

NEIGHBORHOOD

# CONNECT

FALL 2014

**NEIGHBORHOODS GEARING UP FOR THE  
2015 NEIGHBORHOOD REDEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE**

**In conjunction with the Fair Housing Alliance of Greater Memphis**



## **IN THIS ISSUE:**

Aerotropolis Master Plan Receives Outstanding Plan Award

Prodigi Arts | Optimum Plaza | New Technology Promotes Treasures

A Better Neighborhood, A Better Way of Life By Levi Frazier

# NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECT



**Robert Lipscomb**

*Director of Housing & Community  
Development  
Executive Director of  
Memphis Housing Authority*



## COVER STORY

### Come Get A Taste!

Meet some new people or even people you hadn't seen in awhile ... learn something about each other's neighborhoods ... eat ... and simply enjoy yourself at the 2nd annual "A Taste of Memphis at Tiger Lane". You liked it the first time, you'll love it the second time around.

So COME CELEBRATE YOUR GREATNESS and mark your calendars for **Thursday, April 16, 2015** from **6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.**, and we will see you at "A Taste of Memphis at Tiger Lane."

#### CONTACT US:

Neighborhood CONNECT  
City of Memphis  
Neighborhood Redevelopment Department  
314 A.W. Willis Avenue  
Memphis, Tennessee 38105  
Phone: (901) 576-6980



Welcome to another issue of the City of Memphis - Division of Housing and Community Development's E-Newsletter, Neighborhood CONNECT.

**If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please visit us at [www.cityofchoice.org/nrc/newsletter.html](http://www.cityofchoice.org/nrc/newsletter.html) to upload your article and photos.**

## IN THIS ISSUE:



### AEROTROPOLIS RECEIVES AWARD

The Aerotropolis Master Plan received a 2014 Outstanding Planning Award from the Tennessee Chapter of the American Planning Association. Read more on page 4.



### CENTRAL GARDENS NEW TECHNOLOGY

Historic homes and a beautiful canopy of 100-year-old trees that shade boulevards, front yards and gardens—this is Central Gardens. So how can you turn two old treasures, trees and homes into something hi-tech? Well, we have an app for that! Read more on page 8.



### A BETTER NEIGHBORHOOD...

Founded thirty-five years ago by Levi and Deborah Frazier, Blues City Cultural Center has incorporated the arts, the middle class and even the affluent in the arts for a better way of life. Read more on page 6.



# **Neighborhood Redevelopment Conference in conjunction with the Fair Housing Alliance of Greater Memphis SAVE THE DATE: “Just Be A Good Neighbor” Conference Dates: April 15-17, 2015**

There is an air of excitement here in Memphis centered upon a holistic approach to leveraging public private partnerships to build our communities. Mayor A C Wharton’s agenda is aimed at making Memphis a city of choice. It means that Memphis is a place that attracts people who have choices to live anywhere and people who deserve choices for better lives. We are committed to developing sustainable and effervescent neighborhoods; as well as celebrating the uniqueness of over thirty-five targeted neighborhoods and more than two-hundred registered neighborhoods associations.

During this three-day event volunteers, corporations, governments, and community leaders, will meet to share invaluable knowledge that will assist in building and transforming communities of all sizes. Attendees can look forward to a wide variety of workshops about innovative approaches to neighborhood redevelopment and community building, expert speakers, fun and entertainment.



[www.cityofchoice.org/nrc](http://www.cityofchoice.org/nrc)

# AEROTROPOLIS

## MASTER PLAN RECEIVES OUTSTANDING PLAN AWARD

The Aerotropolis Master Plan received a 2014 Outstanding Planning Award from the Tennessee Chapter of the American Planning Association. The award ranked projects submitted on Originality and Innovation, Transferability, Quality, Effectiveness and Results, Comprehensiveness, Public Participation and Roles and Responsibilities. Councilwoman Wanda Halbert, Chairman of the Memphis City Council Economic and Community Development Committee was on hand to accept the award and speak about its merits.

