



BUILDING BLOCKS

A newsletter of the Downtown Neighborhood Association of Franklin, Tennessee

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DNA is Boiling!

If you haven't made your Shrimp boil reservations yet, you'd better call NOW! Some 100 residents and friends of historic downtown Franklin have already marked October 12 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. as the high point of their fall social calendars. The historic home of Dan and Denise Klatt at 214 Third Avenue South will overflow with party-goers who love both downtown and the best Cajun feast outside of Louisiana.



The historic home of Denise and Dan Klatt will simmer with activity October 12 when DNA hosts its annual shrimp boil.

"The DNA shrimp boil has become a Franklin tradition," said Beverly Roberts, DNA president. "It's a great chance for everyone who loves our historic downtown to get together, 'laissez les bon temps roulez,' and talk over the many challenges that face the future of our neighborhood."

Cooking for the crowds of crustacean crunchers will again be DNA member and shrimp boil chairman Dan Plattsmier, who will serve up shrimp, corn, sausage, and potatoes, for the more than 100 people expected at the event.

Plattsmier and his shrimp-boiling partner, John Stickler, are known as "Boudreaux and Fontenot" when they get into their Cajun personas and start preparing their feasts.

"Dan has this down to an exact science," said Roberts. "He has cooked shrimp for dozens of parties like this, and no one has gone away hungry yet!"

This year's shrimp boil event is timed so that Franklin's mayor and aldermen can attend the neighborhood event, then walk down the street to the regular Board of Mayor and Aldermen meeting at 7 p.m. Mayor Tom Miller and several aldermen have already made their reservations.

Hot dogs will be available for children, and soft drinks will be served, but guests who want beer or wine should bring their own. Cost of the shrimp boil is \$12.50 per person.

Reservations are mandatory: Plattsmier has to know how many shrimp to order from his secret source on a bayou in Louisiana. The official R.S.V.P. deadline is Oct 7. Downtown residents who still haven't made the A-list should call Denise Klatt at 794-0019 or email her at klatthome@comcast.net and try to whine their way into a reservation for middle Tennessee's most prestigious social event.

DNA sets five objectives for 2004-2005

The DNA membership voted on five priorities they would like to see city and county government pursue in our core neighborhood downtown. The board ratified these priorities and is working with the relevant government and utility agencies to encourage them to happen.

- 1. Expand Historic Zoning** (see "We're almost in the zone!") Expand historic zoning to the entire 15-block original downtown area, including both sides of the boundary streets. A patchwork of spot zoning currently exists.
- 2. Initiate a schedule of Streetscape improvements** Design and implement streetscape improvements throughout our historic downtown and on key gateway corridors. (The City has hired EG&G of Akron, Ohio, and appointed a Streetscape task force to begin implementing what is expected to be an ambitious ten-year program of Streetscape improvements.)
- 3. Protect residential areas from encroachment** Hold the line against further expansion of office, commercial, and/or church use into residential neighborhoods.
- 4. Implement underground utilities** Implement a phased program to bury utilities underground throughout downtown. Also, whenever street construction occurs for any other reason, bury utilities underground.
- 5. Creatively re-use the old courthouse and library sites** Implement creative adaptive re-use of these governmental structures, maintaining the architectural integrity. (See "DNA says to county. . .")

YOU HAVE A VOICE IN THE FUTURE OF OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Downtown Neighborhood Association of Franklin, 214 Third Avenue South, Franklin, TN 37064

The future of our neighborhood: Challenges, opportunities, and enormous risk. . . .

From First to Fifth, from South Margin to North Margin, and in the tracts bordering downtown across the streets, our neighborhood faces the risks and potential rewards of major change. Expansion of historic zoning is the most important step we can take to manage change to protect our neighborhood, but that's only one of the critical issues and opportunities facing us in the next few weeks, months and years.

From Five Points, where the county is adapting the former library building for new use, to the north end of downtown, where a major park along the Harpeth has been discussed, local governments are making decisions that will affect the lives of our families for decades to come.

A Streetscape program will change (for the better, we confidently expect) what we see every time we go out our front doors for a walk through our neighborhood. Street projects on Fourth Avenue South, Third Avenue North, and Second Avenue South will soon near completion, we hope. We also hope they reflect Streetscape ideas.



Progress is moving so fast that any picture of the new parking garage on Fourth Avenue South will be out of date as soon as it's taken. The facade is now nearing completion.

Completion of the second public parking garage downtown before Thanksgiving will mean that most of those cars in front of our houses will be there to visit us, not to attend jury duty or to shop downtown. Do we need another parking garage downtown? Special city committees on both Streetscape and parking are guiding the discussion on both of these critical initiatives. Bev Roberts, DNA president, is on both committees.

A special task force to discuss the proposed Harpeth river park on the north end of town has been proposed. The park would include at least three key properties the city now owns: the Bicentennial Park area, the boot factory property, and the junk yard property.

Two historic buildings downtown are now saved (or about to be saved) from the wrecker's ball, thanks to public/private teamwork: the Dan German Hospital on the corner of Fourth and Church, and the "Green House" on the corner of Second and Church. With a lease from Williamson County on the proper-

ty, the Heritage Foundation has restored the Dan German House, which we hope will become the home of the Nashville Chamber Orchestra. The City of Franklin is in the process of selling the Green House to a private developer under the stipulation that the developer restore it at its current location.



Downtown neighbors hope to soon welcome the Nashville Chamber Orchestra to the former Dan German Hospital at the corner of Second and Fourth.



The "Green House" sits forlornly on the corner of Second and Church, waiting for its new owner to restore it and make it part of our downtown neighborhood once more.

