within this process, local residents and institutions came together to create a very popular and productive community garden, carryout six community cleanups and expand an ongoing health fair.
- **Reflective practice** that challenges participants to review their practice, on an ongoing basis, in order to identify more effective theories, methods, and practices.

## 1.4 Planning Methodology

In the Summer of 2011 local stakeholders organized by the Vance Avenue Collaborative and UofM students and faculty came together to formulate a planning process based on values designed to provide community leaders with the information they needed to create a cutting-edge community revitalization plan. Between September 2011 and August 2012, local residents and university-trained researchers worked together, on an equal basis, as “co-investigators” to collect and analyze a wide-range of environmental, economic, and social data needed for the purposes of planning. Within this participatory action research effort, local stakeholders and their university partners jointly undertook the following research activities:

- **Archival research** – an examination of more than a dozen former studies, reports, and plans completed by public and private organizations examining various conditions within the Vance Avenue community;
- **Historical investigation** – an investigation of the people, institutions, and sites that have played a critical role in the development of the Vance Avenue community.
- **Environmental studies** – an examination of soil conditions, topographical patterns, drainage systems, open spaces, and historical sites that have and should shape the future development of the community.
- **Demographic analysis** – a review of the population, economic, and housing trends affecting the Vance Avenue community through a systematic analysis of U.S. Census data.
- **Land Use, Building conditions survey** – a parcel-by-parcel evaluation of the current use of land and buildings, the conditions of the physical structures, and the current zoning of the 1,800 individual lots within the study area.
- **Community mapping** – an inventory of the local public, private, and non-profit organizations providing educational, health, housing, transportation and other municipal services to area residents.
- **Stakeholder visualization** – receiving local residents, business persons and institutional leaders’ initial visions for a “new and improved” Vance Avenue community and preliminary neighborhood improvement statements.
- **Neighborhood documentation (aka camera exercise)** – amassing 1,500 images of community assets, problems, and resources generated by 60 community and university volunteers using disposable cameras.
- **Movers and shakers interviews** – one-on-one interviews with local institutional leaders focused on their perception of existing neighborhood conditions and preferred development possibilities.
- **Neighborhood residents’ surveys** – collection of data from neighborhood residents, including 135 heads of households within Foote Homes, focused on their perception of current conditions and future improvement possibilities for the complex and the surrounding community.
- **Quality of life search conference** – organization and participation in a three-day event held on the University of Memphis Campus and in the Community Room of Foote Homes that involved thirteen leading scholars from Europe and North America who had been involved in highly successful, resident-led community transformation efforts. More than eighty local leaders, project consultants, city staff, and U of M students and faculty involved in the Vance Avenue Choice Neighborhood Initiative shared in this forum. The event culminated in an hour-long presentation of economic and community development recommendations from the invited policy experts based upon their independent review of Vance Avenue’s community profile and preferred development pattern data.
- **Community Assembly** – a daylong forum held at Southwest Tennessee Community College during which local stakeholders had the opportunity to review the summary and analysis of existing neighborhood conditions, future development possibilities, and proposed development goals and objectives prepared by the Choice Neighborhoods Consulting Team based upon the abovementioned data (with the exception of the Foote Homes Survey) and to generate an initial list of specific improvement projects.
- **Action research teams** – monthly meetings held throughout the neighborhood following the Community Assembly during which local residents and other stakeholders worked together in issue-specific teams, assisted by Choice Neighborhood Consultants and select resource people, to refine the list of most desired improvement projects and further develop the ideas.
- **Best practice research** – University students and faculty reviewed community transformation literature in architecture, landscape architecture, civil engineering, and city and regional planning to identify best practice case studies that could be used to inform further development and distillation of the neighborhood improvement projects identified at the Vance Avenue Community Assembly in March of 2012 and further elaborated during the series of monthly Community Meetings that took place from April - July of 2012.
- **District-level site planning** – During the months of August and September university planners worked together to create a district-level site plan that illustrates how this plan’s various elements reinforce each other in order to transform the quality of life within the local community.

The data generated by these activities – which involved approximately 800 local stakeholders between July of 2011 and August of 2012 – form the empirical basis upon which the Vance Avenue Community Transformation Plan is based. Earlier reports that are incorporated in this plan have been widely distributed throughout the community and posted on the neighborhood subcommittee section of project's website (<http://vancecn.org/category/neighborhood/>). This Plan will be presented to the community for a final review and vote at a meeting of the Vance Avenue Collaborative scheduled for Thursday, September 13, 2012 from 5 to 7 pm at the Saint Patrick Learning Center located at 277 South Fourth Street between Pontotoc and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

### 1.5 The Emergence of Two Plans?

Early in the Vance Avenue Choice Neighborhood Initiative planning process, it appeared as though many residents and City Officials held fundamentally different views regarding the best way to improve the quality of life within this historic African American community. During our initial meetings and research survey activities, a majority of residents indicated a strong desire to see the neighborhood's remaining 496 units of public housing preserved and enhanced while City Officials and a majority of their Choice Neighborhood Initiative Consultants repeatedly referenced the success of the City's recent HOPE VI Projects.

The divide that appeared to exist between the residents' and City Officials' perspectives regarding the optimal redevelopment strategy for the Vance Avenue neighborhood came into sharp focus in January of 2012 when the City convened a meeting at Bridges Inc., a highly regarded youth empowerment organization, located out-

side of the Vance Avenue Neighborhood to discuss the neighborhood's future. This meeting was sponsored by the Mayor's Office, the City's Division of Housing and Community Development and the Memphis Housing Authority and was attended by approximately 130 people, few of whom were either residents or stakeholders of the Vance Avenue Neighborhood.

Those attending the meeting were informed that the City was exploring a series of infrastructure, institutional, and housing investments aimed at transforming the Vance Avenue Neighborhood into an attractive destination tourism district following the model of New Orleans' French Quarter, Kansas City's 8th and Vine District, Harlem's 125th Street, and Celebration's Main Street. The participants were also informed that this development vision, named "Triangle Noir Redevelopment Project" was being actively considered for submission to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's upcoming round of Choice Neighborhood Initiative Implementation Grant funding. In the days following the meeting at Bridges, the Commercial Appeal ran an editorial urging local residents and institutional leaders to support the City's effort to secure HUD funding for the implementation of the Triangle Noir Plan. Although the City decided not to apply for the funding at that time, this possibility concerned neighborhood residents.

At the Vance CN - Neighborhood Sub-committee Meeting, held at Saint Patrick Learning Center on February 4th, 2012 with the attendance of Mayor A.C. Wharton and HCD/MHA Director Robert Lipscomb, a significant segment of the Vance community voiced its strong opposition to one of the basic components of the Triangle Noir plan: the demolition of Foote Homes and the relocation of its residents.

When presented with five alternative development strategies which residents and other stakeholders had previously generated, two-thirds of the nearly 90 stakeholders attending this meeting strongly endorsed scenarios that preserved and enhanced the neighborhood's existing public housing units. Their choice was to focus energies on economic and community development efforts within the broader Vance Avenue neighborhood. When asked to identify the redevelopment approach they least wanted to see applied to their community, two-thirds of the participants identified the clearance and HOPE VI-like redevelopment approach reflected in the Triangle Noir Plan. In a subsequent survey carried out by The University of Memphis with a broader sample of neighborhood residents in April 2012, two-thirds of the 135 Foote Homes residents surveyed as part of the sample reaffirmed their strong desire to see the current supply of affordable hous-





ing at Foote Homes preserved and enhanced rather than demolished and replaced with a mixed-income project similar to College Park, University Place, and Legends Park.

Why do residents tend to oppose redevelopment strategies, such as the Triangle Noir Plan, that feature the demolition of the neighborhood's existing supply of affordable housing, construction of mixed-income replacement housing, and investment in facilities and programs to transform the Vance Avenue community into a destination tourism district? Here is what neighborhood residents have repeatedly expressed during the planning activities:

- Foote Homes Residents are generally satisfied with their current housing;
- The majority of local families are much more concerned about addressing police protection and harassment, improving public education, enhancing access to primary health care, expanding transportation alternatives, re-establishing quality retail services (especially a full-service supermarket), and generating living wage employment for local residents. Issues that the Triangle Noir Plan barely mentions;
- Residents want to remain in the neighborhood. Relocation tends to separate families from long-time neighbors, friends and family who they have come to know and depend upon;
- Temporary or long-term relocation to neighborhoods located at greater distances from the City's Central Business District make it more difficult for many families to access critical services they depend upon (i.e. MIFA, Catholic Charities, Memphis Housing Authority, Memphis City Schools, LeBonuer Children's Hospital;
- A small number of the public housing tenants who have been relocated to make way for the construction of mixed-income housing under the City's HOPE VI Program have been able to return to the community;
- While housing conditions may have improved, the overall conditions in the neighborhoods where former public housing residents have been relocated are, in many cases, no better than they were in their former public housing complexes;
- Relocation of public housing tenants during the school year has been highly disruptive for children, parents, teachers, and school administrators;
- Utility costs for many of those who have been relocated to make way for new HOPE VI Projects are so high that many families are unable to meet these expenses placing their Section 8 Voucher at risk;
- The completion of physical developments designed to transform the Vance Avenue Neighborhood into a destination-tourism district may cause displacement beyond that related to the demolition of Foote Homes as real estate values in the new commercially-oriented district will force low income homeowners and renters to

seek alternative housing;

- Residents are skeptical of plans that have been developed with little grassroots input by private sector organizations whose collective interests may be at odds with local residents and institutions.

The City had already established a website, Facebook page, YouTube video, and Twitter account for the Triangle Noir Plan revealing their ongoing commitment to this approach to revitalization within the Vance Avenue Neighborhood, which many local residents and institutional leaders oppose.

## 1.6 Let the Peoples' Representatives Decide!

In light of what appears to be two fundamentally different revitalization plans for the Vance Avenue Neighborhood; The Triangle Noir Plan developed at the request of the City's Division of Housing and Community Development by Self-Tucker Architects and The Vance Avenue Community Transformation Plan developed in collaboration with local residents and institutions by the University of Memphis' Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning, local residents and institutions strongly believe the content, merits, and drawbacks of each of these plans should be presented to the Memphis City Council, which could hold a series of hearings on the matter before making a recommendation to the Mayor regarding which plan or combination thereof should be used as the basis of the City's future application for funding under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant Program (expected to hold its next round of competitive funding in April of 2013).

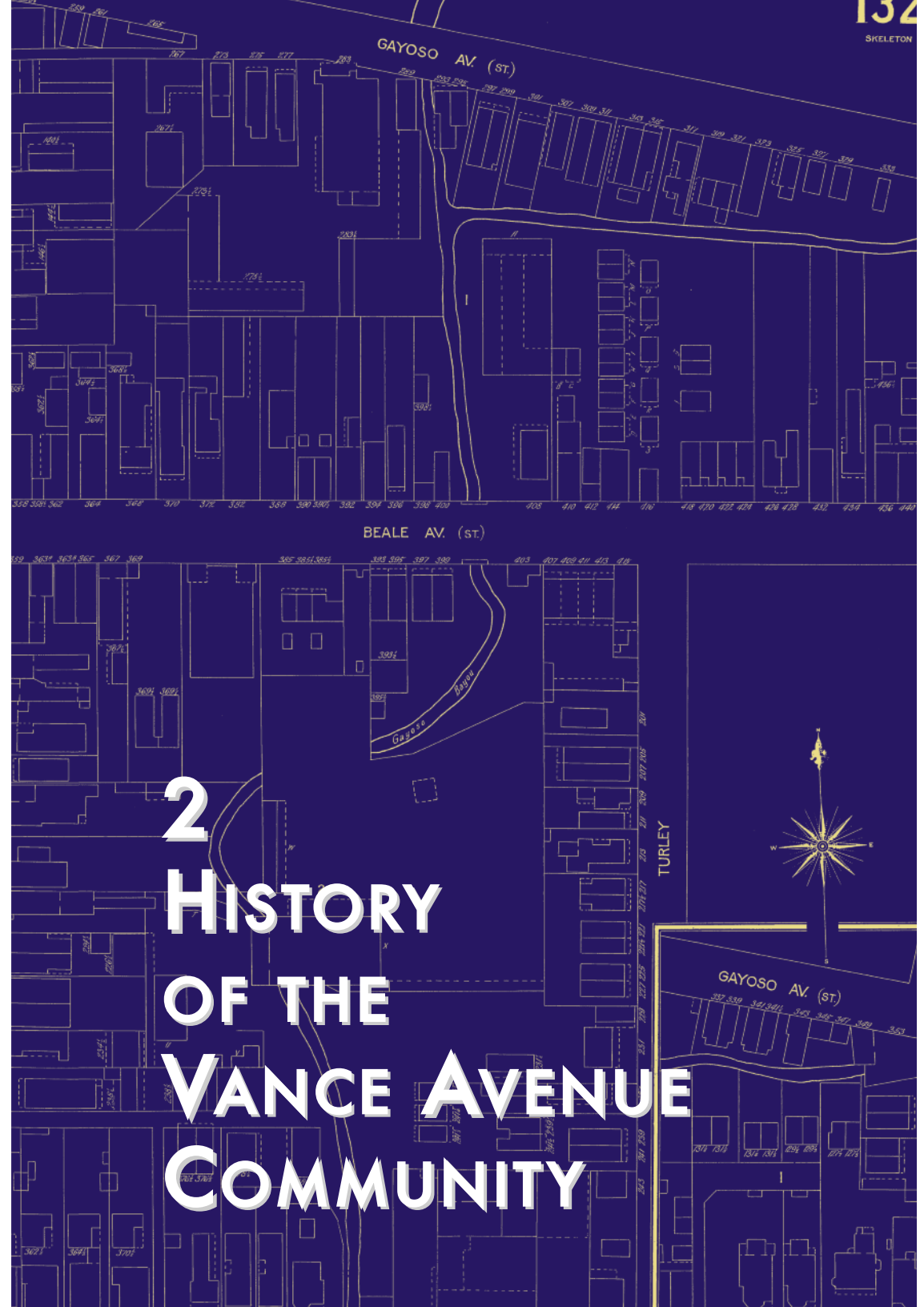
Among the local institutions supporting the proposed third-party review and evaluation of the two plans are:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • National Association of the Advancement of Colored People | • Saint John Baptist Church  |
| • American Federation of State County Municipal Employees   | • Mount Olive Baptist Church   |
| • Advance Memphis   | • Progressive Baptist Church   |
| • Saint Patrick Community Outreach Inc.                     | • PAX Christi  |
| • Streets Ministry  | • Memphis Policeman's Union  |
| • Western Tennessee Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church    | • Latino Memphis   |
|   | • Mid-South Peace and Justice Center                                   |
|   | • University of Memphis Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning |

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*A detail of the 1907 Sanborn Insurance Map, shows the urban density charactering Beale Street before Urban Renewal and the Little Betty Bayou before its burial.*





In this page: A detail from Rucker's 1858 Map of Memphis (source: Shelby County Archive) shows parts of South Memphis including St. Agnes Academy. The map indicates that there are two forms of urbanization taking place before the Civil War era. Large Estates of land, mostly on high ground, were owned by affluent families and were the location for elegant mansions and houses. At the same time, land was being subdivided into smaller parcel sizes and sold to lower class residents seeking property and housing ownership (probably from upper middle to the lowest classes). This 1858 map reveals the cohabitation within the neighborhood of both upper and lower class residents.

On the right page: St Agnes Academy in its original building on Vance.





*A lot of you had to struggle to get here. Most of you weren't born with the silver spoon in your mouth, but what you've shown is determination, what you've shown is character, what you've shown is the willingness to work hard* President Barak Obama's Commencement Speech to Booker T. Washington High graduates, May 16th 2011

## 2.1 The birth of an upper-class neighborhood

Directly east of the Mississippi river bluff, on the northern side of what once was the West Tennessee Chickasaw Trail (approximately the current location of Crump Blvd.), the Vance Avenue neighborhood was born as the upper-income residential area of the town of South Memphis. Established as a real estate venture by the South Memphis Land Company between 1838 and 1846, (its official year of incorporation), the new town was formed by three parallel thoroughfares, Beale Street, and Linden and Vance Avenues that ran eastward from the bluff. To the east of what was considered the town's central business district, today's South Main Arts District, elegant townhouses and mansions were built by early settlers who were mainly affluent Whites from the United States' eastern territories. These settlers came west to what was then considered the fastest growing city in the U.S. seeking to link the profits of southern plantations and slave trade<sup>1</sup> to land speculation and other businesses, such as railroad construction (Johnson 1991)<sup>2</sup>. In 1850, only a few years after its incorporation, South Memphis was merged with the growing City of Memphis<sup>3</sup>, and the Vance Neighborhood continued its growth as an upper-class residential area. It was an overwhelmingly white and affluent community choosing a very convenient location in the town to position their luxury mansions and houses, close by the prestigious St. Agnes Academy for young girls and the new and elegant Elmwood Cemetery (1852).

## 2.2 The Civil war

The years during and right after the Civil war are years of deep change for the city of Memphis and for the Vance Avenue neighborhood in particular. Mirroring what happened in the city as a whole, the quiet and affluent, white Vance neighborhood underwent several traumatic events and processes of social and economic transformations.

In 1860 the City's government decided to ratify Tennessee's secession and a Confederate Government was established. Only two years after, on June 6th 1862, the City was formally

"captured" by Union forces coming down the Mississippi River, transforming Memphis into a field of open and hidden conflict between federal authorities and secessionist citizens: among those, some of the most important families of the Vance Neighborhood. The affluent residents of this neighborhood saw St. Agnes academy repurposed for use as a hospital for both Union and Confederate soldiers and Federal Troops occupy the Hunt-Phelan mansion on Beale St. for the purpose of giving food, clothing, shelter, medical care, schooling, and jobs to the increasing number of black freedmen relocating to Memphis. Federal Troops also established Camp Shiloh, a 'contraband' camp for escaped slaves, located at the corner of Beale and 3rd near the Freedmen's school in the lot where the new Beale Street Baptist Church was to be built in a few years. At that time, the church was a poor congregation that simply met under the trees on the lot (source: Earnestine L. Jenkins, African Americans in Memphis, 2009). Plans to build an American Missionary Association Teachers School for African Americans at Lincoln Chapel on Orleans Street in 1863 further reinforced the secessionist-union tensions.

Most of the 15,000 of African Americans who were attracted to Memphis during the war years decided to remain in the same neighborhoods where services and jobs (union soldiers, servants, or just spies for the Union) were available to them (Biles 1986). This caused a dramatic change in the race and class composition of areas once wholly upper- and middle-class white. This change was not unique to Memphis, but reflected a national trend; between 1860 and 1870, the percentage of African-American residents rose from 35% to 52% of the total urban population, an increase of 131%. Much of this transition was due to African Americans in rural areas relocating to cities to work for the Union Army during the war. Most of them, when the war was officially over in 1865, remained in the same urban neighborhoods where they had initially established themselves.







Two examples of new houses built by affluent white residents on Vance after the Civil War: the Bowles house (bottom), built by cotton broker Robert Bowles in 1876 at 544-548 Vance, at the corner of Lauderdale (pictures at the top; source: courtesy of Memphis Landmark commission); the Davis house built in 1870 by Bank President, Frank Davis, and sold, in 1882, to grocery and cotton industry investor William B. Mallory. After years of abandonment, it was demolished in 2011. In the picture the house in 2008, from Google Street).



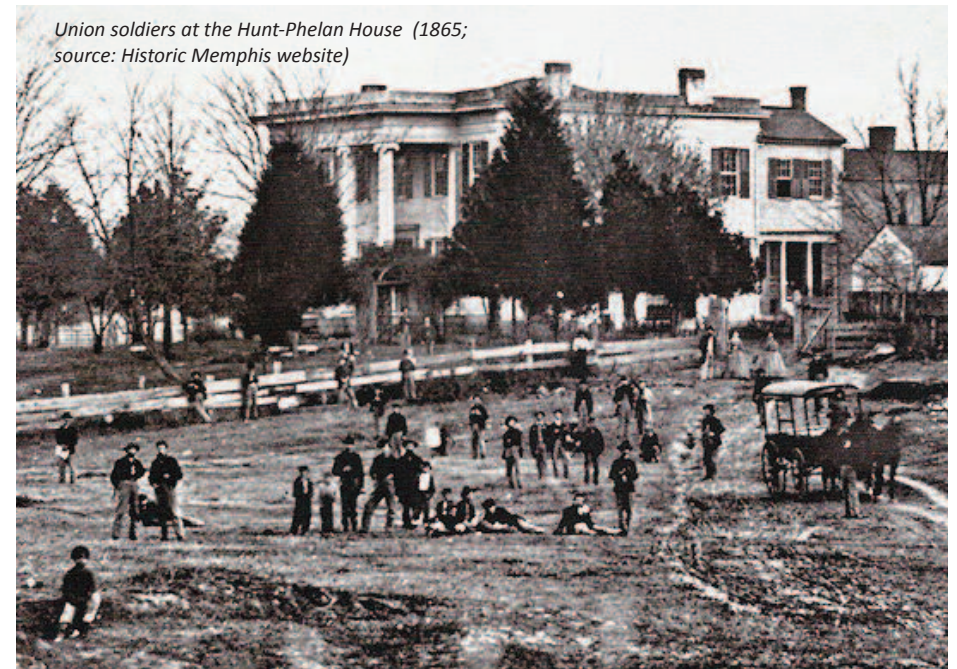
At bottom of the page, the Anderson House on East Street, bought by Planter William Coward in 1866 from H. M. Gosvornor whose furniture business had declined during the war. The House, which is today vacant and listed in the National Register of Historic Places, hosted for many years, Justine's, a successful and popular fine dining restaurant (source: Memphis Heritage).



## 2.3 Years of violence and disease

After the war and despite the growing African-American population, affluent whites still considered the northern portion of the Vance Avenue neighborhood a very desirable residential area. Current and previous owners decided to stay and, in some cases, decided to improve their houses. For instance, in 1866 Hunt began repairs on the mansion used by the soldiers during wartime. In addition, new, prominent, white residents were attracted to the neighborhood and either building new houses or bought existing housing from former owners who suffered from decline in their nearby businesses during the war.

Affluent white residents were not the only ones disquieted by the new black residents of the neighborhood; the growing Irish immigrant community perceived the black newcomers as direct competitors for low-pay jobs. Irish immigrants had fought on the Confederate side of the war and when Memphis was declared free from Union occupation on July 3rd 1865<sup>4</sup>, African-American Union soldiers lined South Main Street waiting for their paychecks. Many policemen serving the new City government were Irish and lived in the neighborhood, which was served by a newly constructed St Patrick's parish school on Linden Ave (1865) and the soon-to-be erected St Patrick Catholic Church (Carriere 2010). In November



Union soldiers at the Hunt-Phelan House (1865; source: Historic Memphis website)





1866, Rev. Martin Riordan celebrated the first mass at St. Patrick by laying the cornerstone of a new plain brick structure (on Linden and the De Soto, today 4th). Only 7 months prior to the parishioners' celebration, Irish policemen had initiated a three-day long violent race riot during which

*three Negro churches were burned, also 8 school houses (among those the Lincoln School on Orleans, nda), 5 of which belonged to the United States Government, and about 50 private dwellings, owned, occupied or inhabited by freedmen as homes, and in which they had all their personal property, scanty though it may be, yet valuable to them and in many instances containing the hard earnings of months of labor. Large sums of money were taken by police and others, the amounts varied from 5 to 500\$ the latter being quite frequent owing to the fact that many of the colored men had just been paid off and discharged from the Army. No dwellings occupied by the white men exclusively were destroyed and we have no evidence of any white men having been robbed (source: The Freeman's Bureau Report on the Memphis Race Riot of 1866).*

Despite the damage caused by the riot and despite some initial financial difficulties, the African-American community immediately started to recover and re-build. Lincoln Chapel, one of the schools burned during the riot, was rebuilt and reopened in 1867 with 150 students and six teachers ([www.loc.edu/about-loc/history.asp](http://www.loc.edu/about-loc/history.asp)). The same school was then demolished and rebuilt in 1870 as LeMoyne Normal and Commercial School: it was an elementary and secondary school for prospective teachers. Soon after, in 1871, the Black congregation of Beale Street Baptist laid the cornerstone for the first stone church built by African-Americans in the South (Bond 2005, Jenkins 2009). Additionally, in 1873, the City built Clay Street Public School, the first brick public school for colored people (DeCosta-Willis 2008, p. 6), which later became what is today Booker T. Washington High School. In 1876, Julia Hooks – the first black teacher to teach an integrated class in Kentucky – arrived in Memphis and was named the principal of Clay Street School. The 1873 and 1878 yellow fever epidemics contributed to further changes in the neighborhood, and Memphis more generally. Low-income communities were particularly hard hit. In Vance, the area

*Top-left: Young African American kids at a Freedmen school (around 1864; source: Historic Memphis website).*

*Bottom-left: an illustration of the freedmen school burning during the 1866 Race Riot published by Harper's Weekly (source: Historic Memphis website).*

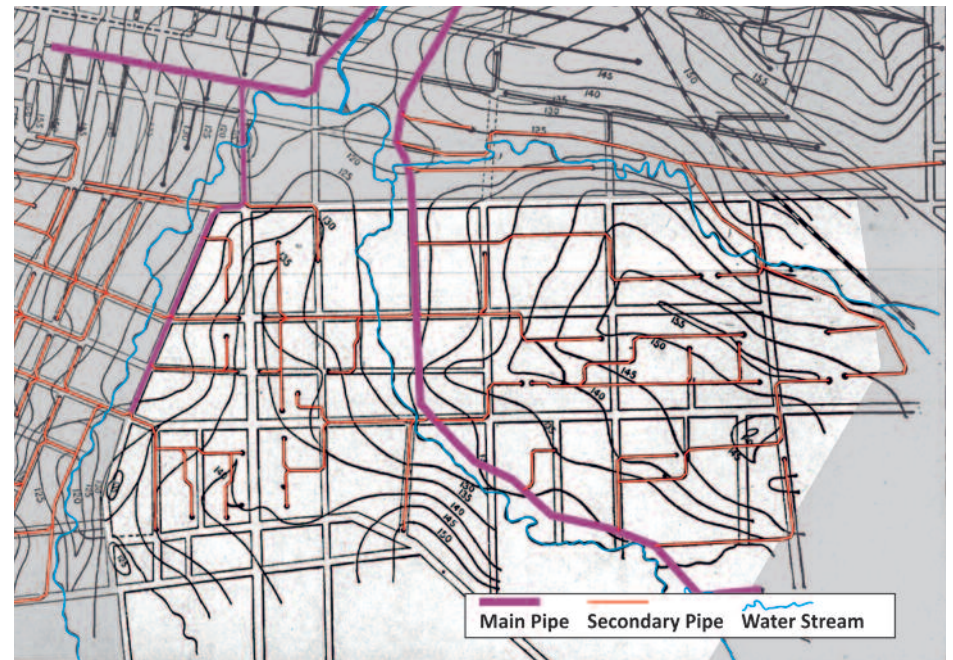
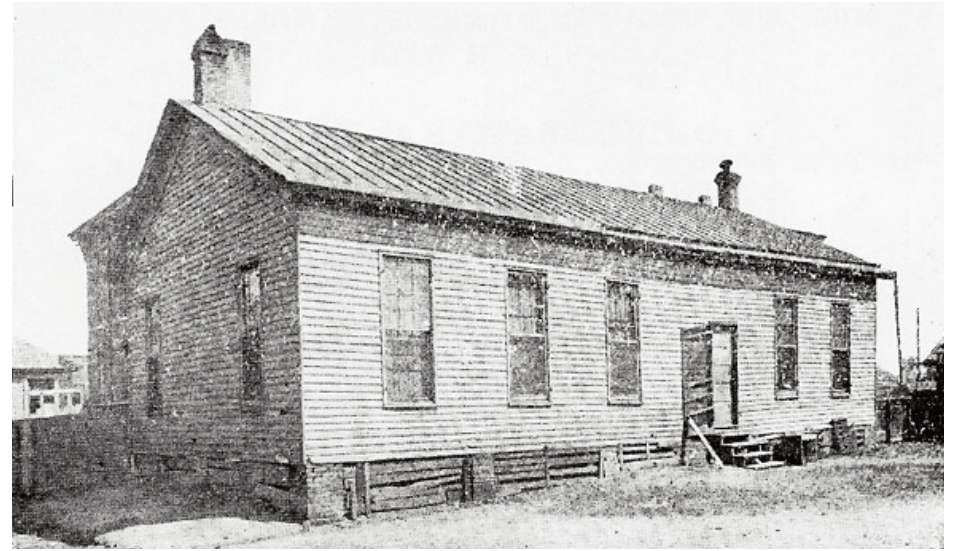


south of Union and west of Lauderdale was referred to as “Hell’s Half Acre,” as many of Irish and the African-American residents, who did not have the resources or possibility to leave, died. This included the deaths of spiritual leaders (Beale First Baptist’s pastor died in 1877, Rev. Riordan from St Patrick died in 1878, and his successor died in 1879) and doctors, like African-American physician Dr. Tate from Cincinnati (Keating 2007). While the crisis was only temporary, it proved to be an amazing occasion for land speculation; developers bought abandoned, cheap land during the epidemics and resold it with significant profits a few years later to a “coming back” city.

## 2.4 Profitable Urbanization

The devastation of the yellow fever epidemics gave birth to a period of modernization as in the city invested in infrastructure and encouraged growth in neighborhoods like Vance, which saw more upper-middle class homes built south of Beale Street, in the northern portion of the neighborhood (Linden, Pontotoc and Vance, between Wellington, which today is Danny Thomas Blvd., and Orleans St.). In 1880, the city built the first 30 miles of a new system of pipes that separated sewage from fresh water which was intended to “clean-up the diseased city” (Sigafoos 1980 p. 60-61). The system adhered to the natural topography of downtown Memphis, and two main lines were built, one east and one west of the Gayoso Bayou. These main lines ran north toward the Wolf River. One of these two lines bisected the Vance Ave. neighborhood and ran along the bed of the Little Betty Bayou (see map of the sanitary sewer pipes).

Together with a new system of sewer lines, electricity, electric street cars (the first one was built in 1891 and replaced mule-drawn street cars) and phone lines also arrived in the neighborhood. In fact, General Samuel Carnes, who built his mansion in 1890) on the southeast corner on Linden and Wellington (today Danny Thomas), just opposite of Judge and US Senator Thomas B. Turley’s house, was the first Memphian to have a personal household phone and electricity. He was also the first Memphian to own a car, which he acquired in 1894. While a private company provided a supply of water for these early households, public garbage collection and street cleaning services were also added in the 1880s. During the second half of the 19th century, the southern portion of the Vance Ave. neighborhood was subjected to intense land speculation that targeted both white and black middle and lower-middle class residents. Real estate developers, some of whom were residents of the Vance-Pontotoc district, subdivided and merchandised the land



Top: the first building of the Clay street School for colored people, built right after the 1866 race riot (source: Historic Memphis Website)

Bottom: Map of the sanitary sewer pipes installed in the neighborhood in 1880s ( UofM-CRP elaboration).





Top: Church Park and Auditorium in 1890 (source: Johnson & Russel 1991, p. 147)

Bottom: Detail of the Streetcar system in 1908. In 1886, construction for streetcar lines began on Main, Poplar, Vance, and Beale. In 1907, as seen in the map, they were among the most requested "elements" marketed to assist the sale of plots in the new subdivisions.

*"... in a circus-like atmosphere, several thousand lots in a variety of subdivided tracts were offered for sale within the city and on its boarder [...] giant newspaper ads and leaflets announced rare investment opportunities as well as good home sites were available for little down payment and convenient terms." (Sigafoos p. 101).*

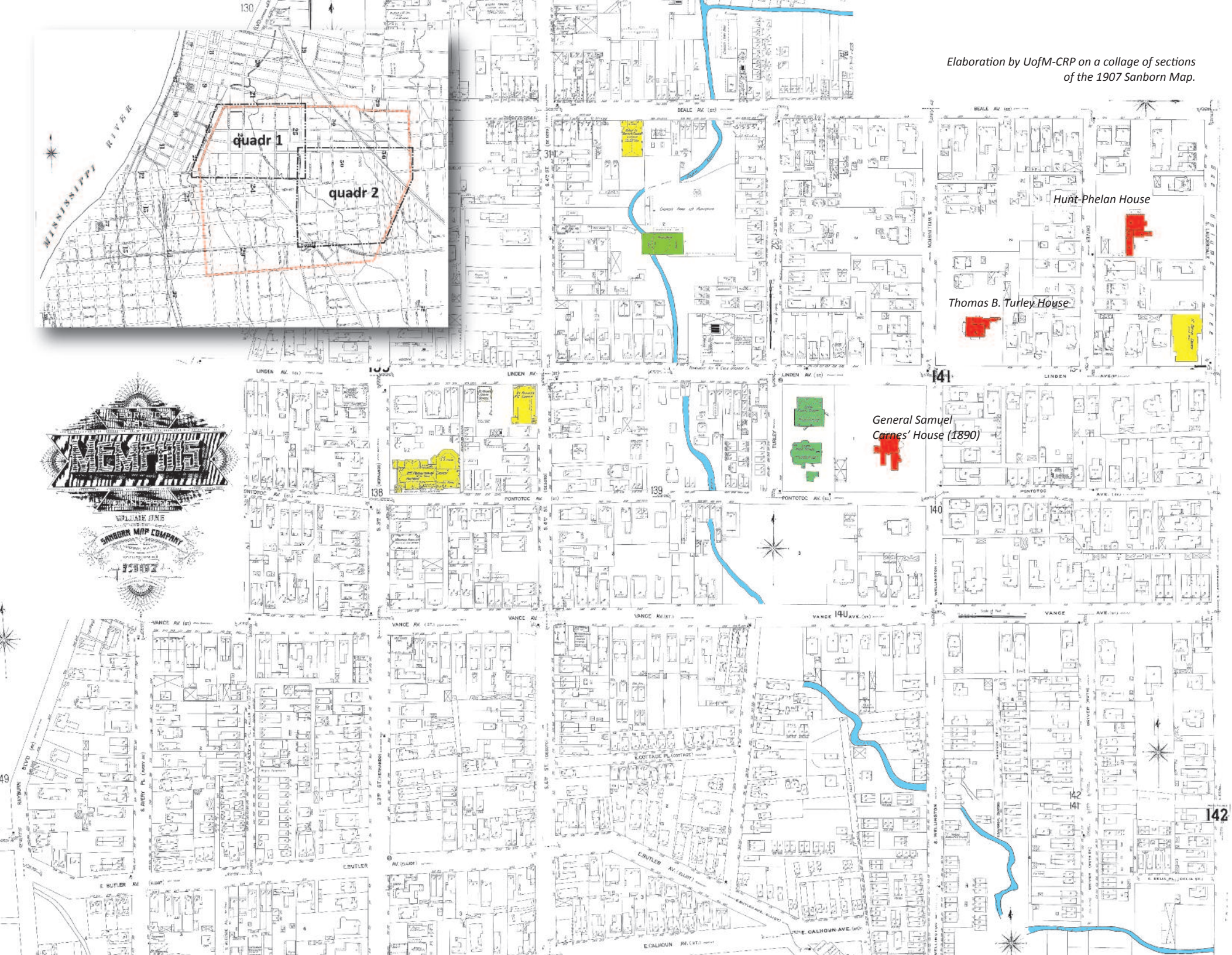
The newly developed housing attracted new, white residents to the neighborhood, increasing the need for new public facilities, including "white only" public schools. Such was the case with Linden Street School, later Leath Elementary, located on Linden Ave. in 1889 (Linden High was added in 1892 on the same parcel), and St Paul School that was located on St Paul in 1890. Land speculation was not a business endeavor relegated to white citizens, however. In the 1880s and 1890s the neighborhood also came "under the reign of of black businessman Robert Church, a representative of the emerging African-American business community. Like affluent white businessmen had done decades earlier, Church invested heavily in the area. By the 1890s, he owned the majority of properties on Beale Street and transformed it into the "main street of Negro America" (Lee p. 13, quoted by Sigafoos p. 116). In 1899 Church designed and built his own house at 384 South Lauderdale (today the north-west corner of the recently demolished Cleaborne Homes) and bought 6 acres of land behind Beale Street Baptist Church to establish Church Park and Auditorium, the 1st major urban recreational center in the nation owned by an African-American; see picture).

In this period of rapid urbanization, the characteristics of new developments in the southern portions of the Vance neighborhood varied depending on the target population. Subdivisions on less attractive portions of the land, mostly along bayous, railroads, or near warehouses, were marketed to lower-middle and lower class residents. In these less desirable areas, streets were unpaved and lots, with frontages equal to or smaller than 25 feet, were designated for shotgun and duplex houses, or multifamily structures. In contrast, the land located at higher elevations and closer to the growing streetcar system (see street car map, was subdivided into plots with large street frontage and designed to host large, single family homes served by paved or graveled streets. Under the blessing of this real estate boom Memphis became the third largest southern city in the United States, and despite race and class differences, the 1907 Sanborn Insurance map shows a coexistence between race and class in the Vance neighborhood, whose spatial quality was never allowed to decline under a certain level<sup>7</sup>.