The work detailed in the Aerotropolis Master Plan culminates in a highly developed and coordinated plan of action to support reinvestment and guide future development in a fifty square mile area surrounding the Memphis International Airport. The implementation of the strategies identified in the plan will reinforce Memphis' position as the leading logistics and distribution center nationally and internationally as well as attract business, create employment opportunities, and enhance neighborhoods.

The Aerotropolis Master Plan was developed utilizing funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Sustainable Communities in conjunction



Front Row: (Left) Nykesha Cole, Aerotropolis Business Coordinator; (Center) Councilwoman Wanda Halbert; (Right) Grace Hutchinson, Memphis Shelby County Division of Planning Deputy Director. Second Row: (Left) Steve Auterman, LRK Consultants; (Center) Charlie Goforth, Greater Memphis Chamber; (Right) Chad Bowman, Aerotropolis Project Manager

with contributions and support from the City of Memphis, the Greater Memphis Chamber, the Memphis and Shelby County Division of Planning and Development, Memphis City Beautiful, Memphis Area Transit Authority, Memphis Light Gas and Water, and the University of Memphis.

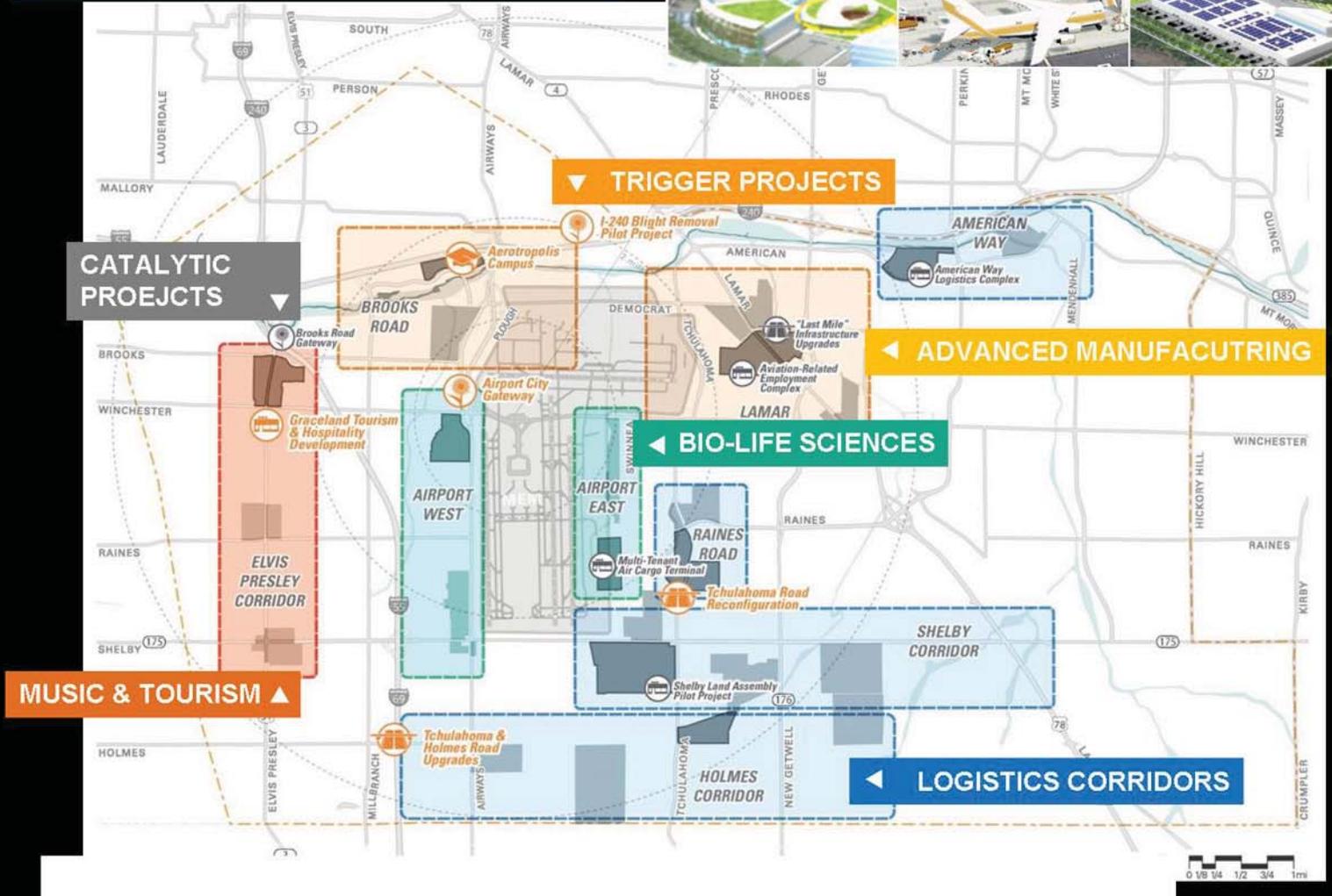
Mayor A C Wharton, speaking about the future implementation of the plan stated, "I am certain the implementation of this Master Plan will ultimately transform the areas surrounding the Memphis International Airport commercially and residentially; strengthening our community's reputation as "America's Aerotropolis".