Downtown churches continue to be a vital component of our community life, but if they grow too large, they can upset the delicate balance of residential, commercial, government, and religious uses that make our neighborhood lives so unique and rewarding. At least one downtown church is struggling with the issue of how to grow while keeping a congregation downtown.

On the private front, at least two high-end condominium projects (on Second Avenue North and South) have been proposed for vacant or abandoned downtown sites. With both of these projects subject to Historic Zoning Commission review, these new residential complexes should have nothing but upside potential for our neighborhood.



This weed-filled vacant lot may soon be the site of elegant condominiums.

Down on Main Street, the tiff over whether to allow sidewalk dining has been resolved to almost everyone's apparent satisfaction, and our downtown is generating increasing energy and excitement. Remember the days when cruisers were the only life downtown after dark? A walk downtown any evening these days reminds us of how far we have come.

As downtown Franklin's uniqueness continues to attract major investors and new residents, it's important for downtown residents to stay involved and aware and to communicate constantly with aldermen, planning commissioners, county commissioners, key property owners, and other leaders of the public agencies and private businesses who are making the decisions that will affect our neighborhood for decades to come.

Start by attending our shrimp boil, where you'll have a chance to talk with many local leaders. That's the easy part. Beyond that, track city committees and meetings, make your voices heard, and keep the lines of communication open with your representatives. Both the city and the county have put meeting calendars, complete with agendas, on their Web sites.

Check the following regularly :

- franklin-gov.com/
- williamsoncounty-tn.gov/williamson/live/agenda.asp

DNA says to county: Let's really USE Five Points!

DNA has urged county commissioners to expand its proposed re-use of the former library building at Five Points, currently believed to be the location for the county archives. The site should have a broader use for residents and visitors such as a Visitor/Welcome Center with public restrooms. The site could even be redeveloped as a downtown inn.



DNA has urged Williamson County to use the former library building at Five Points for a Visitors Center or some other public use.

"The Five Points property is in a central location for tourist activity and is in the very heart of downtown Franklin and our county seat," said Ed Cagle, Vice President of the DNA Board of Directors, in a recent letter to Williamson County Mayor Rogers Anderson. "Imagine the significant impact this strategic location could have on the local economy of Franklin and Williamson County."

At the very least, Cagle urges, the public should have a chance to participate in a process to determine the future use of this key property. "We should not allow this central location to be handed over for any use without any public consensus or opportunity to voice one's opinion."

We're almost in the zone! Let's fill in the holes!

A proposal to fill in the holes in downtown Franklin's historic zoning overlay is making its way through the city legislative process. Expansion of historic zoning is the number one priority of the Downtown Neighborhood Association.

Much of Franklin's original 15-block downtown area is protected by the historic zoning overlay, but some key properties were omitted from the original ordinance, leaving a piece-meal patchwork that leaves some of the historic downtown vulnerable to demolition or inappropriate new construction. The new ordinance will fill in those holes and also protect property across the street from the downtown district.

Expansion of historic zoning is important for the protection of property values and of Franklin's unique small-town quality of life, said Beverly Roberts, DNA president.

"Currently, we almost have spot zoning," said Roberts. "If inappropriate construction takes place on some of the excluded properties, the result could be a significant deterioration of our neighborhood."

Roberts pointed out that several myths exist about what historic zoning does and does not mean for property owners.

The law does NOT specify property uses, it does not specify building colors, and it does not tell people they can't build on downtown property, Roberts explained. "Historic zoning simply insures that when a property owner applies for a building permit, any new construction visible from the street is appropriate to our historic downtown. Like other zoning laws, historic zoning protects our property values, but with the current 'swiss-cheese' zoning overlay, we have a lot of holes in that protection."

The Board of Mayor and Aldermen, the Planning Commission, and the Historic Zoning Commission have already held a special public workshop on the proposed new historic zoning ordinance, and the Historic Zoning Commission has approved it. Next steps are Planning Commission consideration and three readings, including a public hearing, by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

Save our trees!

Many downtown residents were shocked a month ago when the City suddenly destroyed some stately old sugar maple trees on Fourth Avenue South between Main and Church streets. That was the bad news. The good news is that the City will plant new trees on the street and is working toward creation of a Tree Board that will discourage future destruction of the old sugar maples that are so much a part of our historic downtown experience, especially this time of year when the foliage is beginning to turn. Some of our downtown trees are dying from old age and need replacement, but others need protection, not pruning or felling.



Large sugar maples recently shaded Fourth Avenue across the street from the County Judicial Center. Today, we only have holes in the pavement and warning cones.

Thanks to Buddy and friends!

Thanks to the hard work and landscaping expertise of Buddy Carter and his crew, Main Street is looking terrific. Buddy not only arranged for all the light posts and bollards to be painted, but he has also been going to work at midnight lately to clean the sidewalks when no one is around.



DNA 2004-2005 Board

- Bev Roberts, President
- Ed Cagle, Vice President
- Jim Hudspeth, Treasurer
- Nell Bacon, Secretary
- Denise Klatt
- Heather Martin
- Linda Reynolds
- Dick Thuma
- Becca Vines



Dozens of downtown neighbors enjoyed the summer ice cream social at the home of Margaret and Bob Martin following our annual DNA meeting.



Why DNA?

The purpose of the Downtown Neighborhood Association is to provide a means by which the citizens of Franklin's original 15-block downtown area "may exercise greater control over the economic, political, environmental and social forces that influence their ways of life; to promote understanding among property owners, residents, government and business interests; to foster neighborhood identity and a sense of community; to cooperate and affiliate in appropriate ways with other local, state and national organizations having compatible goals."