



Up On Downtown

The newsletter of the Memphis Downtown Neighborhood Association

Volume 5, Issue 6

November-December 2011

Special points of interest:

- Cover Story: DNA members have a say-so in the look and feel of our community.
- New Board of Directors to continue the positive message of DNA
- It's Membership Renewal Time again—help us save money by renewing your membership before we have to send out notices. Membership Form is inside!

Visit us on-line at

www.memphisDNA.org

Inside this issue:

Leadership Letter **2**

Volunteering at the Hospitality HUB **3**

Meet the 2012 Board! **5**

Happy Hour Patrol at the Rooftop Terrace @ River Inn **6**

Happy Hour Patrol at Grille 83 **6**

Your Membership Renewal Form! **7**

The Back Story **8**

Design Review Board Seeks Member Input by Bill Denton

For the last year I have been pleased and honored to serve as DNA's designee on the Downtown Memphis Commission (fka Center City Commission) Design Review Board (DRB). The DRB, made up of citizens, architects, and business people, has two main functions: first, it reviews all plans for new Downtown buildings, renovations, additions, and other major exterior alterations. These project reviews are judged against a set of rather broad Design Guidelines. Second it is charged with sole administration (subject to appeal) of the Downtown Sign Ordinance, which is separate from the general Memphis and Shelby County sign ordinances. In short, the DRB is responsible for deciding how Downtown should "look," including size, number, type, and location of signage. As DNA's special representative, I am always open and, indeed, invite your comments, complaints, suggestions, and other input. If you see something you don't understand or don't think is appropriate for Downtown, contact me and I'll see what I can find out. You can email me at

bl-dn10@comcast.net.

The Guidelines and Sign Ordinance are around ten years old now and we are faced with new sign technologies and perhaps evolving attitudes toward historic preservation and how Downtown should look. All these concerns, of course, have to be balanced to some degree on the desire we all have that our Downtown merchants be allowed to adequately publicize their businesses, setting up tensions that at times have been

difficult to reconcile. Thus, after the ubiquitous "nationwide search" we have engaged a Denver design firm, Winter & Company, to update our design and sign guidelines. The first step was to hold a series of three focus groups: (1) Design Professionals such as sign company representatives, architects, preservation community; (2) Downtown Business and Property Owners, including major tenants, The Chamber, and real estate brokers; (3) Downtown Residential and the General Public. DNA was identified as representative of public stakeholders and is a member of the latter group. After meeting with the various focus groups and the DRB, Winter is producing drafts of the guidelines that will go through further review and then be presented to the public in an open house on December 8. After we've all had our say, final drafts will be produced for approval by the DRB and formal adoption by the City Council.

This updating of our Downtown Design Guidelines and Sign Ordinance presents an opportunity for all of us to have a say in how our neighborhood will look, what we will allow and what we will not. Do you want banners draped all over buildings? Should such advertising be limited to the business in the building, or other Downtown businesses, or should it be open as billboards on the highway? Is the information contained on sidewalk sandwich boards worth the clutter and obstacles they create? May old buildings receive contemporary alterations? Do historic details have to be retained regardless of cost? These



Could this be an approved sign type in Downtown's future?

are the kinds of questions that the DRB faces every month, and the existing guidelines often do not provide sufficient guidance. Be thinking about these kinds of issues; be observant of our Downtown, take notes!

Please drop by the MATA Board Room at Central Station 4:00 PM - 7:30 PM on December 8 for the open house to review the first draft of the Design Guidelines and Sign Code. There will be a brief summary presentation at the top of every hour beginning at 4:00 PM with the last presentation beginning at 7:00 PM. The draft Sign Code and Design Guidelines will be available beginning November 23, 2011 at

www.downtownmemphis.com/mission.com.

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Leadership Letter by Ken Hudson

My, my, were did the time go? It seems like only 2009 when I agreed to take on this job of DNA president. So much has changed for DNA, Downtown, and me.