To see the Aerotropolis Master Plan and all the supporting documents, please visit

[www.memphisaeroplan.com](http://www.memphisaeroplan.com)

## ECONOMIC DISTRICTS

Key projects unlock the potential for economic growth in industry-specific districts



## AEROTROPOLIS OVERVIEW

Memphis is the largest city in Tennessee and the seat of Shelby County. It is located in the southwest corner of the state, bordered by Arkansas and Mississippi, and overlooks the Mississippi River. The city is known as “America’s Distribution Center,” serving business interests throughout the northeast, southeast and southwest regions of the United States. The population is nearly 650,000.

Although Memphis is known the world for its amenities, global enterprises, cultural assets and contributions to medicine and music, the Memphis International Airport is no doubt the city’s crème de la crème in air travel and serves more than 10 million passengers a year. The Airport, a world-class facility, is now considered to be an “Aerotropolis,” the only one of its kind in North America.

So what is the Memphis Aerotropolis? The phrase was coined in 2006 by Dr. John Kasarda, a professor at the University of North Carolina. The Memphis Aerotropolis can be described as the airport-integrated urban land form where the impact and development attraction of the airport extends out as far as 25 miles into East Arkansas and North Mississippi and 50 square miles directly around the airport. This is the primary study area, often referred to as Airport City.

# A BETTER NEIGHBORHOOD A BETTER WAY OF LIFE

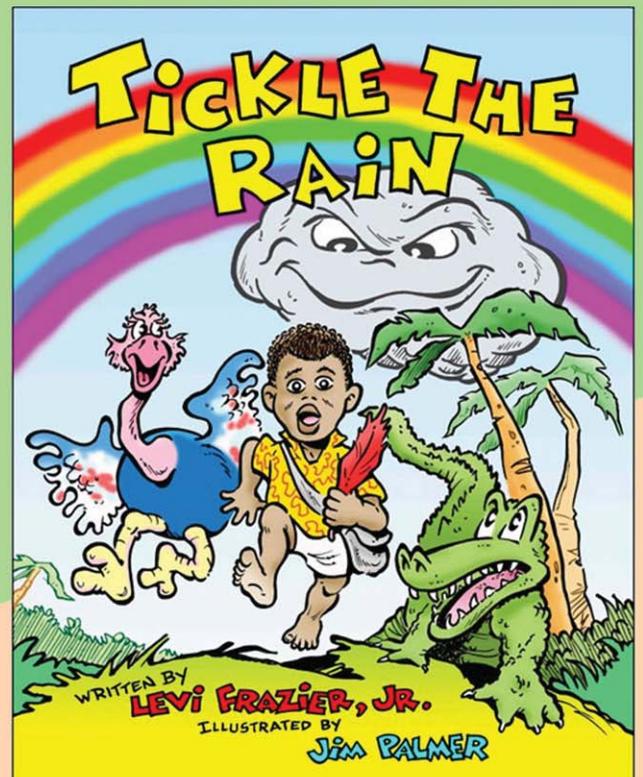
By Levi Frazier, Jr.

