

Urban Residential Association Meeting
Monday, August 21, 2006
The Standard's Ballroom at The Smith House
6:00 to 8:00pm

Chair: Skip Courtney

Guest Speakers: Cliff Harris – Metro Social Services & Susan Earl – Nashville Main Public Library
Total Attendees: 54

Secretary: Michelle Boucher

Meeting began at 6:00pm

Topics of Discussion:

Skip welcomed the downtown residents and thanked the Smith's for providing the meeting space at The Standard.

Skip reminded past members and encouraged new ones to get on our URA website as it is a great source for residents to get to know each other, start discussions, share issues and ideas, get to know local merchants and new businesses as well as each other. Please visit www.neighborhoodlink.com/nashville/ura and sign up!

Ben Bahil spoke on the topic of the unsightly news media boxes and showed pictures taken the day prior to the meeting. Pictures were taken along Broadway, Church St. and Second Avenue.

Issue: Most media boxes are in disrepair. They are not maintained. They are not clean. Some are filled with trash, broken glass, food items and old papers. Some have the incorrect media inside. Some have graffiti and or advertisements to after hours bars painted on them.

Proposal: Get a team together and form a committee to investigate viable solutions and create a plan for a new classy look and feel for Downtown media boxes.

All agreed and volunteer committee will be formed.

Skip updated everyone on the URA Local Resident Card. It is still in the works and more information will be available at the next URA.

(From last meeting: Rhonda Courtney introduced the beginning of a new local merchants sub committee. The idea is to let local merchants know who the local residents are by having a local resident card. This would show our local merchants that we are excited and supportive. Possible discounts from merchants could be had when we show our card. Next step is to contact merchants. First ones to contact will be those that are open after hours and on weekends. Create a laminated card that residents can show to the merchants. Create a URA logo.)

Cliff Harris – Homeless Services Coordinator from Metropolitan Social Services gave a presentation concerning the homelessness in Nashville and the Mayor's ten year plan to abolish homelessness.

Mr. Harris began his presentation by showing a video that showed the homeless faces of Nashville and followed it by speaking to the following topics:

Three types of homeless: 1. Those people at shelters who are there for food and services. 2. Those that are using the services to get out of their current situation. 3. Those that are *camping*, or rather, want to remain in a homeless state.

Nashville has approximately 2000 homeless people. Of these 2000, 64% are chronically ill.

Cost of being homeless: In an 18 day arrest record, 255 homeless with misdemeanors were arrested at a cost of 75 dollars a day per person. This cost only accounts for those incurred by the Sheriff's department.

Cost of housing the homeless is less expensive than maintaining them on the streets.

Current pilot program: 24 of the 2000 homeless have been housed. There are services provided around the housing to support what ever the situation may be, such as medical, mental illness, job search, etc. Ideology being that having a person housed instead of on the streets is better able to receive such services to get back on track.

Current plan is to raise 40 million dollars mainly for housing and have an action plan to present by January 1, 2007.

Questions and concerns from URA members included:

Q. Are missions and shelters safe? As many homeless say they are not.

A. Metro is working with the missions. Mental health and addiction services people are talking with members of missions and communications are being established on how to prevent unsafe situations.

Q. Is panhandling illegal?

A. Panhandling is not illegal.

Q. Is there anything being done to educate tourists about the dangers of accepting a panhandling request?

A. There are currently a few meters that tell tourists that they can put their money in the meter for better use as United Way will provide services to the homeless.

Q. Who is the Homeless Power Project?

A. Visit their website at <http://www.homelesspower.org/>

Q. Are families of homeless being addressed and what are the services provided?

A. There are currently only two family shelters.

Q. Is there a danger of making Nashville known for its services to homeless?

A. Many cities have been successful in providing better services.

Q. Is it illegal to camp out? For instance the camp ground under the Woodland Bridge?

A. TDOT has jurisdiction over this matter and it depends on whether the land is public or privately owned.

Q. How many people are active in the streets in the outreach program?

A. Currently 6. Not enough.

Please visit <http://www.ich.gov/slocal/plans/nashville.pdf> to read the full Strategic Framework for Ending Chronic Homelessness in Nashville, presented by the Mayor's task force on September 23, 2004.

Definition of Chronic Homelessness: Homeless for a period of one full year, or three episodes of homelessness in a period of four years.

Please visit the URA site for scanned copies of documents passed out during the URA meeting by Cliff Harris.

Skip introduced the next guest speaker, Susan Earl, with the Nashville Public Library

Susan introduced herself and spoke about the services and a few of the many upcoming events at the library.

Drifting Down the Nile – Collecting Memories of Egypt

Public Lecture by John Updike – One of the most versatile and prolific literary artists.

Summer Concerts in the Courtyard – Every Wednesday during summer.

For more information please visit the library and check out all events at the library website as well as hours of operation: http://www.library.nashville.org/locations/loc_main.asp#

Skip introduced a new URA visitor Jennifer Hagan-Dier. Edgefield Neighborhood Association Board Member.

Jennifer introduced herself and expressed her thanks, excitement, and interest in the issues that the URA faces as they are the same as what the Edgefield community experiences. She expressed enthusiasm in working together to bring forward best practices as well as working together to come to viable resolutions when it comes to making our community a better place to live.

She also introduced an upcoming event of great food and wine that supports three East Nashville charities: CASA, The East Nashville Hope Exchange and The Warner School. For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit <http://www.edgefielduncorked.com/>

Finally, Skip introduced an idea for a fun event at Church St. Park. The Street Life Project <http://www.civicedesigncenter.org/projects-streetlife.html> contacted the URA about coordinating a series of lunchtime concerts in the park. They would run September 14th, 15th, and 16th and would provide special event platforms for additional park usage studies to be performed by Vanderbilt. Interest was generated and the idea will be looked at. Look for more information on the URA website or contact Skip to be part of the volunteer committee.

Other events and new local business

Wine on the River – Please visit <http://www.wineontheriver.com/> to volunteer and/or attend.

Samuel Smith with Allstate Insurance at 903 Church Street. Please visit <http://agent.allstate.com/SamuelSmith2/Welcome/> for more information.

Action items for next meeting:

Ben Bahil to update on the Media Boxes Committee
Rhonda Courtney to update on the URA Local Resident Card
Bring a new neighbor!

Next meeting: Monday, September 18th. Location details to follow.

Guest Speakers: Jim Snyder from Public Works to talk about Church Street and other downtown projects and Sharon Smith from Public Works to talk about residential recycling!

Please visit the URA website for location and guest speaker updates as well as for a copy of all the documents handed out at the meeting: www.neighborhoodlink.com/nashville/ura

Neighborhood Link Website Note: Should you get a blank page or a banner with a blank page, just hit refresh and our URA will appear.