



PRESS RELEASE

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CITY COUNCIL HEARS ABOUT CULTURAL AND HERITAGE TOURISM

May 19, 2009 — Scott Blake, the executive director of Victorian Village Community Development Corporation, is invited to speak to the executive session of City Council today about the city's hidden assets in cultural and heritage tourism.

“Heritage tourists look for activities such as art galleries, theatres and museums,” Blake said. “They attend cultural events like Memphis in May and the Cooper Young Festival, and seek out our architectural and art treasures. They want to know the contextual story behind our music history.”

Cultural and heritage tourists represent 80% of our ten million visitors to Memphis every year and they spend 30% more on average than other tourists (not including the travel costs). This is a market we need to encourage by bundling similar attractions and creating links between our major, world-renowned places like Graceland and Beale Street to less familiar attractions including 19th Century Memphis.

“Heritage tourism dollars are easy money,” stated Blake. “The events and places tend to be in the older parts of town and stimulate redevelopment and community building. This city stimulus income does not require infrastructure such as new roads, schools, and manufacturing. The investment return benefits everyone from waiters and hotel staff to major event promoters.”

“For the Victorian Village neighborhood, heritage tourism means the preservation and interpretation of our unique Memphis story. There are 26 sites on the National Register of Historic Places within a four block radius that tell the 19th Century history of our city. Through free, downloadable, self-guided tours anyone can enjoy our neighborhood and its unique places including Neely’s BBQ, Mollie Fontaine Lounge and the house museums. Small businesses follow the tourist dollar, and creative people want to live in an active cultural arts community. Promoting our cultural tourism is a formula for success because it directly affects our quality of life and our ability to attract highly qualified employees in this competitive marketplace.”

Blake explained, “The Memphis Medical Center will be spending 1.67 billion dollars over the next five years in project development. This means thousands of new jobs and a chance to restore our shrinking residential tax base. Our purpose is to imagine a downtown neighborhood where the new doctors, researchers, technicians and support staff can walk to work and play, and enjoy visiting on sidewalks and front porches in the revitalized 19th century Memphis.”

Scott Blake is a neighborhood activist and has lived in Victorian Village for over 15 years. He was one of the founding members of the Victorian Village Inc. Community Development Corporation in 2006 and serves as a director on the Memphis Medical Center Board.

Victorian Village Inc. Community Development Corporation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The mission of Victorian Village Inc. is to create a vibrant and diverse urban neighborhood that treasures our architectural heritage and builds a community that is safe, clean and prosperous.

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