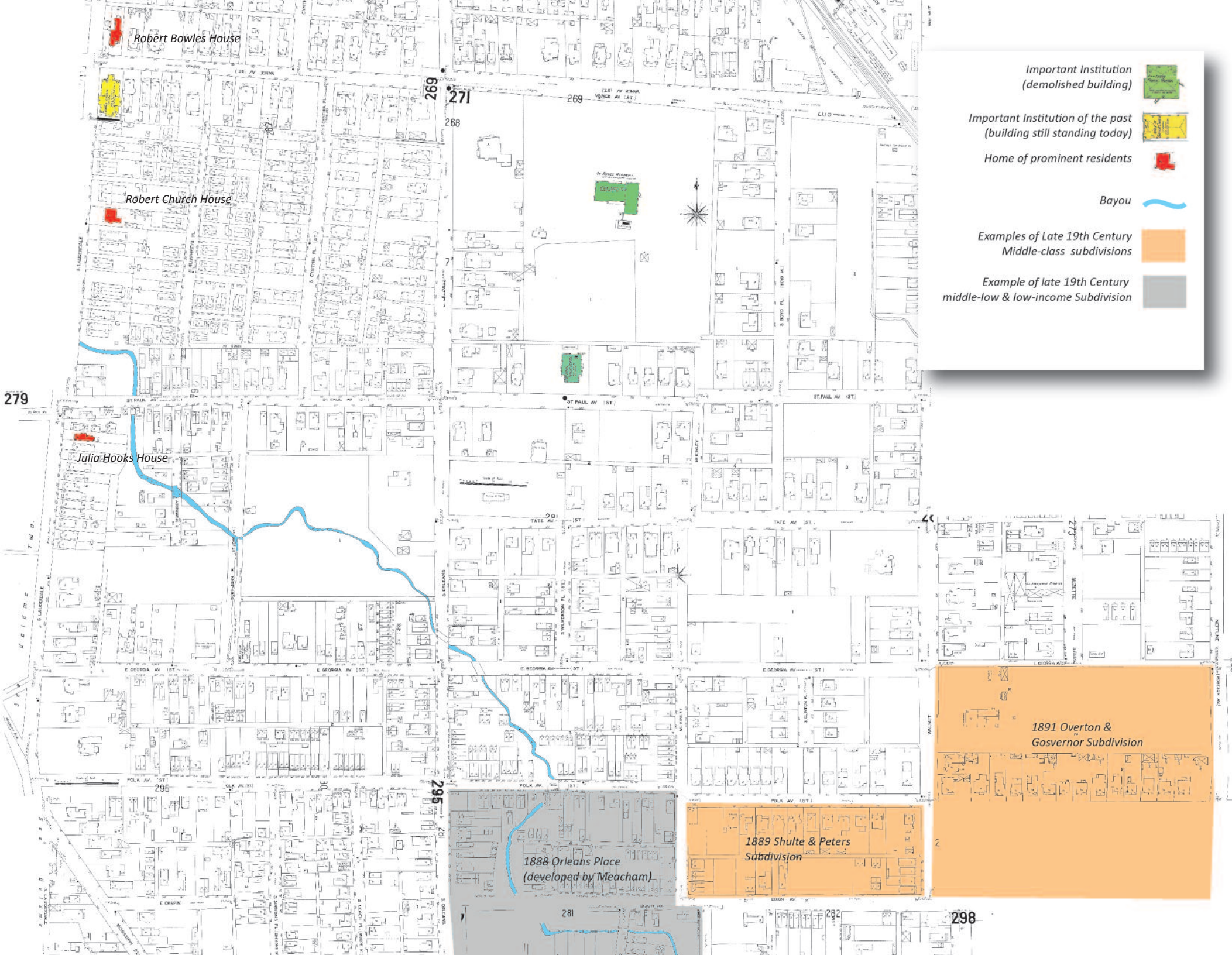
While spatial coexistence between residents of different races and classes occurred early on in Vance, this did not mean residents shared a sense of identity or unity as a com-



Elaboration by UofM-CRP on a collage of sections of the 1907 Sanborn Map.









*On the left: Family portrait of Robert R. Church, his wife Anna Wright Church, and his two youngest children, Robert R. Church, Jr. and Annette E. Church (University of Memphis Libraries Preservation and Special Collections Department).*



*Bottom: A photo of one of the two new public schools for whites built after the yellow fever epidemics: Linden Street School, later named Leath Elementary, on Linden in 1889. The building in the back is Linden High; it was added in 1892 on the same parcel of land (source: <http://www.memphistechhigh.com>).*



munity. In the Vance neighborhood – like in Memphis and in the South in general – Whites and Blacks lived on different streets or sections of streets and, in keeping with Jim Crow laws (adopted in Tennessee in 1881), did not use the same public facilities such as streetcars, railroads<sup>8</sup>, or schools. An important dynamic emerged during this period; while the more dominating race, the whites, were engaged in economic, cultural, and physical (lynching) oppression of the African-Americans, the African-American community was increasingly becoming economically, socially, and culturally independent. Children and nephews of former slaves and freedmen found many opportunities for work in this neighborhood. They also came to own valuable properties, or become business owners or school teachers. In the inventory of “accomplished” colored people in Memphis published in 1908 by school principal G. P. Hamilton, about 50% of the people mentioned, including many famous and less famous music teachers/blues performers, lived and/or worked in the Vance Avenue neighborhood. The education level of African-American residents was or became such that they not only understood oppression, but also started raising their voices against it to claim their rights. A claim, many would argue, that still waits to be fully addressed.

In 1885, a young Ida Wells started teaching at Clay Street School and became an important member of the community. She lived at her Aunt Fanny’s house on Georgia Street and joined the well-attended 2<sup>nd</sup> Congregation Church on Orleans<sup>9</sup>. Most importantly, she was only a few streets away from Beale, where, in 1889, she began the famous Free Speech newspaper, which was printed in the basement of Beale Street First Baptist Church (a few years later her office moved out of the Church basement on Beale street, but was destroyed in 1892 by a mob. Following this, Wells decided not to return to Memphis). From the columns of Free Speech, Wells led one of the very first efforts by southern African-Americans to use investigative journalism to challenge white oppression. After Wells left Memphis, her friend Julia Hooks (both used to go to the Memphis Theatre on Jefferson to challenge segregated seating; source Hooks 2003 p. 6), who was deeply dissatisfied with the quality of the education “officially” provided for African-Americans, established the Hooks Cottage School for kindergarten and elementary school children in her home located at 578 S. Lauderdale. Her school became the go-to school for the children of the local African-American elite. These are only a few of the small slices of the history of this vibrant and well-served residential community where, at the turn of the century, those considered the founders of Memphis’ civil rights movement lived, worked, raised their children, and used culture (high quality education, music, and investigative journalism) as a major strategy for black emancipation and organizing.





*Photo portraits of  
Ida Wells (top)  
and Julia Hooks  
(on the left in her  
house on S.  
Lauderdale).*

## 2.5 A “negro” slum image or a vibrant black community?

At the turn of the century, in a growing Memphis, the cotton-based economy began evolving into a more complex urban economic system. Grocery distribution (Sigafos 1980) and the construction industry played major roles in the growing economy. Between 1899 and 1919, within what was called the “Greater Memphis” movement, a series of annexations doubled the size of the city (see map published in Memphis City Planning Commission, p. 22), and higher quality subdivisions built to the east (e. g. Annesdale was subdivided in 1903 while Central Gardens and the areas surrounding Overton Park were subdivided between 1900 and 1915) attracted upper middle class residents. Within these new citywide dynamics and geographic boundaries, the role assigned to the Vance Avenue Neighborhood by the City establishment drastically changed.

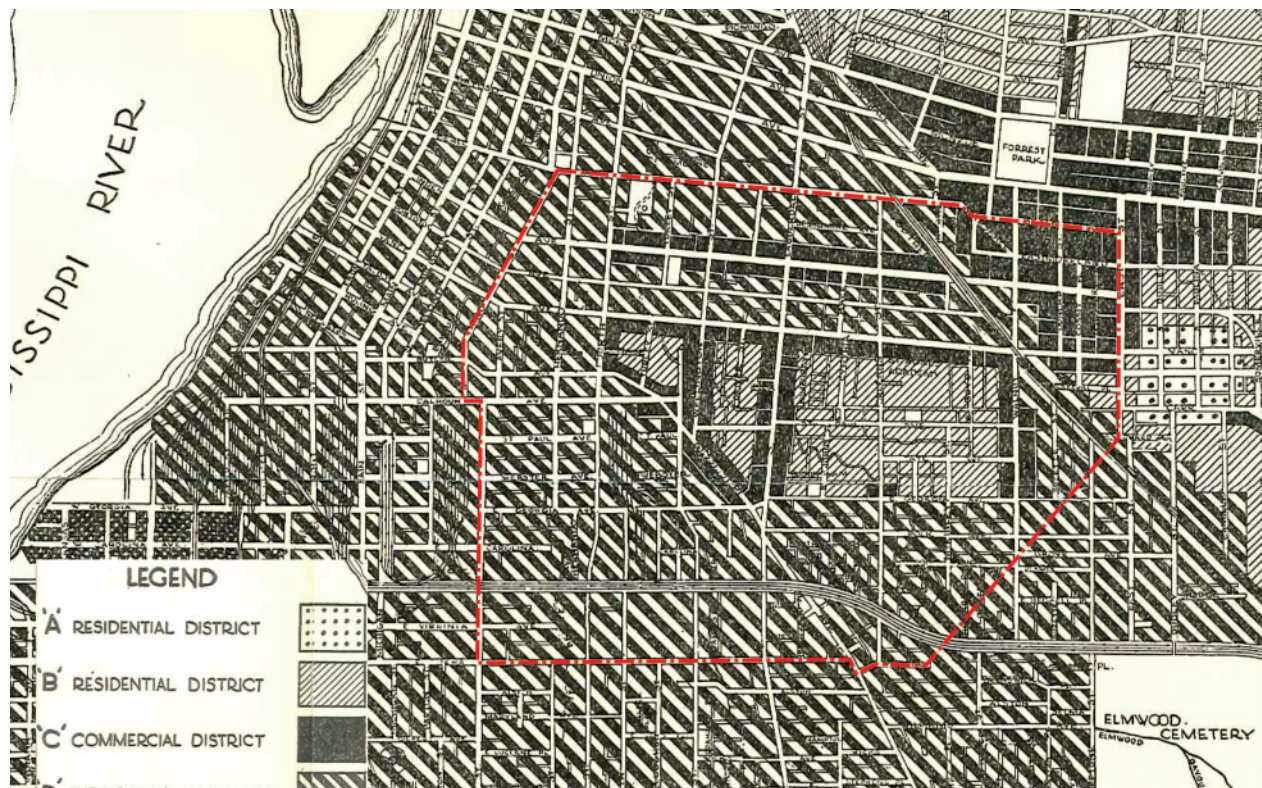
In early 1920s Memphis’ business elite<sup>10</sup> commissioned the famous St Louis planner Harland Bartholomew a new City Comprehensive Plan aimed at facilitating exceptional growth through:

- the rationalization of transportation systems (streets – that now have to host the expanding presence of private cars – and transit facilities);
- the regulation of properties through zoning in order to separate conflicting functions: industrial and commercial areas had to be served by major transit facilities; residential areas had to be served by an adequate amount of recreational facilities.

The new the zoning designation of the Vance Ave neighborhood did not reflect its genesis as an upper-class residential area (see zoning map of the New Plan). The core of the neighborhood, between 4th, Walnut, Vance, and Mississippi, was rezoned for commercial activities along the frontages of the major streets (Vance, 4<sup>th</sup>, Wellington, Lauderdale, and Walnut) and low-income residential (rentals, multifamily, etc.) along minor streets (residential “B” zone). The remainder of the neighborhood, including the Vance-Pontotoc-Linden area, where many elegant single-family homes were located (source: Historic district nomination), was zoned as “D” Industrial district, where all types of production activities (even the most noisy and incompatible with residences) were allowed.

These changes in Vance, reflect broader trends revealed in The Bartholomew Plan’s zoning map. New residential zoning encouraged upper-class residential movement “out-east,” while the entire downtown became the “engine” of the economic development of the City (industrial productions and commercial trades). Only the lower classes – mostly African-American – were imagined to live downtown, near-by their places of work. Said another way, the plan imposed the image of an “indus-





*A section of the Districts Map of the 1924 City of Memphis Comprehensive Plan (in red the boundary of the Vance Avenue Neighborhood).*



*White (black dots) and "negroes" school-age residents, mapped for the preparation of the 1924 City of Memphis Comprehensive Plan.*



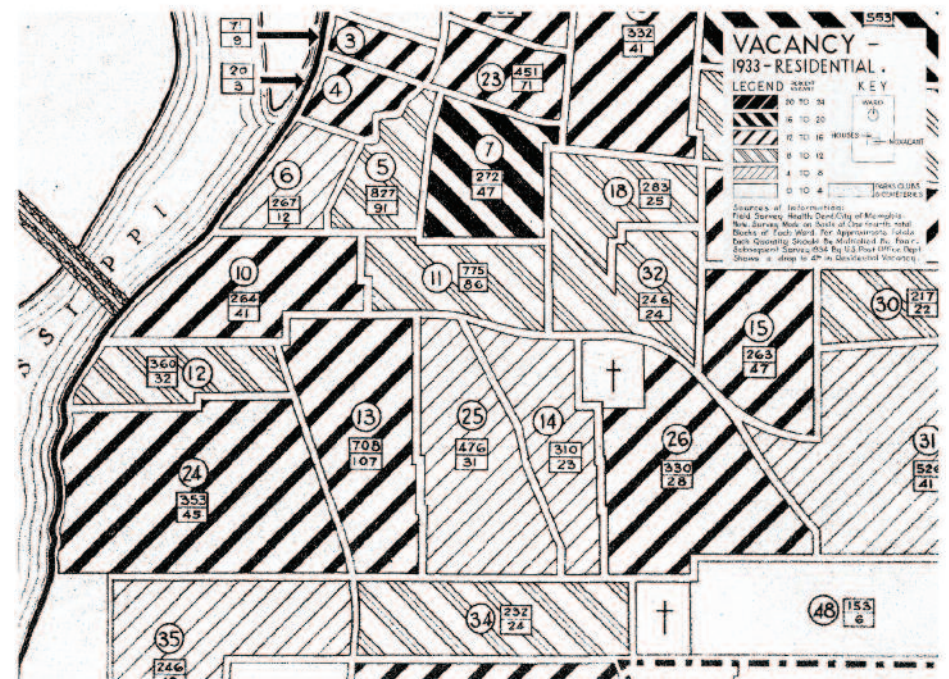
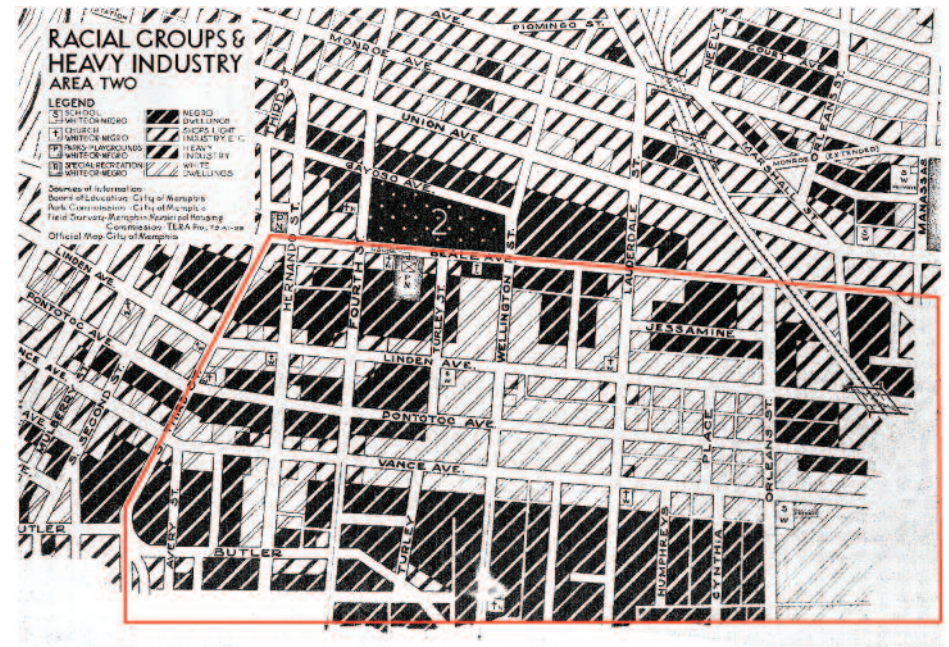




## 2.6 The advent of public housing

Encouraged by New Deal legislation, Downtown Memphis began to be transformed into a living-working area geared toward low-income residents. By the late-1920s, rural workers, mostly African-American sharecroppers, in search of jobs with factories and railroads began to replace the increasingly eastward mobile white downtown residents.<sup>13</sup> These rural newcomers were located in poorly equipped subdivisions in newly developed multifamily units – with communal outdoor toilets – and in former middle class, single family homes that had been converted into boarding houses. In an effort to combat what was perceived as a low-quality residential area in Downtown that was in a general state of urban decline, City Commissioners established the Memphis Municipal Housing Commission in 1933 to analyze living conditions, especially housing quality and health issues (typhoid fever, etc.). The commission surveyed the city, using an index scaled from 1 to 34 that was based on a combination of congestion (n° of people per acre), percent of dilapidation, and a percent of outdoor or communal toilets. The survey map at the bottom of this page) reflected a picture of an unhealthy downtown that was mostly occupied by “slums,” in particular, “negro slums,” that were located on low-lying land and along the city’s bayou system. In 1939 the city established the Memphis Housing Authority with the purpose of replacing these “slums” with federally funded public housing projects, which, across the nation, were being conceived as “temporary” places of residence for families that were losing their houses and jobs to the Depression and an attempt to keep the construction industry alive. In this time period, the urban area between Fourth St., Vance Ave., Lauderdale St., and Mississippi Blvd. was selected to become Foote Homes: the second, largest and most affordable public housing complex for Memphis’ low income African-American population.

Whether or not Memphis Housing Authority’s Foote Homes actually replaced an “unhealthy slum” is a controversial issue. The Memphis Housing Commission’s Survey did not classify the area as a slum based on their index, but simply indicated a “juxtaposition” of location based upon race (white residences were on major roads and “negro” dwellings on minor streets). Both the 1938 Aerial photo and the 1940 Sanborn Map reflect a neighborhood that was occupied by “poor” housing types on only a very minor portion of the total land area. The lot dimensions and building shapes that constitute most of the area reveal a high portion of middle- and upper-middle class housing types. Pictures taken by MHA to document “the worst case scenario” and support the argument for demolition, show duplex shotgun homes in good structural condition, equipped with several brick chimneys and productive home gardens, and built at an ad-







equate distance away from the bayou system along graveled streets. In the background of these photos, larger houses are visible as elements composing the urban fabric of this historic neighborhood.

The perception of urban decay was related to the fact that many middle-class White and African American families had lost their homes during the Depression and many of the homes were left vacant or converted into low-income boarding houses (such as Senator McKellan Home; MHA 1939, p. 25). Even Julia Hooks, early civil rights activist and educator, lost her home at 578 Lauderdale (former Hooks Cottage School), where she was living with her son, Robert Hooks (fine photographer on Beale Street since 1907) and his family (including a less than 10-year-old Benjamin L. Hooks; Hooks 2003, p. 17).

When a redevelopment plan was announced for the neighborhood, with the purpose of addressing “a very unsatisfactory condition that arose when negroes started moving in before some of the old residents had moved out” (MHA 1939, p. 25), various groups, black and white, strongly opposed the decision to tear down the core of what had been for a long time (and mostly still was) a middle-class neighborhood.



On the left page: Negro and White Dwellings (top) in the 1933 and the evaluation of the quality of housing (bottom) by Memphis Housing Commission 1933 Survey.

This page: the 1938 Aerial photo (on the left) shows the density and quality of the neighborhood before the construction of Foote and Cleaborne Homes. On the right, a newspaper clipping covering the protests against MHA's location of Foote Homes.

Rev. T. O. Fuller, pastor of 1st Baptist on St Paul and one of the most active supporters of the Crump Machine, implored Mayor Overton to spare his and other churches, which acted as “effective moral forces,” in the neighborhood. In addition, a coalition of black property owners wrote to the mayor, arguing that the destruction of Vance Street, “one of the best streets for Negroes in the city,” would destroy the stability brought to the black community through homeownership in a decent neighborhood. Area residents bombarded the mayor’s office with letters urging the relocation of the proposed edifice (Foote Homes) a few blocks further south [in the area called Shinertown, where eventually Lemoyne Gardens was built few years later], and both of the daily newspapers published petitions signed by sympathetic citizens of both races. [...] City officials insisted on locating the public housing project on that precise site, regardless of the effect on the residents. In subsequent months some whites owning property on the south side of Vance Street found themselves exempted from relocation; they objected, feeling that they had been singled out to form a “white strip” to hide the black project from the view of passersby on Vance. (Biles 1986, p. 95).





In other words, despite the strong opposition of residents of the neighborhood, city officials decided to physically replace the core of a vibrant community with a subsidized complex where “negroes” were taken care of by whites. This decision reflected the nature of the relationship between races in Memphis at that time: whites needed the African-Americans’ hard work (houses and factories) and votes (Crump’s machine) and in turn, African-Americans needed “services” while being kept “under control.”

Under the flag of progress and beautification, established local architects Furbringer and Frazer Smith and the famous St Louis firm of Harland Bartholomew & Associates (landscape architects) designed a public housing complex that reflected the most advanced principles of modern architecture aimed at guaranteeing air ventilation and maximum functionality (minimum square footage for residential units, repetition of regular modules, controlled distance between buildings, etc.). An irregular placement of buildings and special landscape arrangement were conceived to maximize visual pleasure, and the most advanced technologies were used for construction: a fireproof structure made out of reinforced concrete. In fact, the efficiency of this advanced technology was proven only a few months after construction when a large, accidental explosion occurred in one of the buildings.

The New Foote Homes complex was officially completed on April 21st, 1941. Each unit was equipped with the most modern finishing materials and appliances; while the complex as a whole was served by dedicated services (see pictures) and social spaces that were periodically used for recreational activities (especially the

Foote Homes Auditorium). The inaugural residents of the complex referred to it with the following expressions “the Cadillac of Public Housing,” “A colorful city within a city [...] If care for one’s surrounding is a sign of dignity and pride, residents in the projects had both in abundance. They framed their windows with starched curtains and tailored drapes and planted begonias, roses, and petunias which grew in profusion in the small patches of earth they called their yards.” (Former Foote Homes resident Gloria Wade-Gayles’ autobiography, 1993, p. 10). Many middle-class residents of the neighborhood, who had struggled through the Depression –such as the Hooks Brothers (see picture, Hooks 2003), were able to move into the facilities along with newcomers to the neighborhood. People from different economic and geographical backgrounds were located in the same complex and shared an average period of 10 to 15 years together within the supportive system of Public Housing. At that time, it was used to “get” or “get back” (depending on the case) on one’s feet, encouraging ownership of a house in the immediate surroundings and worship in a stable Church home and, in general, remaining part of the surrounding community.

Both of Julia Hooks’ sons, known as the Hooks brothers, famous “photographers” with a studio on Beale Street, moved into Foote Homes in 1941 with their families (including a young Benjamin Hooks), after having lost their house on S. Lauderdale. Ben’s family lived there until 1949, when they bought a 3-story house at 664 Vance Ave, across the street from St. Agnes academy (source: Hooks 2004, p. 18, 19). As a young resident of Foote Homes, enjoying the communal playground of the complex, Benjamin Hooks describes how different the social perception of today is from when it was built: not a ghetto of concentrated and everlasting poverty, but an uplifting place of solidarity and community:

*Photo documentation of the appliances and services of the new Foote Homes Public Housing Complex in 1941 (source: Shelby County archive)*



Among the first residents of Foote Homes there were the Hooks Family (on the left, with a young Benjamin in the center) and Rufus Thomas' family (Rufus in the center, and his daughter Carla Thomas on the right).

*In 1939, public housing was not relegated to the poor and destitute, or second- and third-generation inhabitants. The projects were segregated, as was private housing. There were a lot of upwardly mobile black people who lived in Foote Homes. They shared the same values of making your apartment your home. [...] Many of the children I remembered from the Projects grew up and built successful careers. [...] The projects were not then, and need not be today, mere breeding grounds for despair, hopelessness, and spiritual moral decay. The Foote Homes was a safety net for my family. It was the ladder that we used to regroup and rebuild from economic dislocation. (Hooks 2004, p. 18)*

While white residents of the Vance Avenue neighborhood continued to move out of the neighborhood, taking

their institutions with them<sup>14</sup>, more and more rural workers migrating to urban settings continued to move-in as they were pushed out of the cotton business where technology was increasingly replacing human labor. Among these migrants was

*"Bee Bee King," (listed as King, Bee B. in the city directory) and his wife Martha, who, in late 1951, rented a cozy room in a house a few blocks south of Beale, at 376 South Lauderdale, that was among the once-grand homes that had been subdivided, tenement style. B. B. was a local radio celebrity and played guitar in clubs, but you could also see his shorts hanging out to dry like everyone else's. The Abe Scharff YMCA building on Lauderdale and Linden, constructed in 1947, [today, incorporated into the highly rendered JIFF Building], "sat barely a block away from King's flat." It was here where B.B. and his pick-up band recorded "three o' Clock blues"15*

*in a rented, vacant room that was converted into a makeshift sound studio (Lauterbach p. 211).*

Unfortunately, many of the neighborhood's once-grand homes, including Julia Hooks' and Robert Church's, were demolished a few years later to create space for another public housing project, Cleaborn Homes (opened in 1954). By the mid- fifties, Vance had become largest concentration of public housing for blacks, but remained the center of African-American business and commerce and culture. The neighborhood was a blend of middle and working class residents, many of whom were kept under strict rules (MHA code of behavior for public housing), situated close to railroads, factories and polluting activities (e. g. the an incinerator was located nearby "Negro" High School Booker T. Washington and the Negro baseball stadium). Most of the people that crowded Beale Streets' theatre and music venues dur-



On the left: a NAACP membership drive on 1978-04-23 is staffed by Lorene Thomas (center) and Maxine Smith (on her left); (Digital Image (c) 2011, University of Memphis Libraries Preservation and Special Collections Department).

on the right: Cornelia Crenshaw at her house on Vance, striking against MLGW, shows how she lives without utilities (Digital Image (c) 2011, University of Memphis Libraries Preservation and Special Collections Department).



ing its golden years lived nearby and listened to the local radio station, WDIA, whose announcers were often familiar voices from “the project.” Rufus Thomas, soon to become a Stax Records blues superstar, and his family lived in Foote Homes, at 435 Vance, apartment G (source: City Directory, 1945), from day one until 1952 (when they moved south to Kerr Street), where he was in close proximity to his performance spaces on Beale Street and his announcer position at WDIA. As youngster in the Foote Homes Housing Project, his daughter and future “Queen of the Memphis Soul”, Carla Thomas remembers her father teaching all of the neighborhood kids the hambone and hand jive, to recite nursery rhymes in proto-rap rhythms, and a little bit of tap dancing (Bowman 2000, p. 15).

*I grew up across from Church Park in the projects. Beale Street was right there - it was like a way of life for us. I was around music all the time and around Dad all the time. And he would take a lot of the kids to [the Palace Theatre]. He was the emcee of a lot of those amateur shows. We'd all be holding hands - Mom and all of us - and we'd go watch the show. It was interesting because people would just allow their feelings [to come out] "Man, get off the stage!" It was just fun. (Carla Thomas quoted in Freeland 2001, pp. 58, 59)*

As a cultural product whose quality reflects the complex social system that has created and produced it, Memphis' music reveals the tight relations between the rich

music scene of Beale Street and the high level of organizing by African-Americans, ready to claim their civil rights through a sophisticated set of strategies. In Memphis, like many other Southern cities, a new generation of well-educated leaders was prepared to take the lead of the local movement. After WWII the GI Bill of Rights, providing education benefits for WWII Veterans, helped encourage the upward mobility of many residents of public housing. Among these was Benjamin Hooks who came back to Memphis in 1949 after military service in Europe and a law degree from DePaul University College of Law in Chicago. Upon his return, he opened the second black law firm in the city of Memphis at 164 Beale Street. Hooks was not alone, as the economic growth of this post-war period spurred the start up of many black-owned businesses. For example, Dr. J. E. Walker, the founder of Universal Life In-

insurance Company, located on Hernando and Beale, became the 2nd African American company in the United States to attain a million-dollar-capital status in 1947 (Mitchell 2009). By 1948, the company moved in to a new Egyptian Revival Building that still remains today at 480 Linden. During this time, the Mutual Federal Savings and Loan here, another neighborhood financial institution, was established at 588 Vance Avenue by Hooks and civil rights attorney Archie W. Willis – who, in 1964, became the first African American elected to the Tennessee General Assembly since the 1880s (Tucker 1979). the Mutual Federal was housed in “one of the most modern and efficient buildings in the city” (Hooks 2004, p. 85), the same building that Russel Sugarmon – who would also be elected state legislator – soon after started his legal practice (Russel Sugarmon interview, Crossroads to Freedom archive).

These leaders, whose political careers grew out of their early service as civil rights attorneys, fought on one of the major battlefields for racial emancipation, the Court. Behind them, there were the many many “common” yet very courageous people willing to take their cases to the Court, to pay their membership to the local branch of the NAACP, and to register to vote in the most crucial local and national electoral competitions. In fact, many of the active organizers were from the “project” just around the corner from the local NAACP chapter headquarters and Hooks, Willis, and Sugarmon’s legal office, on Vance. Among them were:

- Community activist, Cornelia Crenshaw, after whom the Public Library on Vance is named, who lived at 603 Vance Avenue; called herself an advocate for the underdog; and worked to make Institutions accountable to ordinary citizens. Not without some criticism, she moved not only against the white establishment of power but also powerful black leaders;
- Lorene Thomas, Rufus Thomas’ wife and Carla Thomas’ mother, remembered by her son and STAX musician Marvell Thomas: “she was a stay-at-home mom until I was about six years old, and she decided to go to nursing school. I admired her sitting up burning the midnight oil studying medical textbooks. It was a lot of very heavy stuff. She became a nurse at John Gaston Hospital and was a civil rights and political activist. To this day, I think she holds the record for getting more membership commitments for the NAACP than anybody in the history of the organization” (Marvell Thomas’ interview published by the Downtowner – 4/22/2012);
- Foote Homes resident Drewsy Anderson “had one leg and crutches but nothing slowed her down. She took her invitation [to the 1960 inaugural ceremonies in Washington for the new President John F. Kennedy] to the Foote Homes Tenant Association and they raised the money and sent her. [...] Well that invitation..., people here now have that framed on the wall” (interview with Russel Sugarmon, Crossroads to Freedom).

## 2.7 “After that, the neighborhood was never the same again”

Different sources describe the Vance Avenue neighborhood during the 1950s and 1960s in very different ways. On one side, it is a lively, neighborhood where residents’ needs were being met. On the other side, it’s an obsolete, declining neighborhood (depicted by the new emerging political and planning discourse fed by the availability of federal funds for “Urban Renewal”) and on the other side. Residents of this period described it:

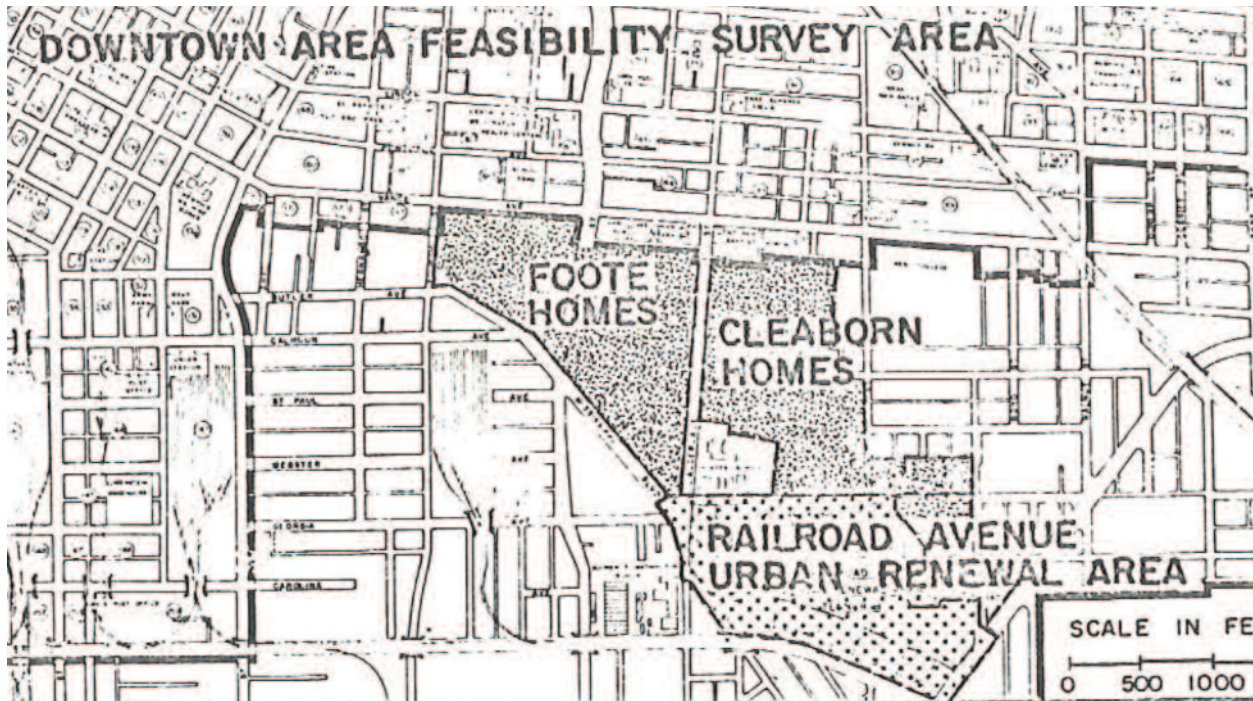
*“We had all of the stores, greeners, all of the things; all of the stores and things were down Beale Street. And then you could always – you lived in the neighborhood – walk. Down Beale Street, up to Main Street, and back. It was just an awful lot of people in the area at the time.” (Eddie Mae Hawkins’ interview, Crossroads to Freedom Archive 3/6/ 2007, Resident at 292 4th 1954-1968)*

*“This was the center of Black life, business and commerce. You could have everything you needed if you were black: a pharmacy, doctors, colleges – such as the business college at the corner of Wellington and Vance – everything was right here” (Interview with Debra Nell Brittenum, Foote Homes Resident between 1949 and 1955, 8/26/2012)*

In contrast, the “official” discourse on the decline of the Beale Street where, supposedly, slum conditions prevailed over a once “vital” community, followed the same pattern used to merit the construction of Public Housing in Vance Avenue. First, Urban Renewal funds were used to “redevelop” a dense 47 acres of a low-income, residential area east of Mississippi, south of Georgia, west of Crump, and north of the Frisco Railroad, under the label of “Railroad Avenue Area, Project No. Tenn R-8” (see 1938 aerial photo). By 1961, in the advancement of this project, thousands of families had already been relocated, and the land was cleared out and ready for sale to private developers as “light industrial uses.”

In the meantime, federal funds for “planning Urban Renewal” were used to fund surveys of the entire, downtown area to determine the feasibility of other Urban Renewal projects (Ewald Associates 1964). This federally funded survey resulted in the designation of 8 areas which could be undertaken as individual Urban Renewal Projects: Beale Street was designated Project no 1, since it was considered to be the best area, “to provide a balance to the Civic Center Area, to help prevent further deterioration and loss of business from the CBD, to preserve an area of historic value, to provide tourist





and entertainment attraction, and to provide a residential development identified with the magnetic draw of Beale Street” (Ewald Associates pp. F8-F11). An additional detailed survey conducted in 1965, showed that in the area just north of Vance a “disorderly mixture of land uses,” whose lack of consistency of land use at that time (unlike today) was considered an “indicator of blight and environmental decline” (Ewald Associates 1968). This survey also found that the most conservable structures (Ewald Associates 1968), as well as the ones with the highest “appraised values” (MHA 1968), were located within the Central Business District in the western portion of the survey area. These surveys also found that most of the residents south of Beale Street and East of Third Street were “overcrowded” (See map of people in the Beale Street Tenn R-7 project). The plan was to “transform” the Beale Street area into a Downtown Shopping Mall – through the demolition and replacement of most of the physical structures of the area, as well as the relocation of local residents to areas outside of downtown.

Opponents of this project were owners of local businesses, soon-to-be relocated residents, musicians, such as W. C. Handy and violinist, Thomas Pinkston, and leaders in the black community, such as Lt. George W. Lee, who, in 1966, worked to have Beale Street listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the birthplace of the blues (Rushing 2009, p. 130-135). Once again, voices opposing the development plans of MHA went unheard. In 1965, bulldozers hit historic Beale Street and business owners were forced to “sell,” and move elsewhere. Famous, Andrew “Sunbeam” Mitchell, owner of the most important music venues on Beale, relocated to Georgia Ave. and



*On the top: boundaries of areas designated for Urban Renewal in the early 1960s.*

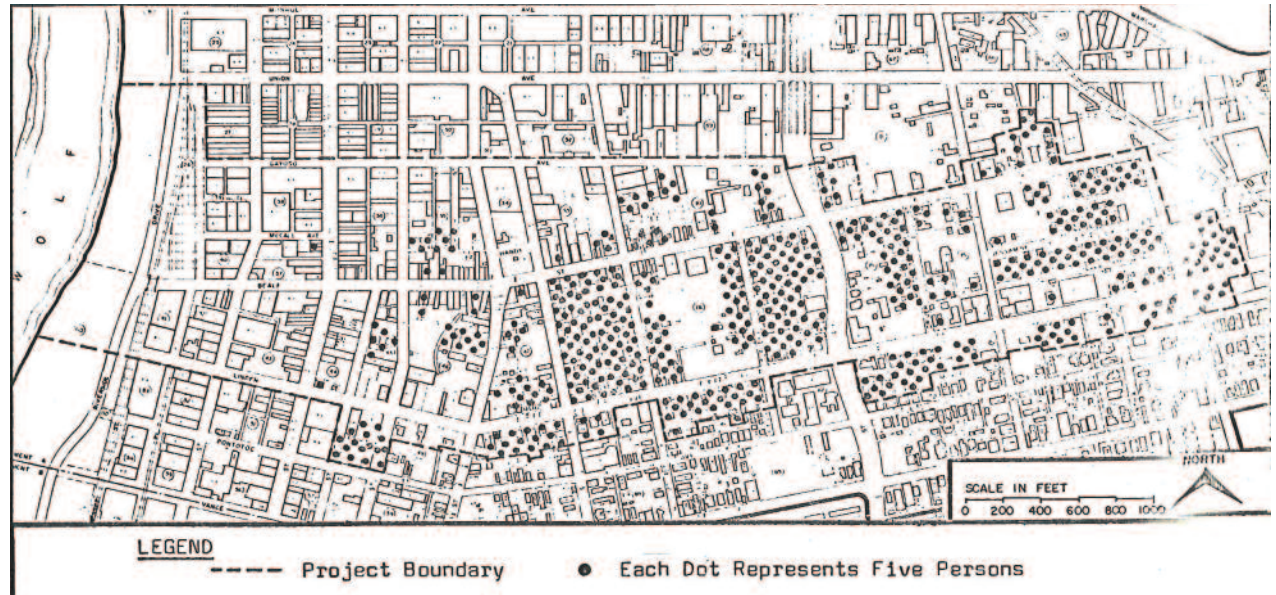
*On the bottom: the 1938 aerial photo with the boundary of the “Railroad Avenue Area, Project No Tenn R-8.”*



opened what became the largest nightclub in Memphis, the Paradise Club. Many other business owners in the community were forced to follow suit and this began a process that, in a few years time, had irreversibly changed the physical, social, and economic fabric of Beale Street and the neighborhood (Lauterbach 2011, p. 282).