*The life of the arts, far from being an interruption, a distraction in the life of the nation, is very close to the center of a nation's purpose – and it is the test of the quality of a nation's civilization.*

-John Fitzgerald Kennedy

This quote by our thirty-fifth president mirrors Blues City Cultural Center's own motto, "Arts for A Better Way of Life."

Founded thirty-five years ago by Levi and Deborah Frazier, Blues City Cultural Center has incorporated the arts, especially theatre in all of its programs that reach tentacle-like into the farthest recesses of Memphis neighborhoods to attract, motivate and engage the marginalized, the middle class and even the affluent in the arts for a better way of life. Some of the company's programs and the neighborhoods where they were presented are: A HELPING HAND in Bethel Grove; PEACE IN THE HOUSE in Westwood, Hickory Hill, and Bickford; and the upcoming 125th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION of Orange Mound. In addition Blues City Cultural Center has presented hundreds of uplifting and empowering theatrical productions in neighborhood schools throughout Memphis for more than three decades.



Today, the company's five major programs include THE HOPE DAY ZONE, a self-esteem building program for homeless women and SEW MUCH LOVE, a entrepreneurship program for homeless women based in Uptown area of Memphis; SEEK TO SERVE, a grassroots leadership program for the elderly; and PEACE IN THE HOUSE, a violence prevention program that seeks to replace violence by youth with arts by youth. Aside from implementing these programs, Blues City Cultural Center tours Shelby County schools with its theatrical productions that promote character building among youth from K-12. The company's children's show, "Tickle The Rain", is an adaptation of a book written by Levi Frazier, Jr., BCCC's managing director. After each show the students have an opportunity to meet the author and converse with the cast about the highlights of the colorful production as well as lessons learned throughout the play. And everyone loves it!

Just like John Fitzgerald Kennedy, BCCC believes that the arts are the test of the quality of a nation's civilization. Blues City Cultural Center exists to ensure that as a nation of neighborhoods, we pass the test.

Author of TICKLE THE RAIN, Levi Frazier, received his M.A. from the University of Memphis—Communications - Theater and B.A. from Rhodes College. He is presently an Associate Professor in Speech and Theatre at Southwest Tennessee Community College.

## Other Works:

2007 wrote and directed the Fall production of In It To Win It.

2002, When It Rains, won first place in Chattanooga Theatre Center's Playwriting Contest and was subsequently produced in Memphis at Southwest under the direction of Ron Gephart and in Hollywood under the direction of Tommye Ray, a graduate of Southwest.

1992 he produced his play, A Tribute To Richard Wright, by invitation in Paris, France at the Sorbonne as part of the African-Americans and Europe International Festival.

1994 he was commissioned to write a musical for the Tennessee Bicentennial. The musical, entitled Beale Street Back Again, had its world premiere at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center in June of 1996.

2008 his commissioned living history play was produced at the National Civil Rights Museum in commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of Dr. King's death.

Most recently Levi has become a book author with the publication of 151 Things That Happen or Don't Happen When You Turn 50.

1979 cofounded Blues City Cultural Center.

# NEW TECHNOLOGY PROMOTES NEIGHBORHOOD TREASURES



Photo above: Central Garden volunteers: Ellen Whitten, Sarah Pospisil, Barbara Sysak, and Sheila Noone. Not Pictured: Kathy Ferguson, Stephany Goodnight, and Carson Irwin

Historic homes and a beautiful canopy of 100-year-old trees that shade boulevards, front yards and gardens— this is Central Gardens. So how can you turn two old treasures, trees and homes into something hi-tech? Well, we have an app for that!