Your DNA continues to grow and like any organization with growth, there were some hiccups. We have more new faces at every outing and members seem to be spreading the word. This past fall, we introduced a new festival in the often overlooked Pinch District. We got folks out on the river – many of you for the first time. Our restyled website is showing a ton of traffic and our newsletters are looking better than they have in years. Part of DNA's core mission is communication. Your feedback on our efforts continues to be greatly appreciated by us all. Never forget, DNA is a member-driven organization.

Downtown Memphis is always changing – new enterprises coming in, old friends moving on – just like a vibrant urban community should. 2012 will usher in changes along our river front, the Main Street Mall is slated for improvements, new businesses continue to locate Downtown, and apartments are springing up from Mud Island to South Main.

As for me, I have had to face down my discomfort with public speaking and with meeting new people. Truly, I could not have done either without all of you. Many thanks to all that attended the meetings this year and supported our work.



On that note, what a great turnout we had this year at the Annual Meeting. Clearly, moving it away from Thanksgiving was a good call. It will also allow for a smoother transition of leadership between now and January. I would like to congratulate Doug Vanover and Sharon Leicham on their incoming board – it is so nice to see fresh new faces taking leadership of the organization. I see that they will be hard workers who will make their own mark on Downtown.

Lastly, thank you to everyone who I have had the pleasure of working with over the past year and half. I had a tremendous support group (see all the names in the left column!). Now.....I look forward to being the elder member of the Board and an ear to bend for future DNA leaders.

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DNA WANTS YOU!

Want to make a difference in your community? Whether you are a resident, a business owner, or just frequent visitor to Downtown, you have a vested interest in what is going on here.

DNA is looking for people who CARE about their community to be involved on committees. If you think you might be interested, please contact us at

Membership@memphisDNA.org

Thank you for making Downtown a better place!

MEETING DATES!**DECEMBER HAPPY HOUR**

December 16 2011
At 6:00

Tai Bistro and Sushi Bar
149 Madison Avenue
(between 2nd and 3rd Streets)

DNA HOLIDAY PARTY**T U E S D A Y**

December 20 2011
At 6:00

The Blue Monkey

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www.memphisDNA.org

For regular updates on DNA and Downtown news, events



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Volunteering at the Hospitality HUB by Will Hayley

Wednesday afternoons my role at the HUB is Intake Counselor for first time, homeless guests / clients. I conduct an interview to gather personal data, complete required legal forms, and lead a discussion concerning the guest's reasons for homelessness, immediate needs, and a referral plan to improve their condition. In terms of age, education, health, and background our guests represent a wide spectrum of people who you see on Memphis streets every day. Some you would immediately recognize as homeless, other you would assume are tourists or 8-5 regular, working folks. Every personal story is memorable, unique, and sometime heart breaking. As in most worthwhile volunteer opportunities, I learn more than I invest in time and contributions at the HUB.

Some of my lessons learned include:

1. When Memphis was identified as the poorest metropolitan city in the country, I dare say no one on the HUB's team was surprised. One of the treacherous conditions of poverty is that a family or individual is one, two, or three paychecks from a homeless condition. I have interviewed more than one guest who was functioning within a normal family with kids going to school where the main bread winner lost their job due to layoff, illness, legal run in's, etc. As a result the family may lose their apartment and face a homeless condition. If you get behind one month's rent check you do not make enough money to ever catch up. Some may slowly descend into homelessness by moving into temporary housing such as an inexpensive motel or to a friend / family member's home. Nevertheless, miss a paycheck and you are in a financial crisis.
2. Local, state, and federal services for the homeless can be perceived as complex and sometimes challenging. If a guest just got out of prison or has no place to stay, they also don't have a car, smart phone, or laptop. The most accessible directions for most government services are internet-based. Also, if you don't have ID you are a non-person to any level of government (except for the police). To get ID you must deal with two to three different government agencies in different locations and with different rules of engagement. Homeless people become discouraged and a little cynical in dealing with this complexity. The HUB provides a very valuable service for its guests in explaining and facilitating ID acquisition. Frequently this is the first step in helping a person move from homelessness to a job and home.
3. Team wins at the HUB include small steps like getting a person's full ID, helping a young lady get into a temporary shelter at the "Sisters", or getting an abscessed tooth fixed. Big wins are helping a guest get sober through our Breakfast Club and placement in long-term treatment or a permanent job placement.