Not surprisingly, people have described the trauma of the physical demolition of the neighborhood as an occurrence strongly connected to what is probably the most well know event in Memphis history: the 1968 sanitation workers strike and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's assassination on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel.

The Vance Avenue neighborhood, and in particular Clayborn Temple, located at the corner of Hernando and Pontotoc, became the headquarters of both the sanitation strike and the support activities carried out by the many community groups organized around them. What had begun in February as a Union-sponsored strike against unequal treatment of black and white sanitation workers, had within a few weeks time become a citywide Civil Rights Movement that was officially supported by many African-American organizations (NAACP, Black Churches, the Shelby County Democratic Club, etc.). The violent episodes that disrupted the marches and the strong retaliation of public authorities that sorrowfully, culminated in the assassination of Dr. King – whose corpse was exposed for a final farewell at R. S. Lewis Funeral Home on Vance Ave. (Hooks' autobiography, p.77) – were the beginnings of a long phase of abandonment and decline for the Vance Ave. neighborhood. Prompted by April of 1968's rioting and curfews, the presence of the National Guard in the streets, and a growing fear of violence, many long-time residents, business owners, and investors abandoned the area. In the aftermath of these events, the neighborhood was never the same.



Top: Relocation Residents in the Beale Street Area (source: Williams Donald 1970, p. 50, adapted from Ewald Associates 1968).

Bottom: Newspaper clippings from The Commercial Appeal on July 25 1973 on the desolation left in the neighborhood by Urban Renewal (source: University of Memphis Libraries, Special Collections).



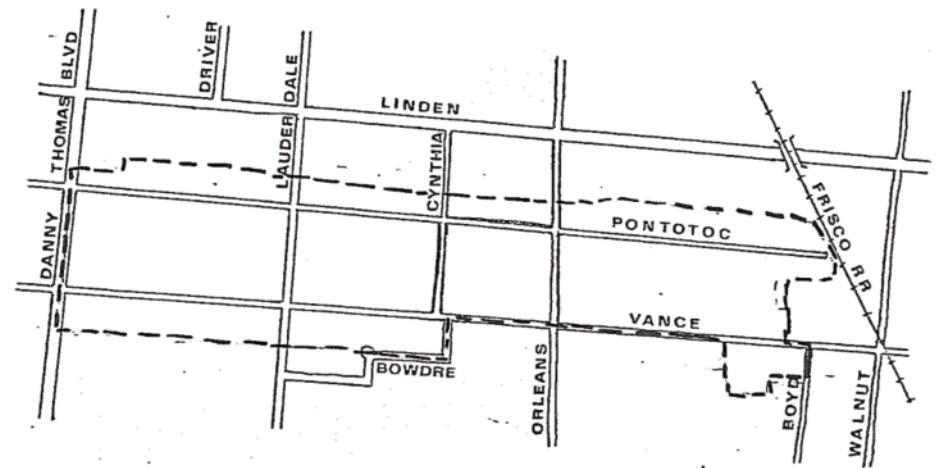
## 2.8 Relocation, Demolition, Redevelopment, ... Again? Really?

Throughout the 1970s and the 80s a combination of the collapse of many local industries (cotton, railroad, lumber, pharmaceuticals), the inefficient management of public housing complexes by the local “troubled” Housing Authority,<sup>16</sup> and an increasing flight east by inner city residents affected the entire downtown area, which, subsequently, almost became a ghost town. Most of the residents of our neighborhood, surrounded by large portions of land left vacant by Urban Renewal and increasingly vacant industrial facilities to the south, decided to move east. A few long-term business owners resisted the overall decline of the neighborhood and many public housing residents, who had withstood a long period of lack of opportunity for upward mobility, remained.

In an effort to preserve what was left of the historic houses in the Vance Pontotoc Area, a Vance-Pontotoc Historic District was entered into the National Register of Historic Places on March 19th, 1980 (see map of the district, source: application). During this period, the City of Memphis Division of Housing and Community Development attempted to begin an Urban Homesteading Project by using preservation tax credits to encourage developers to rehabilitate buildings in the neighborhood. The project failed after the first building that was to be rehabilitated (donated to the city by the owner not interested in preserving it) was completely destroyed by a suspicious fire. There was some evidence that local residents were trying to discourage what they perceived as a gentrification effort. By 1987, only 36 out of 92 historic buildings of the district were still in place, and the District was removed from the National Register of Historic Places.

In the 1990s, after decades of decline, the local establishment and the business community focused their attention again on Downtown Memphis, where consistent public and private investment was aimed at revitalizing the urban core of Memphis. After years of debate, what remained of Beale Street was redeveloped by a private real estate developer as an “Entertainment District” and new clubs and attractions opened (B. B. King’s opened in 1991). Between 2002 and 2004, public funds were also used to build FedEx Forum, home of the Memphis Grizzlies NBA and the largest public building in Memphis. Other major investments have also taken place over the past two decades both in the South main district, and in the medical district.

At the edge of such crucial investments, it was poignant for the City to deal with the quality of the two low-income housing complexes located just two blocks away. Foote Homes was, in the early 90s, the target of an intense intervention of de-densification and physical improvement. In 1996 MHA entirely renovated the complex. Federal funds were used to demolish 13 of the original 36 buildings (\$4.2 million) and renovate the



*Top: the Boundary of what was listed in the National Register of the Historic Place as the Vance-Pontotoc Historic District between 1980 and 1987.*

*Bottom: one of the houses of the Vance-Pontotoc Historic District during a fire on April 1982 (source: Memphis Press Scimitar, University of Memphis Libraries, Special Collection).*



*Cleaborn Homes before (top) and after (bottom) clearance in 2010 (source: bing maps and google maps).*

remaining 420 dwelling units (\$23 million). Part of the renovation included: the installation of new electrical, water, gas and heating and air-conditioning systems; the aesthetic remodeling of the small entrance porches; the conversion of some units with added wheelchair ramps to meet the accessibility requirements of ADA, installation of support railings and rods in the bathrooms and the addition of buzzers outside the front door for the hard-of-hearing. With the exception of superficial additions to the entrances, the buildings' external appearance and the units' internal floor plan were not significantly altered by the renovation. Despite this recent renovation, Foote and Cleaborn Homes became the target, in 2008, for redevelopment.

In 2008, following a HOPE VI model of action that had been applied in the other public housing complexes (except for Lauderdale Courts), collaborating agencies HCD and MHA – currently under the same leadership – released a new plan for the area, named Triangle Noir. The plan was to be used to apply for a combination of public and private funding sources – including the federal HOPE VI grant program – to fund the demolition of the old buildings, relocate most of the residents with the use of Mobile Section 8 Vouchers<sup>17</sup>, and contract with a private developer to manage the design, reconstruction, and management of a new mixed-income complex. In 2010, Cleaborn Homes became the target for Memphis' 5th HOPE VI redevelopment of the city of Memphis, and is today in the process of redevelopment.

While construction workers are giving birth to a new senior complex building on S. Lauderdale, in the site where Julie Hooks' and Robert Church's houses once stood, the rest of neighborhood is wondering what is going to happen to the remainder of it under this "redevelopment" pressure. In particular, the big question is: what about Foote Homes, the last remaining Public Housing project of the city of Memphis? Is it going to be, once again targeted for clearance and relocation, in what has been so far the most "urban renewed" community in the history of Memphis?



## NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. The trade of slave labor was a lucrative but illegal business kept behind closed doors until the 40s, when it finally became legal. Benefiting from this legal designation Memphis found itself, between 1845 and 1850, quickly becoming the largest slave market in the U.S. and found its endeavors quite financially profitable (Biles 1986).

2. The expansion of business is interwoven with the fact that in the 50s Memphis became the biggest in-land cotton market in the world (Sigafos 1980).

3. South Memphis was the fashionable residential area with little business activity but relied on the concentrated and established business community in the neighboring City of Memphis, north of Union Avenue, that was advantaged by its strategic geomorphology (the riverfront to the north was more suitable for landing and docking boats for trade along the Mississippi).

4. Even if the military rule was over, Union soldiers remained in place mostly to help federal authorities, running the Freedmen bureau (established in march of the same year with the purpose of assisting blacks in the transition from slavery – officially illegal now – to freedom), and to maintain order in a still very conflicted place.

5. The school was named after Dr. Francis J. LeMoyne, a Pennsylvania doctor and abolitionist who donated \$20,000 to the American Missionary Association to build the school.

6. Although the construction of Beale Street First Baptist Church started in 1963, the cornerstone of what was the first African American Church in the South wasn't set until 1871 (Bond 2005 Jenkins 2009). The lack of resources and the yellow fever epidemics (who killed the pastor in 1877) made progress slow. The Church was completed in 1878.

7. An accurate analysis of basic urban dimensions of the neighborhood shows, for instance, that in this part of town developers never developed low quality subdivisions that, at the same time, were being developed in more suburban areas, where "lots were being sold with 12½ foot frontages, without alleys behind, and laid out in long and monotonous lineal fashion. The developers in many instances had no regard for the logical development of a city street system." (Sigafos 1980, p. 101)

8. See for instance the legal struggle against segregation between African-Americans and the Memphis Street Railway Company between 1890 and 1920 (Goings and Page 2004).

9. Among the 2nd Congregation parishioners was the soon-to-be state legislator Thomas Cassels that Ida hired in 1884 to represent her as lawyer in her lawsuit against the Chesapeake & Ohio & Southwestern Railroad Company.

10. 8 out of the 9 members of the special Planning commission that was established in 1919 and commissioned Bartholomew to design the plan were members of the Chamber of Commerce (Memphis City Planning Commission 1924).

11. The plan identified the following streets to be widened (Memphis City Planning Commission 1924, p. 36): Linden, Vance, Calhoun-St Paul, Georgia, and Iowa running east-west; Mississippi running north-west toward south-east; Raybourn (3rd today), 4th, Wellington (Danny Thomas today), Lauderdale, Orleans, and Walnut running North-South. In particular, Wellington is identified to become the new "internal" parkway.

The transit was also reorganized according to the principle that street railroads had to be abandoned, and substituted with buses. Within the neighborhood, in particular, a new line along Mississippi is preferred to the line going east on Vance and turning south on New Orleans.

12. Among those business there was the Lewis Sr. Funeral Home, established in 1914 on Beale and 4th, which then moved in the current location as R. S. Lewis and Sons Funeral Homes on Vance and 4th.

13. Since 1933, federal funds were given to planters and, on paper, to their tenants (mostly African-American sharecroppers) not to grow cotton with the purpose of making prices go up. However, everywhere in the South federal officials "advised planters how to circumvent the few provisions protecting the rights of tenants. [...] Some dispossessed sharecroppers accepted "day labor" and remained in the countryside in an increasingly destitute state. Many others picked up and moved into the nearest sizable city." (Biles, p. 72).

14. Agnes Academy and Siena College, one of the oldest and prestigious white Institutions of the neighborhood, relocated east between 1951 and 1953.

15. Three o'clock blues was an instant smash hit landing at the top of the chart for best selling rhythm & blues and earning the juke-boxed plays in the R&B category.

16. During the 80s and the 90s MHA was listed twice among the least performing agencies in the country, after audits that showed evidence of mismanagement of federal funds aimed at managing and maintaining the properties.

17. A mobile Section 8 voucher allows a former public housing resident to relocate to free market housing units and pay a fee amounting to only 30% of their income, while the difference between such 30% and the total amount of the rent is covered with federal funds.

An aerial photograph of a city neighborhood. In the upper left, there is a large, circular, blue-roofed structure, possibly a pool or a large tent. Below it, a large, light-colored building with a flat roof is visible. To the right of this building, there is a cluster of smaller, red-roofed buildings. A road runs horizontally across the middle of the image. In the lower right, there is a large, dark, curved structure, possibly a bridge or a large building. The text "3 COMMUNITY PROFILE" is overlaid in white on the right side of the image.

# 3 COMMUNITY PROFILE



### 3.1 Physical Description

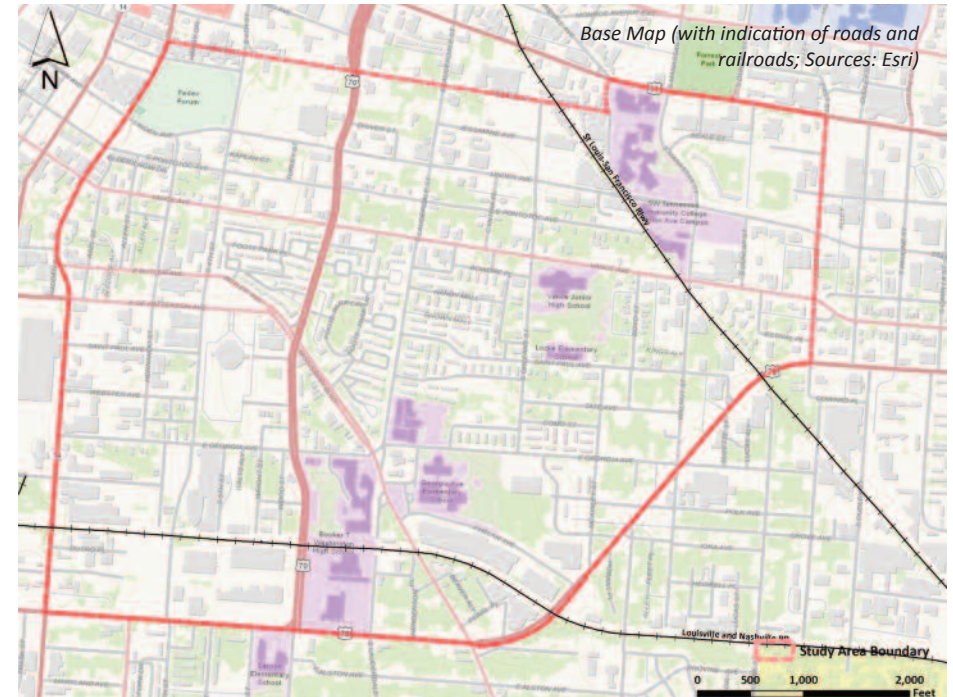
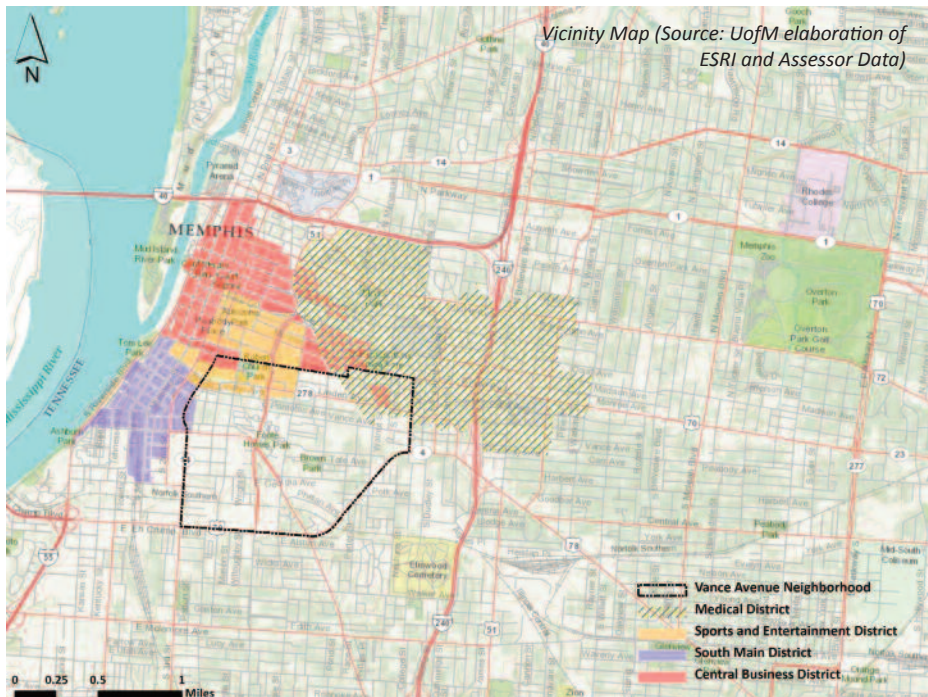
Although the geographic extent of a community can never be established with absolute precision, the Vance Avenue Neighborhood is usually perceived to be that part of the city south of Beale, north of Crump, east of 3rd and west of East street.

The neighborhood, which takes the name from what was historically a main commercial corridor, has a very strategic location (see vicinity map) between urban areas in which the City has invested a significant amount of development funds and energies over the past few decades.

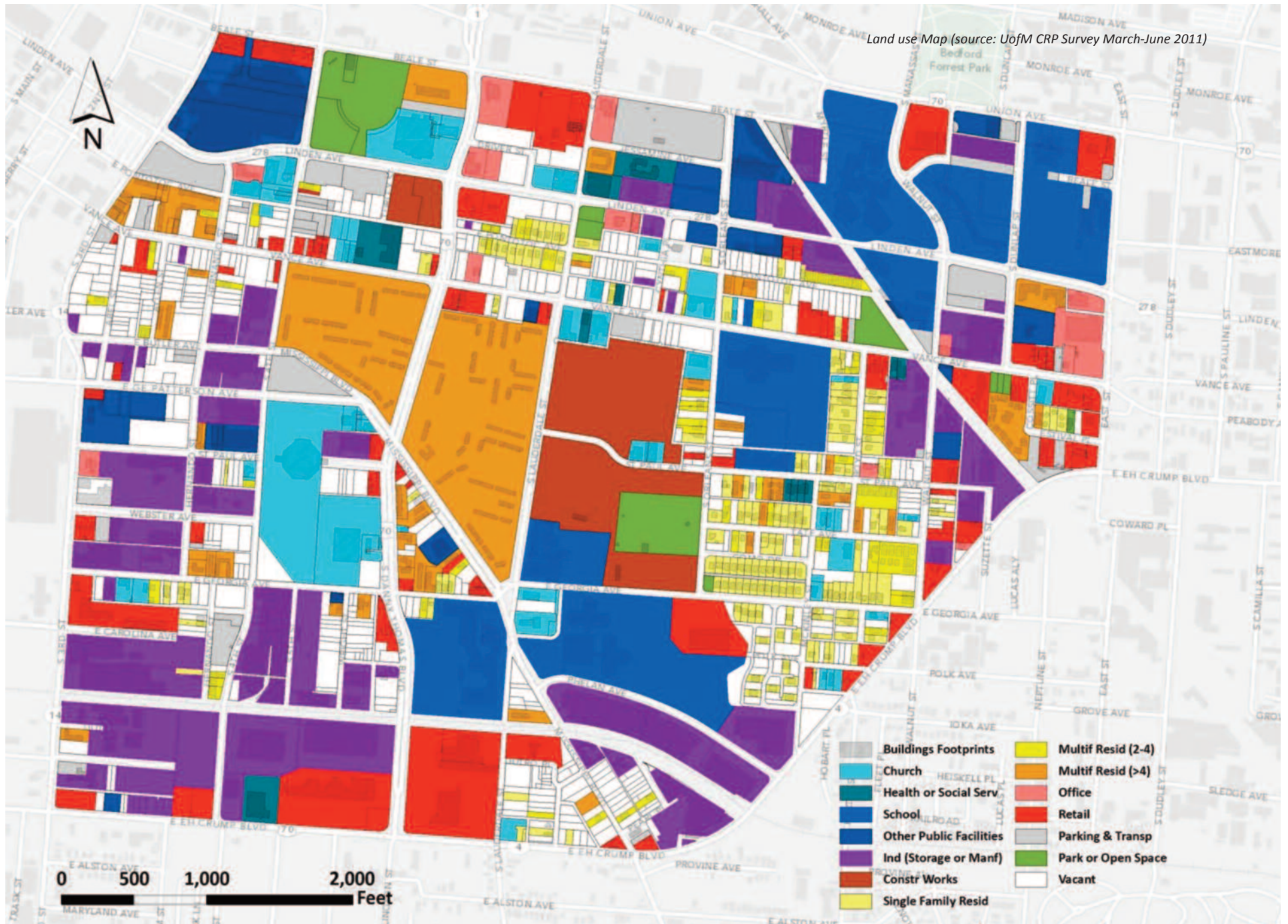
Along 3<sup>rd</sup>, the neighborhood overlaps for a small portion with the South Main District, the historic area overlooking the Mississippi river bluff – today a luxury housing development – and includes the southern portion of Main Street, where all the recently renovated historic cotton warehouses have become residential lofts, bar and restaurant as well as small retails and arts galleries. The north-west corner of the neighborhood overlaps with the Sport and Entertainment district which includes the FedEx Forum, the city's sports arena and home to the Memphis Grizzlies NBA team, and the Beale Street Tourist

District, one of the most successful tourist destinations in the South. North of the Entertainment district is Memphis Central Business District. The north-east corner of the neighborhood overlaps with the Medical District, where urban development is linked with the concentration of Medical facilities (hospitals and health-related research facilities) and ancillary services (housing for health employees, parking, etc.).

Despite their vicinity to Memphis' most economically lively areas, the 754 acres located within the neighborhood boundary are quite scarcely populated in comparison with Downtown or other successful inner-city neighborhoods. 67% of the land in Vance is developed or developable while 31% is occupied by streets and public spaces, and 2% is occupied by the regional railroads. The physical structure of the neighborhood (see base map) is a mostly regular grid, which is transversally cut by Mississippi Boulevard (north-west toward south-east) and Crump Boulevard/Highway 78 (which runs north-east toward south-west between east and Mississippi before running a 45 degree curve). Three major physical barriers divide the neighborhood in geographically "separate" segments: Danny Thomas Boulevard/Highway 70 bisects the neighborhood on a north-south axis, the St Louis-St Francisco Railway cuts out the north-east portion of









the neighborhood, and the Louisville and Nashville Railroads runs east-west bisecting the southern fifth of the area.

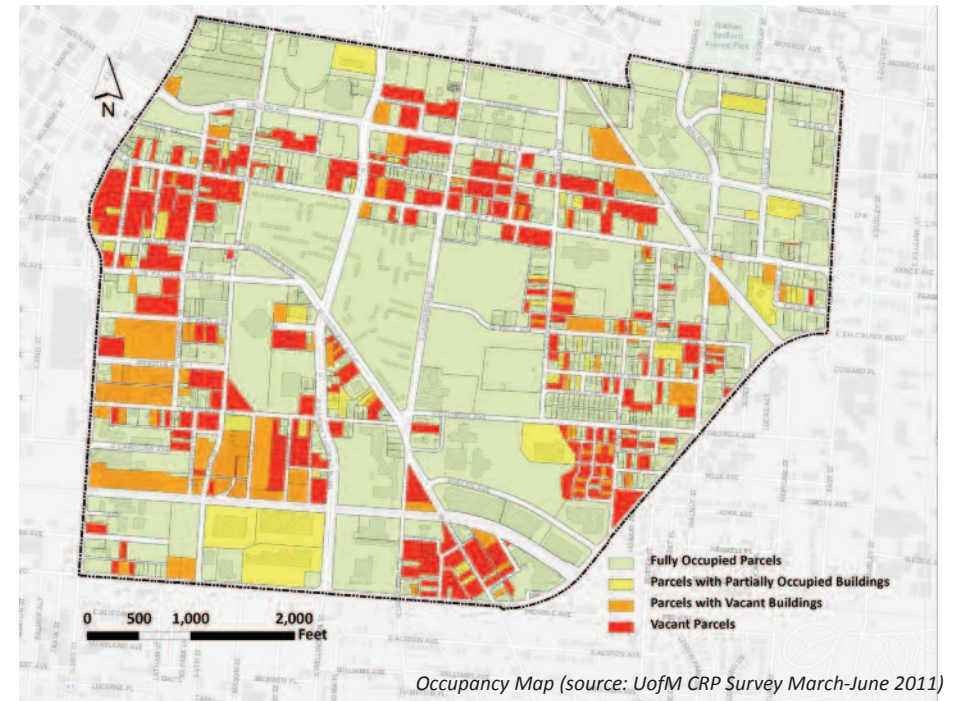
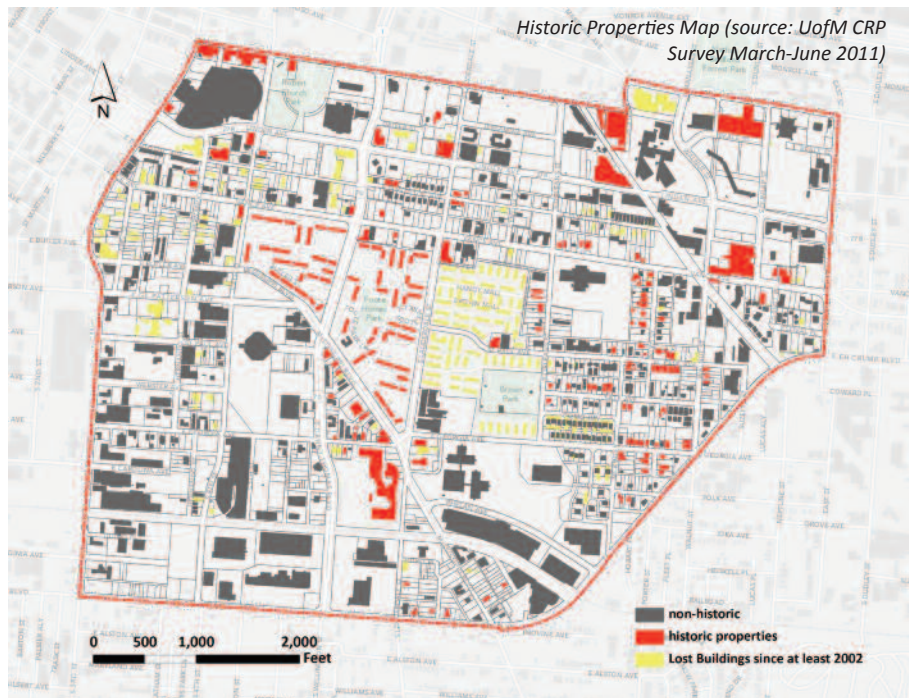
Industrial parcels (in purple in the land use map), such as warehouses and factories, but also drycleaners, auto shops, fast foods, and big-box retailers for comparison goods such as auto parts and tires, are concentrated along the railroads and along Crump Blvd. Smaller scale industrial lots, mostly warehouses, are also scattered south of Vance, east of Third Street, and west of Danny Thomas. The portion of the neighborhood east of the St Louis-San Francisco Railway is mostly occupied by Institutional uses (UT, South-west Tennessee Community College) and big box retail activities on Union that are functionally disconnected to the rest of the area.

The remainder of the neighborhood is characterized by a mix of uses typical of a residential area. The residential core of the neighborhood is what remains of the two Public Housing projects, Foote Homes and Cleaborn Homes, built by the Memphis Housing Authority between 1939 and 1954. After Foote's "renovation" between 1994 and 1996 and Cleaborn demolition in 2011 (soon to be replaced by new mixed income housing

complex named Cleaborn Pointe at Heritage Landing) TOT of the original TOT housing units still host TOT low-income families. Foote and Cleaborn/Heritage Landing are surrounded by what remains of highly historic residential districts (see the historic properties map) with a prevalence of single family houses or duplexes with few commercial brick-buildings.

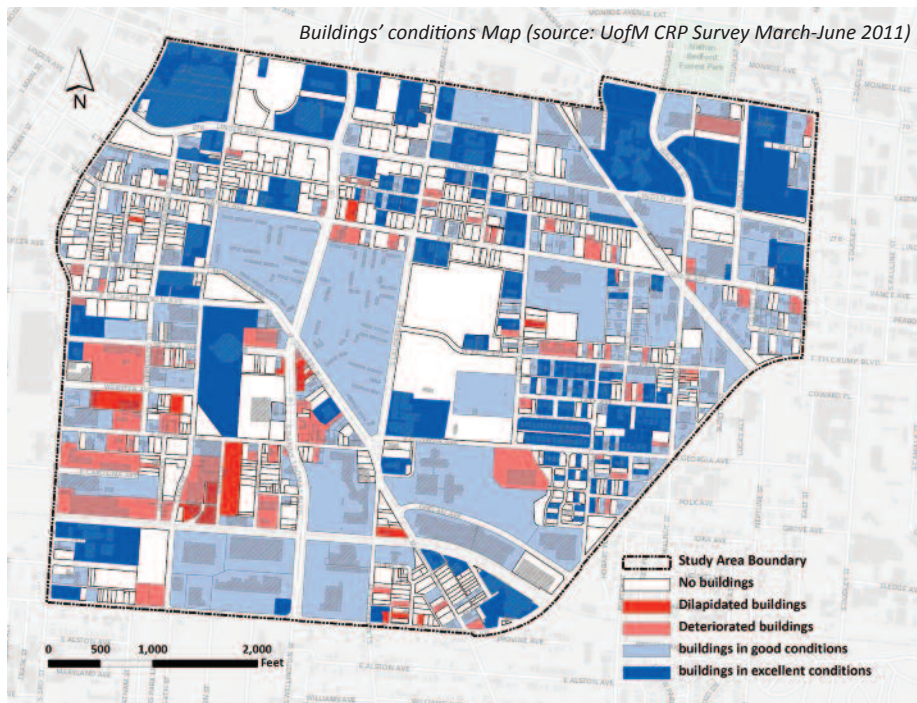
The area that is better preserved, with only the TOT % of vacant plots, is the one located south of Vance, East of Orleans, North of Crump, and includes the St Paul historic district characterized by a mix of Queen Anne style houses and a peculiar string Craftsman Bungalow styled duplexes. Other historic houses of various type (single- and multifamily craftsman bungalows, shotgun, Victorians, etc.) are located along Boyd, Tate, and Georgia. Recent affordable housing developments are located between Como, Ioka, McKinley, and Orleans (MHA's single family houses and McCormac Baron's McKinley Park) and on St Paul (Presley Place built and managed by Memphis' Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association - MIFA).

Located North of Vance and South of Linden is an area once known as the Vance



Pontotoc Historic District. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 19, 1980, it included the city's only concentration of large residences built between 1870 and 1905 in a variety of architectural styles and design. Unfortunately very few of the original physical structures are still in place, namely, the two Victorian houses on South Lauderdale with their carriage house in the back; an upper-middle class multifamily in Romanesque style on Pontotoc; and several historic houses and commercial brick-buildings on Vance. With the exception of a new affordable housing development on Pontotoc between Danny Thomas and South Lauderdale built by St. Patrick Development Corporation, the lost structures have not been replaced by new ones and TOT % of the land is vacant or occasionally used as parking lots (the FedEx Forum is only few blocks away).

Other historic residential subdivisions –one located south of Vance, East of 3rd and north of Mississippi, and the other located East of Lauderdale, West of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, and north of Crump – are characterized by an even higher land vacancy rate, respectively TOT% and TOT%.



In all these residential areas very little neighborhood-oriented retail remains, and is dominated by corner grocery stores that are not able to provide access to fresh and affordable food to residents, who suffer from the absence of a full-service grocery (the closest one is about 2.5 miles away, and is reachable with public transportation by taking at least two buses). The neighborhood is served by several public educational facilities, which cover both primary and secondary education (in dark blue on the Land Use Map). Due to Memphis City School District's high financial difficulties, Locke Elementary and Georgia Elementary have been closed (in 2004 and 2012, respectively), and 1st to 4th grade students have been reassigned to La Rose Elementary, South of Crump, or optionally some attend St Patrick Elementary School, a private Jubilee school on Linden, where the majority of students are admitted with a full scholarship and qualify for the Free Lunch Program. Three other important city Schools successfully serve 5th to 12th grade youth in the area: Vance Middle, on the historic home site of St. Agnes Academy; the Historic Booker T. Washington High, awarded with the 2011 Obama's Race to the Top High School Commencement Challenge for having improved its graduation rate from 55 % to more than 80 % in 3 years; the MLK Academy, on South Lauderdale and Georgia, dedicated to expelled and incarcerated students in transition to the traditional school environment.

Seventeen different Churches of various Faiths are located within the neighborhood, serving not only locals, but also many outsiders (mostly former residents). Some of the Churches also manage additional outreach centers and facilities that, together with several non-profits, are able to provide services for low-income residents (recreational activities, sports and after school programs for kids, basic health care, food programs, affordable or temporary housing, job training for ex-offenders and unemployed, etc. The Cornelia Crenshaw Public Library on Vance and Foote Homes Community Center are the only two public recreational facilities. The future of the neighborhood's three local public parks is uncertain. The historic African American Church Park is in the process of being re-designed by the City Division of Parks and Neighborhoods. Brown Park, that was once part of the Cleaborn Homes complex is in the process of being redesigned within the new Cleaborn Point at Heritage Landing site plan. A small playground located on Vance and south-west of the St. Louis and San Francisco Railway is under-maintained and perceived as unsafe by local residents. Currently, the most popular open spaces are located within the Foote Homes complex. Although portrayed by local newspapers as a cradle for crime and loitering, a closer look at Foote playgrounds during the after-school hours and to Foote Homes Park, the location of the annual spring festival, offers a very different perspective: here it is possible to glimpse a community that has managed to

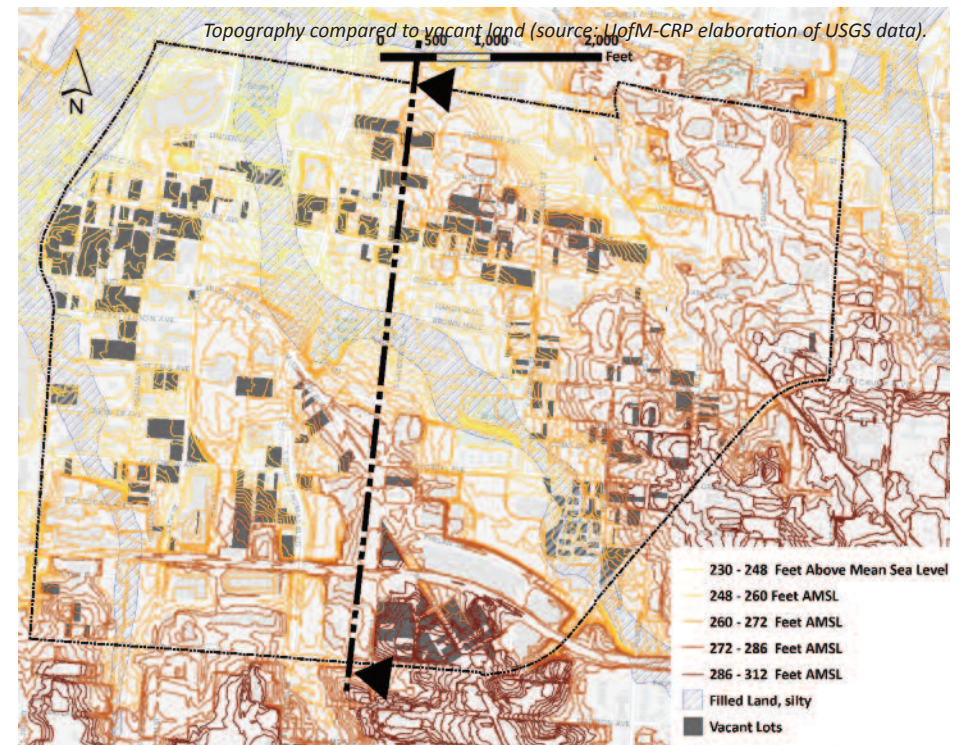
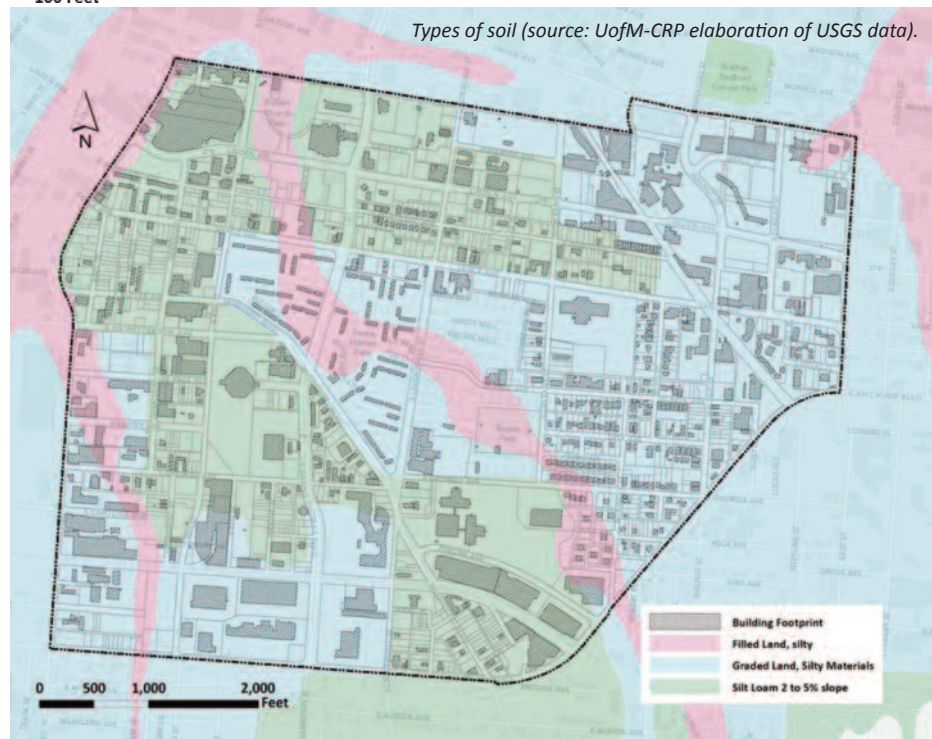


remain vibrant and tight despite the lack of job opportunities and despite the evident physical decline of the surrounding area, where TOT% of the land is vacant or occupied by vacant or semi-vacant buildings (see occupancy map).