In 1982, Central Gardens Neighborhood was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Central Gardens was designated a Level III Accredited arboretum by the State of Tennessee in 2008; it is the only arboretum in West Tennessee and is home to more than 90 species of trees many over 80 years of age. Most designated arboreta are located in botanical gardens or parks. This rare distinction of an arboretum in a neighborhood is a point of pride.

Volunteers with the Central Gardens Association wanted to take these treasures and make them more accessible for the community. A free app was created that provides GPS-enabled walking tours of arboretum and historic homes. Each tour includes photos and descriptions of over 100 trees and 80 homes. Now users can stroll through the neighborhood with an IOS or Android device in hand and capture a piece of history or botanical wonder.

Visitors are welcome to enjoy their own walking tour through Central Gardens. You can download the app for free by searching “Central Gardens”. Come and enjoy a tree-shaded oasis in the heart of Memphis!

[WWW.CENTRALGARDENS.ORG](http://WWW.CENTRALGARDENS.ORG)

# PRODIGIarts



*In this pic (from left to right) Martin Englert, Animator; Chris O'Conner, Founder/Principal  
Jamie Bechtel, Animator; Josh Colfer, Director of Communication*

Like many entrepreneurs, Chris O' Conner's journey began with an obsession. From an early age, he had a fixation with turning the status quo on its head and re-inventing the way Memphis companies communicated themselves across visual mediums like television and the internet. When he began working in animation and visual media in college, Chris noticed that many Memphis companies were still using styles and technology that were tired and outdated. From this observation arose a desire to equip businesses in Memphis and the Mid-South with the quality of visual media that was already being incorporated in larger markets like Atlanta, New York or Los Angeles.

After cutting his teeth at animation studio Magnetic Dreams in Nashville, coupled by a stint in marketing at the Germantown Performing Arts Center, Chris struck out on his own to build Prodigy Arts in the Spring of 2010. Since then, Prodigy has built a diverse team of creative professionals hailing from the shores of California to sunny Florida in an effort to seek out the best in artistic talent. Over the past four years Prodigy has garnered a client roster that includes the Memphis Business Journal, Regional One Health (formerly the MED), Greater Memphis Chamber and architecture firm Hnedak Bobo Group. Looking forward, Prodigy has its sights set on creating visual media for national brands and campaigns looking to tell compelling stories and break from the traditional; an objective that holds just as true today as when O' Conner first began.

[www.prodigiarts.com](http://www.prodigiarts.com)

*Special Thanks to the Renaissance Business Center for Article Contribution*

# Optimum PLAZA [www.osmemphis.com](http://www.osmemphis.com)

An exciting project is under way. A \$1.1 million new production studio, school, and café are coming to the Uptown Memphis community. Monroe Ballard Jr., owner of media production company Optimum Studios and nonprofit Optimum Learning, said he will invest that sum over the next four years to upgrade the 10,440-square-foot building at 726 N. Parkway, across the street from eatery Cozy Corner.

In efforts to support the Uptown transformation Monroe Ballard, owner of Optimum Studios, has purchased and renovated an unkept building located at 726 North Parkway. Ballard got the vision for the possibilities while at their current location directly across the street. After purchasing the building from the Shelby County Tax Sales office, Optimum Studios has moved in its full service Music Recording Studio, a coffee shop, a gourmet popcorn shop, and Optimum Learning.

Optimum Learning is a non-profit started by Optimum Studios that offers training and exposure to kids in the area that desire to learn more about music and the media industry. October launched the new opening of the studio in Optimum Studios by doing a talent search. If you play an instrument or sing like the angels, you were what we were looking for. To enter you had to be between the ages of 6-15 and have your parents permission to participate. Registration was only \$45 and it included a professional photo shoot and a digital print sent to your email to use how you see fit. We provided them with information that will get their career moving, including music career coaching, advice on stage presence, voice lessons, and much more.

Registration began November 1, 2014. Auditions were held Sunday November 16th. The winner was announced on Thanksgiving day. For more information about Optimum Studios, contact us at [www.osmemphis.com/studio](http://www.osmemphis.com/studio). or call Optimum Studios at 901-335-2306.