The HUB appreciates DNA's financial support. I am pleased to report to DNA that our money is well spent and that the HUB has defined rules concerning guest services which cost money. The HUB is well run. Most of the human capital is volunteers. My observation is that the HUB's staff and volunteers take their jobs seriously: meetings start on time; guest services have rules and proven best practices. The HUB provides real value to its guests and the city.

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Annual Meeting 2011 Introduces New 2012 Board



This year's annual meeting was held at Ernestine & Hazel's on South Main and featured Lin Sitler from the Memphis and Shelby County Film Commission. As part of the annual meeting, the election of the 2012 Board of Directors was held. Congratulations to Doug Vanover and Sharon Leicham on their new board. We have no doubt that they will do their utmost best for DNA and Downtown Memphis in 2012!

Photograph by Barbara Standing

Pictured at left are incoming and returning Board Members Cindy Montgomery, Kinzie Bird, Nancy Lubiani, Doug Vanover, Deni Reilly, Ken Hudson, Tanja Mitchell, Anthony Troxel, and Cisco Bertorini.

Not pictured: Sharon Leicham, Marcy Siebert, Jim Murray, Peggy Williams, Carly Knight, and Gary Gardo.

Schedule of Events

Please check our website memphisDNA.org for more information!

- **12/04/11** 23rd Annual Jingle Bell Ball at Gibson Guitar Factory
- **12/08/11** DMC Sign Ordinance and Design Guidelines Public meeting #2 at Central Station
- **12/13/11** CCFC Board Meeting at the DMC offices
- **12/15/11** Memphis Landmarks Commission Meeting
- **12/16/11** DNA Happy Hour at Tai Bistro and Sushi Bar
- **12/20/11** DNA Holiday Party at The Blue Monkey
- **12/31/11** Chairman Lowery's Annual Prayer Breakfast

2012 events will be posted soon on the website!

DECEMBER 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 23rd Annual Jingle Bell Ball	5	6	7	8 DMC Design Guidelines Public Meeting #2	9	10
11	12	13 CCFC Board Meeting	14	15 MLC Meeting	16 DNA Happy Hour	17
18	19	20 DNA Holiday Party / Hanukah Begins	21	22	23	24
25 Christmas Day	26 Kwanzaa Observed	27	28	29	30	31 New Years Eve

September Happy Hour Patrol at River Inn by Ken Hudson



On September 16th, the Happy Hour Patrol let the Mud Islanders do the walking while the rest drove over the bridge to Harbor Town for what was anticipated to be the last patio outing of the year. Cocktails and a Memphis sunset from the roof of the River Inn.

The “scene”, as Bill would put it, was a mixed crowd of older folks – I took them to be guest of the hotel – and younger women in business attire. The rooftop had great views of the Mississippi River and the “new” bridge, but it was overcast with intermittent sprinkles, so the anticipated sun set was not to be had on this outing. Light jackets were the dress code on this mid-September evening.

Drinks were served from the rooftop satellite bar, which usually means a limited selection. I was pleased to see that they had the full gambit of spirits and select wines. I only saw two beer drinkers – armed with a Stella Artois and the strangely popular Bud Lite. Most drank clear cocktails and red or white wines this cool night. I arrived around 6:20 to find the rooftop hopping and the bar slightly overwhelmed. I realized their advertised Happy Hour ended at 6:30 and the others were trying to get those last minute orders placed. I settled in for that not-so-Happy pricing experience. My lovely wife decided to have wine at ten dollars a pour – but a healthy pure nonetheless – while I opted for a well drink at six fifty. While I can find much better prices in Downtown, we were here for the view, and considered it the cover charge.

A few of your Neighbors opted to try the bar menu appetizers – a limited but reasonable selection considering the kitchen is four stories below us. The hummus seemed to go over well, but the salmon was described to me as good, but not great. There was some disagreement as to whether Paulette’s was a place for good food or not – I sensed that it depended on the selected dish.