Among the existing structures (see Bdgs conditions map), only TOT% of them are dilapidated (structural and roof damages), and TOT % are deteriorated to the extent to which, even if there are no signs of structural damage, a consistent cash flow would be needed not only to paint and install windows, doors, etc. but also to fix expensive features like the roof (or a considerable portion of it). The remainder of structures are in excellent (newly constructed or renovated, TOT %) or good (with signs of use and time consumption on external features, but no evidence of structural or other expensive

damages; TOT %) condition. This means that most of under-utilized and low quality structures, as well as many historic building, have already vanished; those that remain are mostly well maintained by residents and owners. Moreover, among the historic structures that are still in place, even the most deteriorated ones have showed a significant resistance to time and might be considered for renovation.

The silty character of the soil (see geology map) on which the neighborhood has developed is typical of the broader Mississippi Delta Region (and of ancient floodplains in general). While this is excellent soil for farming, its propensity for retaining water coupled with its scarce cohesion (car erode easily) can create problems in an urban environment if water drainage and gardening are not addressed properly.



When it was first developed, the neighborhood site was moderately well drained through two major tributaries of the Gayoso bayou. Overtime, the topography has drastically changed: more than a half the land has been graded to facilitate development, and the bayous have been almost entirely buried (in light red in the geology map) and now serve as channelized storm water system. Only TOT-feet long section of the betty bayou is still open air in Brown Park. It is likely that debris from the demolition that occurred between 1941 and 1954 have been used to fill the bayous.

The overall topography still follows the original patterns (see the contours map). There are two major headlands: one located south of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, East of S. Lauderdale and West of Mississippi (304 feet AMSL) and the other overlapping the Orleans-St Paul historic district (294 feet AMSL) and on a lower level portion of the Vance-Pontotoc Historic District (276 feet AMSL). From these points, the land slowly slopes down northwest, along what were the bayous and are today just gutter lines. However, probably due to the alterations, several sections of low-lying land, especially within Foote Homes, do not drain well and might cause small flooding episodes and mold issues on the ground level of the residential buildings. Overlaying the topography and vacant land maps reveals that most of the vacant land is located on high land, making it more suitable for new developments since it is less likely to have flooding issues.

Without any significant discrepancies with the way the land is used today, the current zoning as contained in the newly adopted The Memphis and Shelby County Unified Development Code divides the neighborhood into four main zones: commercial, residential, industrial, and special district areas.

The portion west of Danny Thomas, including the eastern half of Foote Homes, belongs to the South Central Business Improvement District (South Main), that is subdivided into: South Downtown Residential areas (S. Downtown R, in light yellow with a red patch on the zoning map) for new residential developments in the South Downtown Area; Sports and Entertainment (SE, in green), for a mix of residential and light commercial uses to complement sports and entertainment facilities; and Gateway Commercial (Gateway, in orange), for the redevelopment of higher density residential, office, institutional, and commercial uses; and South Downtown Business Park (SBPD), intended to promote economic development by allowing mixed uses, primarily industrial and commercial (in light yellow on the zoning map).

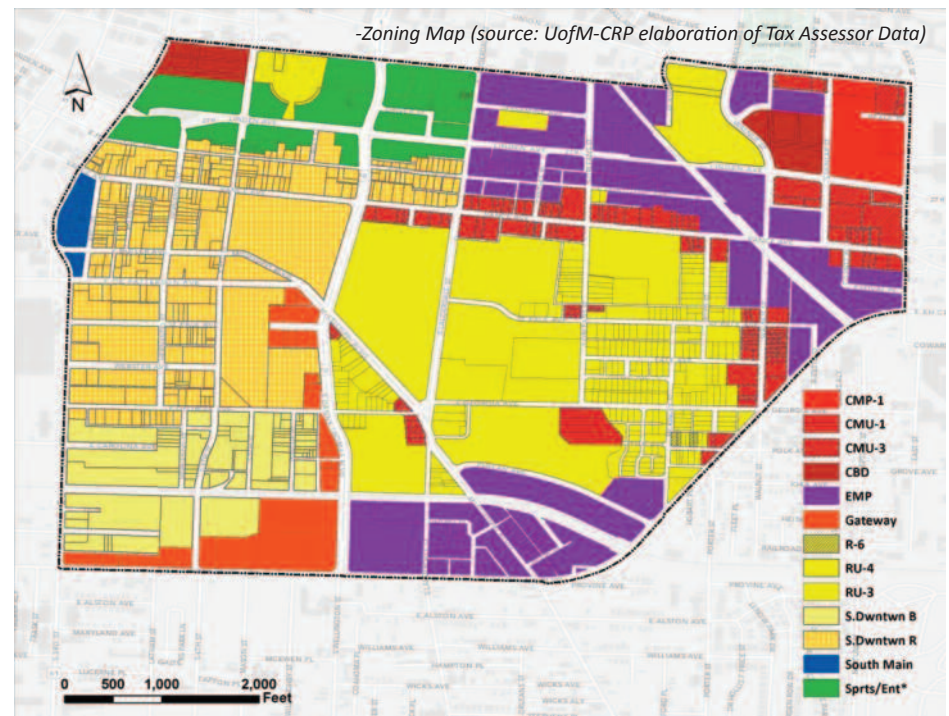
The residential zone (tones of yellow in the map) is located in the center of the neighborhood around Heritage Landing (formerly Cleaiborne Homes), and is subdivided into: Residential Single Family – 6 (R-6), that allows for only single-family detached housing; Residential Urban-3 (RU-3), that allows for single-family detached, single-family attached, and

multifamily housing; Residential Urban – 4 (RU-4), that allows for single-family attached, and multi-family housing.

The Mixed Use zone (tones of red in the map) are located along commercial streets (Vance, Walnut) and specific areas such as the FedEx Forum, the South West Tennessee Community College, and University of Tennessee buildings; the zone is subdivided into:

i. Commercial Mixed Use – 1 (CMU-1), intended for neighborhood serving commercial, office, and employment uses. Residential uses are encouraged above ground floor; ii. Commercial Mixed Use – 3 (CMU-3), intended to accommodate high intensity commercial, office, and employment uses with direct access to arterials. Those uses are intended to serve regional needs; iii. Campus Master Plan – 1 (CMP-1), intended for developments that should be urban in character with an emphasis on compact, vertical, pedestrian-oriented, and mixed use development; iv. Central Business District (CBD), intended to accommodate high intensity commercial, office, and employment uses within downtown and promote vertical mixed use development inclusive of active ground-floor uses.

The Industrial Zone (EMP, in purple in the map), Intended to accommodate office, light manufacturing, research and development, warehousing, wholesale, processing, and commercial uses to promote employment and economic growth.





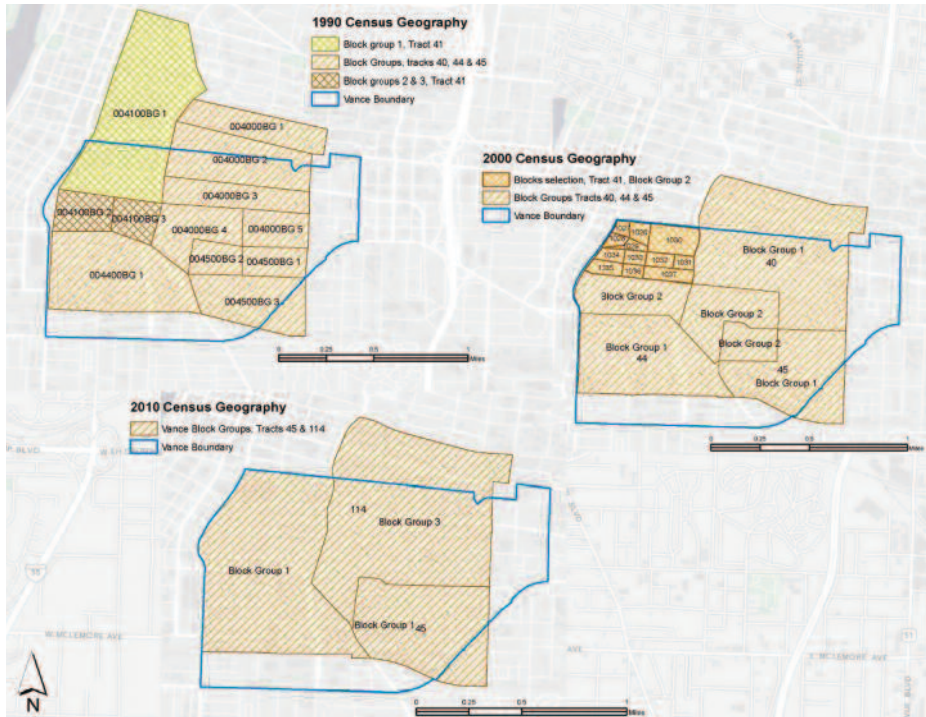


Table 1 Total Population (source: Census 1990 and 2000 Summary File 1 and 2010 Census Summary File 1).

	Vance		Shelby County	
		% change		% change
1990	6,429		826,330	
2000	3,610	-42%	897,472	9%
2010	4,046	8%	927,644	3%

Table 2 Educational Attainment for the Population Over 25 Years Old (source: Census2000 SummaryFile 3 ACS2006-2010 estimates).

	Vance Avenue				Shelby County	
	2000		2006-2010 estimate			
Total:	2,902	% of total	2,000	% of total	673,842	% of total
Less than 9th grade	76	3%	28	1%	32,967	5%
Some high school, no diploma	1,616	56%	843	42%	75,234	11%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	826	28%	675	34%	194,389	29%
Some college, no degree	260	9%	366	18%	166,924	25%
Associate degree	40	1%	35	2%	35,124	5%
Bachelor's degree	54	2%	15	1%	108,807	16%
Advanced degree	30	1%	38	2%	60,397	9%

## 3.2 Demographic Trends

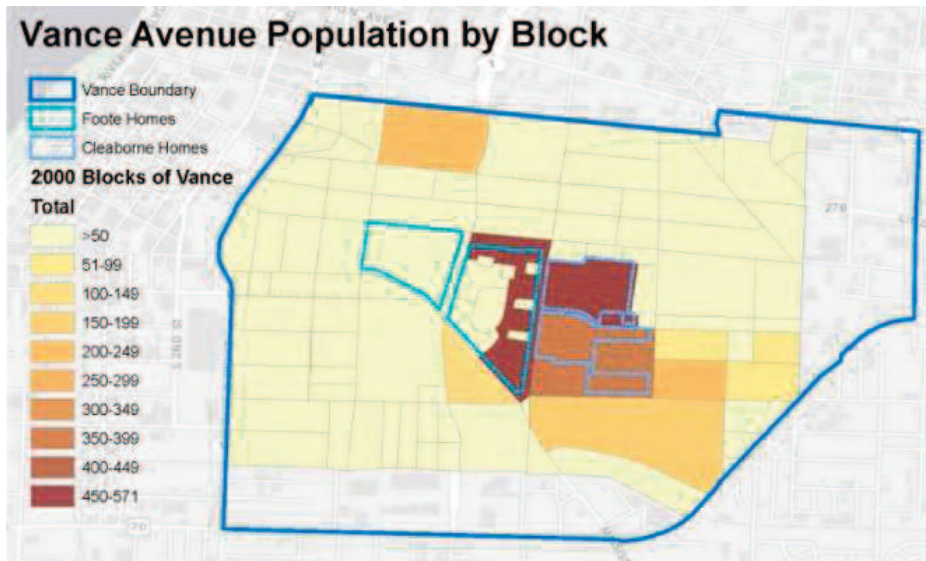
The Vance Avenue study area is a historically residential and commercial neighborhood, originally settled in the late 19th century near the end of the Civil War. The neighborhood is located southeast of the Memphis central business district and the boundaries of the study area are Linden Avenue to the north, East Street to the east, Crump Boulevard to the south, and South 3rd Street to the west. This demographic profile highlights pertinent decennial census data from 1990, 2000, and 2010, as well as data from the 2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS). In the time between the census data collection periods, the census geographies comprising the Vance Avenue neighborhood changed considerably, but the analysis was able to approximate equivalent data areas for the purpose of comparison. Figure 1 displays the changes in the census geography of the Vance Avenue neighborhood study area from 1990 to 2010.

### Population

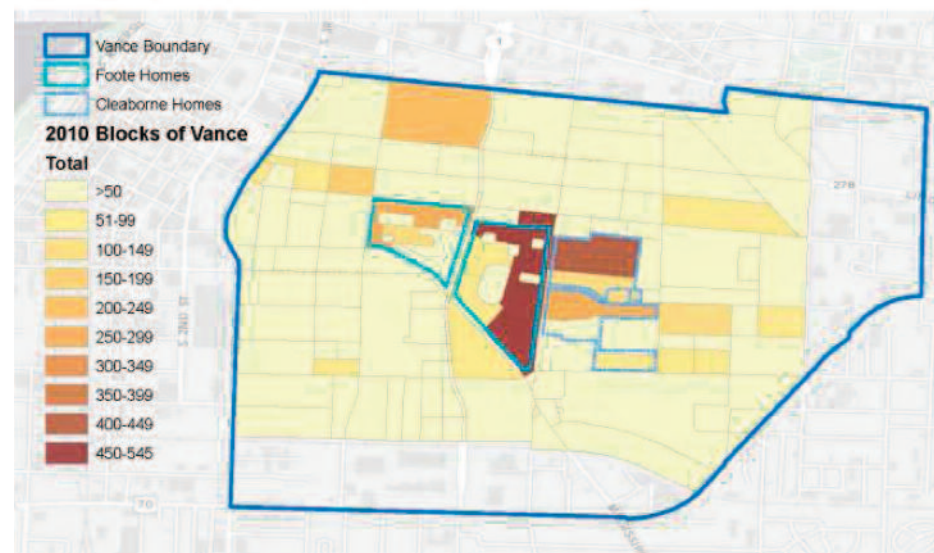
The total population of the Vance Avenue study area declined sharply between 1990 and 2000, but grew between 2000 and 2010. These fluctuations prove to be quite different from the changes seen in the population of Shelby County as a whole. Table 1 shows that while the population of the Vance Avenue neighborhood experienced a drastic forty-two percent decline, Shelby County saw a relatively substantial nine percent increase. However, between 2000 and 2010, Vance Avenue's population increased by eight percent while the county as a whole increased five percentage points less than Vance at only three percent. Upon additional analysis, it was found that the majority of the increase in population was reflected in census blocks that coincide with property and parcels owned by Memphis Housing Authority. As seen in Figure 2, the concentrated growth of population is likely caused by the relocation of public housing residents to the remaining MHA properties within Vance following displacement from other public housing facilities under redevelopment through HOPE VI funding. The only factor that appears to be unchanged in the census data is that the population of Vance remains less than one percent of the entire population of Shelby County.

### Education

Table 2 describes the educational attainment of the population over the age of 25 of which, in 2000, was nearly eighty percent of the total population. By 2010, this population dropped to about fifty percent of the total. The educational attainment of these populations experienced a slight improvement in the time between the collections of



census data. In 2010, the percent of people indicating that they had received no schooling had decreased by two percentage points and the number of people indicating that they had received a high school diploma or its equivalent increased by six percentage points. In addition, while the total number of individuals entering college increased nine percentage points between 2000 and 2010, the number of those achieving any level of degrees only increased by a total of one percentage point. In comparison to the educational attainment of Shelby County as a whole, the population of Vance Avenue lags behind at many levels, especially in terms of degree achievement. The percent of Vance area residents without a high school degree is the most telling demographic that indicates the overall educational climate of the population. In 2000, over half of the adults in the Vance area had not completed high school. Adults in Vance are far more likely to be without a high school degree than the typical resident of Shelby County, and only five percent of adults in the area have a college degree. These statistics indicate a need in Vance Avenue for services and programs that encourage adults to prepare for and obtain high school completion or a diploma equivalent, discourage drop out by students currently engaged in attaining education, and for those students remaining through achievement of high school diplomas, programs to enhance student's success in preparing for college and/or trade and certificate degree programs. More thorough attention to neighborhood needs such as these has the potential to improve other, interrelated neighborhood characteristics, for instance, employment and household income and in general, can serve to set in motion, improvements in residents' overall quality of life.



#### *Employment and Occupation*

Table 3, Employment Status, displays drastic differences between the Vance Avenue populations' employment characteristics and Shelby County's as a whole. In 2000, over fifty percent of the population in Vance was not in the labor force. This designation is defined by, "anyone 16 years old and over who is neither employed nor seeking employment, nor in the military. This category consists mainly of students, housewives, retired workers, seasonal workers interviewed in an off season who were not looking for other work, institutionalized people, and people doing only incidental unpaid family work (fewer than 15 hours during the previous week)."<sup>2</sup> By 2010, the Vance population not in the labor force had increased by thirty six percent to a total of seventy-three percent of the total population over the age of 16, which had increased only four percent. Compared to the two percent increase for those not in the labor force in Shelby County is this data for Vance Avenue is quite striking. The rate of unemployment for Vance residents in the labor force remains at a steady thirty-six percent in 2000 and 2010. While Shelby County's 2010 employment rate seems to have been affected by the more recent waverings in the national and global economies, the steadiness of Vance Avenue's climate of employment indicates no influence by these other scales of economy.

An analysis of Table 3, Employment Status and Table 4, Occupation combined, can assist in explaining the steady rate of unemployment of Vance Avenue compared to the increased rate in Shelby County. The majority of occupations held by those in Vance Avenue's labor force are low skilled service, sales, and transportation positions, which



	Vance			Shelby County		
	2000	2006-2010 est.	% change	2000	2006-2010 est.	% change
<b>Total Population 16 years and Over:</b>	3,756	3,909	4%	671,029	703,777	5%
In labor force	1,656	1,054	-36%	440,141	468,525	6%
Not in labor force	2,100	2,855	36%	230,888	235,252	2%
	<b>% of total in labor force</b>			<b>% of total in labor force</b>		
In Armed Forces:	0%	1%		0%	0%	
Civilian:						
Employed	64%	63%		93%	89%	
Unemployed	36%	36%		7%	10%	

Table 3 Employment Status for the Population 16 Years and Over  
(source: Census 2000 Summary File 3 ACS 2006-2010 estimates).

Table 4 Occupation for the Employed Population over 16 Years  
(source: Census 2000 Summary File 3 ACS 2006-2010 estimates).

	2000		2006-2010 estimate	
	Total: 1066	% Total	616	% Total
<b>Management, professional, and related</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>-</b>
Management, business, and financial operations	18	2%	5	1%
Professional and related	56	5%	9	-
Architecture and engineering	14	1%	9	1%
Education, training, and library	42	4%	48	8%
Healthcare practitioners and technical	0	0%	8	1%
<b>Service</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>-</b>
Healthcare support	12	1%	31	5%
Protective service	14	1%	53	9%
Food preparation and serving related	164	15%	115	19%
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	258	24%	25	4%
Personal care and service	0	0%	70	11%
<b>Sales and office</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>-</b>
Sales and related	148	14%	69	11%
Office and administrative support	48	5%	27	4%
<b>Construction, extraction, and maintenance</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>-</b>
Construction and extraction	48	5%	23	4%
Supervisors, construction and extraction workers	0	0%	0	-
Construction trades workers	48	5%	0	-
Installation, maintenance, and repair	68	6%	0	-
<b>Production, transportation, and material moving</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>-</b>
Production occupations	76	7%	59	10%
Transportation and material moving	156	15%	47	8%
Supervisors, transportation and material moving	20	2%	27	4%
Motor vehicle operators	40	4%	0	-
Material moving workers	96	9%	0	-

often do not require high levels of educational achievement. Even in a state of depressed economic conditions, the overall economy will retain these low skilled positions which remain available for those seeking employment in these areas of occupation. In more detail, Table 4 indicates that the majority of positions held by those in the labor force and employed in Vance Avenue are in building and grounds maintenance, food preparation, transportation, and sales. While these industries, for the most part, appear to offer consistent employment opportunities for Vance Avenue between 2000 and 2010 these types of positions are often taken with low wages, and a lack of job security and health and retirement benefits. Table 5, Household Income indicates the quality of this type of employment and its implications on its effect on the population more clearly.

### Income and Poverty

In both 2000 and 2010, more than half of the Vance Avenue's population of total households earned less than \$10,000 per year. This is due in part to the type of employment opportunities available to Vance Avenue households reflected in Table 4. Other factors influencing this trend are the nearly forty percent unemployment rate in Vance, and the fact that more than half of the area's population over 16 years of age was not in the labor force. This could indicate a large number of households surviving on unemployment benefits, social security, or disability benefits, which would place them in this lowest income bracket. Table 5, Household Income reflects a drastic comparison between Vance and Shelby County as a whole. Only ten percent of Shelby County households earned less than \$10,000 annually. The percentage of the Shelby County households earning more than \$50,000 per year is nearly equal to the percent of households earning less than \$10,000 in Vance. While this comparison is striking the percent of Vance households earning less than \$10,000 decreased by two percentage points between 2000 and 2010. Similarly, those earning between \$10,000 and 20,000 increased three percentage points, as did those earning between \$40 and 50,000 annually.

Table 6 illustrates that a consistent seventy percent of the individuals in Vance live below the poverty level.. To define poverty level, the Census Bureau uses a set of income thresholds that vary according to both family size and composition and are compared to the family's threshold. Poverty Thresholds are updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index, but they do not vary geographically. If a family's total income is less than the threshold, then every individual in the family unit is considered to be in poverty.<sup>4</sup> In 2000 nearly half of the individuals below poverty level in the Vance Avenue area were at or below the age of 11. By 2010, only thirty-four percent of the individuals below poverty level were under age 11, but this figure is still far higher in Vance than it

is in Shelby County as a whole. These findings have strong implications to this young population's development and educational outcomes as their position in poverty exposes them to increased risks that will affect their future trajectory.<sup>5</sup>

An example of the trajectory of this future scenario can be seen in the preceding tables of this demographic profile, including the large percent of the population failing to complete a high school education, a majority employment positions in low wage and low skilled occupations and the large number of household incomes below \$10,000 annually. These demographic characteristics can be related to some of the physical characteristics of Vance Avenue.

### Housing

Table 7, Housing and Tenure, indicates that from 1990 to 2010 the percent of owner occupied housing units never rose above six percent. However, between these dates it is possible that the same 100 or so individuals maintained ownership throughout these time periods. While the total number of units decreased thirty-one percent between 1990 and 2000 and then increased by three percent between 2000 and 2010, the total number of vacant units remained at a steady average of about 340 in each period. The percent of vacant units in Vance does not contrast starkly with the percent in the county; however, the percent of residents who rent versus own units in Vance compared to Shelby County is quite striking. In addition to the fact that many of the housing units in Vance are MHA owned public housing, the high percent of rental versus ownership can be attributed to the low levels of income of Vance residents and the persistent presence of poverty. The statistics also indicate that Vance is at a disadvantage with between thirteen to twenty percent of its units remaining vacant over the time between 1990 and 2010.

	Vance Avenue				Shelby County	
	2000		2006-2010 estimate			
		% of total		% of total		
Total Households:	1,150		1,577		340,443	
Less than \$10,000	692	60%	917	58%	33,396	10%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	211	18%	336	21%	42,151	12%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	122	11%	159	10%	39,303	12%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	46	4%	39	2%	38,634	11%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	24	2%	78	5%	31,468	9%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	55	5%	31	2%	94,005	28%
more than \$100,000	0	0%	17	1%	61,486	18%

Table 5 Household income in last twelve months (source: Census 2000 Summary File 3 ACS 2006-2010 estimates).

	Vance				Shelby County	
	2000		2006-2010 estimate			
		% of total		% of total		
Total:	3,317		2,943		902,432	
Income below poverty level:	2,397	72%	2,049	70%	178,079	20%
Under 5 years	460		228		21,996	
5 years	98		71		4,142	
6 to 11 years	528		403		22,831	
12 to 17 years	266		364		24,271	
18 to 64 years	952		909		93,850	
65 to 74 years	58		61		5,469	
75 years and over	35		15		5,520	
Income at or above poverty level:	920	28%	894	30%	724,353	80%
Under 5 years	18		42		43,457	
5 years	0		0		9,423	
6 to 11 years	100		61		56,135	
12 to 17 years	89		63		61,864	
18 to 64 years	614		659		474,574	
65 to 74 years	68		41		43,946	
75 years and over	31		30		34,954	

Table 6 Poverty in the Last Twelve Months by Age (source: Census 2000 Summary File 3 ACS 2006-2010 estimates).

	Vance			Shelby County
	1990	2000	2010	
Total	2,585	1,781	1,846	398,274
% Owner Occupied	4%	6%	5%	53%
% Renter Occupied	82%	73%	77%	35%
% Vacant	13%	20%	18%	12%

Table 7 Total Housing Units and Tenure (source: Census 1990 and 2000 Summary File 1 and 2010 Census Summary File 1).



### 3.3 Local Residents and Stakeholders' Perceptions of Existing Conditions and Future Development Opportunities

This section of the plan presents a brief summary of local residents and stakeholders' perceptions of current conditions and future development possibilities for the Vance Avenue neighborhood.

## Visioning Session

Fifty local residents, business owners, institutional leaders, municipal officials and university students attending our initial community meeting in July and were asked to meet, in small groups, to imagine the neighborhood 30 years in the future and then share their individual visions for a “new and improved” Vance Avenue neighborhood with each other. The exercise produced 85 ideas, many emerging multiple times. The most frequently mentioned ideas could be grouped into the following categories: improved urban environment, enhanced playground and parks, expanded housing opportunities, re-established neighborhood retail services, expanded access to living-wage employment, high quality schools, strengthened public safety, new transportation alternatives, supports for healthy living, celebration of local history and culture, and promotion of community arts. The table presented in Appendix A provides a list of the most frequently cited visions.

### Interactive Asset Mapping and Photo Documentation

Embracing an asset-based approach to neighborhood development, we involved residents and key stakeholders (from both inside and outside of the community) in a three-part interactive data collection strategy. The first, an interactive community asset mapping exercise, brought 90 neighborhood residents and stakeholders together to identify places within the neighborhood that they perceived as assets (strengths/green dots), weaknesses (challenges/red dots), and/or untapped resources (opportunities/yellow dots). Working in small groups, these participants gathered around a map covering a nearby table and placed different colored dots on the map and talked about the their reasoning for marking a particular location and the how it fit into the history and dynamics of the neighborhood. The map that follows presents a compilation of observations collected from these small maps.

Following this activity, 40 residents volunteered to take disposable cameras and shoot nine images of each of the following: what they most love about the Vance Avenue neighborhood, what they find most upsetting about the neighborhood, and what



they perceive to be unrecognized and/or underutilized area assets. While taking pictures, resident-photographers used a caption book to write brief descriptions of the picture (name of the building or focus of the picture), assign it a category – asset, weakness, or untapped resource – and explain why. Fifteen graduate students participating in the University of Memphis' Comprehensive Planning Studio also participate in this activity. Together, these two groups generated more than 600 photographs.

Finally, following these activities, 65 residents and stakeholders then came together to review and analyze the photographs, which had been grouped by caption and then divided among 8 tables. Eight-person resident-stakeholder groups, facilitated by the University of Memphis faculty-student research team, examined each image, placing them into one of the following three categories: Community Assets, Neighborhood Challenges, and Untapped Resources. Once the images were sorted, residents were asked to talk more about why they were in each category. Similar to the small group discussions that took place during the interactive mapping exercise, students recorded resident and stakeholder comments, stories, and insights. The summary below incorporates the information collected during both participatory research activities.

## ASSETS

**People** - Residents and stakeholders identified the often quiet, but persistent community organizing and service delivery efforts of long-time residents and the “can-do” attitude of youth as critical resources for the Vance neighborhood. Among the specific examples they cited were:

- Betty Isom, a long-time staff member at the Emmanuel Center and president of her neighborhood association
- Ms. Woodley and Ms. Hall, leaders of the Foote Homes Resident Association,
- George Jones and Allen Stiles, both graduates of Booker T. Washington High School, who are long-time St. Patrick and community volunteers,
- Deacon Eugene Champion, Director of the Saint Patrick Community Outreach Inc.

**Schools** - Residents’ and stakeholders’ were proud that the Vance Avenue neighborhood is one of the few inner city communities that benefits from a full-range of local schools: Georgia Elementary, Vance Middle School, and Booker T. Washington High School, M.L. King Learning Academy, and Saint Patrick Jubilee School.

**Faith-Based Organizations** - The asset map and photographs captured a strong and diverse faith-based presence in the neighborhood. In particular, residents noted:

- Many churches are important to the historical fabric of the community;
- Serve the pastoral needs of a significant portion of the Vance Avenue residents;
- Offer non-denominational education, health, housing, and social services; and,
- Bring thousands of non-residents into the community each week.

**Housing Stock** - Photographs and the small group discussions identified the neighborhood’s housing stock as a key asset. In particular, they pointed to:

- architecturally and historically significant 19th century homes;
- The high quality of craftsmanship and aesthetics of Foote Homes, particularly following the City’s late-1990s refurbishing of the complex;
- The recent development of new residential options, including the single-family homes built by the Saint Patrick Housing Corporation, McKinley Park, University Place, and the future Cleaborn Point at Heritage Landing.

**Social Services** - Participants emphasized the commitment and diversity of human service organizations in the community, particularly those serving youth, families, and advancing civil rights. Among the institutions mentioned were:

- Youth: Shelby County Head Start, the Vance Youth Development Center, Porter-Leath Boys and Girls Club, JIFF, and the St. Patrick’s Outreach Ministry;
- Adults and families: MIFA, Mid-South Food Bank, Memphis Health Center, Birthright, Memphis Public Library, Clovernook Center, and Mustard Seed Inc.;

- Institutions advancing Civil Rights, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and AFSME.

**Facilities and Local Businesses** - Participants in the asset mapping and photography activities identified community facilities and local businesses as two of neighborhood’s most significant assets. In particular:

- The FedEx Forum, the Rock and Soul Museum, and Beale Street were noted as important anchors for outside investment in the area;
- The large number of long-time retail, industrial, and service firms located in the community, are examples of key local investment;
- They suggested that these facilities not only provide jobs, but brought visitors to the area who potentially represent an important source of income for local businesses.

**Public Spaces, Play Grounds, Parks, and Community Gardens** - The asset maps and pictures highlighted spaces where residents gather to socialize, exchange news, and watch their children. These spaces include:

- Sidewalks in front of popular local stores, eateries, and churches;
- The stoops, court yards, and basketball courts at Foote Homes;
- In and near several of the neighborhood’s parks and playgrounds; and
- At the two community gardens: Lindenwood-MIFA Community Neighborhood Garden, and the Common Ground Garden.

**Infrastructure** - The Vance Avenue neighborhood is equipped with a wide range of well designed and built infrastructure elements, including: streets, curbs, sidewalks, water systems, waste and sanitary water systems, street lights, and traffic signals.

**Murals and Landmarks** - There are a significant number of historic sites, landmark properties, and murals within the neighborhood that stand as testament to the importance of the neighborhood and its residents to the history of Memphis.

- Among the landmark properties are: First Baptist Church on Beale, Universal Life Insurance Company, Booker T. Washington High School, and Claeborn Temple.
- Murals, painted by an older generation of community-based artists, celebrate the neighborhood’s history of overcoming racial, class, and religious divides and suggest the importance of artistic expression to residents of the neighborhood.

## CHALLENGES

**Food Access** - Food access is a serious challenge, as many local residents lack access to private transportation. They noted that the neighborhood has neither a full-service supermarket nor other local outlets for purchasing perishables like fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats, despite the buying potential of residents and community institutions.



**Housing** - While residents and stakeholders applauded recent efforts to expand residential opportunities in the neighborhood, many also pointed to a shortage of quality housing options as a challenge. In particular they identified:

- Area apartment complexes with poorly maintained exteriors and apartments;
- Limited affordable housing in the immediate area; and
- Limited options for people with disabilities needing handicapped accessible units;

**Nuisance Businesses** - While local businesses were recognized as important community assets, residents distinguished between those offering quality goods and services and others that sell second-rate goods at inflated prices that are not clearly marked. Additional characteristics of the latter of these businesses included:

- The absence of exterior signage or lighting, posted business hours, waste receptacles, and
- Poorly maintained building exteriors;
- Concerns about how exterior conditions contribute to residents' and visitors' perceptions of insecurity and disorder.

**Deteriorated Infrastructure** - While infrastructure, especially streets, sidewalks, storm drains, traffic lights, etc., was seen as an asset, small group discussions also indicated that specific elements of these systems are in need of maintenance, repair, or re-design. Specifically they identified:

- The streets and sidewalks that run through and border the former Cleaborn Homes site.
- Dangerous intersections along Mississippi Blvd.

**Gang Activity** - Threaded throughout participants' reflections on the challenges in the neighborhood, was the issue of violent street crime, much of which participants attributed to the sale and distribution of illegal drugs by local gangs. Participants frequently suggested that young men and women enter the dangerous world of illegal drug sales because they don't see any meaningful local employment or career opportunities.

**Vacant Buildings, Unkempt Lots, and Illegal Dumping** - Maps, pictures, and stakeholders' discussions suggested one of the most frequently cited challenges facing the Vance Neighborhood were vacant buildings and unkempt lots, some of which have become sites of illegal dumping and vandalism.

## UNTAPPED RESOURCES

**Area Retail** - Corner Groceries and Commercial Corridors - While small businesses were identified as an asset, residents and stakeholders felt that there was not only an opportunity to grow new businesses, but also the potential to work with existing busi-

ness to expand their products and services available. They noted that:

- Numerous small footprint corner stores, currently selling alcohol, tobacco products, candies, and highly processed foods, could potentially be convinced to complement their current product lines with fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy food options;
- Several of the east/west corridors running through the neighborhood have significant numbers of vacant commercial strips that are ripe for adaptive re-use.

**Beale Street and downtown tourism** - The pictures, maps, and small group discussions spoke about tourism on Beale Street and Downtown as an untapped economic and employment resource. In particular, they suggested:

- Building links between well-travelled tourist sites and local businesses;
- Bridging local history and culture with the Civil Rights Museum;
- Targeted job training and employment opportunities that provide living wage jobs for residents and support downtown tourist industry.

## Stakeholder Interviews

Faculty and students at the University of Memphis conducted fifty-two interviews with a cross-section of neighborhood stakeholders, representing three groups that were identified by residents as community assets: leaders in the faith community (13 interviews with faith leaders and volunteers), local small businesses (18 interviews with business owners), and Vance Avenue Collaborative (VAC) participants (21 interviews). These groups were also chosen in an effort to expand local business and the faith community involvement in the participatory planning process, as well as to document the insights of stakeholders who have been active in neighborhood advocacy and planning for the last several years.

Interviews with the faith community represented 11 of the 17 faith communities in the neighborhood and cut across religious traditions and Christian denominations. The small number of businesses leaders interviewed represented diverse industries, including mechanical oriented businesses (machinery, long haul trucks, and automobiles), restaurants, entertainment and tourism, plumbing and fire prevention systems, electricians, construction and building companies, and dry cleaners. Interviews with members of VAC, included residents, local social service providers, community volunteers, and civic organizations.

Interviews with faith communities and small business focused on perceptions of current conditions in the neighborhood, interviewees' insights into the most pressing issues impacting the neighborhood, and how revitalization efforts can best support their respective organizations. VAC participants' interviews focused on their involvement in the Collaborative, their current assessment of the area, and what they would like to see come out of the community planning process. All interviewees were asked to share their ideas about com-

munity assets, how to best address the barriers and challenges and to describe their vision, hopes, and questions about the future of the community. Below is a summary of the interview findings, organized by group.

**Faith Organizations** - Many organizations in the Vance neighborhood faith community are deeply rooted in the neighborhood's history and have extensive experience in providing charitable support to neighborhood residents. Regardless of faith orientation, every interviewee felt it was important for their faith organization to work to address local issues. Among the many things faith leaders noted as local strengths were relationships within community, its location and history, the Vance Avenue Collaborative, local educational institutions, and the many social services organizations, many of which are faith-based, like Mustard Seed, Emmanuel Center, the Church Health Center, and Streets Ministries. As one pastor noted, "Its location. It's at the center of things. Its history, this is one of the most historic neighborhoods in Memphis." Several interviewees emphasized the importance of the people in the neighborhood, and the sense of community they have built. One faith leader described it this way, "you know, really, people in this community kind of, if you will, they have eyes and ears in the midst of one of the toughest areas in the city. So kind of, you know, watching out for each other, you know. And that's a big sense of in that immediate area, and so that's been a plus." As another faith leader explained, "We have some of the brightest people you'll ever meet as residents of this neighborhood. Then an awful lot of service organizations in this neighborhood and nonprofits that overlap each other...but there's still a great need even with them. So those would be two areas in which I think this neighborhood has a lot of strengths."

Committed to serving the needs of the neighborhood through both spiritual and social service outreach, these local faith leaders were well versed in the many challenges residents face. In particular, interviewees most frequently identified crime and violence, drug addiction, inadequate housing, lack of local commercial businesses, and low literacy and high school completion rates, and the physical environment, specifically, vacant and unkempt lots and the condition of roads and streets, as key concerns.