Concept of new  
Optimum Plaza

Optimum Plaza  
During  
Construction

Concept of new  
Optimum Plaza

**Monroe Ballard, Jr.,**  
*Owner of Optimum Studios*





# City of Memphis Neighborhood Stabilization Program



## **Picture Perfect at 40% Discount\* of Appraised Value**

Homeownership can become a reality for you by participating in the City of Memphis Neighborhood Stabilization Program. We offer quality homes that are new or recently renovated in several designated neighborhoods of choice. You can purchase one of our spacious homes that are conveniently located near schools, retail outlets, community centers, parks and other amenities.

By participating in our Neighborhood Stabilization Program you and your family can own a home with a monthly payment that may be less than the monthly cost for rent. We offer down payment assistance, homebuyers counseling classes and a discount of 40% of the appraised value of the homes available under this program.

These homes are priced to sale and ready for occupancy.

\*For more details contact the Division of Housing and Community Development, 901.576.7474 or visit our NSP website:

**[www.memphistn.gov/nsp](http://www.memphistn.gov/nsp)**

*Note: Applicant must apply for mortgage financing. Applicant must own and occupy property as their primary residence. No Investors may apply.*



**[www.memphistn.gov](http://www.memphistn.gov)**

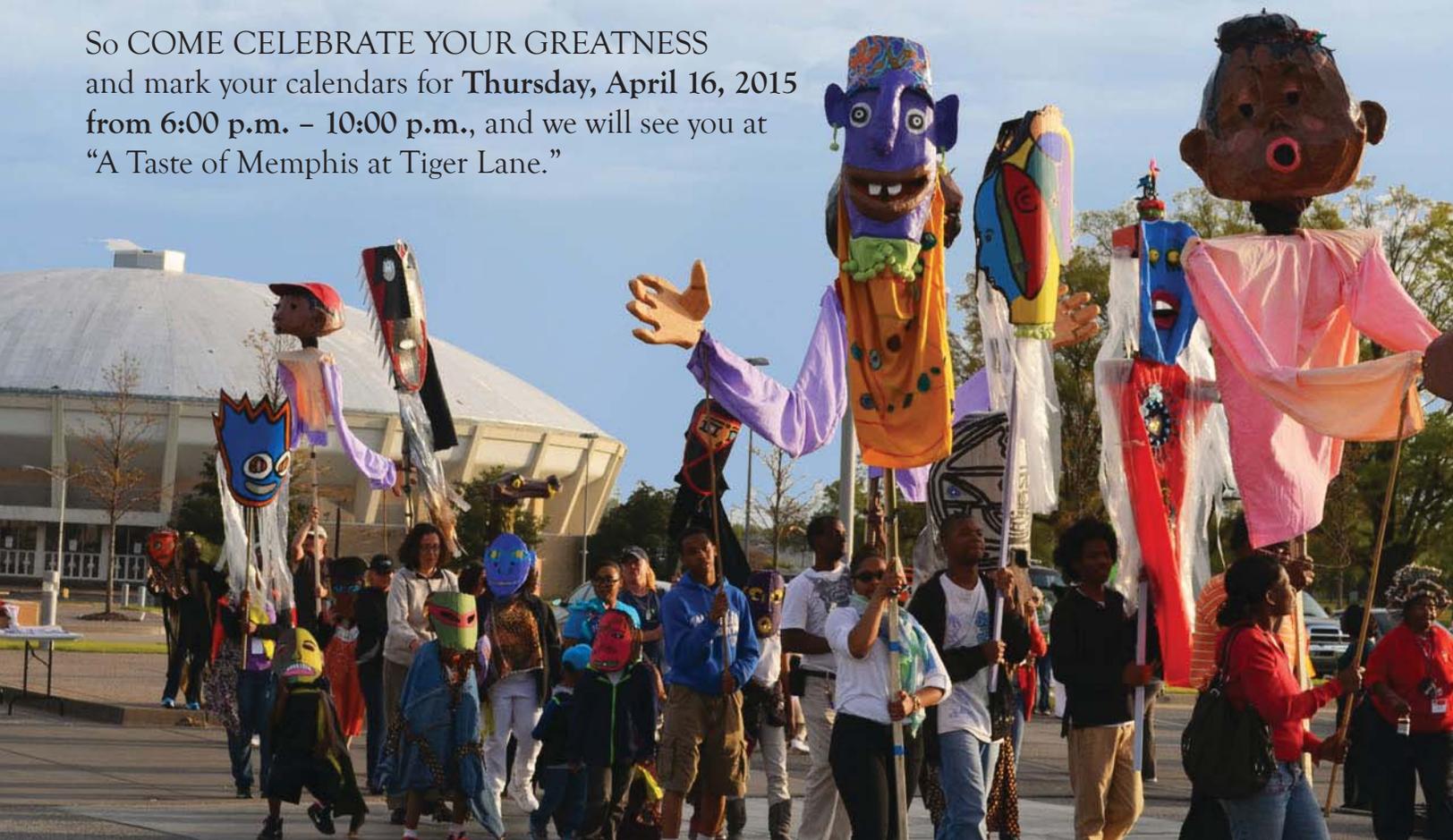
C L I C K   O N   O U R   N S P   P R O G R A M   P A G E

