

## ***We're not taking the future for granted***

For numerous years now, your Memphis City Council has included in the City Budget the Council Community Grant Program. This program allows the Council to award grants directly to local, qualifying non-profit entities that target one or more of the four City of Memphis priorities: Crime and Drug Prevention, Youth Empowerment, Economic Development, and Poverty Mitigation.

This year, the Council allocated \$3.25 million for the program. From this pool, each Council member received \$250,000 to grant to qualifying non-profits of their choice. After three months of receiving and reviewing applications and hearing presentations from those organizations that applied for the first time, the members disclosed their chosen grantees at the Council's July 12 meeting. A list of the grantees may be found on the Council's website at the following link:

<https://www.memphistn.gov/government/city-council/grants/>.

Recognizing that there is additional need in the community, the Council decided using the unallocated Grant funds to reopen the application window. This means those qualifying non-profits that did not submit a Grant Application by the original deadline in early May have another chance to apply. The application, as well as the qualifications and list of required documents, are also available at the link above.



## **Keeping you informed**

As its name implies, the Council Community Grant Program is aimed at assisting non-profit organizations that work to benefit their communities. Another such program the Council has is the Community Impact Fund. Under this program, each year the Council appropriates a large, one-time investment to a non-profit or project with the power to greatly impact and transform a community.

The project chosen for investment this year is the planned Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Center at Whitehaven High School. WHS, through its partner SchoolSeed Foundation, is currently raising funds to construct the planned center, which will include classrooms for Advanced Placement physics, biology, chemistry, robotics, computer science and environmental science courses; nine traditional science laboratories, a computer lab, a 1,600 square-foot robotics lab, three STEM focused classrooms and a 9,600-square-foot landscaped courtyard.

According to the Greater Memphis Chamber, Memphis is the fastest-growing city for young, Black technology talent; and the demand for workers in the STEM fields is predicted to grow with the addition of the nearby Ford Blue Oval City manufacturing complex. The Council awarded \$250,000 from the Community Impact Fund to Whitehaven High School to help construct this facility that will train Memphis students for the jobs of the future.

The Council also designated money to address one of the city's needs of today. Recent data has identified North Memphis as a food desert – an area without adequate access to affordable, nutritious food options. Acting on a Resolution sponsored by Councilwoman Michalyn Easter-Thomas, the Council appropriated \$3,000,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for a project aimed at alleviating this inadequacy. The Resolution tapped Promise Development Corporation, an agency dedicated to making North Memphis communities better places to live, work and play, as project manager and fiscal agent for the project.

Seeking to address a persistent problem throughout the city, the Council also received an update from representatives of the Tennessee Department of Transportation on its efforts to keep clean the rights-of-way along State Routes and Interstates within the Memphis City limits. In March, the Council passed a Joint Resolution with the Shelby County Commission requesting Gov. Bill Lee and the Tennessee General Assembly to increase funding to TDOT for this purpose.

TDOT Region IV Director Jason Baker and Director of Operations Michael Welch told the Council TDOT received an additional \$4 million for right-of-way maintenance throughout the state. About \$1 million of funding, they said, will be used for operations in Memphis.

Baker and Welch said TDOT has increased funding for litter cleanup in Memphis by 50 percent. Using this money, they intend to increase the frequency of litter pickup on rights-of-way along State Routes and Interstates in Shelby County. As of this year, some of these roads had as few as 5 cleaning cycles; but under TDOT's new plan, the state rights-of-way will be cleaned at least every other week, with many major routes getting once-a-week pickups. TDOT also is finalizing a plan to specifically address the interchanges within the city, which often act as collection points for litter.

The TDOT representatives also brought to the Council's attention the Department's new public concern hotline, 1-833-TDOTFIX (836-8349). Drivers may call this hotline to report potholes, debris in the roadway, litter along the rights-of-way and other concerns.

Finally, on Saturday, July 9, I had the privilege of participating in the unveiling of the Honorary Street Name sign for legendary Memphis radio personality Bobby O'Jay. An on-air staple in Memphis since 1974, working at WLOK and later WDIA, O'Jay touched the lives of thousands of listeners over the years. He was an inductee in the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame and a nominee to the National Radio Hall of Fame. It was my honor to participate in the ceremony for this Honorary Street Name Change, which was spearheaded by Councilmembers Easter-Thomas and Edmund Ford, Sr. and co-sponsored by all 13 Council members.



**Bobby O'Jay Unveiling**

***A moment of gratitude:***

I am very fortunate to serve you each day along with my colleagues working to advance our great city. Stay tuned for future Council updates as we keep you informed regarding the activities taking place here at City Hall. As always, for an archive of meeting recordings, you may visit <https://www.memphistn.gov/government/watch-public-meetings-online/>.



Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jamita E. Swearengen'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J'.

Jamita Swearengen  
Chairwoman, Memphis City Council  
**District 4**