This group of interviewees' discussion of crime focused on violence, citing instances when their respective organizations had assisted victims of domestic violence, a deep concern about gun related deaths, and drug sales and use. Relatedly, faith leaders frequently lamented the lack of access to substance abuse programs. Interviewees also identified a variety of housing related challenges, mentioning quality of housing and displacement as specific concerns. As one interviewee described it, "The biggest challenge in the neighborhood is housing. Memphis does not have a big problem with homelessness, but we have an unbelievable problem with inadequate housing. We've become anesthetized to

people living in squalor." Additionally, several of the faith leaders pointed to the physical and psychological impacts of relocation and displacement as challenges, particularly if residents are not able to come back. For example, one interviewee reflected on seniors effected by the Cleaborn relocation, saying, "Some of them had lived there for years, and to have to move to other neighborhoods and be uprooted from where they're used to staying, some of them, they actually don't fare so well after they leave the neighborhood. And I'm pretty sure it caused some increase in the nursing home population, because grieving actually affects the elderly's health." In addition to crime and housing related challenges, several faith leaders emphasized the educational factors affecting residents' quality of life. In particular, they noted a connection between literacy/education and the poverty level, suggesting that the low levels of literacy and insufficient education are key barriers to some residents' employability.

Amidst these challenges, interviewees from the faith community suggested that redevelopment of the area offers opportunities to strengthen current organizations and programs, specifically the library, afterschool programs, programs for senior citizens, and adult educational programs (i.e. literacy, GED). They also suggested that not only can revitalization improve the look of the neighborhood, but it can also bring with it job creation, new partnerships within the community, and local businesses, particularly a grocery store. As one interviewee said, "I know most people look at abandoned houses as a non-asset. But if you have a group of, say, ex-offenders that can't get jobs anywhere else, and you hook them with a construction company, and you give them whatever it is that they need to be able to learn how do to a demolition, or a board-up, or to go in."

Additionally, several saw the City's renewed attention to housing as providing an opportunity to do more to support refurbishing and maintaining existing residences and address the issue of vacant buildings in neighborhood. Thinking creatively about adaptive reuse, one pastor offered the idea of taking an old, abandoned structure and converting it to an automotive rehab center where youth could bring some of the abandoned cars in the neighborhood, fix them up and sell them. Another faith leader pointed to The Metro Plaza, saying "there's a huge opportunity to revitalize that thing and turn it into some type of community center that meets the needs, and from a perspective of a 24-hour thing... whether there's domestic violence, whether it's, you know, gang-related, just whatever it is, that there could be a help center."

Although generally hopeful about the future prospects of the area, faith leaders reflected on several things they thought could threaten the successful revitalization of the area. Drawing on their wealth of experience in the neighborhood, several interviewees expressed some uncertainty about whether the changes will result in growth or more



decline. In particular, they suggested that relocation of Cleaborn and Foote residents could have unintended consequences, pointing to the closure of Georgia Elementary as an example of a consequence of population decline in the neighborhood. Interviewees also shared their fears that unaddressed crime, the prevalence of drug use, and unmaintained properties would deter businesses and families from moving into the neighborhood. Finally, several faith leaders expressed concerns about the lack of adequate resources, currently and in the future, to provide decent housing, drug treatment, healthcare, and job training for residents.

**Small Business Owners** - The Vance neighborhood has a cross-section of small and medium sized businesses offering a variety of products and services. Of the businesses owners interviewed, many had been in the neighborhood for more than ten years (range 66-3 years). When asked about their involvement with the community, answers ranged from “When I leave here, I’m going straight home”; to working with area vo-tech students; to going “in and out of people’s homes talking to ‘em about various things.” While there was one interviewee who emphasized that there was nothing he liked about the neighborhood, the vast majority of business owners saw a lot of assets and potential in the area.

Collectively, they identified location, history, and people as key neighborhood strengths. Many interviewees noted the neighborhood’s location, with proximity to downtown and access along major transportation routes, coupled with the low cost of property as major assets. Summarizing the importance of the location, one interviewee said, “Location for one thing, I mean that’s one of the major assets. You’re right here at I-55 and I-40 you know. The convenience of this area to your interstate system and truck traffic...Your tri-state area you’re right on the corner of it...[and the] location of it to the heart of your downtown area, you know.”

Importantly, a number of the owners described their long-time ties to the neighborhood; several others took over family businesses and others grew up in the area. These connections strengthened their sense of the neighborhood’s historical significance. Interviewees often shared their memories of the neighborhood and talked about important buildings. For example, one business owner said, “Universal Life Insurance Company building sat right over there. This was the branch office. I worked in that office in the 1960s... The NAACP office was in that building. Mr. Jesse Turner who was the first black certified public accountant, his office was in that building... [there] was a business, a restaurant across the street, the Holland House... and, of course, this street leads straight to Beale Street.” In addition to location and history, small business owners also identified people as community assets. As one interviewee put it, “The people [are an asset]. I mean the people themselves are intelligent people. They’re resilient because they’re surviving under

really dire circumstances.”

On the question of neighborhood challenges, small business owners identified a number of issues that concerned them. In particular, lack of complimentary retail, vacancy rates, poor property maintenance, crime and safety, inadequate employment opportunities, and outsiders’ negative perception topped their list. Numerous interviewees talked about the lack of local businesses, stressing that the neighborhood needs “some more local businesses, restaurants, and I’m not talking chain kinda places...” and “we need a grocery store.” Vacant buildings and poor property maintenance at those sites were seen as a challenge to attracting new businesses to the area. As one business owner asserted, “If you take care of that aspect of the neighborhood – if the areas where there are houses that needs to be taken away, demolished – they are demolished; if they are – need to be renovated – if they are renovated – then naturally that’s the base support for any neighborhood. If that’s taken care of, then more businesses will be encouraged to actually move here to this area.” Additionally, some interviewees noted that outsider’s perceptions of the neighborhood were problematic. As one business owner expressed her frustration, saying, “The negative reaction that some people have to it [the neighborhood]. They don’t even give it a chance. And maybe some of your mothers or grandmothers and grandfathers used to live in this neighborhood, especially with Booker T. Washington...”

On the issue of neighborhood crime and violence, business owners frequently cited theft of scrap metal, drug dealing, prostitution, and individuals’ safety as challenges. They differed in their perception of the degree to which crime has impacted their business. Further discussion revealed that most small businesses have taken security measures, like high fences and flood lighting, to protect their property. Additionally, several interviewees have actively built relationships with community members, which they felt not only helped their business, but has also been an important security measure, as residents are now their eyes and ears. As one business owner explained it, “[Crime] used to be worse, but it’s better...I don’t see that much of it right here. People like us. We take good care of our customers and I think that has a lot to do with it.” Interviewees attributed neighborhood crime to a variety of factors, however, vacant buildings and lack of job opportunities were the most frequently mentioned. For example, connecting crime to vacant buildings, one business owner said, “I mean, the city needs to go in there, and if you’ve got broken windows out and you’ve got it set up where it’s gonna be criminals that are gonna be doing drugs in there; there – prostitution’s in there –I think we need to go in there and tear a building down.” Another interviewee linked between crime and job opportunities, saying “if there were jobs, like in every little community, I think that

would deter crime most definitely, because during the summer months, we get a lot of kids that's like, 13, maybe 17 years old, they come up looking for work..."

When queried about the degree to which their small business is or could be a source of jobs for residents, business owners' answers varied. While a few small businesses currently have employees that live in the Vance neighborhood, a number of the interviewees pointed to a lack of training or mismatch of skills as barriers to hiring more residents. For example, some businesses can only employ individuals certified in a particular trade (e.g. pipe fitters, electricians, and machinery mechanics, accountants). While some businesses also need less specialized, entry-level employees (warehouse stocking, clerical, and food service), interviewees indicated that there are less of these types of jobs and turnover was infrequent.

The majority of small business owners described Vance as an up and coming neighborhood and emphasized the opportunities that redevelopment can bring, particularly for attracting new small businesses, making the neighborhood more attractive, and encouraging entrepreneurial activities. Capturing several interviewees thoughts about the appearance of the neighborhood, one interviewee explained, "There are many nice houses and apartments that, if they get renovated and if the sidewalks get repaired and new asphalt put in, it can turn into something whole lot classier and nicer than what it is." Other small business owners focused on building on the area's people assets. One interviewee summed it up this way, saying "naturally there are many talents in this area that, if things start changing for better –those [are] gonna show themselves and they can be taken advantage of." Similarly, on the opportunity for job creation, another interviewee suggested, "if companies could come in, and like I said, nothing major, and help to employ the youth in the summertime, give them something to do, that would help out a whole lot."

Having seen the neighborhood through several periods of change, some small business owners suggested that several factors could pose threats to the long-term improvement of the community. In particular, several interviewees noted that without commercial investment, there would be few retail amenities to attract new residents. Additionally, many small business owners noted that outsider's continued perception of neighborhood as unsafe was a deterrent to business. They attributed these negative perceptions to other potential threats, specifically, physical appearance of the neighborhood, drug related crime and personal safety, and the lack of mental health and substance abuse treatment options available in the area.

Elaborating on the factors contributing to negative perceptions of the area, interviewees expressed concern that if left unattended to, the physical conditions of lots and

buildings in the area would deter people from wanting to invest in the neighborhood. Business owners had different ideas about what physical conditions needed to be addressed and how to do so. On one hand, several interviewees were concerned that the loss of historic buildings would threaten efforts to preserve one of the special things about the neighborhood – its history. Summarizing this sentiment, one interviewee said, "[something] I don't like the tearing down of the older structures that are here, to put up so much newness. It's taken away the history of the area." On the other hand, some interviewees saw demolition of vacant and derelict buildings as necessary for improving the appearance and safety of the neighborhood. Additionally, some business owners felt that building new housing would also improve the look of the neighborhood. As one interviewee put it, "Over here on Crump, you know when then torn down over there, man, that improved everything over there. They really made it look nice....Any time they improve doing something like that, giving people nicer places to live, it's gotta help."

Moving beyond questions about their vision for the neighborhood, small business owners were asked what steps they would like to see taken to support existing businesses and encourage new small business development in the Vance neighborhood. Interviewees' answers tended to echo their thoughts about the assets, challenges, and potential of the neighborhood. They made several specific suggestions: increase opportunities for small business loans, link local job training to skills sets that local businesses need, update buildings, clean up the trash, and remove derelict structures, promote local retail, and launch a media campaign to improve the reputation of the neighborhood, emphasizing the positives - history, culture, and sense of community.

**Vance Avenue Collaborative Participants** - The Vance Avenue Collaborative represents a coalition of local residents and institutional leaders committed to working together to build on community assets to improve the neighborhood. Many VAC participants have long history in the neighborhood – some as residents, others as volunteers, and still others as leaders or staff of local non-profits; and they see many assets in the area. The four most frequently discussed strengths were: the people and relationships within the community, the area's history, its location, and faith and social service organizations. VAC interviewees elaborated on these five assets in a variety of ways. Focusing on people and relationships within the community, interviewees pointed to the strong networks that residents have among themselves and the connections they have with local agencies, particularly those that serve area youth. Many interviewees emphasized residents' care for each other and the community. One person stated, "I look at the residents as the assets, because you have people within the community who care about the community, but they don't have the economic means to basically just



say redevelop..." Another interviewee, noted that appearances don't do justice to the sense of community in the neighborhood, saying, "despite the way things presently look – or they seem to be, that there is a loving and thriving community that's there underneath it all." Other interviewees attributed residents' sense of community to a shared history of struggle. Elaborating on this sentiment one interviewee said, "historically that group of people have banded together and decided how they want that neighborhood to become and remain, and they've done a good job of it over the decades, but that didn't just happen. It was designed that way and the same thing needs to be done with what we're getting ready to do here." Many VAC participants saw the Collaborative as contributing to community building in the neighborhood. This sentiment was best captured by one interviewee who said, "[VAC is] doing a great job in the community to get people to come together and come as one in a meeting and talk about things that are going on in different neighborhoods; and helping us see what we can do in – our neighborhood to build up the neighborhood."

VAC interviewees also identified local history and culture as important strengths. For many interviewees, their sense of history and culture came from lived experience. Older residents recalled times when Beale Street was an extension of the community, and residents regularly shopped, ate, went to movies, and listened to music right in the neighborhood. Additionally, many VAC interviewees contributed area's uniqueness to its role as an early commercial corridor for the city. As one resident explained, "It's, like I said, beautiful old houses. It's a part of the major downtown corridor, and it has a wonderful history. Vance Avenue alone has a wonderful history as one of the old major thoroughfares that led from midtown into downtown for well over a hundred years." Other interviewees focused on the assets associated with the area's proximity to downtown. For one resident, this includes the area's history as well as being able to walk outside in the mornings and "smell the fresh bread cooking from Wonderbread" or enjoy the fireworks at AutoZone Park from her window.

In discussing local social service and civic organizations as assets, VAC participants often named specific ones they thought had model programs. For example, one interviewee said, "So I feel that Streets, Advance Memphis, and other organizations within the community, they give people within the community a chance to really enhance what's already in them anyway." Another interviewee reflected on the first time he went to St. Patrick to help with the More Than a Meal Program, saying, "Brother [name], said, 'come on down one Sunday and see...This is the Sunday that we feed.' And that was my surprise right there – how all those folk come in there – how many come in there and what they have to eat and how the people treat those people and how they

treat each other." Many of VAC participants are also residents of the neighborhood, and very familiar with the quality and availability of programs in the area. The Emmanuel Center was frequently mentioned by interviewees, with one VAC participant describing the organization as "a very vital thing here...they have a great program for the kids, so they still allow the children to come to the church and be active after school and in the summertime." Another interviewee praised the Church Health Clinic, saying, "It's a pretty good clinic. It's a long wait, but it's a good clinic. I never knew they had dentistry over there... I was able to go, and the dentist – and they had a program where you can get a tooth pulled for \$25.00." Other interviewees pointed to other less visible organizations and people that are important assets in the community. One resident said, "Pastor Ronnie's Church." He's another one. He has a – it's a gym, but his gym, on Mondays they have pizza, so a lotta the kids – you'll see a lot of the older kids coming to get pizza for their sisters and you could take a pizza home with you..." Other organizations described as strengths include, Cornelia Crenshaw Library, Booker T. Washington High School, MIFA, NAACP, Advance Memphis, the RISE Foundation, as well as faith-based organizations like Mustard Seed, the Emmanuel Center, Streets Ministries, and the Common Ground Community Garden.

VAC interviewees were equally as versed in the challenges the neighborhood faces. Some of the most frequently identified challenges included: lack of employment, crime, specifically violence & drug use, neglected infrastructure, lack of local retail, low literacy rates and struggling (failing) schools, displacement and homelessness, and greater needs than there are services. As they elaborated on these issues during their interviews, many VAC participants emphasized the interconnectedness of these challenges. As one interviewee put it, "you don't have a single problem or a single problem that you could categorize going on with that neighborhood ... you have a system of negative feedback loops that all feed - upon each other." Or as another resident explained, [The neighborhood is] just like a body that's malnourished. You can't just take Vitamin D and think that the whole body – you need the whole complete vitamin system in order to get your body working right. So all aspects of the neighborhood needs to be looked at and addressed in one way or another." To this end, many interviewees discussed the challenges in terms of their interconnectedness.

On the issue of crime, interviewees identified drugs as a major contributor to neighborhood crime. For some drug sales and drug addition were linked, pointing both to the lack of treatment programs/facilities and the sense that the police were not policing certain people/places known for drugs. Others linked vacant buildings to crime, suggesting that they are sometimes used for nefarious purposes. Others, connected crime

to the lack of jobs. As one resident said, “We always try to blame the people, but it’s not the people. It’s really the people having no opportunities. So if you give people opportunities, and there’s no – no, you really, if you give them opportunity, you really can’t say where they would go...”

Similarly, in identifying neglected infrastructure as a challenge, VAC interviewees pointed to vacant buildings, uneven sidewalks, trash, lack of code enforcement, and dangerous intersections as key weaknesses in both the neighborhood’s aesthetic appearance and public safety. Several interviewees were particularly concerned about children and others trying to cross some of the wider and busier neighborhood streets, like Danny Thomas and Mississippi Blvd., and Lauderdale at East Georgia Avenue. Another VAC participant described the physical conditions around St. Patrick as “dire,” pointing to “vacant lots full of garbage, either strewn or big bags of garbage, sidewalks broken up, and vacant buildings boarded up – a mess.”

A number of VAC interviewees pointed to challenges related to education and neighborhoods schools, including low educational success rates, struggling schools, and insufficient afterschool programs. One interviewee connected low levels of adult literacy to children not being prepared for school. Another VAC participant, and parent of school aged children, summarized these concerns saying, “I guess we need more education programs, because we do have a large – I wouldn’t say a large – we do have a lotta teens that drop out. We got a lotta teens that drop out and some can’t read....[Then] it’s like, “Well, I can’t read,” or, “I don’t know how to do math, so I’m gonna do what I do best: rob, steal or kill or sell drugs.” Others pointed to the need for more GED programs to provide those adults that dropped out of school a pathway towards work.

Depopulation of the area was regularly identified as a challenge. Summing up this concern, one VAC participant opined, “...if all of the housing is torn down and people go, it’s – the population is already shrinking in this neighborhood. So, I think that’s gonna be a challenge.” Other VAC interviewees connected the closure of Georgia Avenue Elementary to the decline in children due to the demolition of Cleaborn Homes. Some VAC participants identified relocation, particularly its personal impact on people as difficult challenge. As one interviewee explained, “cause you scattered them, [they] have got to reestablish that fabric and trying to figure out a system to get to work. And so that’s not helpful.”

Finally, several VAC interviewees saw the gap between the resources and staff that local social service agencies have available and the needs of the community as a challenge for both the organization and the residents. Some interviewees attributed this to the lack of cooperation and coordination between human and social service providers.

Other interviewees saw this as evidence of the need for better communication between providers and with residents, so that everyone knows what services are available.

Emphasizing the importance of addressing challenges in an interconnected way, VAC interviewees identified a number of opportunities redevelopment could provide for improving individual lives, local businesses and organizations, as well as the neighborhood as a whole. The most frequently mentioned were the potential for economic and employment development and collaboration. At the individual level, one resident saw the coming changes as an opportunity to buy a house “built from the ground up that nobody’s set foot in,” start a local business, and for her “children to be in the best schools.” Advancing the kind of entrepreneurial spirit suggested by the interviewee above and building residents current skills were underlying themes in VAC interviewee’s thoughts on the economic and employment opportunities that could be created as the neighborhood redevelops. Several interviewees focused on the links between the chance to support small businesses, local entrepreneurship, and job creation. One VAC participant captured this sentiment saying, “Support for local small business (cottage industries) - I think there would be some entrepreneurship if there were some maybe – what do they call those – micro lenders? Maybe get some micro lending going in the area, ‘cause small businesses are kind of the only savior jobs we have left pretty much.” Other interviewees saw revitalization as an opportunity for resident investment, suggesting that residents should have right of first refusal on the purchase of properties in the neighborhood. Others saw job opportunities in the construction and rehabilitation work that will be part of redevelopment, suggesting the use of Community Benefits Agreements to ensure jobs for residents and the possibility of linking green building practices to green jobs initiatives. As one resident reasoned, in addition to providing jobs, this strategy would “build environmental consciousness and green practices into the community” and would encourage and sustain clean-up efforts. Relatedly, another VAC interviewee saw the potential and benefit of creating a live-work environment, where housing options included, “worker-owner apartment complex co-ops in place in the community and then everybody to work and it begins to stabilize.”

Finally, the need for collaboration came up in numerous VAC interviews. Some interviewees focused the strong presence of non-profit and public social service agencies in the community as an opportunity for more inter-agency collaboration and partnerships. One VAC participant and leader of a community-based organization, pointed to the level of need in the community to explain, “there is opportunity for more, either collaborative or just more communication. To make sure that if there’s a gap, surely there’s somebody that can pick up that gap and do it. And if there is a duplication well,



let's give it to however does it best and figure that." Moving beyond social service organizations, other interviewees suggested the importance of breaking down isolation between the various sectors of the neighborhood to build, as one interviewee explained, "collaborative cooperation from the business owners, the homeowners, and the housing leaders." Relatedly, several interviewees emphasized the opportunity to build residents' sense of neighborhood ownership by creating and maintaining ways for residents to be involved in redevelopment process.

On the whole, VAC interviewees could be described as cautiously optimistic about the future of the neighborhood. They expressed optimism about the potential to raise the quality of life for neighborhood stakeholders, but often cautioned that how the development proceeded, whose interests were addressed, would ultimately determine the success of redevelopment. VAC further elaborated on their sense of cautious optimism in the course of identifying potential threats to redevelopment. Most frequently mentioned were: poverty, resident displacement and gentrification, over emphasis on physical structures, insufficient affordable housing and job development, and resident apathy. The displacement of residents was cited as a threat with varied implications for organizations, people, and the neighborhood as a whole. Some VAC interviewees suggested that it would negatively impact local social service agencies others were concerned that displacement would disrupt people's networks, weakening their place-based social support network and relationships.

Many interviewees expressed concerns that investment in physical structures would overshadow investment in the human needs and potential of those people currently living in the neighborhood. Several interviewees saw this as an issue of resident involvement and collaboration. Some interviewees saw resident apathy as barriers to redevelopment and worried that "volunteers in the area may leave after the Choice Neighborhood and HOPE VI is complete," reinforcing a pattern of disinvestment that some VAC interviewees noted is often blamed on residents. As one interviewee explained, "The people who live there in that neighborhood aren't the problem. They're living in the neighborhood. They're the ones dealing with the problems that the rest of the City has done through decades of disinvestment..." Another interviewee explained this threat in terms of the importance of coordination, saying "Just building it, having the physical structure, is not going to produce the change. And so, yes, you gotta have the relational programming there that couples with that. And the more that the community is a part of creating that rather than feeling like I'm going through this motions and I'm being patronized, you know, you're going to end up with a healthier, a more vibrant product."

Relatedly, many VAC interviewees emphasized the threat gentrification poses to the neighborhood. Analyzing the situation, one resident observed, "It looks to me that someone's putting together an entire strip from the uptown development all the way here to Vance Avenue that, most likely, seems like it'll displace the folks who traditionally have lived here in effort to get a preferred citizenry who pay higher [taxes]." Residents discussed the potential for redevelopment to make neighborhood housing unaffordable for lower income and working class residents. Current residents, and seniors, in particular, were on the minds of some interviewees. Summarizing these concerns, one resident offered this analysis, "...if the plans go through and you have all this new development, then a lot of these people who are seniors, a lot of those folks who still have houses there are seniors on fixed income are gonna be priced out of their homes. As the property tax is raised, as the – and the rental rates in the area are bound to go up." Others questioned if the redevelopment would serve working class people, asking "Is there – space gonna be available for working class folks? Because the majority of people in this city are lower to – lower-middle to lower income folks. Is that gonna be something that's a part of the plan – to make sure that those folks are served by this 'redevelopment' and what that actually entails." Several interviewees pointed out that without job development, it will be impossible to raise the income level of current residents, which will further the possibility of gentrification. Another suggested that redevelopment without gentrification by focusing on raising the quality of life in neighborhood. We can have development in the neighborhood without gentrifying it. We can do enough with in-fill in that area to make it more attractive to people to move there..." adding, that avoid gentrification requires a "healthy tension of co-dependence between the city and the redevelopment, and between the current residents" to ensure that everyone's needs are met.

## SUMMARY

While the three groups interviewed had varying position and ideas on some aspects of the community, there was overlap among them. The following discussion briefly discusses the assets, challenges, opportunities and threats issues that were consistent across the three groups.

**Strengths** - Interviewees described a neighborhood as a community made up of many people with long-time personal connections to the area, a sense of commitment to other residents, strong relationships with community organizations, especially churches and local social service organizations. Significantly, residents, and their sense of pride and belonging were seen as a major asset to the community. Likewise, relation-

ships within the community were view as another asset. Many noted that community organizations, like Mustard Seed, Advance Memphis, St. Patrick's, and Booker T. Washington help create the neighborhood's social fabric and have built respectful and trusting relationships with residents.

Additionally, numerous interviewees emphasized to the neighborhood's historical significance and the buildings that represent that history. In particular, they talked about the NAACP, Claeborn Temple, Beale Street, some of the first African-American businesses and oldest African-American churches in Memphis. Finally, interviewees recognized the neighborhood's location as an important asset, pointing to the area's proximity to downtown and the advantages of having major thoroughfares run through the area, like, Peabody/Vance, Linden, and Crump that connect between downtown and areas east and Mississippi, Blvd. Danny Thomas and Third that connect the north and south sides of the city.

**Weaknesses** - Interviewees identified several key weaknesses, including crime, lack of neighborhood-oriented businesses, lack of jobs, drug use and addiction, long-term disinvestment resulting in resident apathy, and neglect of infrastructure and code enforcement. In identifying these issues, interviewees took great pains to offer a balanced perspective and often discussed the interconnection between the challenges residents face. In discussing crime, they noted that while there is crime, particularly burglary, drug trafficking, and gun and domestic violence, the area's reputation for being crime ridden and unsafe is overstated. They identified police as both a solution and challenge in addressing neighborhood crime, noting that there are times that police appear to be overlooking obvious criminal activity, like prostitution and drug activity, while at the same time over policing other areas. Interviewees suggested that street level eyes and ears are the most effective deterrent to crime and steps need to be taken to rebuild trust and new relationship with MPD. Some interviewees linked crime to drug use and addiction and noted the lack of treatment options, for those wishing to seek help. Other interviewees' connected crime to a persistent lack of job opportunities in the neighborhood. Still others saw the high number of vacant and overgrown as the source of the problem because they provide space for criminal activity to occur.

Depopulation of the area, particularly due to the relocation of residents from Cleaborn, was frequently identified as a challenge. Interviewees' discussed several challenges related to the decline in residents: at the individual level they expressed concerns about the way relocation disrupted people's social support and personal networks; at a community level, they saw it as potentially undermining neighborhood support and investment in redevelopment going forward. Finally, interviewees frequently identified

various aspects of the physical environment as challenges. In particular, they cited vacant and overgrown lots, trash and illegal dumping, poorly maintained roads and sidewalks, and dilapidated buildings as issues. They suggested that these conditions add to some residents' sense of apathy, and contribute to stereotypes of the neighborhood as an unsafe and undesirable place to be.

**Opportunities** - Drawing on their long association with the neighborhood, many interviewees recalled what a wonderful place it used to be, full of life, entertainment, retail, safe places to play for children, and decent housing. They described a future in which the neighborhood had more local businesses, after school programs for the youth, and a place specifically for the senior citizens. They stressed their desire to see the history of the neighborhood preserved and celebrated, including rehabbing older buildings to help maintain the historic character of the area and honoring residents who have spent their lives advocating for the community. Interviewees also emphasized a need to harness reinvestment in the area to support the creation of new jobs for residents and to support the creation of local businesses based upon residents' entrepreneurship, skills, and culture. Additionally, many interviewees saw redevelopment as an opportunity to ensure that there is adequate affordable housing, a mixture of single and multi-family housing, and to avoid gentrifying the neighborhood. Finally, interviewees suggested the potential for the growth of new partnerships and collaborations.

**Threats** - Overall interviewees expressed a sense of reserved optimism about the area's redevelopment. While there was definite appreciation for the neighborhood's potential to regain its previous status as a thriving, attractive, and desirable community, interviewees also identified several important factors that they see as potential challenges. Given many residents strong ties, and in many cases long association with the neighborhood, many interviewees saw the relocation of residents & disruption of support systems and networks as a major barrier to revitalizing the neighborhood. Some interviewees expressed concerns that it will take a long time to redevelop the area and during that period the neighborhood will further deteriorate beyond the point of repair. Other interviewees identified the negative perceptions of residents and neighborhood, particularly as they relate to poverty and crime, as barriers to attracting new investment and residents into the area. Additionally, interviewees emphasized gentrification as a threat to the area; in particular, they felt that without attention to affordable housing and the creation of job opportunities, the neighborhood would be gentrified.



## Resident Survey

Hoping to expand resident input beyond the Visioning, Interactive Asset Mapping, Photo Documentation activities and interviews, a short survey was conducted with neighborhood residents to ascertain their perceptions of current neighborhood conditions, using a convenience sample. The survey asked respondents to rank the quality of housing, municipal services, health and medical services, educational opportunities, physical environment, transportation options, economic/job opportunities currently available, as well as offered recommendations and preferences for how these services and features could be improved and transformed in the future. An analysis of the survey data revealed the following information (note: percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, and are based on the total number of respondents who answered each question).

A total of 151 respondents completed the survey 66% (n=99) lived in Foote Homes 34% (n=52) were non-public housing residents. Of the 151 respondents who completed the survey, approximately 75% have lived in Memphis Housing Authority-owned properties. Women comprised the majority of respondents (60%). Approximately 66% of residents were unemployed, while 24% were working either full- or part-time. A vast

majority of respondents (83%) earned less than \$10k per year—96% were earning less than \$20k.

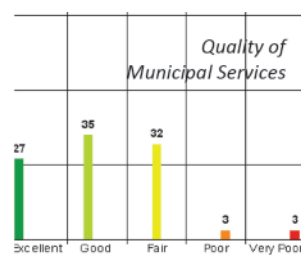
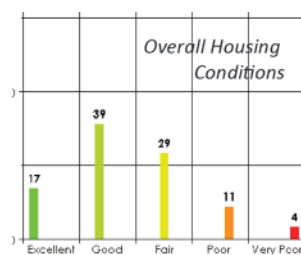
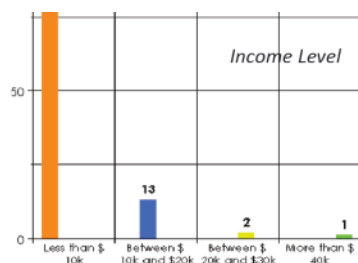
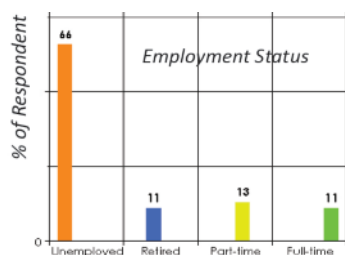
**Housing** - The majority of respondents answered favorably when asked about the current, overall housing conditions within the Vance Ave. neighborhood. Only 15% answered “Poor” or “Very poor,” while the majority of residents (56%) answered “Excellent” or “Good.” When asked to elaborate, of those who responded favorably, many residents said they had no complaints and that it was a nice neighborhood to live in. Some mentioned that crime had decreased in recent years, and that housing conditions had improved. Of those who answered “Fair,” the most common complaints were related to general upkeep and maintenance issues regarding property and housing. Of those who answered “Poor,” or “Very poor,” the most commonly cited issues related to crime—drugs, gangs, inter-community violence and abandoned properties.

**Housing Redevelopment Options** - When presented with a variety of options for addressing conditions at Foote Homes from: do nothing, preserve it, enhance it, undertake partial replacement, and tear down and replace the complex; the majority of residents indicated their desire to see the complex preserved and enhanced benefiting from upgrades similar to those carried out in the mid-1990s. Among the specific improvements residents desired were new kitchens,

more energy efficient windows, enhanced heating and air conditioning, and the creation on more private rear-yard spaces for families. One in three residents wanted to see the complex replaced with a development similar to either University Place or Legends Park. One in seven residents supported selective building removals, tearing down those buildings that had suffered from recurring foundational and mold problems.

**Municipal Services** - Again, when asked about the overall quality of municipal services, the majority of respondents answered favorably (62% answered “Excellent” or “Good”). Only 6% of residents answered “Poor,” or “Very Poor.” Across all respondents, the most commonly cited municipal services in need of improvement were police and fire response times, and trash pick-up. In particular, large number of residents felt that the fire department was too slow to respond to calls. Additionally, many residents reported issues with police presence and police corruption.

**Human Services** - Respondents answered very favorably to the question regarding the overall quality of human services in their area—69% answered “Excellent” or “Good.” 23% of residents answered “Fair,” 8% answered “Poor,” and no respondents answered “Very Poor.” Across all respondents, the most commonly cited areas for improvement were after-school and other programs for children, senior services, educa-



tional and job-placement programs, and services for those with disabilities.

**Health and Medical Services** - Residents were mostly satisfied with the overall quality of Health and Medical Services available in their area. 71% answered “Excellent” or “Good.” For all respondents, the most commonly cited areas of improvement were the accessibility of health facilities and the lack of health and dental care. Many respondents said they would like to see more free clinics and a number of people indicated a need for more health and dental facilities in the area. Additionally, the lack of adequate transportation to existing clinics was raised by a number of respondents.

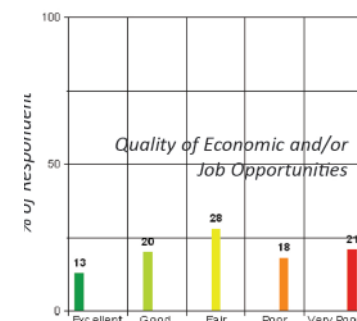
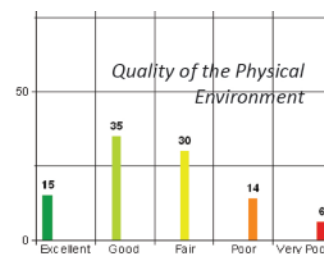
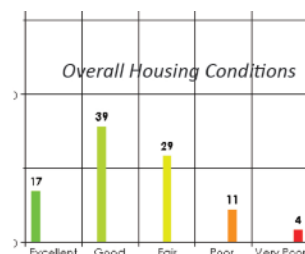
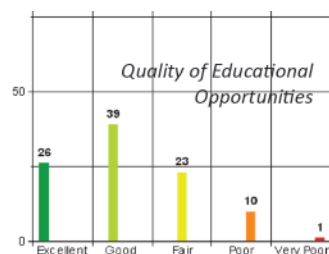
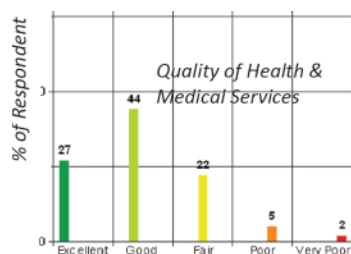
**Educational Opportunities** - Approximately 65% of respondents answered that they thought the quality of educational opportunities in the Vance Ave neighborhood were “Excellent,” or “Good.” 23% thought the quality was “Fair,” and 11% thought it was “Poor,” or “Very Poor.” Many residents wanted to see more schools in the area, and some of them also suggested that there needed to be more educational opportunities for adults including more Pre-GED and GED programs, college courses, financial planning, and job training seminars. A number of respondents specifically voiced concern over the closing of Georgia Ave, a neighborhood school.

**Physical Environment** - Residents were slightly more evenly dispersed across categories in response to the ques-

tion involving the physical environment of the Vance Avenue neighborhood. 50% answered “Excellent,” or “Good,” 30% answered “Fair,” and 20% answered “Poor,” or “Very Poor.” For all respondents, even those who answered favorably, trash was the most commonly cited issue in need of improvement, especially trash in vacant lots throughout the area. A few people suggested neighborhood clean-ups as a solution to this problem. Other common issues were the need for more (and cleaner) parks, upkeep of yards and properties (especially vacant properties), and the poor quality of streets and sidewalks.

**Transportation Services** - Residents were generally happy with the overall quality of transportation options in their area. 68% answered “Excellent,” or “Good.” Of the people that answered favorably, many wrote in that transportation was actually one of the better categories of services in their neighborhood and that it wasn’t in need of improvement. The most commonly cited issue for those who answered unfavorably was the quality of the bus system, primarily the frequency and number of stops and the timeliness of the busses. A number of residents also mentioned that the cost of riding the bus was prohibitive for some people and suggested that there should be free or reduced bus fare. It must be noted that service to the neighborhood has been significantly reduced following this survey due to budget cuts affecting our regional transportation agency.

**Economic and Job Opportunities** - Of all the categories of services residents were asked about, the overall quality of economic and/or job opportunities was the category most in need of improvement. Only 33% of respondents answered favorably, while 39% answered “Poor,” or “Very poor.” The vast majority of residents, even those who responded favorably, said that the primary issue was the simple fact that more jobs were needed, especially within the neighborhood, and that too few businesses were hiring. Many respondents also said there should be more job training and educational programs for adults in the area (GED classes, workshops, resume-writing seminars, vocational schools, etc). Some residents suggested that opening a grocery store in the area would fill a need while also creating jobs for Vance Ave neighborhood residents.





Residents were asked the question, “What three things could the City of Memphis do to improve the quality of life for you, your family, and your neighbors?” The three most common issues were as follows:

1. The need to minimize crime, improve safety, and prevent violence. Included in this category were responses related to increasing police presence and the need for neighborhood watch groups.
2. The need for more neighborhood activities and after-school programs for children and young adults.
3. The need for more jobs and increased economic opportunities.

Other common issues were the need to improve clean-up and maintenance of the neighborhood and the need for better streets and sidewalks. Many people said that they would like to see more neighborhood meetings and community centers, and desired greater collaboration between the neighborhood and the city. The following list presents a summary of other outcomes residents hope to see emerge from this planning process:

- Playgrounds, parks, and recreation areas designed as safe places to organize sports activities accessible to all children; these new spaces would be designed with special services to support parents with children
- Thriving neighborhood-oriented retail businesses employing local residents
- The presence of a full-service grocery store
- Revitalized commercial corners/nodes featuring banks, small groceries, dollar stores, clothing establishments, and e-cafes
- Design, installation and maintenance of improved green spaces
- A new historic and cultural trail connecting Vance Avenue’s history to the City’s larger Civil Rights, Labor, and Social History narratives
- The existence of an accessible, affordable, and attractive fitness center for individuals and families to exercise, meditate, and receive spa-like health and wellness treatments
- A greener neighborhood with more trees, shrubs, plants, flowers, parkways and greenlines
- Parks with a full set of age-appropriate play equipment
- Ex-offenders engaged in a full-range of community-based volunteer, job readiness, and
- Multiple opportunities for health education
- Expanded substance abuse prevention, intervention, and treatment programs, especially for pre-teens, teens, and young adults
- Improved out-patient treatment options for individuals and families suffering from

a wide range of chronic psychological illnesses

- Playgrounds, parks, and public open spaces that are truly “drug free zones”
- Multiple housing and service options for the homeless and individuals suffering from various forms of mental illnesses
- An improved and expanded Mission Shelter
- A full service supermarket that the majority of local residents can walk to that participates in all of the Federal food programs and employs local residents
- More spaces that celebrate the rich social history of the neighborhood
- A multi-purpose community center serving all ages
- A center and program supporting the development of successful entrepreneurs

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### NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. The Census 2000 and 2010 Census data provides geographies, which allow for exact comparison over time. Due to recent changes in the data available from the U.S. Census Bureau, the geography for 1990 is limited. In the 1990 geography displayed in Figure 1, a percent of the data for Tract 41, Block Group 1 (shown above in yellow) was calculated into the totals for the Vance Avenue Neighborhood.

2. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/acs-10.pdf>

3. Block level data for this employment variable was not available from the ACS 2006-2010 estimate. To adjust for this missing data set, the total from the full census tracts was taken (Tracts 45, and 114) and adjusted to reflect the percent of the total population over 16 that Vance comprises (roughly sixty-seven percent).

4. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html>

5. Black, M. and Engle, P. The Effect of Poverty on Child Development and Educational Outcomes. 2008. [http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=psycd\\_fac](http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=psycd_fac).

# 4 SWOT ANALYSIS

The following chart summarizes the major themes that emerged from the full set of citizen engagement activities we undertook which involved more than 800 individual residents, business owners, institutional representatives, and elected and appointed officials. The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Chart commonly used to present “thick” descriptions of complex systems was first developed by researchers at Stanford Research International and popularized by students and faculty from the Harvard Business School.

Urban planners have been using this format to present a

nuanced profile of local residents’ and stakeholders perception of current and potential future conditions for nearly forty years. The chart which features four separate quadrants, incorporates in its top half, a left-side quadrant summarizing current strengths and/or community assets and a right-side quadrant presenting current weaknesses or problems confronting the community. The lower half of the chart presents potential opportunities and threats confronting the community – if local residents and officials do nothing to address ongoing economic and social trends.

## CURRENT STRENGTHS

- **Presence of strong local Community and Social Service Organizations**
- **Resilient Residents/People**
- **Strong relationships within the community connecting individuals and organizations**
- **A rich emancipatory neighborhood history and culture**
- **Strategic physical location in terms of both the City and Region**
- **Numerous prophetic minded and socially engaged Churches**
- **Strong supply of architecturally noteworthy structures**

## CURRENT WEAKNESSES

- **Persistent Crime**
- **Lack of neighborhood-oriented businesses – esp. grocery store**
- **Absence of job opportunities**
- **Drug use and addiction**
- **Long-term disinvestment in neighborhood; resident apathy**
- **Un-kept and overgrown yards and prevalent trash**
- **Poverty**
- **Vacant and/or dilapidated buildings**
- **Displacement/relocation of residents**
- **Low educational and literacy levels**
- **Dearth of city investment in local infrastructure and its up-keep**

## FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

- **Entrepreneurship that builds upon current skills/culture of the current residents**
- **Creation of job opportunities with new (re)investment in the area**
- **New opportunities for investment**
- **Tapping into the history of the neighborhood**
- **More collaboration between organizations and small businesses**
- **Strategically connecting the neighborhood to downtown**
- **Preservation, renovation and adaptive re-use of old buildings**
- **Comprehensive approach to redevelopment**
- **More affordable housing options**

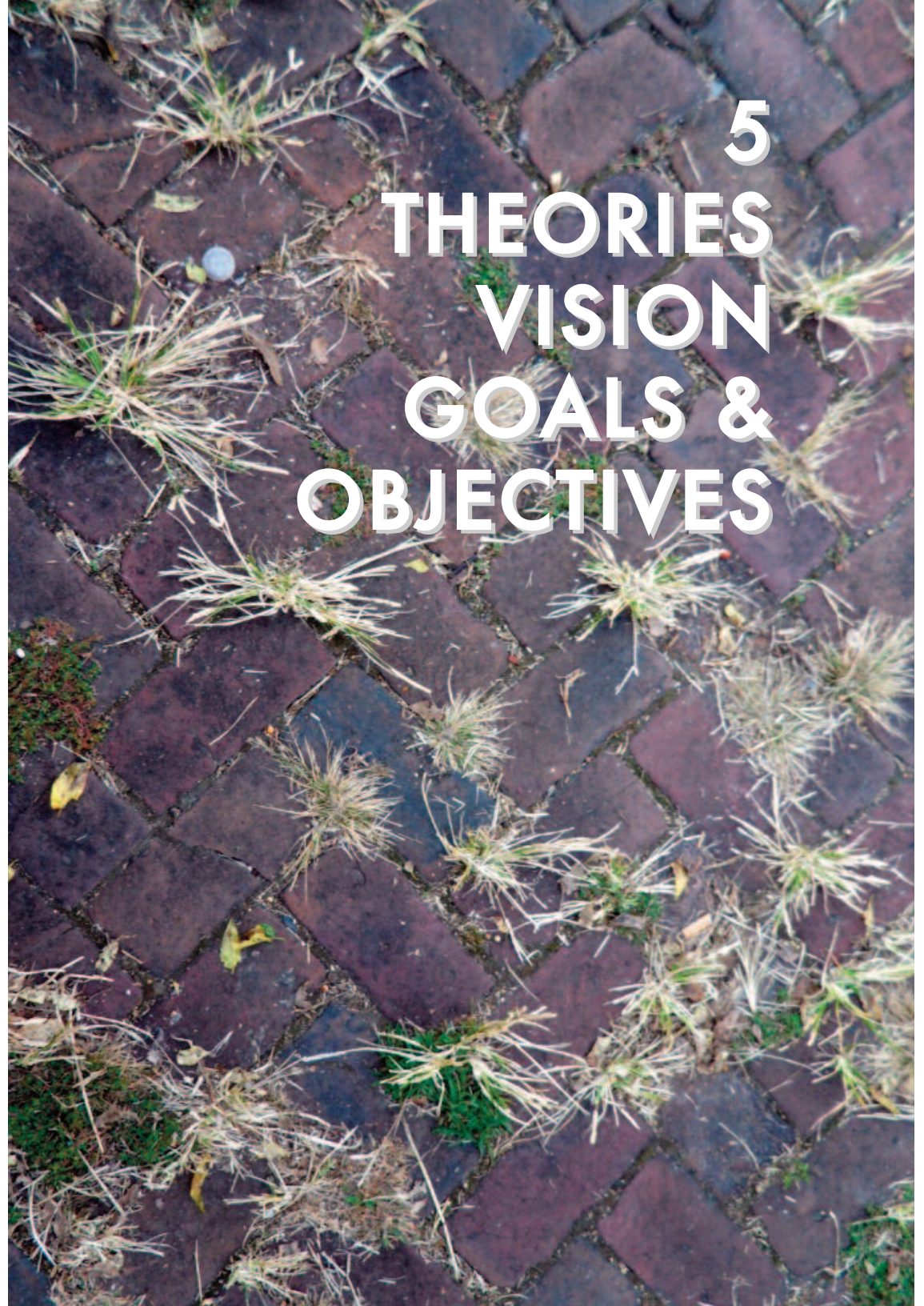
## THREATS

- **Relocation of residents and disruption of support systems and networks**
- **Continued blight, loss of infrastructure, increased vacancies**
- **Poor treatment/negative perception of residents and neighborhood by the City and the Memphis Police Department**
- **Gentrification**
- **Escalating crime**
- **Lack of affordable housing**
- **Conflict between goals of residents and goals/approach of developers**
- **Uncertainty as to whether future changes will result in real community improvement or further decline**



# 5 THEORIES VISION GOALS & OBJECTIVES

*Detail of a brick sidewalk, one of the physical traces left of the 19th century physical fabric of the neighborhood.*



## 5.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

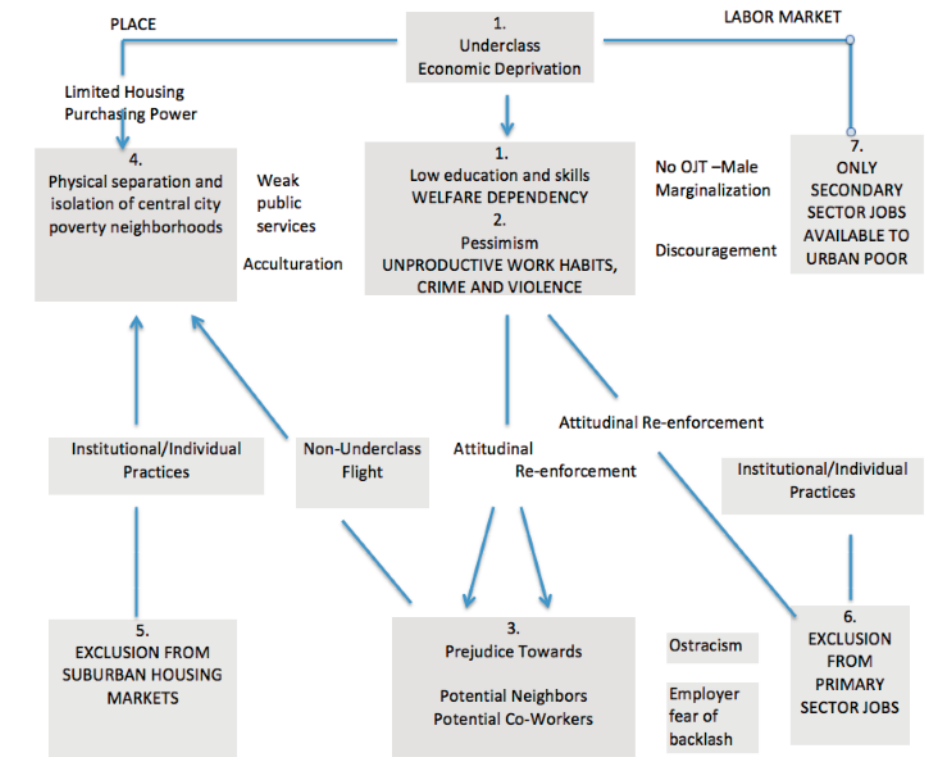
Since the earliest days of the President Johnson's War on Poverty serious scholarly and public debate on whether poverty was the result of individual shortcomings related to the self-defeating attitudes, values, and behaviors of the poor themselves, environmental factors resulting from living in a severely under-resourced environment where access to primary care, quality education, decent housing and other vital services is difficult, or seen and unseen barriers preventing residents of economically challenged neighborhoods from securing adequate employment.

A culture of poverty-based explanation of persistent urban and rural poverty focuses on "people-oriented" education programs aimed at addressing self-defeating attitudes and behaviors that, while adaptive as coping mechanisms for their immediate environment may complicate the self-help efforts of low-income residents seeking living wage employment.

An environmental determinism-based analysis of persistent poverty focuses on "place-oriented" improvements to the open spaces and built environment designed to attract a wide range of job generating private organizations and service-providing public and non-profit organizations to poor neighborhoods, eventually transforming them into resource rich mixed-income communities. More recently, public policy has emphasized assisting poor individuals and families to "move to opportunities" by using Mobile Section 8 vouchers to relocate into more stable middle class neighborhoods that offer a enhanced economic opportunities, improved public safety, better municipal services, superior human services as well as the opportunity to interact with more working class and middle income families who can serve as role models providing entre into the mainstream of the economy and society.

A structural analysis of poverty focuses on "policy oriented" interventions aimed at countering our increasingly uneven pattern of development visible within most contemporary metropolitan regions: these interventions have included the enactment of progressive education, health care, economic development, public transportation, affordable housing, land use, and criminal justice policies, programs, and projects. Policies pursued under this approach to poverty alleviation seek to reduce the gap in income, wealth, power, and influence separating the rich and the poor through redistributive policies and participatory planning, design, and development policy-making processes.

Harvard University Sociologist, William Julius Wilson, Princeton University Economist Paul Krugman, Cornell University Urban Planner William W. Goldsmith as well as



A Cumulative Causation Model of the Underclass Phenomena (George C. Galster)

a growing number of critically-minded social scientists believe that the recent growth and the number and size of high poverty areas, such as the Vance Avenue community, represent a new and more virulent form of urban poverty that is not likely to be addressed by any of the historic single prong anti-poverty approaches. The New American Poverty, according to Wilson, requires a multi-pronged approach that integrates people, place, and policy-oriented strategies into an comprehensive anti-poverty scheme such as that outlined by George C. Galster in his classic article, "A Cumulative Causation Model of the Underclass: Implications for Urban Economic Development Policy" which appeared in *The Metropolis in Black and White: Place, Power, and Polarization* (Galster & Killen 1992). The following diagram illustrates the various factors that generate and maintain uneven patterns of poverty and high rates of inner city deprivation.



## 5.2 The Methodological Foundation

The plan was prepared using an empowerment approach to community development developed by Reardon, Andrejasich, and Orland of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Campaign's East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP) that integrates the core theories, methods and practices of participatory action research (PAR) articulated by William F. Whyte, Davydd Greenwood, and Fals Borda, direct action organizing (DAO) as described by Ernesto Cortez Jr., Michael Gecan, and Edward Chambers, and popular education (PE) as practiced by Paulo Friere, Danilo Dolci, and Myles Horton into a fully integrated approach to community capacity-building. This model of community-based planning and development is designed to increase the influence low-income and working-class individuals and families, and the community-based institutions they support over the public and private investment and management decisions that play a critical role in determining the quality of urban life.

## 5.3 Principles Used to Shape the Plan's Implementation Strategy

Local stakeholders participating in the Vance Avenue Renaissance Planning Process identified more than seventy-five specific policies, programs, and projects to advance the overall development goals and objectives that follow. With the assistance of issue-specific resource persons and the guidance of "best practices" research as well as recommendations made by thirteen international scholars participating in the Quality of Life Conference co-sponsored by the Vance Avenue Choice Neighborhood Initiative and the University of Memphis Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning local stakeholders identified thirty-six neighborhood improvement projects which they believed could make a significant impact in transforming conditions within the historic Vance Avenue neighborhood.

Using the following prioritization criteria, local stakeholders selected six signature projects to receive maximum attention during the implementation period, believing that they will have a transformative impact on the quality of life offered current and future residents. These projects are described in some detail in the second half of this plan while the remainder of the neighborhood improvement initiatives are presented, in a more abbreviated form, in Appendix III. The phasing of these projects with the signature efforts being presented as "immediate priorities" while the remainder of the improve-

ment efforts are listed as short, intermediate, and long-term priorities reflect Mintzberg's "Ready, Fire, Aim" Theory of Organizational and Community Change pioneered by the Rensselaer Institute. In theory and practice such a prioritization seeks to overcome inertia and skepticism by encouraging immediate action on critical issues. Using the momentum created by early advances to broaden the internal and external base of support for constructive change needed to take on more ambitious economic and community development challenges.

## 5.4 The Plan's Prioritization Matrix/Decision-Making Tool

Each of the resident-generated and community-supported improvement projects that emerged from our community process was evaluated according the following criteria. The seven projects identified as signature efforts within this plan were determined to embody at least five of the seven criteria listed below.

Neighborhood Development Initiatives	Meets a Critical Community Need	Potential for Significant Impact	Will Generate Local Support	Capable of Leveraging Outside Resources	Improves Local Business Climate	Local Jobs/Business Generator	Builds Local Capacity
Public Housing Preservation	X	X	X	X		X	X
Cooperative Grocery Store	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community-Based Crime Prevention	X	X	X	X	X		X
Little Betty Bayou Greenway (Day lighting)	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Weavers' Walk Freedom Trail	X	X	X		X	X	X
Expanding Transportation Alternatives	X	X		X	X	X	
Community School Center	X	X	X	X		X	X

## 5.5 Resident-Generated Vision for A More Vibrant, Sustainable, and Just Vance Avenue Neighborhood: Inspired by a Dream!

During the first eight months of the planning process local residents, business owners, institutional representatives worked together to share their vision of a stronger healthier and more sustainable community. The following vision statement, inspired by Dr. King's ideal of the "Beloved Community" emerged as a consensus expression of the Vance Avenue neighborhood's collective hopes and aspiration for the community. It reflects the kind of community and place that local stakeholders would like to work with their municipal, county, state, and federal officials to create. Dr. King's ideal of the "Beloved Community" emerged as a consensus expression of the Vance Avenue neighborhood's collective hopes and aspiration for the community. It reflects the kind of community and place that local stakeholders would like to work with their municipal, county, state, and federal officials to create.

**Transform the historic Vance Avenue neighborhood into the nation's leading example of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s ideal of the Beloved Community – a place where local residents and leaders are working together to overcome the legacy of economic and social justice by providing individuals, of all ages and backgrounds, quality educational opportunities, access to critical health and wellness resources, opportunities for living wage employment and entrepreneurship, convenient retail services and a range of attractive housing choices, in a safe, nurturing, and uplifting urban environment.**

During a Neighborhood-Wide Assembly organized to mobilize a broad cross-section of the Vance Avenue community to develop a planning framework to achieve this vision, local residents identified the following community development goals and objectives to guide their ongoing planning, development and design activities for the next two decades.

### **Goal 1: Preserve and expand quality-housing options for residents.**

- 1.1. Preserve and enhance the neighborhood's supply of permanently affordable housing by saving Foote Homes.
- 1.2. Seek opportunities to redevelop the neighborhood's significant stock of historic homes

for possible use as assisted living apartments for seniors and their caregivers.

- 1.3. Work with new firms being recruited to the area to develop employer assisted, work-force housing within the neighborhood.
- 1.4. Pursue every opportunity to maximize the local job training and employment positions connected to the proposed housing rehabilitation, new construction and ongoing maintenance.
- 1.5. Maximize the care of local residents in the process of transformation (minimize relocation, maximize information about housing options, and on-site assistance for making sure residents qualify for the preferred options and in general more on-site services than other redevelopments in other areas of the city.
- 1.6. Seek opportunities to connect existing and new housing to an improved urban landscape that features public recreational spaces with regular programmed and staffed activities.
- 1.7. Address local residents' needs (affordability, ADA requirements, houses for extended families, minimization of upper floor living, fire protection measures, guarantees against the loss of the property-value for first time home owners).
- 1.8. Emphasize quality affordable rentals with safety-net measures rather than homeownership opportunities.
- 1.9. Incorporate green building and infrastructure design to the maximum extent possible.

### **Goal 2: Promote Local Job Generation and Business Development**

- 2.1 Work with area producers, faith-based organizations, job-training agencies and public and private lenders to establish a cooperatively owned and managed supermarket/grocery store.
- 2.2 Establish a linkage policy requiring those companies receiving significant subsidies within the Downtown and South Main Business Improvement District to enter into community benefit agreements committing themselves to an enforceable number of jobs for Vance/Foote Homes residents.
- 2.3 Pursue the establishment of a "buy local" program by the City and County to support the growth of local businesses and payrolls.
- 2.4 Collaborate with firms and institutions within the Medical District, Southwest Tennessee Technical College and the Consolidated School District to develop specialized curricular, internship, externship, and scholarship programs to prepare Vance Avenue residents for living wages within the ever growing health and hospital sector.
- 2.5 Engage Advance Memphis, The Evolutionary Institute and the English Cooperatives



Association in an effort to explore the job generation possibilities of industrial cooperatives inspired, in part, on the experience of Mondragon in the Basque Region of Spain.

**Goal 3: Enhance public safety by establishing an ambitious neighborhood-level, community-policing program**

- 3.1 Shift the focus of our public safety efforts to supporting the crime prevention efforts of our existing neighborhoods rather than the creation of new “safer” ones.
- 3.2 Initiate a comprehensive community policing effort to compliment our City’s Blue Crush enforcement effort.
- 3.3 Create new opportunities for neighborhood youth to pursue their dreams as an alternative to the challenges of the streets.
- 3.4 Encourage closer collaboration between community leaders and Memphis Police Department officials on crime prevention efforts

**Goal 4: Promote resident health and wellness through improved educational, service delivery, physical fitness, and urban design programs.**

- 4.1 Address the lack of accessible primary care physicians and health services that require local families to use the Emergency Room of The Med as their sole source of medical care.
- 4.2 Enhance access to fresh, affordable, culturally-appropriate, and competitively priced foods.
- 4.3 Challenge area medical, dental, social work, and public health schools to work together to establish a cooperatively funded and managed health clinic in the proposed community school center facility at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Learning Academy.
- 4.4 Encourage more active lifestyles among area residents, including youth and seniors, by restoring the neighborhoods’ existing playgrounds and parks and reclaiming and designing the former Little Betty Bayou as an attractively re-designed greenway.

**Goal 5: Celebrate the rich Civil and Human Rights History of the community.**

- 5.1 Mobilize area high school and college students to work together to increase the number of Vance Avenue residents and stakeholders who have shared their stories of community building and social justice advocacy through the Crossroads to Freedom Oral History Project.

- 5.2 Work with local residents and urban historians to undertake the research needed to develop the Weavers’ Walk Freedom Trail in the Vance Avenue neighborhood.
- 5.3 Engage local students and artists to work together to produce high quality public art installations highlighting the Civil and Human Rights History of the community.
- 5.4 Encourage local elementary, middle, and high schools to incorporate a local social history component into their history and art courses that produce tangible products that can be displayed and, in some cases, sold at the Annual Foote Homes Community Fair.
- 5.5 Initiate a fundraising effort to support the establishment, on a joint basis with the Memphis College of Art and Southwest Tennessee Community College, of a week-long summer arts camp for children and adults to encourage residents to develop their creative capacities.
- 5.6 Recruit local African dance and drumming organizations to establish an after-school program involving large numbers of Vance youth, in age appropriate, study, practice, and performance.

**Goal 6: Strengthen residents’ ability to access the economic, cultural, and civic resources through improved public transit services and new transportation alternatives.**

- 6.1 Improve connectivity with the rest of the City through the improvement of public transit.
- 6.2 Create alternative transportation options within the neighborhood (walking and biking trails).
- 6.3 Increase public and shared transportation opportunities as a way to improve job opportunities, especially through enhanced connectivity with business.

**Goal 7: Advance public education and lifelong learning through the establishment of a community school center.**

- 7.1 Address the low educational attainment levels of children, their parents and caregivers with comprehensive literacy and lifelong learning programs encompassing early childhood, K-12, post-secondary, and adult programs. as well as out-of-school time youth development programs and parenting support.
- 7.2 Mobilize members of local religious congregations and college students with an interest in public education to join Streets Ministries in-class and after-school tutorial and mentorship programs to encourage young people to finish high school and pursue appropriate additional educational opportunities.





# 6 SIGNATURE PROJECTS

*Fresh Okra growing at  
the Common Ground  
community Garden in  
the summer 2012.*



## 6.1 Preserving the Community-Building Legacy and Neighborhood-Revitalization Potential of Foote Homes Public Housing Complex

### *Description*

It is crucial for this community the creation and implementation of a preservation-oriented plan for transforming Foote Homes into a nationally-recognized example of environmentally and socially-responsible redevelopment. The goal is to offer poor and working-class Memphians quality affordable housing within an restored urban landscape walking distance from a wide range of educational, health, cultural and commercial services. The plan is based upon the idea that this can be achieved without the displacement and gentrification effects that have plagued recent community transformation efforts.

Over a five-year period, all 496 units within Foote Homes will be significantly upgraded through the addition of energy efficient windows and doors, selective replacement of household appliances, bathroom and kitchen modernization, installation of custom wood flooring in kitchen and dining areas, and interior painting. Fifty units at a time will undergo this rehabilitation while residents are temporarily relocated to nearby lofts, townhouses, and single-family homes, which are currently vacant within the neighborhood (e. g. Newman Place and McKinley Park), South Main, Downtown, Uptown and Edge neighborhoods.

The \$75,000 per unit cost<sup>1</sup> for this green-inspired rehabilitation will provide current and future residents with significantly enhanced living space featuring improved security systems, partial hardwood flooring, improved kitchen designs, modernized bathrooms, state-of-the art ENERGY STAR appliances, expanded on-site storage, energy-conserving windows and doors, and freshly painted and stained interior walls and molding.

The RFP process used to select the primary developer, as well as the project's major subs will give significant consideration to the firm's commitment to and past history of successfully involving local businesses and workers in the construction process in order to meet the aspirational goals of Section III. The City will also work with the neighborhood's job readiness, training, and placement organizations, namely, Advance Memphis and JFF, Southwest Tennessee Community College, U of M Departments of Architecture

1. The average dimension for a residential unit in Foote Homes is approximately 750 square feet while the average cost for rehabilitation of a building with no structural damage but in need of roof replacement and new appliances is \$100/sq. foot.

and City and Regional Planning, and the Greater Memphis Building and Trades Council of the American Federation of Labor and Council of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) to secure and implement a YouthBuild construction training program designed to prepare long-time unemployed residents for living wage employment by offering them union-sanctioned training leading initially to an apprentice card and later a journeymen's card within the union.

In addition to these interior improvements, resident families will enjoy the benefits of a number of significant exterior improvements. An ample rear deck and fenced-in yard will be added to each unit, offering residents the opportunity to enjoy quiet time, family meals, and gardening in their own private outdoor space. Residents living within the same building zone will have the opportunity to share nearby common space featuring improvements they select, including: community gardens, siting areas, music/performance pavilions, toddler play spaces, and small-scale recreational spaces such as checkers/chess tables and shuffle board areas.

These landscape changes will offer residents private spaces for their families' exclusive use as well as communal areas where they can engage in shared activities, of their choosing, with neighbors and friends. The common spaces within each building zone within the complex will be linked via elegantly designed and beautifully landscaped walking and biking trails that will connect to a new linear park that will follow the long ago filled-in Little Betty Bayou from the southwest to the northeast corner of the community. The re-naturalization of this historic urban waterway will provide local residents with a stunningly beautiful greenway that young people can use to walk and bike to neighborhood schools and families can take advantage of for intergenerational exercise and recreation. The re-establishment of the bayou will also relieve Foote Homes residents of recurring problems with mold caused by water that has been forced to remain in the area do to the elimination of this portion of the bayou.

The new South Memphis/Downtown Greenway will feature a mix of landscaped siting areas, outdoor art installations, and environmental education sites that will draw people to this exciting new pedestrian and bicyclist-oriented corridor that will connect people, institutions, and places within the Vance Avenue community with their nearby South Memphis and Downtown neighbors. The inspiration for this new landscape element are Garden City plans of the 1920s, the Traditional Neighborhood Designs of the 1930s, and the New Urbanism communities of today that seek to design walk-able, mixed-use communities accessible to individuals and families from all economic classes.

Beginning with private rear yards, moving to semi-private common spaces within each building zone, eventually terminating in public open spaces connecting individual



building zones to each other, their surrounding residential neighborhoods, and the region through Memphis' rapidly expanding regional greenway system, the hierarchy of outdoor spaces featured in this section of the plan is designed to promote public safety through its incorporation of Newman's concept of "defensible space" and Crowe's notion of "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)".

Following the inspired example of MIT landscape architect Anne Spurr's work in West Philadelphia, every effort will be made to incorporate such sustainable design elements as: green roofs, window and rear deck gardens boxes, rain barrels to capture precipitation for use in gardening, attractive and well-placed recycling stations, greatly reduced impervious surfaces to reduce storm water runoff, as well as common greenhouse and composting spaces. Efforts will also be made to explore the feasibility of green infrastructure projects which use soils and plants to manage both household wastes and storm water runoff in a manner that manages contributes to flood control as well as water and air quality improvement. Aside from reducing the strain on our environment, these improvements can become important teaching sites for local elementary, middle, and secondary schools committed to providing their students with a quality environmental education.

#### *Rationale*

There are many compelling reasons for focusing on the preservation and enhancement rather than the demolition and replacement of Foote Homes. Among the most important of these are the following:

- **Foote Homes is a vibrant community** that residents appear deeply committed to preserving and improving. Residents know and support each other on an individual basis and through the community-based organizations they are involved in. This form of social capital is, according to Robert Putnam and others, a critical requirement for healthy neighborhoods, cities, and region.
- **Many Foote Homes residents do not wish to be relocated** because they believe the additional stresses and burdens that involuntary relocation will impose on their families will significantly outweigh the benefits of what they perceive as the failure of the Federal government's Movement to Opportunity philosophy embodied in such programs as HOPE VI. The movement of former public housing tenants to residential communities closer to the eastern edge of the Metropolitan Region without the decentralization of the essential health, wellness, education, counseling, and rehabilitation services at a time when MATA is reducing its level of services has placed significant, new burdens on families who are already dealing with a great deal of chal-

lenges. Many of these families have to make regular trips to the Social Security Administration, Metropolitan Interfaith in Action, Catholic Charities of Western Tennessee, Memphis Housing Authority, Consolidated School District, and The Med. Removed from their long-time neighborhoods, extended families, and faith communities, these low-resourced individuals and families are forced to confront these challenges without the mutual support available from long-time neighbors, extended family members living nearby, members of their faith community, and local educators and social workers with whom they have developed close relationships.

- **In the absence of a legislative and/or programmatic guarantee that assures former Foote Homes residents the right to occupy the new housing units that will be constructed under the proposed Triangle Noir Redevelopment Plan few former residents will be able to return to the community resulting in a displacement rate of 80% to 90%.** Only a preservation-oriented plan can assure current residents the "right to return" to high quality affordable housing within the Vance Avenue community following a short period of residence in nearby surge housing. In spite of the significant effort made by past HOPE VI Developers and Case Managers, the Memphis Housing Authority, and the City of Memphis Division of Housing and Community Development only approximately 12% of the former residents of public housing have been able to return to their former neighborhoods following the typical HOPE VI-funded redevelopment process. While an eventual application to a Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant would require a one for one housing unit replacement, this does not guarantee the return of former residents.
- **Many Foote Homes residents have lost confidence in the local contractor providing the wrap-around case management services to those being relocated.** While leaders of the Memphis Hope Program, funded by the City and the Women's Foundation, sought to assure those relocated as a result of the HOPE VI Program improved life outcomes, little creditable evidence exists to justify these claims. As Urban Strategies, the primary contractor providing case management services under the Memphis Hope Program, has expanded its operations from their original base in Saint Louis to many other cities, its ability to remain in contact with and assist the majority of those displaced from public housing in Memphis has become a serious concern among residents and human services professionals who work with these families.
- **The loss of an additional 495 families from the Vance Avenue community will add to the stabilization and redevelopment challenges of this already struggling neighborhood.** The problems of abandoned land and property and related weak-

ness in both the residential and commercial real estate markets will intensify if an additional 1,500 residents are displaced, in the short-run, from the neighborhood. The future viability of the neighborhood's elementary, middle, and high schools, the majority of which already suffer from low occupancy, will be further compromised, significantly reducing resident, business, and investor confidence in this once-proud historic African American community. With the pressure on the newly-established consolidated school district to address their performance and financial challenge – the future of low-occupancy schools will be closely scrutinized.

- **The relocation of another 495 low-income families to neighborhoods further from the City's Central Business District will place additional burdens on these communities, whose future stability is already threatened the Metropolitan Region's slow rate of growth and low-density development pattern (i.e. sprawl).** The economic and social health of the City and its first and second ring suburban communities will be further challenged by future low-density development made possible by the completion of Interstate 269, with its thirty-one local exits, and the out-migration of parents who feel their children's educational future is being undermined by the recent consolidation of the City and County School Districts.
- **The clearance and demolition of Foote Homes will further undermine the physical and social fabric of the historic Vance Avenue neighborhood,** which in the Post-WWII Period nurtured many of the most important figures in the Memphis Freedom Struggle, including: Dr. Benjamin Hooks Jr., Cornelia Crenshaw, and Rufus Thomas family. At a time when the City, County, Downtown Memphis Commission, Visitor and Convention Bureau and the National Civil Rights Museum is attempting to promote cultural tourism capitalizing, in part, on the City's rich Civil Rights History, it makes little sense to demolish the public housing complex where so many of those involved in the City's school desegregation and sanitation workers' struggles lived.
- **The remaining Foote Homes buildings are in good condition.** Demolishing these buildings, which were constructed between 1939 and 1941 according to strenuous architectural and engineering standards, represents a significant waste of human and financial capital. Regular reports prepared by the Memphis Housing Authority staff consistently evaluated the buildings as being in good to excellent shape identify rare structural deficiencies. The engineering report attached to the City's Choice Neighborhood Initiative Planning Grant Application prepared by Goforth Engineering was extremely brief, focusing primarily on cosmetic issues at the expense of any systematic treatment of structural issues such as the state of the

foundation and load-bearing walls. The two licensed architectural engineers from the U of M's Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning who toured the complex on numerous occasions are confident in the building complex's construction quality and structural integrity.

- **Implementation of an environmentally and socially responsible redevelopment of Foote Homes will highlight Memphis' ability to blaze an alternative approach to the reinvention of public housing in the context of growing acceptance of the failure of the Federal government's Move to Opportunity and HOPE VI efforts.** Longitudinal research by Ed Goetz, James Fraser, and others have clearly demonstrated the negative impact such policies have had on the former residents of public housing, despite the best of intentions of the program designers. This research has also documented the positive impact this program has had upon the property values of those holding land close to public housing sites that have undergone HOPE VI treatment.
- The preservation-oriented redevelopment plan outlined above will allow a **much higher number of Foote Home and Vance Avenue residents to secure living wage jobs and construction-related training** because of the higher percentage of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs that rehabilitation-oriented projects generate. Section III of the enabling legislation that created the HOPE VI Program strongly encourages the adoption of ambitious local job generation goals. The incorporation of a YouthBuild Grant into the Vance Avenue Choice Neighborhood Initiative will enable dozens of long-time unemployed Vance Avenue residents to significantly alter their life chances by receiving union-sanctioned apprentice and journeymen's training on the job with the support of the Memphis Building Trades Council, Southwest Tennessee Community College, and the University of Memphis Departments of Architecture and City and Regional Planning.
- Moving 495 of our City's most vulnerable families, many of them headed by individuals with disabilities, to alternative housing where they will experience significantly higher energy costs **will ultimately cause many to lose their Section 8 Vouchers placing them at further "risk" for becoming homeless** at a time when the City is also closing many of its transitional housing facilities. According to local soup kitchen, food pantry, clothes closet, and case management workers and volunteers affiliated with human service organizations serving the neighborhood, more than two hundred individuals are currently forced to survive on the streets of the neighborhood; we should not undertake any action that may cause these numbers to rise.



### *Steps*

1. Form a neighborhood-wide policy and program development advisory board including local residents, business owners, institutional leaders, outside advisors, and elected and appointed officials (at least 50% will be low-income residents of the study area) to provide leadership to the project;
2. Mobilize local residents through Teaching Youth Entrepreneurship and other local community-based organizations, including the Vance Avenue Collaborative, to insure local resident participation in the planning, design, construction, management, and evaluation phases of the planning and development process.
3. Complete a detailed structural inspection of the remaining 495 units on the campus of Foote Homes;
4. Prepare a detailed urban design plan for the physical transformation of the exterior spaces at Home Homes;
5. Develop a detailed pro forma covering all housing-related project costs;
6. Issue an RFP to a private and/or non-profit developer with significant preservation experience;
7. Select the developer, working with him/her to recruit local contractors and subcontractors who are committed to the shelter, employment, and community-building goals of the project;
8. Complete the construction plan and organize a public meeting to explain the nature of the phased (short-term/6 months) relocation and construction effort:

9. Secure off-site housing as close as possible to the construction site for families to live together during the relocation process;
10. Assist families in returning to their homes;
11. Organize a post-occupancy survey to address lingering issues.