# CELEBRATE YOUR GREATNESS AT TIGER LANE!

You said, “We loved the diversity of the different neighborhoods represented and meeting other neighborhood folk” and “We enjoyed learning about the history of other neighborhoods,” then, you said, “I enjoyed the youth singing,” and then, you told us, “the food trucks...one of them even offered vegan food! LET’S DO IT AGAIN! Well, you spoke, we heard you, we listened, and on April 16, 2015, we will be back again with “A Taste of Memphis at Tiger Lane!” That’s right. Because of the overwhelming response, the City of Memphis Division of Housing and Community Development will host the Neighborhood Redevelopment Conference 2015 and, again, highlighting Memphis’ amazing neighborhoods at Tiger Lane. What makes Memphis a great place to live, work, and play? Why, its cool and hip, historical, diverse, and culturally rich neighborhoods, of course. So, come join us for an evening of fun, great fellowship, exciting entertainment, and delectable food.

Meet some new people or even people you hadn’t seen in awhile ... learn something about each other’s neighborhoods ... eat ... and simply enjoy yourself at the 2nd annual “A Taste of Memphis at Tiger Lane”. You liked it the first time, you’ll love it the second time around.

So COME CELEBRATE YOUR GREATNESS  
and mark your calendars for **Thursday, April 16, 2015**  
from **6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.**, and we will see you at  
“A Taste of Memphis at Tiger Lane.”





# 2015 Neighborhood Redevelopment Conference Keynote Speaker



## JOHN HOPE BRYANT

John Hope Bryant is an American financial literacy and poverty, and “silver rights” entrepreneur. Bryant is the founder, chairman and CEO of nonprofit Operation HOPE, member of the President’s Advisory Council on Financial Capability, co-founder of Global Dignity, co-founder of the Gallup-HOPE Index, best-selling author on economics and leadership, advisor to business and government, entrepreneur, businessman, thought leader, philanthropist, global citizen and art collector.

He is a member of the Forum of Young Global Leaders for the World Economic Forum, and a place on the Forum’s Global Agenda Council. He served as the vice chair on the U.S. President’s Advisory Council on Financial Literacy and as the chairman of the Committee on the Underserved.



[www.johnhopebryant.com](http://www.johnhopebryant.com)

SAVE THE DATE

MAY 25-28, 2016

**MEMPHIS**  
Is The Place  
To Be in 2016!

**NUSA**  
Neighborhoods, USA

**NUSA**  
ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2016

[www.cityofchoice.org/nusa](http://www.cityofchoice.org/nusa)



City of Memphis  
Neighborhood Redevelopment Center  
314 A. W. Willis Avenue  
Memphis, Tennessee 38105