

GREATER METRO

SOUTH MEMFix!

Details 10 Oct 2013 Written by Tim Sampson/Special to the Tri-State Defender Hits: 1248



Have you ever walked past a building or a street or a neighborhood that has seen better days and imagined what it could be like if someone were to infuse it with some new life?

That is exactly what is going to happen at the iconic intersection of Mississippi Boulevard and Walker Street, home to the famous Fourway Restaurant, on Saturday (Oct. 12th) when SOUTH MEMFix puts a new face on it from noon until 6 p.m.

A project of the Bloomberg Foundation-funded Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team, SOUTH MEMFix is a short-term, community driven effort that will allow residents and visitors to experience how small, well-coordinated investments in the area can lead to big changes for the community. Developed by local businesses, residents, and community stakeholders, the free event will temporarily activate a one-block area around the intersection and showcase opportunities for the historic neighborhood.

With pop-up shops and neighborhood businesses, local food trucks and a food court, live music on an outdoor stage, physical improvements, and "living" characters from one of the most famous musical neighborhoods in the world, the festival is designed to be fun, informative, innovative and will transform the corner to demonstrate the "art of the possible."

"This intersection is a gateway to Soulsville, a neighborhood with a rich history that has worldwide influence," said Henry Ford, president of the Soulsville, USA Neighborhood Association.

"The famous Four Way Restaurant and other businesses carry forward the spirit of the people, the spirit of the People's Grocery of the past, a spirit of service and entrepreneurship in the community. A walk through Elmwood Cemetery is also a walk through history. LeMoyne-Owen College has been and continues to be a force in the education of individuals who have grown to have a positive influence on the life of our city and beyond."

Ford also pointed out the neighborhood's rich musical legacy.

"The music that was born in Soulsville at Stax Records and Hi Records is still heard and enjoyed all over the world and the names of those that lived and recorded here, including Aretha Franklin, David Porter, Al Green, Rufus Thomas, Memphis Slim, Isaac Hayes and so many others, are names known the world over and their work still lifts our souls and inspire young artists and musicians today," Ford said.

"The past decade has seen a rebirth in Soulsville and we welcome this spotlight on all the good things here, and look forward to more good things in the future."

While SOUTH MEMFix is a one-day event, the goal is much farther reaching: to see businesses move to the area permanently.



THE INTERSECTION OF MISSISSIPPI BLVD. AND WALKER STREET IS A GATEWAY TO SOULSVILLE, A NEIGHBORHOOD WITH A RICH HISTORY THAT HAS WORLDWIDE INFLUENCE. A ONE-DAY FESTIVAL IS JUST ONE ELEMENT OF A STRATEGY TO BETTER LEVERAGE THE AREA'S POTENTIAL.
(PHOTO: KARANJA A. AJANAKU)

"The MEMFix model demonstrates how a great street is a key driver of economic vitality," said Mayor A C Wharton Jr. "The SOUTH MEMFix event is a first step of a longer-term strategy to better leverage the great potential of this neighborhood by building alliances between existing and new businesses, residents, and area institutions.

"Encouraging growth of new retail options in South Memphis will keep millions of dollars in the community, which will ultimately lead to job growth and a better quality of life for residents of the neighborhood."

Planning Partners include: Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team, the City of Memphis, the Soulsville, USA Neighborhood Association, Knowledge Quest and the Green Leaf Learning Farm, South Memphis Alliance, LeMoyne-Owen College CDC, LeMoyne-Owen College, the Soulsville Foundation, Livable Memphis, Community LIFT, Clear Channel Memphis, The Four Way Restaurant, Looney Ricks Kiss Architects, Black Memphis Arts Alliance, Elmwood Cemetery, MATA and MLGW.

SOUTH MEMFix live!

One very special guest on the SOUTH MEMFix! live music stage will be Kris Thomas in a homecoming performance of sorts.

Thomas, a graduate of the Stax Music Academy, recently made it to the top 10 on the popular television show "The Voice." He will be performing with the academy during its 4 p.m.-5 p.m. set. This will be one of Thomas' first Memphis performances since gaining international notoriety on the show.

During the one-day event, there will be free bike valet parking on Walker west of the stage. Car parking will be available at a lot at Mississippi and Stephens, Mississippi and Jennette Pl., and the surrounding neighborhood.

Here is the performance line-up (subject to change):

- 1 p.m. - South Memphis Shalom Zone
- 2 p.m. – Jazz-A-FIRE
- 3 p.m. – Black Rock Revival
- 4 p.m. – Stax Music Academy
- 5:15 p.m. – Tonya Dyson

Hear oral histories from a selection of historic South Memphians between each performance