### *Lead Agency*

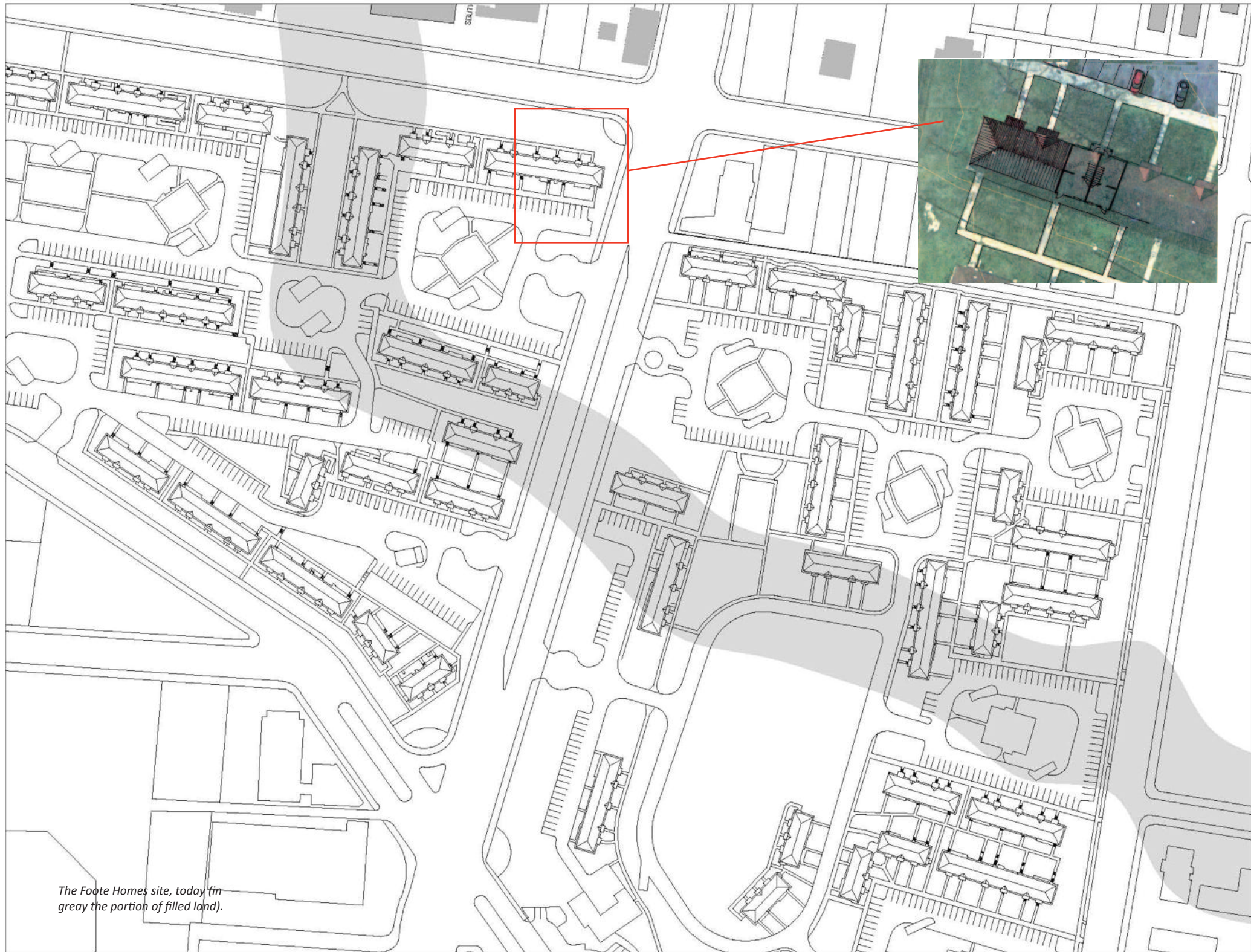
Memphis Housing Authority

### *Supporting Organizations*

Foote Homes Tenants Association, Vance Avenue Collaborative, Saint Patrick Community Outreach, Inc., University of Memphis Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning, Teaching Youth Entrepreneurship, Community Lift, Community Capital, Enterprise Community Partners

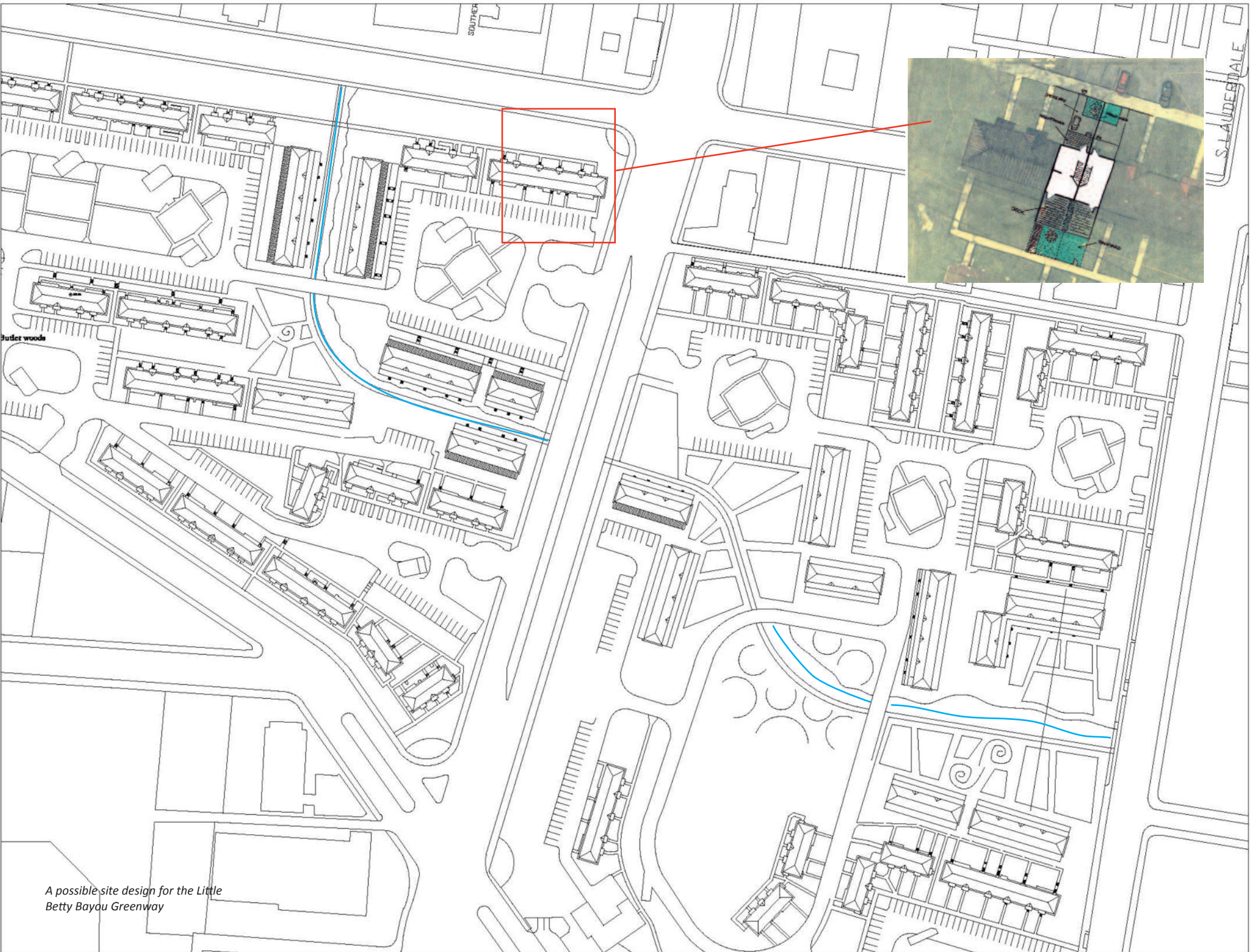
### *Potential Funding*

Financing for the housing element of the Vance Avenue Community Transformation Plan will include Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant, Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program, TVA Energy Conservation and Green Jobs, City of Memphis Municipal Bond and Tax Incremental Financing resources. Assisting in the design and implementation of the project's overall financial package will be Enterprise Community Partners and Monadnock Developers.



*The Foote Homes site, today (in gray the portion of filled land).*

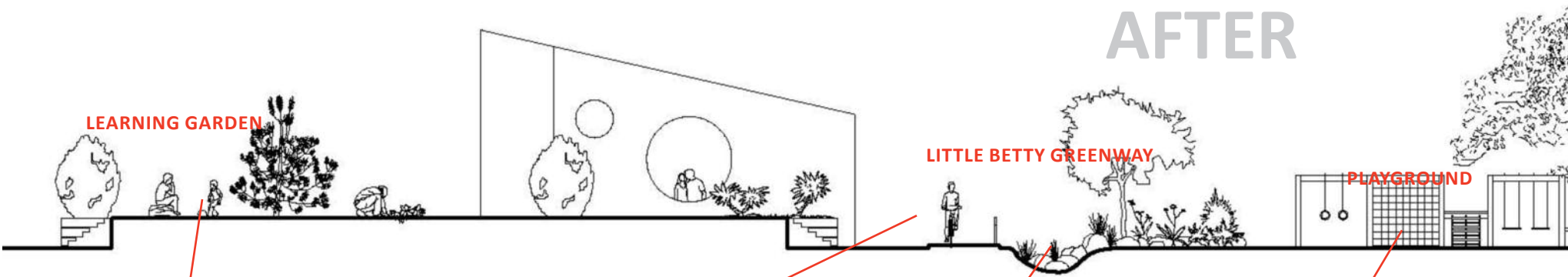
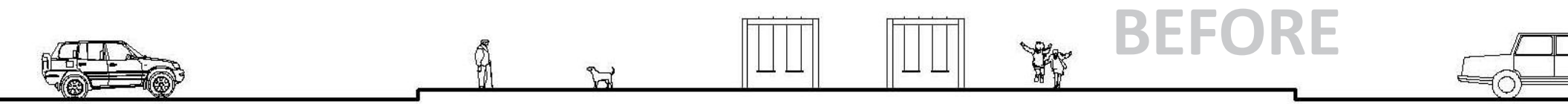




A possible site design for the Little Betty Bayou Greenway



Section AA, Before (top) and after the Landscape improvement project.



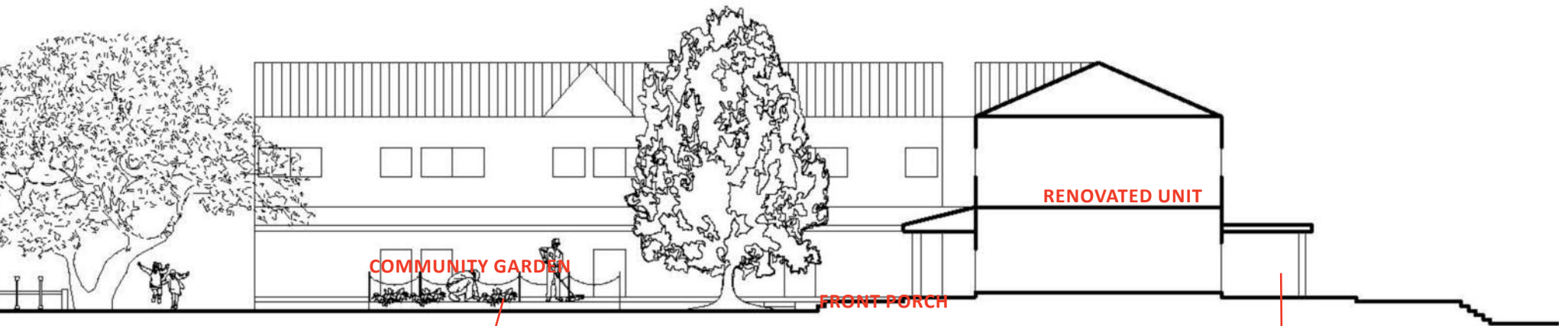
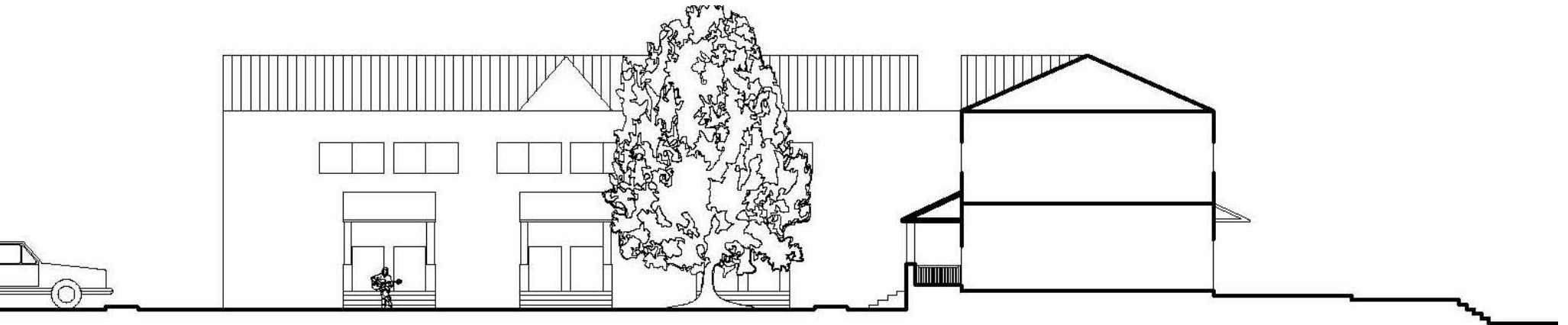
BIKE TRAIL



BAYOU







## 6.2 The Little Betty Bayou Greenway: enhancing the quality of the urban environment and environmental stewardship through ecological design

### *Description*

*No single park, no matter how large and how well designed, would provide the citizens with the beneficial influences of nature...A connected system of parks and parkways is manifestly far more complete and useful – Frederick Law Olmsted*

The same principle that inspired Kessler's and Bartholomew's designs of Memphis parkway system in the early 900s, has inspired the idea of a multifunctional linear park crossing the neighborhood, following what was once the pattern of the little betty bayou, from Church Park through Foote Homes to Ella Brown Park.

The park will be a connection of different areas and points of interests within the neighborhood, featuring bike and pedestrian facilities as well as various amenities for different age and social groups. Major sections of the park will be realized as an open-air storm water stream, following the current natural topography and utilizing the most advanced landscape architecture techniques of urban stream daylighting to restore the historic little betty bayou.

The park will feature a variety of landscape arrangements (decorative patches, grass-and-trees low-maintenance areas, education-gardens, etc.) – related to the variety of strategy for implementation and maintenance that might involve a variety of actors (City agencies, community groups, schools, other institutions, etc.).

Pedestrian-oriented improvements of existing public spaces like sidewalks will be realized in sections where the bayou cannot be restored (e. g. streets intersections and private properties).

### *How did the idea develop?*

When invited to close their eyes and envision Vance in 10 years as the neighborhood of their dreams, many Vance residents described a well-maintained green public space, where people of different generations- from kids to elderly people and young parents with their infants- felt safe and able to enjoy a wide array of amenities and services.

At points further along in the participatory planning process, the issue of the quality of the built environment was explored including the reasons behind the presence of

mold at the ground level of some of the residential units at Foote as well as reasons behind frequent episodes of poor drainage of runoff surface water in some areas. The culmination of these factors is how the idea of utilizing a newly developed green amenity in the community could also serve the purpose of addressing environmental issues. Further exploration and development of this concept has shown that, with the use of a bottom-up, incremental approach to implementation, the Vance Greenway can assist in maximizing other important goals of the Renaissance Plan such as job creation and public safety (see rationale for more details).

### *About Urban Stream Daylighting*

The word "daylighting" is used to indicate the practice of removing water streams from buried conditions (mostly in urban areas). Channelization of urban streams was a common practice of 19th century urban development. Using this practice still today, many cities throughout the nation now have once-natural streams flowing beneath their street grids and urban infrastructure. The method of full channelization was aimed at isolating increasingly polluted urban streams while maximizing developable land. Despite the fact that most of our cities are currently using a buried storm water management system, resource planners, engineers, ecologists, environmental scientists and landscape architects share the opinion that stream daylighting offers multiple and often simultaneous engineering, economic, ecological, and social benefits.

Some of these benefits are associated with the fact that, since the development patterns of cities have changed in the last centuries, the early infrastructure has become insufficient for carrying current volumes of runoff water. The inadequacy of these early storm water management systems can be realized in deteriorating infrastructures and an overcapacity of storm water flow due to an increase in developed land areas and associated impervious surfaces. Failures in storm water drainage can result in frequent flooding and consequent damage to the built environment. Linear parks that incorporate restored urban streams can function – if necessary – as flood plains that create a flexible system that reduces the incidence of costly post-flooding repairs. Open-air streams also have the benefit of being able to self-depurate (self-oxygenation), thus reducing the level of pollution and/or the need of treatment of channelized water.

### *Why Daylight the Little Betty Bayou?*

The Vance Avenue redevelopment footprint is located in an area that, historically, functioned as an essential drainage basin for the central and southern portions of the city of Memphis. Two tributaries of Bayou Gayoso, the DeSoto Bayou and the Little Bet-



tie Bayou, intersect the boundaries of the Vance Avenue neighborhood and travel northwest feeding into the Gayoso. Large or entire sections of these bayous have been channeled/culvertized and incorporated into the city's storm water sewer system and travel underground beneath the streets and developed and vacant land parcels. Only small sections of these bayous have remained exposed to open air, the longest of these being the section located in Ella Brown Park which is currently under redevelopment.

As reported in the National Board of Health's Annual Report of 1880, the Memphis Bayou system naturally drained upward of 5,000 acres of land. The bayous were also fed by numerous cool water springs located along its course which provided a year-round source of both cool running water and deeper pools for fishing. In his book, *The Chickasaw Nation*, James H. Malone speaks of the finest game fish caught in the cool waters of the bayou south of Vance Avenue. However, when waters from the Mississippi River rose high, the bayou system tended to back up and could remain so for months out of the year. A factor compounding these backups of stagnant water was the use of the bayou system for household and manufacturing waste drainage. Following a succession of Yellow Fever outbreaks between 1855 and 1879, the city of Memphis entered into negotiations with The National Board of Health and in 1880 broke ground on a sanitary and storm water sewer system as part of a set of recommendations aimed at guarding the city from future epidemics.

While the recommendation of culvertizing, damming and pumping the north segment of the Gayoso Bayou was realized, the suggestion to condemn and take, "as a public park," a width of land on either side of the lower bayou was not. This recommendation was made in an effort to secure the safety and health of populations residing in low-lying lands and to gain the advantage of a natural parkway through the heart of the town. However, both the Gayoso Bayou and its tributaries to the south were eventually almost fully sealed within brick and concrete culverts and buried under new, leveled ground that increased the total acreage of "developable land." A portion of this acreage of developable land lies within the parcel boundaries of Memphis Housing Authority's Foote Homes, which completed construction in 1941. It is likely that debris from the demolition that occurred between 1941 and 1954 to clear land for Foote and Cleaborn Homes has been used to fill the bayous.

The overall topography of the neighborhood still mostly follows the original patterns of two major headlands within the south east of the neighborhood boundaries that slowly slope down northwest along what were the bayous and today, are storm water culverts (ditches). However, the alteration of the natural topography that did occur in combination with the propensity of the silty soil to retain water (a soil type typical of the broader Mis-

issippi Delta Region) and current deficiencies of the buried storm water management system can be at the origin of insufficient storm water drainage in the low-lying portions of land. Poor drainage is suspected to be related to flooding episodes within Foote Homes and mold issues on the ground level of many of the residential buildings.

It is apparent that the emergence of separate symptoms (storm water pipe obsolescence, mold growth, flooding) addressed with separated techniques (pipe repairs and upgrades, demolition and reconstruction of buildings affected by mold, temporary flood barriers, etc.) are very likely to reemerge with a continuance of the status quo of maintenance techniques. On the contrary, strong suggestions identify approaches to design that are able to address separate but correlated symptoms with a strategy that is both holistic and sustaining. In the case of Vance Avenue, this strategy emerges in the Vance Avenue linear park.

#### *Rationale*

This greenway as been conceived to be a complex infrastructure will address and integrate various morphological, functional, and social issues raised by the community. In particular, the Vance Greenway will:

- Be a multi-functional well-maintained and well-served public amenity for local residents, where the intersection of different functions and land uses can help address the issue of **public safety** while facilitating inter-generational interaction;
- Be a **unique attraction** within the neighborhood that is inspired by the most advanced principle of urban design and landscape architecture; this innovative public feature will make this community special and interesting in the eye of the broader Memphis community by building upon the growing interest in greenways and bike ways (e. g. Shelby Farms Greenline, Vollentine Evergreen) and the re-naturalization of water streams (e. g. the Lick Creek debate), while also re-connecting – physically but also in terms of social perception – Vance with other vibrant communities in Memphis;
- Enhance residents' **environmental stewardship**;
- **Create jobs** for local residents in the landscaping sector;
- Improve the capacity for **storm water drainage** in the neighborhood, through a ecologically sensible methodology that will be taken as a best practice to be replicated in other sections of the City and can lead to better ways of dealing with watershed management and planning;
- Promote **health and wellness** in the community through the facilitation of outdoor physical activities (outdoor sports and pedestrian mobility) and the reduction of haz-

ardous health impacts deriving from poor water drainage;

- Increase the **connectivity** of the neighborhood to the broader Urban environment, in particular to the city's existing and to-be-developed transit and bicycle facilities;
- **Serve visitors** interested in capturing the historic richness of the neighborhood, connecting important historic sites [see paragraph 6.4];
- Enhance the opportunities for **nature-based educational activities** to improve awareness of the delicate nature of the environment and its relationship with human activity by reinforcing and encouraging sustainability practices.

#### *Lead agency*

City of Memphis Parks and Recreation Department;

#### *Partnerships*

- Community organizations that are already involved in community gardens in the neighborhood (Mosque 55, Masonic Lodge at St Paul, St Patrick, etc.) – some of the organizations can organize Ex-offenders trained as landscapers, creating a job opportunity for them);
- The UT Agricultural Extension Service and the Agricenter International Partnership offers a new educational service to enlighten adults and youth in subjects related to agriculture and environmental sciences.
- MRDC
- ASLA
- MLGW (for the purpose of provide an adequate level of lighting)
- MCS and Neighborhood Schools (Booker T., Vance Middle, etc.)
- UofM – Urban Ecology Program and CRP – Urban Design Class
- Memphis Art Schools
- Memphis Health Department (monitoring function)
- APA

#### *Funding*

Sections within the renovated Foote Homes complex can be financed with the housing component of a Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant;

Additional funding for specific sections of the park to be implemented and managed by community groups can take advantage of several APA funding programs dedicated to community-driven projects related to water, especially if involving youth. For these programs, the partnership with MCS is crucial;

Additional funds can be also secured from public and private agencies interested in promoting Health and Wellness in distressed Communities; the partnership with Healthy Memphis Common Table and major Health Care institutions is crucial.

#### *Steps*

1. City of Memphis Parks and Recreation Department forms an **inter-disciplinary team of professionals**, including city engineers, landscape architects, and community workers, who can start performing a detailed physical investigation of the area (map of flooding areas, status of maintenance of the buried channels, etc.);
2. Establishment of a neighborhood **“Little Betty Bayou Greenway” steering committee** of community members and representative of interested partners;
3. **Training activities** for city staff, designers, community members on urban stream daylighting and on strategies to maximize community engagement in park creation and management. Among those activities are to be included:
  - o special training sessions for professional designers and engineering on community-led, low-tech, and low-cost design solutions;
  - o field trips to other communities (e. g. the Neighborhood School community garden in Binghampton);
  - o agricultural education programs offered by the UT Agricultural Extension Service and the Agricenter International Partnership, targeting groups that might be interested in engaging in Urban Agriculture;
4. City Staff and steering committee run a **3 month participatory design process**, at the end of which a detail design can be finalized. The design might identify the exact location of facilities and actors interested in engaging in the production and management of single sections of the park; community members have suggested, so far, that the park should feature:
  - o Jogging trails and specific areas for fitness activities, a staffed basket court, a Juice Bar (a recreational facility reinforcing the “health and wellness” message);
  - o Design has to be sensitive to the issue of water quality and the compatibility between the water stream and residential activities (e. g. mosquitoes encouraged by stagnant water, high level of water pollution); this can be done combining the use of French drainage (avoiding open air water exposure) and hydroponic plants (facilitating water oxygenation) as well as “water cleaning and monitoring stations;”
  - o Different sections might have a different function: most of the park is seen as a decorative landscape with “colorful” (people want a lot of flowers) native plants;



a small section of the park can be used to grow food for educational purposes (school gardens);

- o To assure viability, native plant species can be utilized to landscape the linear park, which in turn will attract complimentary wildlife species, take less resources to maintain, and fortify the significance cultural and social heritage as native plant species were once commonly utilized by healers and medical practitioners prior to the development of modern medicine.
5. Beginning of the “**Adopt a Section Program**” through which the park has to be realized in sections having a different aesthetic, functional, and procedural character. Some sections might be developed and maintained by the City of Memphis Park and Recreation Department, while others might be developed by community organizations, schools, and partnerships. The implementation of each section can follow the overall design (see step #4) but each organization is allowed to act with a certain level of flexibility, so that each group is allowed to program activities that maximize the fit with people’s existing skills; among the organization that have already shown interest are listed among the potential partners;
6. Even if not directly responsible for management, the City of Memphis Park and Recreation Department might be responsible for **monitoring maintenance**.

### 6.3 Enhancing Public Safety Through a Resident-Led Crime Prevention

#### *Description*

The Department of Justice's model of Community Policing, through a basis of community engagement and partnership, infuses proactive problem solving that centers on the roots of the causes and the presence of crime and social disorder (as fully documented by the U.S. Department of Justice, community oriented policing services). Residents and other stakeholders of the Vance Avenue community wish to engage in this model of pro-active problem-solving with the new leadership of the Memphis Police Department (MPD) to implement an aggressive community policing program that would address the common and integrated factors that generate crime within the boundaries of the Vance Avenue and neighborhoods in its proximity.

The effort will mobilize partnership between the leadership of a broad cross section of community-based organizations to work with local and federal law enforcement agencies in designing and implementing a comprehensive crime prevention program to increase the effectiveness of current utilized solutions.

By bringing together neighborhood schools, churches, human service organizations, area businesses, fraternal organizations, cultural groups, and civic associations with the Memphis Police Department, the Shelby County Sheriff's Department, and various federal law enforcement agencies, including local, state, and federal prosecutors, this program would complement the current real time crime data, and strategic patrolling efforts of the MPD to advance police training efforts of the City's existing, Department of Justice-funded Blue Crush program.

#### *Why Community Policing in Vance Avenue?*

With the assistance and support of the University of Memphis (UoM) Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies, the Shelby County Crime Commission, and the UoM Grad. Program in City and Regional Planning, local residents and law enforcement officials will be able to draw upon the considerable research, program development, and program evaluation resources of the National Sheriffs' Association, International Association of Chiefs of Police, Police Foundation, and National Crime Prevention Institute to design, implement, manage, and evaluate a successful community policing program that builds upon the historically, strong grass roots community organizing, building, and development traditions of this particular, historic African American neighborhood to address the significant public safety problems that challenge its future stability and development.

By organizing local residents and leaders to expand educational, recreational, cultural, and employment opportunities for area teens, young adults ex-offenders, and terminally under-employed adults, residents can mobilize an Initiation of a neighborhood-wide crime watch and reporting effort. This effort would undertake a zero tolerance campaign against gun violence, implement a comprehensive educational campaign that would train residents in the practices of non-violent solutions to personal, family, and community conflict, and establish methods to pursue court in the methods of restorative.

By enhancing the community engagement and conflict resolution skills of local police officers, a Community Policing agenda will encourage the creation of a community-police council that will undertake the tasks of reviewing monthly crime data, resolving typical complaints by area residents and recommending changes in local patrolling patterns that would address current and anticipated threats to community safety.

#### *Rationale*

While the Vance Avenue community was recently designated a Community Policing District, changes within senior MPD leadership and the process of re-drawing of precinct boundaries has delayed the implementation of the redistricting programming. Currently, a new Union Station Precinct Station has been completed on Lamar Avenue and the bulk of the Vance Avenue community has been reassigned to the Downtown Precinct. This is, potentially, an ideal time to bring representatives of the community's major stakeholders together with the leadership of the Downtown Precinct to initiate and evaluate a study of current "best practices" in community policing that could, effectively be employed in the Vance Avenue neighborhood. Such an effort at this critical time would address the following public safety issues addressed by stakeholders of the Vance Avenue community, who have consistently ranked public safety as one of their top concerns due to the following:

- Despite intensified patrolling efforts within the Vance Avenue community, it has remained one of the City's most dangerous neighborhoods to live, work, worship, and play;
- A high crime rate discourages residents from getting to know their neighbors, attending school sponsored functions, participating in evening educational, cultural, and civic events sponsored by local churches, and registering their children for after-school programs offered by local non-profit organizations and public agencies;
- A fear of engaging the small, but well-organized criminal element within the community has discouraged area churches and social service organizations from under-



taking needed outreach within the community;

- Resident confidence in the Memphis Police Department and the City of Memphis has been negatively effected by what residents' perceive to be MPD's collective inability to make a significant improvement in public safety within the community;
- Thwarted and discouraged efforts of local residents, leaders, and officials to market available, vacant lots and buildings within the neighborhood to would-be investors, business operators, and residents; and,
- A reinforcement of the resident perception, due to current engagement/interaction between residents and MPD, that the MPD is an occupying, army-like presence with little knowledge of or empathy with local residents. This perception has been fueled by tragedies such as the fatal shooting of Christian Foreman by Memphis Police officers.
- A functioning community-policing program will better-equip the community and its municipal officers with a deeply informed knowledge of the special needs of its population as well as the most appropriate and safe methods of proceeding with specific situations while avoiding possible escalation.

#### *Leadership*

The lead organization for this project will be the soon-to-be-established Community Services Cabinet that will be jointly staffed by the Memphis Police Department and the Graduate Program in City and Regional planning..

#### *Partnership*

- The Shelby County Crime Commission
- The University of Memphis Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice and the Graduate Program in City and Regional planning.
- The City of Memphis Office of Neighborhoods
- The Shelby County Sheriffs' Department and Prosecutors' Office
- The State of Tennessee Police
- The U.S. Department of Justice.

#### *Funding*

- Community Service Block Grant Program,
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Weed and Seed Program, U.S. Department of Justice
- Special Project Funding, U.S. Homeland Security

#### *Actions*

1. Prepare U of M graduate students participating in the Vance Avenue Collaborative to use the MPD's on-line crime analysis data to prepare a detailed profile of criminal activity within the community;
2. Use these abovementioned data to recruit a cross-section of local civic leaders to participate in the establishment of a Vance Avenue Community Policing Taskforce;
3. Work with the leadership of the Downtown Precinct and MPD Community Policing Program to inventory and prioritize the neighborhood's major crime prevention concerns;
4. Organize issue-specific work teams, supported by U of M Graduate Research Assistants to investigate community policing inspired "best practices" aimed at addressing the resident identified/prioritized crime prevention challenges facing the neighborhood;
5. Sponsor in-depth training for residents, community leaders, and law enforcement personnel in the philosophy, principles, techniques, and management of community policing;
6. Create a three-year strategic crime prevention plan based upon the abovementioned research aimed at reducing the overall crime rate by 20% and the incidence of violent crime by 33%; and,
7. Form a Community Services Cabinet including the leadership of the Vance Avenue Collaborative, the City of Memphis Choice Neighborhood, and the City's major uniform services to meet, on a monthly basis, to review recent crime data, review and act upon citizen complaints against the MPD, oversee the implementation of the strategic crime prevention plan, and recommend needed changes in police patrol patterns and special enforcement activities.

## 6.4 Vancing with the Arts Freedom Trail: Celebrating the Educational, Commercial, Cultural and Civic Achievements of a Historic African American Community

### *Description*

The Vancing with the Arts Freedom Trail proposes the creation of a one-mile long walking trail that introduces Vance Avenue residents, other area Memphians, and visitors and tourists to the extraordinary contributions that local residents, educators, clergy and businessmen, and civic leaders have made and continue to make that contribute to an enhanced quality of life within the Bluff City.

A carefully marked and interpreted trail, that begins at the intersection of Beale and South Fourth Street, will guide history and culture-minded Memphians and visitors through an opportunity to visit more than two dozen historical sites and buildings that highlight the many contributions that people of color have made to the storied development of the Bluff City into what it is today.

Each stop along the Vancing with the Arts' Trail that mimics "Weavers' Walk" will be designated by a historic plaque naming the site, the date of its significance, and an explanation of its importance to the history of the city, region, nation and globe.

At sites where significant and intact landscapes or buildings are in place to provide physical clues to their historical importance, there will be audio-narrated tours available from the staff of the Handy House or service to cellular phones.

Additionally, at sites where physical elements are no longer available to highlight the site or building's importance, an effort will be made to commission public art murals installed on appropriate building exteriors near the former site that will highlight the significance of its location

Local and regional artists will be commissioned to install these significant-site murals by the Urban Art Commission, who will assist in the design. In collaboration with the commissioned artists, the murals will be executed by teams of selected faculty and students from Booker T. Washington High School, the Martin Luther King Transition Academy, and Vance Ave. Middle's fine arts programs who will work along side volunteer students and faculty from the Memphis College of Art, Southwest Tennessee Community College, LeMoyné-Owen College, Christian Brothers University and the University of Memphis.

For clear and accurate interpretation of the sites, a serious effort will be made to use the maximum amount of material from Rhodes College's Crossroads to Freedom History Project and the University of Memphis' Oral History Project to interpret these sites and their importance.

Staffed by a committee of National Civil Rights Museum curators, a group of scholars specializing in the social history of the Vance Avenue community, the origin and evolution of Memphis, and the contributions of people of color to the economic and community development of the Bluff City and the Mid-South Region will serve, along with a small group of respected elders, as the curators of the Vancing with the Arts living history project.

A preliminary list of sites and buildings recommended by participating, local residents and leaders of the Vance Avenue Choice Neighborhood Initiative planning process includes:

- Tri-State Bank – a critical source of capital for minority businesses, churches, and civic organizations seeking to advance the African American community
- First Baptist on Beale – the first Baptist Church chartered in the State of Tennessee where Robert Church Sr. and Jr. worshipped.
- American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Headquarters – the public employees' union that came to the defense of the Memphis Sanitation Workers Union in the historic 1968 strike.
- Hunt-Phelan House- the last intact plantation home and property extant within the City of Memphis.
- Marker for Lt George Lee homestead on Beale Street
- Mount Olive Baptist Church – one of the city's oldest and largest Baptist congregations where the Memphis chapter of the NAACP has met for decades.
- Common Ground Community Garden – a free communal gardening space created through the efforts of long-time activist/educator Allen Stiles and educator Anne Stubblefield of Saint Patrick Community Outreach Inc. as part of the Vance Avenue Collaborative.
- Universal Life Insurance Company Headquarters – one of the nation's oldest and most respected African American finance corporations. In the 1940s, this Company was the most highly capitalized African American owned business South of the Mason-Dixon Line.
- Church of God in Christ – the mother church of a Baptist Congregation launched in Memphis that has grown into a national denomination with more than 7,000,000 members under the leadership of three generations of Patterson pastors.
- Church Park – a public park created by African American businessman Robert Church at a time when segregation of the races prevented African American residents of Memphis to take advantage of the City's excellent park system, zoo, and botanical gardens.
- Saint Patrick Church – a one hundred year old Roman Catholic Church built by



Irish immigrants that became one of the first predominantly white churches to cross the “color line” to support the 1968 Sanitation Workers Strike which remains committed to Dr. King’s notion of the “Beloved Community”.

- Clayborn Temple – the site of a former AME congregation which offered their church as a meeting site for the striking sanitation workers; it was from this church that the workers organized their nightly non-violent marches to City Hall seeking justice.
- Vance Avenue Market – a local commercial establishment which was the site of the night club scene prominently featured in the hit indie movie “Hustle and Flow” starring Samuel Jackson and Terrence Howard and featuring the music of South Memphis’ own Three 6 Mafia.
- R.E. Lewis Funeral Home – the oldest continuously operating funeral home serving the African American community whose founder, in the days prior to the Negro College Defense Fund, helped many promising students from the African American community achieve the goal of a college education.
- Foote Homes Public Housing Complex – the last remaining example of public housing created by the Roosevelt Administration to provide shelter to poor and working class African Americans experiencing economic problems. Preserved through the efforts of residents, their neighborhoods, and supportive institutions such as the NAACP, Mid-South Peace and Justice Center
- Within Foote Homes the following Sites will be visited:
  - o Benjamin Hooks Jr.’s childhood apartment – Lawyer, civil rights activist, judge, Federal Communications Commissioner, and President of the NAACP (Nationally)
  - o Rufus Thomas Apartment – local educator, D.J., entertainer, and Civil Rights Activist who, with his wife, helped build the local chapter of the NAACP and introduced local children to the music of their people along with the importance of education, and the fight for justice. His apartment is also Carla Thomas’s birth place.
  - o Ida B. Wells Homestead – one, among many of the home sites of crusading journalist of civil rights, from Holly Springs, MS who waged a withering attack on anti-lynching and the Jim Crow laws and customs of the South.
  - o Robert Church Homestead – home site of Robert Church Sr., a prominent and very successful African American business person who was among the first residents of the city to purchase the municipal bonds that allowed the city to get back on its feet following the Yellow Fever Epidemics of the late 19th century.
  - o Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church – a church long-pastored by Andrew Love Sr. whose heir, Andrew Love, of STAX and Hi-Records, and the Memphis Horns, was both baptized and a long-time member, and also, regrettably, waked a mere few

weeks after receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award with his long-time musical partner Wayne Jackson.

- o Jessie Turner Branch of the NAACP – the long-time home of the nation’s first local NAACP branch that played pivotal roles in both the Memphis school desegregation cases of the 1960s and the Sanitation Workers Strike.
- o Vance Avenue Child Development Center – a remarkable after-school program launched and administered for many years by a single inspirational former teacher, [NAME].
- o Cornelia Crenshaw Library- a structure celebrating the extraordinary record of activism one of the City’s most outstanding women.

Local high school students from Booker T. Washington High and Martin Luther King Transition Academy will be trained by residents, UoM historians, and Rhodes College urban scholars to serve as docents along the Vancing with the Arts Freedom Trail. These young people will take local residents and tourists interested in the extraordinary social history of the Vance Avenue community on walking tours every Saturday morning at 10 am. These tours will begin and end at the W.C. Handy House on Beale Street. Revenue generated by these tours will be split three ways – 1/3 for the youth tour guides, 1/3 to support community-based research activities by BTW and MLK h students, and 1/3 to help to defray the installation and maintenance costs of the public murals.

### *Rationale*

This social and cultural history trail has been conceived to be a multifaceted coordination that will address and integrate various structural, functional, and social issues raised by the community. In particular, the Vance Greenway will:

- Preserve and interpret what residents, business owners, and institutional leaders from the Vance Avenue neighborhood and their community allies deeply appreciate about the important history of this vital African American community.
- Share with future generations, a local stakeholder commitment to the inspiration and lessons embodied in the Civil and Human Rights history of this remarkable community.
- Protect important elements of the Vance Avenue story that local residents feel are threatened by historically and culturally uninformed public policies that place important elements of the community’s physical fabric at risk.
- Represent an important learning and teaching resource for those seeking to gain a deeper understanding of issues related to white privilege, race, and class in the Bluff City and the Mid-South through the preservation and interpretation of the significant Civil and Human Rights History of the Vance Avenue community.

- Offer a rich opportunity for intergenerational teaching and learning related to urban development, African American history, race and class relations in the historic and modern South, and historic preservation through the visual arts, multi-media education, and mural construction.
- Contribute significantly to improving the appearance and legibility of the public spaces within the Vance Avenue community by creating more than twenty-four beautifully crafted, communicated, and expressed social history installations.
- Compliment the efforts of the Downtown Memphis Commission, Memphis Convention and Tourism Board, Beale Street Business Association, and the South Main Neighborhood Association to promote heritage and cultural tourism as an economic development strategy.
- Contribute to the multi-million dollar efforts to transform the experience of visiting the National Civil Rights Museum into a more active and transformative learning experience by offering visitors the opportunity to experience the people, places, and stories of important chapters of the Memphis Freedom Struggle that were played out in the homes, businesses, churches, clubs, and public spaces within the Vance Avenue community.
- Implement a significant element of the recently completed and adopted Shelby County Trail by offering those traveling north or south by foot or bike along the Mississippi River Trail the opportunity to take a two to four hour cultural enrichment tour of a nationally and internationally significant set of heritage sites (i.e. Dr. Benjamin Hooks' home, First Local Branch of the NAACP, Universal Life Insurance World Headquarters, Clayborn Temple, etc.
- Offer young people the opportunity to earn needed income by becoming knowledgeable interpreters of the peoples' history and, in the process, sharpen their communications skills while making contacts that could advance their personal, academic, and professional careers.