The rooftop staff worked extra hard and I did not hear one complaint on the service. We likely added about ninety minutes to their usually Friday night, but they handled it quiet well. As the sun set, the group disbanded with some of us stopping in the downstairs Little Bar for one last round and a snack. Again, the service was top-notch and friendly without being overbearing. Overall, an excellent Happy Hour experience and one that might be worthy of repeating when it warms up again next year. I would RECOMMEND– when the weather allows - and would rate this Patrol with Three Glasses.



October Happy Hour Patrol at Grille 83 by Bill Denton



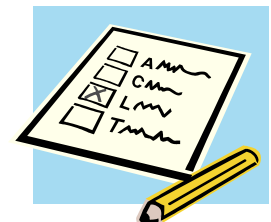
At our October Happy Hour the Patrol lifted glasses and bade adieu to Grill 83, the restaurant/lounge in The Madison Hotel, by the time you read this having been rebranded as ei8hty3. Those aren’t typos: all lower case, subscript 8, no space between y and 3. The new name follows the current trend of license plate-like, cryptic names with letters, numbers, symbols, etc.

Another example of this weird notion is the local architecture firm that was formerly a branch of TRO/Jung-Brannen and is now brg3s. Catchy, huh? I guess the Madison thought ei8htythr33 would be too over-the-top. And AT3 simply inelegant. Anyway, the name change is part of an overall revamping of the fine dining restaurant into a more casual eatery, also a trend - this one a symptom of the economy. It will be interesting to go back and evaluate the changes.

Grill 83 is (was) a narrow space on the east side of the hotel, and has a sophisticated urban vibe to it. Too bad the hotel has become the place for touring bands, and they are allowed to park their busses right in front of Grill 83. Things started out slowly but a festive crowd stopping off for a drink on their way to The Orpheum to see “Memphis” soon livened the place up. Befitting the quality of the hotel, Grill 83 offers an extensive and expensive wine list, although they do have surprisingly good 5-7 Happy Hour drink and appetizer specials. I saw a slider plate being shared and making a perfect light bite before theater, and heard only raves about the food. And suddenly they were all gone, and the Patrol regulars were about the only people at the bar. Grill 83 is an upscale lounge and you should be prepared and content to pay typical prices. For that you will get well-prepared food and drink, good service, sumptuous surroundings, and the chance to maybe glimpse Taylor Swift getting on the bus.

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The Downtown Neighborhood Association has many committees that need volunteers! Circle the committee that best fits you and send it along with your form, or contact Ken Hudson at Khudson@archincmemphis.com to sign up!

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The Back Story: *The Who and What of the Happenings in our Neighborhood*

The Uptown Partnership gets behind Spay/Neuter by Barbara Standing

When approached by Mid-South Spay & Neuter Services, Tanja Mitchell and Alex Mobley were more than enthusiastic about getting involved in a program to help reduce pet overpopulation in the Memphis Metropolitan area.

Nationwide, countless communities serve as unwanted breeding grounds for stray cats and dogs which can be seen roaming any urban street landscape. Thankfully, Uptown decided to step up and do their part by providing a grant for residents within the Uptown community to have their pets spayed/neutered at no charge. Spayed/neutered pets are healthier and happier pets since they are mostly spared from more aggressive behavior that can lead to fighting and from unwanted illnesses from having litters. Altered pets also reduce the number of animals that live suffering on the streets due to lack of food and medical attention as well as help reduce the overall pet euthanasia rate.



One unaltered cat and her litters can produce 370,072 cats in 7 years and one dog and her litters can produce 67,000 in 6 years! Sad and true. Memphis Animal Services had to kill over 12,000 pets last year due to lack of homes. Please support the best rescue of all, spay & neuter!

Mid-South Spay & Neuter Services is a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing pet overpopulation and serving the Memphis Metropolitan area. They offer affordable and often free spay/neuter surgeries. Please visit www.spaymemphis.org for more information.

If you are a resident of Uptown and would like to sign up for a free spay/neuter for your pet, please call 901.213.8210.

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