#### *Leadership*

- Memphis Heritage

#### *Partnerships*

National Civil Rights Museum; Booker T. Washington High School; Martin Luther King Jr. Learning Academy; W.C. Handy House; Area Colleges and Universities; NAACP; Foote Homes Tenants Association; AFSCME Local

#### *Funding*

Tennessee Council on the Arts; Benjamin Hooks Institute for Social Justice; The Grizzlies; Consolidated School District; The Hyde Family Foundation; Memphis Music Foundation

#### *Actions*

1. Convene a group of local urban historians to review the initial set of resident-generated historic sites to confirm their importance and to identify the most relevant primary and secondary data that can be used to prepare the guide to the trail and to influence the muralists work.
2. Identify interested university faculty to work with BTW and MLK history and social science instructors to prepare the catalogue and docents guide for the trail.
3. Work with the Urban Arts Commission, Memphis Heritage, and the Landmarks Office to raise the funds needed to hold a competition for muralists to work with area high school and college students in creating the mural installations long the trail.
4. Enlist the aide of a local public relations, advertising, and branding firm to assist in the development of a logo and signature look for all of the materials related to the Weavers' Walk Freedom Trail.
5. Invite youth participating in various community supported summer programs to work with the project's chosen artists to help create and install the public murals that will, in many ways, be the centerpiece of this trail.
6. Work with the staff and volunteers of the Handy House to determine whether or not this location can serve an ideal jumping off point for the start and finish of the Weavers' Walk Freedom Trail. If this does not work out, an effort should be made with the Beale Street Business Association and the Visitors' and Convention Bureau to find an appropriate alternative location.
7. Involve students and faculty from the communications programs at our area colleges to design and implement a comprehensive advertising and promotional campaign using traditional and alternative media to announce the launch of the walk.
8. Seek support from the City of Memphis Engineering Department to install appropriate signage and wayfinding guides along the trail.
9. Select an appropriate date of historical importance to Memphis' African American community to launch the trail with the participation of individuals who are in a unique position to provide first-person interpretation of the events celebrated at selective sites.



## 6.5 Job Generation Through Cooperative Economic Development

### *Description*

The collapse of neighborhood-oriented retail centers in the 1960s and 1970s has left many central city communities without food markets, sandwich shops, dry cleaners, barber shops, stationery stores, pharmacies and banks. The departure of these and other businesses from older residential neighborhoods force residents to travel by car or public transportation to more distant shopping centers and malls. The lack of conveniently located, neighborhood retail services places additional burdens on low-income families that do not own a car as well as youth, seniors, and those with physical disabilities who do not drive.

The lack of well-designed and conveniently located neighborhood-oriented retail services also represents a significant economic challenge for these urban communities. Each month, the families, businesses, and institutions, such as churches, day care centers, and social service agencies, located in these retail-starved communities are compelled to purchase everyday household and business goods and services outside the neighborhood, thereby exporting vast sums of money that could be used to support and expand existing neighborhood businesses and to create new enterprises capable of generating significant employment opportunities for local residents.

Michael E. Porter of the Harvard Business School following a study of Post World War II retailing patterns has argued that older residential neighborhoods within central cities represents the next frontier for profitable retail development. Nowhere is the opportunity to establish profitable inner city retail more obvious than in the grocery sector. Currently, tens of thousands of Memphians live in neighborhoods that meet the United States Department of Agriculture's definition of a "food deserts" because they are located more than 2.5 miles from the nearest full-service food store.

Two recent studies by the University of Memphis' Regional Economic Development Center and a third report commissioned by the LeMoyne Owen Community Development Corporation have clearly established that effective market demand exists within South Memphis to support a 25,000 to 40,000 sq. ft. full-service market. In spite of these data and the efforts of the Shelby County Food Policy Council to provide additional incentives to one of our region's existing full-service grocery chains, such as Kroger's, to open new stores in underserved areas, the private sector has shown little interest in doing so.

The organizations comprising the Vance Avenue Collaborative believe a cooperatively-organized full-service supermarket can be successfully organized to: a.) meet

local residents, businesses, and institutions' need for high quality, competitively priced food and household items; b.) generate needed full and part-time employment for unemployed/underemployed residents; c.) recapture capital currently flowing out of the community, and d.) place Memphis in the forefront of the nation's rapidly expanding social entrepreneurship movement.

The proposed Vance Avenue food cooperative would seek City assistance in locating an existing building and/or lot where this exciting new venture could be launched. Currently, there are several underutilized and vacant shopping centers located along Crump Boulevard and several recently vacated theatrical and costume supply buildings along Third Street that could be adapted to serve as a food store. The Coop would enter into contracts with local community gardens and nearby farmers to secure fresh fruits, vegetables, eggs, and dairy products during the Mid-April to Mid-October Mid-South Growing season. All other products would be secured through the Association of Cooperative Grocers in Nashville.

The Coop would operate with a mix of part and full-time employees from the neighborhood, trainees participating in publicly and privately funded workforce development programs such as WIN, and volunteers who, as part of their Coop memberships, pledge to work a minimum number of hours to support the institution earning discounts on the goods they offer. The Coop would accept all forms of State and Federal food coupons and vouchers including those provided through the Senior Nutrition Assistance, Women Infants and Children, and Food Stamp Programs. The Coop would function as a high service store where bags would be packed by employees and for those needing assistance to get their purchases to their vehicles or the bus would be assisted in doing so.

As an organization, the Vance Avenue Cooperative would feature a number of different types of memberships, including producer, institutional and family/individual memberships. Producers Memberships will be purchased by area farmers, cattlemen and dairywomen who wish to invest in the Coop, play a role in shaping the policies that direct its growth, and gain a return on their investment while securing shelf/refrigerator space for their products. Institutional Memberships will be offered to area church, schools, social service organizations that run food programs whose leaders wish to invest in this new venture, play a role in its development, purchase discounted food and household products, and gain a return on their investment. Individual/Family Memberships will be offered to those wishing to invest in the business, have a say in its development, purchase discounted products, and gain a return on their investment.

A Supporters Membership will be offered to area, regional, and national corporations, foundations, and individual donors wishing to support the effort; these members will not be offered voting rights within the Coop nor will they be offered an opportunity to share in the Cooperative's profits.

#### Rationale

- Access to high quality, farm-fresh, and culturally appropriate foods that are competitively priced is a critical need for every individual and family living in the city. The reorganization of the retail food industry during the Post WW II era has resulted in the replacement of neighborhood-based groceries with large-scale supermarkets that tend to be located within shopping centers and malls located well outside of the CBD and the city's older residential neighborhoods. These changes in the scale and location of contemporary food stores have created serious food access problems for thousands of Memphians, especially the poor, elderly, and infirm many of whom are carless.
- While there is compelling evidence that sufficient consumer demand for full service groceries exist within Memphis's older residential communities, the region's leading grocery has shown a deep reluctance to invest in the construction and operation of such business despite the success of numerous inner city groceries that have, in many cases, become the leading stores within their regional catchment area.
- Cooperatives have a long history of empowering producers and consumers to mobilize their knowledge of the market, human resources, capital equipment, and financial capital to create and sustain business enterprises that meet important consumer needs in highly challenged markets.
- Members of the Vance Avenue Collaborative have a long history of creating and sustaining innovative food programs aimed at meeting the critical poor and working class Memphians. This experience and commitment can be tapped to address the food security needs of these households. Among the successful food projects undertaken by members of the Vance Avenue Collaborative are:
  - o Mid-South Food Bank – provides thousands of pounds of low-cost food for area food pantries.
  - o MIFA – provides case management services for families in crisis which includes the provision of emergency food vouchers; distributes surplus food from the USD to supplement household diets.
  - o Saint Patrick Community Outreach Inc. – operates a food pantry five days a

week, serves more than 200 meals each week to homeless individuals and families; sponsors a successful (fenceless) community garden; and is the lead developer for the Green Machine Mobile Food Market.

- The project, if successful, can be easily replicated in other retail-lean communities in Memphis, Shelby County, Western Tennessee and the Mid-South Region.
- There is a long history of successful economic development through cooperative action within our region making this call for an alternative approach to development a bit easier. Individual organizations participating in the region's longstanding network of cooperatives may serve as an important direct or indirect source of funding.
- In the early phase of the African American Freedom Struggle, Dr. W.E.B. DuBois challenged people of color to embrace communal control of capital by organizing cooperative businesses. After pursuing the dominant approach of building personal wealth one African American business person at a time, it appears that the accrued benefits continue not to reach the masses of poor and working class. We, therefore think now maybe time to re-evaluate DuBois' advice.

#### Actions

1. Undertake a new small area retail study to establish the feasibility of constructing a mid-sized supermarket in the Vance Avenue community;
2. Carry out a siting study to identify suitable sites that might be available;
3. Work with the staff of the Cooperative Foundation to prepare a detailed pro forma covering the launch and operations costs of a cooperative food store;
4. Identify an appropriate non-profit development corporation interested in raising the local and national funds needed to launch this effort;
5. Recruit an experienced grocer with a strong curiosity about cooperatives to formulate a strategic plan needed to move the project through the planning, development, and launch phases;
6. Work with the Vance Avenue Collaborative Board to develop an aggressive outreach and marketing campaign aimed at securing the maximum number of producer, institutional, and consumer members;
7. Work with these new members to create an appropriate set of by-laws to guide the development of the project;
8. Work with representatives of the Cooperative Foundation and Chris Gunn of the Union of Radical Political Economists to design and implement an adult education program on cooperatives to provide participants with the tools they need to make the project work; and



9. Establish a business relationship with the Association of Cooperative Grocers to secure all non-fruit and vegetable items for the Cooperative.

#### *Lead Organization*

The leadership for this project will be provided by the Board of Directors, staff, and volunteer networks of Teaching Youth Entrepreneurship, Advance Memphis, and Saint Patrick Community Outreach Inc.

#### *Supporting Organizations*

Among the organizations supporting this effort are the members of the Vance Avenue Collaborative and the faculty and students of the University of Memphis Department of Anthropology, Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning, Fogelman Chair in Social Entrepreneurship.

#### *Potential Funding*

Pre-development funding will be provided by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Delta Commission, Project Edge, Bloomberg Innovation Team, United Way Venture Fund, as well as several philanthropic foundations and corporate giving programs with strong interests in social entrepreneurship.

## **6.6 The Hooks Cottage Community School Center: serving Vance Avenue’s social, educational, and health and wellness needs through innovative programming and partnerships**

### *Description*

Envisioned by the residents of the Vance neighborhood as a new hub and one-stop-shop where they can go to experience a continuum of activities, the Hooks Cottage will serve as a nucleus of social, health, educational, and personal development activities in the community.

Inspired by memories of Vance as the social and cultural hub of Memphis’ African American community, where citizens of diverse classes had ready access to services to meet life’s daily needs, The Hooks Cottage Community School Center at The Martin Luther King Transition Academy will ignite a turnaround in the Vance Neighborhood that will steer the area and its inhabitants in the direction of its former wholeness, pride and glory.

Defined by a unique set of partnerships between existing local organizations, non-profits, service providers and educational establishments, the Center will provide desired future resident and youth groups with a range of services: from obtaining an eye exam to skills training for healthy eating and cooking; from mental health counseling to tutoring sessions with area youth; or from taking a pre-GED class to getting your blood pressure checked.

With expansion to accommodate significant programming and capacity enhancements aimed at fortifying The Martin Luther King Transition Academy and its on-campus Boys and Girls Club, the Center will partner with already existing organizations and services to realize the community’s vision and recreates the comprehensive livability of the Vance Neighborhood of the past.

### *How did the idea develop?*

Since the development of the Vance Avenue Collaborative’s Preliminary Planning Framework in June of 2010, which followed a participatory planning methodology, the Vance Avenue community has voiced the need for a neighborhood-based “center,” offering a range of services focusing on youth and adult experientially-based education, skills development, and the planning and implementation of community-based development projects. While this community vision of a neighborhood center has proven to be consistent over the last several years, the nature of how the center will function and serve the community has evolved considerably. Since June of 2010, the residents, organizations, businesses, and service providers of Vance Avenue have recognized and expressed an increasing need for improved access to health and wellness services in the form of a

“one-stop-shop,” community clinic. Their vision mimics the “community school” model of the Coalition for Community Schools and other national and state organizations, which utilize existing public school facilities as hubs for social service partnerships, community resources, and community engagement .

The Vance Avenue community envisions an environment where healthy lifestyles come with relative ease in the course of day-to-day life. Desired alterations to the physical environment and urban design of the neighborhood, like walking paths and enhanced parks, are initial factors geared at increasing the livability of the neighborhood and the resident’s overall quality of life. Within this enhanced urban fabric, community participants envision a centrally located community health and social service center that is readily accessible, fully programmed with all around services, consistent in providing support for healthy living, and a place of respite and recovery for some of the more entrenched community ailments such as common chronic diseases, substance abuse, and mental health ailments.

### *About Community Schools*

Full-Service Community Schools provide comprehensive academic, social, and health services for students, students’ family members, and community members that will result in improved educational outcomes for children. As defined by the Federation of Community Schools of Illinois, the Community School model is constructed around the mission of coordinating school and community resources with the goal of achieving elevated student and community success. While community schools vary between different cities and neighborhoods based upon specific needs, goals and available resources of supporting individuals, organizations and residents, the establishment of these centers is based upon and foundation if integrating academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement. Upon this foundation, communities can expect improved opportunity for student learning, a strengthening of family and an enhanced level of community healthfulness.

It is too often the case that the complexity of problems facing neighborhood residents and organizations, children and families, and public education and service organizations is more than a single organization, or even a network of organizations can successfully confront in isolation or without duplication. As in the case of Alignment Nashville (AN), community school models seeks to align existing resources and services and provide them to communities more effectively and efficiently, complimenting goals of educational achievement and overall health and well-being. In fact, AN has assessed that their community school model has greatedened a return on investments through



leveraged resources and the elimination of duplication, and improved the quality and provision of community services. Additionally, it has enhanced overall impact on the community by improving the capacity of individual organizations through collectivization, by successfully leveraged funds from both national and local sources that has been used to institute a pilot program.

#### *Why the Hooks Cottage Community School Center?*

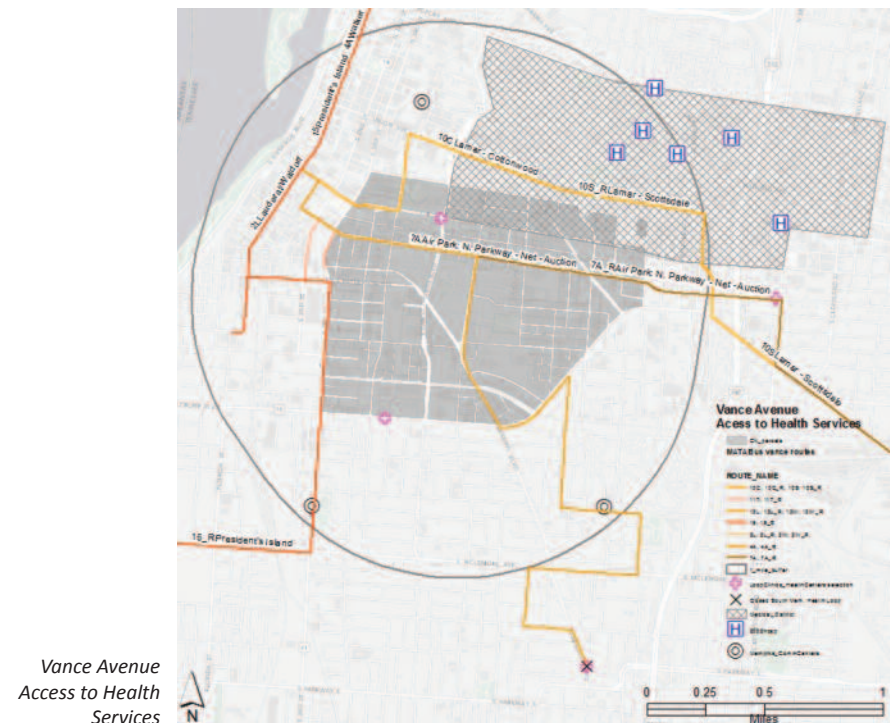
Despite its relative proximity to these clinics and Memphis' medical district, county Health Department, regional medical center, and state supported schools of medicine and public health, The Vance Avenue neighborhood is a veritable "medical service desert." With the exception of a few frequently-used but over-capacity clinics existing on Crump Blvd. and McLemore Ave., the residents of Vance Avenue are without easily accessible primary care, family medical, dental, counseling, psychological, or pharmacy practitioners for routine health maintenance activities and check-ups. In the absence of general and routine, primary-care practitioners and services combined with a heavy reliance on public transit, walking, and carpooling, residents often rely upon expensive and limited emergency room services when their existing or acutely exposed conditions express acute and intolerable symptoms.

Additionally, the Vance Avenue community experiences a challenged environment of educational achievement resulting in a high rate of drop out and low overall educational attainment that is subsequently reflected in low annual household incomes, high rates of unemployment, and an inflated percent of the population living in poverty. While health care facilities such as Memphis Health Center, Towne Center Health Clinic, Health Loop, and Church Health Center exist, their proximity and access to the Vance Avenue community is limited and their services fail in meeting the comprehensive and overall needs of the community for complete health and wellness. These limitations are complicated by narrow options for transportation to and from the facilities and, in general, the constricted physical mobility of many community members due, in part, to factors such as existing poor health, presence of children, perceived and real threats to personal safety, and insufficient public infrastructure.

As expressed in figure 1, three hospitals and two health clinics and centers are within a one-mile buffer of the Vance Avenue community. Unfortunately, these health care facilities are located with only slight proximity to the three existing public transit routes that intersect portions of the neighborhood of the Vance Ave community and a single, east-west, route that passes directly and entirely through the Vance Avenue neighborhood. Unfortunately, it is along this single, east-west route that The Church Health Center is located. Additionally,

this facility requires regular patients to be fully employed; a major barrier for the residents of a neighborhood where there is a persistently high unemployment rate.

The proposed location for the Hooks Cottage Community School Center is the Martin Luther Transition Academy, located at the intersection of Georgia Avenue, Mississippi Blvd., and Lauderdale Street. This location is near the center of the neighborhood and in direct proximity to the majority of the resident population. It is currently a known hub of activity and located next door to the Porter Boys and Girls Club. With the complexity of stressors experienced by Vance Avenue residents, the implementation of a community school model will encourage an alignment of existing resources and services, improving both the overall capacity of each individual organization and the community's overall goal of a holistic consideration of health, wellness and education among and between age groups. Fostering a strong partnership between organizations, service providers, institutions and individuals, community groups and residents will create a climate of shared accountability, in which to achieve common, desired results by building upon the strengths of the community, by innovatively collaborating on a diverse set of solutions focused on achieving the goal of a strengthened community.



### *Rationale*

The Hooks Cottage Community School Center has been designed to integrate various morphological, functional, and social issues raised by the community. Establishing a neighborhood-based community school would unite the following, frequently-cited goals of the community visioning activity initially held in August of 2011, in the early stages of the Vance Avenue Choice Neighborhood Initiative:

- Quality health care for all, emphasizing healthy living, wellness, and disease prevention
- Existence of an accessible and affordable fitness center for individuals and families to exercise, meditate, and receive wellness treatments
- Multiple opportunities for health education
- Improved out-patient treatment options for individuals and families suffering from a range of psychological illnesses
- Improved access to quality health education opportunities including nutrition evaluation and training
- Neighborhood-based medical and dental services
- Establishing both a Senior Companion and Youth Mentoring programs
- Adaptive re-use and re-purposing of long-term or recently vacant buildings

### *Leadership*

- Memphis City Schools' Martin Luther King Student Transition Academy

### *Partnerships*

- University of Tennessee Medical School
- University of Memphis Schools of Public Health, Nursing, and Education
- Memphis Health Center
- The Federation for Community Schools
- The Mustard Seed
- Area Churches with social ministries
- NAACP local and their Youth Council
- MIFA
- Coalition for Community Schools
- UoM Social Work Program
- UoM CRP and ANTH for monitoring and evaluation

### *Funding*

Explore earmarking a portion of the recently received funds by the Memphis Health Center.

### *Actions*

1. Martin Luther King Academy, with the help of Memphis Consolidated Schools (or whatever we're calling now), forms an inter-disciplinary team of teachers, parents, non-profit stakeholders, and outside professionals, to look at models of successful community school programs, e.g. Alliance Nashville;
2. Establish a Hooks Cottage Neighborhood Steering Committee of community members and representatives of interested partners to work with residents to reconfirm service priorities;
3. Determine spatial needs and arrangement within MLK Transition Academy facility;
4. Finalize agreements with non-profit and social service agencies that will utilize community space in Hooks Cottage;
5. Evaluate, in an ongoing way, the success of the community school by looking at changes in student achievement, rates of utilization, etc





## 6.7 Site Plan and Urban Design inputs

Renaissance is the outcome of the complex, holistic interconnection of social, economic, organizational, and physical strategies. The following schema envisions an overview of possible physical transformations that are contained in the six signature projects described in the previous section, as well as some of the physical transformations implied in the complete list of projects in Appendix 8.1. The goal of this section is to provide some indication of how this neighborhood could look ten or fifteen years from now: a place that is transformed but not “disfigured,” where historic preservation did not entail gentrification, and visitors come not to “touch” and see “dead stones,” but to be part of, even for an afternoon, an historic but still vibrant community, where history is not confined in one building, but is still part of living memories, told by real people, evolving toward the future thanks to their strong awareness of the bitter-sweetness of their collective past.

### *Methodology*

The site plan of the neighborhood is divided in sections, called strategic Districts. These identify particular spaces that will play a strategic role in the process of transforming the neighborhood. For the strategic districts the plan indicates what criteria are to be followed for physical interventions and policies; in some specific cases design indications are given.

### *Special Districts*

To an outsider, the Vance Avenue neighborhood is identified as the area around the Foote Homes complex, which today is a gated community that does not interact with the “outside” in any way. This is partially due to the lack of recognizable neighborhood “cores” where important functions are associated with high quality public spaces. An historic account of the neighborhood’s physical transformations show that this is mainly due to the level of physical distress associated with previous urban renewal interventions. In contrast, local residents have mixed perceptions of what used to be, and might still be in the future “cores” of the neighborhood.

One of those areas is “Beale Street,” (**SD-Clayborn**) which is not only the small Special tourist district of today, but a broader area including two highly neglected but important historic landmarks of the neighborhood and the city: Church Park and Clayborn Temple. The other core lies at the intersection of Mississippi Blvd, Lauderdale, and Georgia, where important institutions include Booker T. Washington and the MLK Transition Academy.

Both areas, indicated in the plan as **Special Districts (SD)** are characterized by the need to:

- Improve the aesthetic and functional quality of public spaces, with a focus on improving pedestrian and bike connectivity to the proposed Little Betty Linear Park that may start within Church Park;
- Revitalize large vacant iconic structures, including but not limited to Clayborne Temple or Club Paradise;

In particular, Clayborn Temple has to be given back to its community in a way that celebrates African American family and community life, with special regard to the dense history that has taken place within its walls. While there may be some concern that the refurbishing of Clayborne Temple may impact the viability of the nearby Civil Rights Museum, Clayborne must be revitalized as a community oriented facility, where traditional exhibitions of the history of the civil rights movement in Memphis (the NAACP history and the sanitary workers strike) are parallel with contemporary educational and art-based activities involving community members and interested outsiders.

**The Industrial Cooperative Incubator District (SD-ICI)** - Residents of the City’s high poverty areas face significant challenges in securing living wage employment. In recent years, the United States has experienced renewed growth in its industrial/manufacturing sector after more than thirty years of steady decline. Historically, this sector has been an excellent source of living wage employment for those with modest educational attainment levels.

There are several local institutions that are interested in establishing a business incubator space that would include the former Paradise Club and adjacent Vance Avenue School properties. Advance Memphis, Teaching Youth Entrepreneurs, JIFF, Black Business Association would work together with economic development specialists at the University of Memphis, Mayor’s Innovation Team, EDGE, and Hope Federal Credit Union to seek funding to establish a production-oriented incubator that would support worker-owned cooperative businesses in developing successful business plans, refining their products, securing pre-development financing, and marketing their products.

The initial list of potential businesses would include:

- An urban agriculture business growing high quality hydroponic fruits, vegetables and herbs and farm grown fish. Production would serve local restaurants, hotels, schools, and hospitals.
- Assembly of small-scale machines and equipment, on contract, for larger industries within the region.
- Fabrication of low-cost, low-maintenance solar panels designed for the typical



Memphis single family home and small business operation.

- Technical assistance for this effort will be provided by the Industrial Cooperative Association of Somerville, MA, the Cooperative Foundation of Washington, DC, and Professor Chris Gunn of Hobart, William, Smith College – an international expert on cooperative economics and management

#### *Historic Preservation Districts (HP)*

A fundamental principle of the plan is that, in order to build upon the rich history of the neighborhood, it is necessary to include historic preservation strategies for the historic assets that are left after years of decline. In this case, Historic preservation is pursued through ad-hoc housing policies aiming at preserving not just the physical, but also the social fabric of the community. This is crucial in order to avoid gentrification, which is an all too common phenomenon of well-preserved historic urban areas around the world. Increasingly this phenomenon mirrors successfully revitalized areas in Downtown Memphis. Past conflicts in the neighborhood, particularly during City's sponsored preservation efforts in the 80s (Johnson 1992), suggest that this is especially important to avoid.

Two districts that are special targets for historic preservation include: the "Historic Preservation – Public Housing District" (Foote Homes) and the "**Historic Preservation – Historic Houses District**" (HP-HH District) that includes an area with the highest concentration of (special homes that could be fully renovated?

The **Historic Preservation - Public Housing District (HP-PH District)** coincides with the Foote Homes Public Housing project, including the surrounding sections of Mississippi, Lauderdale, and Danny Thomas, and is the site of the Foote Homes Housing Preservation and Development Project. From a design perspective, building preservation has to be accompanied by the redefinition of the overall landscape through topographical improvements (open-air water drainage improvement through the restoration of the historic bayou). Additionally, landscape design has to reinstate the spatial contiguity between the public housing complex and the surrounding streets (see picture of the close relationship between public streets and the public housing units prior the restoration occurred in the 1990s).

The intersection of Mississippi, Lauderdale, and Georgia, is a highly symbolic place. At the same time this intersection is perceived as a very dangerous and it divides the housing complex from crucial institutions in the vicinity. Special urban design arrangements need to transform this corner into a symbolic pedestrian oriented public space with public art celebrating neighborhood's history.



*The complex on July 1949 (source: University of Memphis Library – Special Collection), and the complex today (source: CRP-UofM archive). The comparison between the two pictures shows the relationship between buildings and public streets has changed from proximity to separation after the renovation in the 90s.*

The “Historic Preservation – Historic Houses District” (HP-HH District) includes the portion of the neighborhood with the highest concentration of remaining historic houses (late 19th century, early 20th century). Houses can be targeted for a special Senior Housing Program, targeting federal funds for senior housing applying them to historic preservation rather than new construction.

#### *New Housing Districts*

Due to the very high vacancy rate, preservation has to be coupled with New Housing developments. Redevelopment in other Memphis’ inner-city neighborhoods, including the HOPE VI redevelopment, have used the Traditional Neighborhood Development concept – defined within the New Urbanism School – based upon the need of having a range of housing types, a network of well-connected streets and blocks, humane public spaces, and the presence of amenities such as stores, schools, and places of worship within walking distance of residences. This concept is usually applied by clearing existing structures and re-creating new structures that “replicate” past building types and urban morphology.

In this case, redevelopment has to be based upon the fact that this is already a traditional neighborhood, whose streets and plot morphology still reflect those principles that are often used to “recreate new” that “looks like old.” In this case there is no need to clear large sites and readjust streets grids, and install the full packet of required public improvements that are usually needed to transform a cleared site into a set of developable parcels. New Housing development is suggested to occur as infill housing because of the high concentration of vacant parcels (**New Housing Districts - NH Districts**). In most cases those parcels – where old historic middle-class houses were once located – have high topographic and visual qualities and are very suitable for redevelopment.

#### *Neighborhood Oriented Retail District*

Residents and stakeholders have consistently shared their desire for a broader range of neighborhood-oriented retail establishments within the neighborhood, including a coffee shop, a hair and beauty salon, grocery store, etc. the neighborhood currently offers several convenient locations for such a retail district that would serve residents of Vance, adjacent neighborhoods, and those traveling through the City by foot, bus, or car.

These locations include Vance Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street where there are a number of very attractive Art Deco buildings that have recently been vacated and several large abandoned lots that could serve as an attractive and convenient retail node location. Alternatively, there are several abandoned retail shopping centers on Crump Boulevard which could also meet this purpose. While these spots benefit from a very high volume of drive

through traffic, they are less accessible to the majority of Vance Avenue residents, the overwhelming majority of whom do not have access to private automobiles.

In either location, the anchor business would be the cooperatively-owned and managed food store, complimentary retail that would reinforce the convenience of such a center might include: community barber shop, beauty salon, nail store, coffee and sandwich shop, a new and used book, toy, and video store oriented towards children, and a child development center. The ultimate development plan for the center would be driven by a small area retail study completed by the Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning in cooperation with the Mayor’s Innovation Team, Downtown Memphis Commission, and the EDGE.



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# 8 Appendixes

## 8.2 APPENDIX A: Complete List of Economic and Community Development Projects Vance Avenue Renaissance Plan

Plan Elements	Short-Term 4 - 6 years	Long-Term 7 – 10 years
<b>Preserve and expand quality affordable housing</b>	<p><b>Assisted living cottages</b> – adaptive use of larger Victorians as scattered site assisted living units.</p> <p><b>Senior home repair</b>- use contribution from publicly assisted Downtown firms to fund an expanded senior home repair program (more and larger grants.)</p>	<p><b>Employer assisted housing</b>- Work with neighborhood, Downtown and Medical District firms and the city to encourage new in-fill housing in the Vance Avenue community.</p> <p><b>Student housing</b>- Collaborate with area colleges and universities to develop new housing for students, staff, and faculty in the community.</p>
<b>Promote local job generation and business development</b>	<p><b>Restore MHA maintenance jobs</b>- Rehire public employees who formerly maintained Foote Homes.</p> <p><b>Section III jobs</b>- Improve the effort to hire current Foote Homes and Vance Avenue residents for Choice Neighborhood-funded construction under the federal Section III Program.</p> <p><b>Linkage/Community Benefit Agreement jobs</b>- Establish a city policy requiring firms receiving public support in the form of grants, zoning, and infrastructure assistance within the Downtown or South Main BIDs to negotiate local employment and minority contracting agreements featuring third party enforcement.</p>	<p><b>Medical District employment pipeline</b>- Collaborate with the firms and institutions in the Medical District, area higher educations, Consolidated School District, and area non-profits to develop curriculum, internship, externship and other programs to maximize living wage employment for Vance Avenue residents.</p> <p><b>Vance industrial cooperative initiative</b>- Work with the leadership of Advance Memphis, Evolution Institute, Industrial Cooperative Association, and the Cooperative Bank to establish a worker-owned industrial cooperative to generate living wage jobs especially for youth, ex-offender, and other abled workers.</p>
<b>Enhance public safety</b>	<p><b>Community crime watch</b>- Cooperate with area law enforcement agencies and participants in the Vance Avenue Collaborative to establish a crime watch and reporting program.</p> <p><b>Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)</b>- Incorporate defensible space and CPTED design principles into proposed rehabilitation and new construction projects</p>	<p><b>Expanded alcohol/drug treatment</b>- Establish a new residential treatment program focused on the needs of area teens based upon a Therapeutic Community Model.</p> <p><b>Establish a community-based restorative justice program</b>- Create a community-managed restorative justice program based in non-violence principles as an alternative to incarceration promoting healing solutions that facilitate individual and community recovery.</p>
<b>Enhance health and wellness</b>	<p><b>12-Step Programs</b>- Work with local substance abuse professionals, area health providers and the AA Intergroup Office to establish local AA, NA, Al-Anon, Alateen Meetings within the Vance Avenue neighborhood.</p> <p><b>Lets' Move</b>- Organize local public, charter and private schools, the Grizzlies, Streets Ministry, and other area non-profits to involve at least 50% of area youth in after-school programs that provides at a minimum the recommended weekly exercise suggested by this program.</p>	<p><b>Cooperative health center</b>- Work with the Shelby County and Tennessee Departments of Health and area medical, dental, public health and social work schools to establish a cooperatively funded and staffed public health clinic providing primary care services to low-income Memphians.</p> <p><b>Residential treatment program</b>- Create a community- based substance abuse prevention, intervention, and treatment program in collaboration with area medical schools and professional associations, the U of M Social Work Program, and leaders of the local 12-Step community.</p>

**Celebrate local history and culture**

**African dance and drumming program for youth-** Initiate with the assistance of local performing arts programs a large-scale African dance and drumming program as an after-school program.

**Public murals project-** Work with local art institutions to recruit area artists to work with youth and adult groups to design and install installations celebrating Vance's rich Civil and Human Rights history.

**Clayborn Temple Social History Museum-** Investigate the feasibility of restoring Clayborn Temple as a shared used facility housing a social/environmental justice charter school and a social history museum highlighting the role that local Black businesses, fraternities/ sororities, churches and other institutions have played in advancing the Civil and Human Rights agenda of people of color.

**Ida (Tarbell) arts and communications initiative-** Work with the writing at the U of M, the Benjamin Hooks Institute, and the National Civil Right Museum to develop age-appropriate curriculum materials on social justice that can be used to generate student poetry, short-story, plays, script, and songs as well as various visual arts projects that can be brought together for exhibition, presentation, and sale as part of the April in Africa Festival.

**National Park-** Work with local historical societies and Civil Rights activities, area colleges and universities, Memphis Heritage, Shelby County and State of Tennessee Historical Societies and Museums, National Park Service, and the U.S. Department of the Interior to establish Downtown, Vance Avenue, and South Memphis neighborhoods as the nation's newest National Park celebrating the contribution that African Americans have made to advancing the cause of Civil Rights, community-problem-solving, and nation-building, similar to the National Parks now operating in Lawrence and Lowell, MA and Paterson, NJ.

**Improve public transit and expand transportation alternatives**

**Create Little Betty Bayou Greenway-** Construct a linear walking and biking path along the excavated (Day lighted) Little Betty Bayou connecting South Memphis, Vance, and the Downtown.

**Restore MATA bus service cuts-** Work with the MATA Board to restore service cuts in the Vance Avenue neighborhood.

**Vance Avenue transportation loop-** Create a strong walking, biking, driving, and bus riding connection between Vance and the proposed multi-modal transportation hub at the Memphis AMTRAK Station.

**Vance Avenue car and van sharing program-** The organization on a non-profit agency to purchase quality used vehicles that can be shared by local residents to commute to school, training or work.

**Advance public education and lifelong learning**

**Memphis Summer Literacy Corps-** Mobilize local college and university students to participate in a three-year summer literacy program to increase the percentage of high school graduates in the Vance Avenue community from 60% to 75%.

**Youth Empowerment Conference-** Organize an annual youth summit to identify issues requiring new policy approaches and solutions.

**Middle College Program-** Investigate the feasibility of creating a jointly sponsored Middle College program offering upper level Booker T. Washington Jr. High School and Martin Luther King Academy students the opportunity to earn college credits at the University of Memphis.

**Memphis environmental sustainability education initiative-** Convene the city's public and private secondary school leaders, trade school administrators, and college and university administrators to explore the creation of a coordinated curriculum designed to prepare the next generation of youth and adult learners for key leadership positions in the field of green design, building, and management.

**Memphis preservation arts academy-** Take steps to establish a historic preservation trades school in cooperation with Memphis Heritage and the U of M to prepare students to stabilize and restore historic structures and statuary in the community and across the country.

**Vance Avenue re-entry resource collaborative-** A cooperative effort by local social service organizations, faith-based groups, and ex-offender organizations to insure ex-offenders who are returning to the community and their families with east access to the services they need. This network will also work together to identify and remedy missing links in the ex-offender service delivery program.



## 8.2 APPENDIX B: Complete list of organizations

- Advance Memphis
- AFSCME Local 1733
- Area Teachers
- Church Ministry Leaders
- C.O.G.I.C.
- Congressman Steve Cohen
- Emmanuel Episcopal Center
- First Baptist Beale
- First Baptist Lauderdale
- Greater Memphis Labor Council
- Grizzlies Foundation
- Healthy Memphis Common Table
- Human service providers
- JIFF (Juvenile Intervention & Faith –based Follow-up
- Karat Place, Inc.
- Labor organizations
- Local and city-wide job training organizations
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Transition Academy
- Masonic Lodge #9
- MATA
- MCS and Neighborhood Schools
- Memphis Arts Schools
- Memphis Health Department
- Memphis Housing Authority
- Memphis Parks and Recreation Department
- Mid-South Peace and Justice Center
- MIFA
- Memphis Police Department
- MLGW
- Mosque 55
- MRDC
- Mustard Seed Inc.
- NAACP
- National Civil Rights Museum
- Offenders trained as landscapers
- Roman Catholic Diocese of Western Tennessee
- Shelby County Office of Early Childhood & Youth
- Southwestern Tennessee Community College
- St. John Baptist-Vance
- St Patrick Catholic Church
- Streets Ministries
- Teaching Youth Entrepreneurship
- The Prayer House
- The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service
- U of M – Agriculture Department and CRP – Urban Design Class
- Vance Avenue Choice Neighborhood Members
- Vance Avenue Youth Development Center
- Vance Investment Properties, LLC
- VFW-District 10
- WIN (Workers Interfaith Network)
- Youth and Parents Associations

