

Clarksville-Montgomery

COUNTY



Montgomery County
Courthouse

BY CANDACE MOONSHOWER

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Bricks, Mortar & Beyond

BY CANDACE MOONSHOWER

Public Square
Historic Downtown
Clarksville

RiverWalk and Courtesy
Boat Dock on the
Cumberland River

A few years ago, rebuilding Clarksville was definitely a brick-and-mortar issue. In the early morning hours of Jan. 22, 1999, a tornado cut a five-mile path through the historic river town, damaging more than 500 properties including Austin Peay State University and much of the downtown area. These days, city and county leaders prefer to shift the focus from rebuilding Clarksville—a great deal of which has already been accomplished—to continued revitalization and beautification. Brick-and-mortar rebuilding has been replaced with a rededication to planned growth and inspired and long-lasting revitalization.

Mayor Johnny Piper has a unique perspective on Clarksville’s dedication to the continued growth and improvement of the town and the surrounding county. Piper, who was elected in 1998 and took office on Jan. 1, 1999, is a Texan by birth but a Tennessean for almost 40 years. With a background in commercial and residential construction, his roots run deep into the heart of Clarksville. “When I took office, I had a ‘100-Day Plan’ for a much-needed revitalization and reorganization of the city,” he says. “That plan was blown up with the tornado 22 days later.”

Rebuilding became key, Piper says, and it quickly developed into a community effort. “By the second day post-tornado, I could tell the necessary cooperative spirit was at work—and not due to anyone’s political persuasion,” he says.




Johnny Piper
Clarksville Mayor



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Ken Shipley, assistant professor of art at Austin Peay State University who is known across the globe for making ceramic teapots, teaches a student during class.

McAuliffe Hall is the new division headquarters at Fort Campbell.

Now in his second term as mayor—he was defeated in his bid for reelection in 2002, and reelected again in 2006—Piper is working hard—and fast—to implement his vision for the city. But he’s quick to credit previous mayors for doing the work necessary to jumpstart the population boom and current growth that Clarksville is enjoying. “When Ted Crozier won in 1978,” Piper recalls, “he did things that were definitely not politically correct, but for the right reason.”

One of those initiatives was the annexation of St. Bethlehem. Prior to the annexation, St. Bethlehem’s presence and location was limiting

expansion of the city of Clarksville. “That was a big vote—and not an easy one,” Piper says. “It defeated Crozier in his next election, but the annexation of St. Bethlehem was one of the most critical things to happen to Clarksville’s growth in the last 100 years.”

These days, the Capital Project Revenue District (CPRD) is essential to long-term plans for growth and development. Born out of a state TIF (tax incremental funding) program, the CPRD involves revenue in a district that extends from Exit 8 off I-24 to Exit 1, and all the revenue captured in that district, including construction, reassessment and increased valuation—previously slated for the General Fund—will go into a Capital Revenue Fund (CRF).

These monies are set aside strictly for capital projects that meet the criteria of \$500,000 in investments over a 10-year life span. “The difference between a TIF and our CPRD,” Piper explains, “is that with a TIF, whatever money is captured can only be used in that area. Under the CPRD, we can take the revenue captured in the area and use it anywhere in the city.” Clarksville’s CPRD received an award from the Greater Nashville Regional Council as a creative funding tool for government. “The CPRD allows us to implement projects without raising taxes,” Piper says.

The Riverfront has been the focus of development projects for many years through the River District Commission (RDC), which was established more than twenty years ago by city and county leaders. Its goals were to organize plans for the redevelopment and revival of Clarksville’s river district area. Phase I of the River District Commission’s plan is completed, and Phase II is underway. The Cumberland RiverWalk, a component of Clarksville’s Upland Trails Master Plan, anchors the 13.2-acre McGregor Park at one end, with the Cumberland RiverCenter Pavilion, a venue for local events and outdoor festivals, as its showpiece. The RiverWalk and RiverCenter project received the International Clearwater Award for riverfront development.

Phase II of the RDC’s Land Use Master Plan includes the continuing development of the RiverWalk trail system (linking it with Austin Peay State University, and running it from the Fairgrounds to the Fort Defiance project at the other end); privately developed residential components; and a marina facility adjacent to the Fairgrounds Park. “We are committed to a marina and an expansion of the Fairgrounds,” Piper says, “including opportunities for commercial, residential and retail development.” The marina

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The Browning Administration Building, named for former Tennessee Gov. Gordon Browning, houses the office of the president of Austin Peay State University.

is a public and private partnership. It will open in 2010. Fort Defiance, with its significant historical architecture, will have a multi-purpose event and conference center and an Interpretive Center. The conference center will be finished

by mid to late April of 2008, and the Interpretive Center will be online by the end of the year.

Montgomery County Mayor Carolyn Bowers has lived in the county all her life, teaching school for 29 years in the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System and serving as a city trustee for two terms. She is excited about the year the county has just had and the promising outlook for continued growth. Upcoming capital projects illustrate the scope of that growth and development. "We're building Civic Hall, with a catering kitchen, at the Montgomery County Veterans Plaza that will accommodate 500 people in chairs and 250 eating at tables," Bowers says. The new Civic Hall will allow for three simultaneous meetings with technology available for PowerPoint presentations.

In March, a much-needed new animal control building opened with improved facilities and positions for new deputies. The new hospital at Exit 4 off I-24, owned by Community Health Systems, will open soon, and an old hospital in the Hilldale community has been pur-

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chased by an investment group out of Atlanta that is planning to build a retail center and condominium homes. Also online for the Hilldale area are new restaurants and a new Lowe's Home Improvement Store.

The county's Corporate Business Park, off Exit 8, expanded in 2006. The last parcel in the original park was sold to Sanderson Pipe Corp., and several spec buildings are underway in the expanded park. Matteson-Hudson Construction and Fulton Wilson Construction are building spec buildings, as well. Panattoni Development Co., known for its distribution warehouses, has signed a letter of intent and will build 2.5 million square feet of spec industrial space and other small buildings over a 10-year period—a development that bodes well for employment numbers. (Panattoni's completed facility in Rutherford County is approximately three million square feet and employs 2,600 people.)

The Industrial Development Board has donated land at the industrial park for a new facility for the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center. A new EMS and fire hall facility is slated for property donated on Highway 79 across from Industrial Boulevard.

In 2006, the Tennessee Valley Authority



(TVA) and Clarksville-Montgomery County officials announced that a 1,187-acre site is now a certified megasite—a large industrial property suitable for major automotive manufacturing. Called Commerce Park, it is the only certified

Peg Harvill Art Gallery at Roxy Regional Theatre

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Carolyn Bowers
Montgomery County Mayor

megasite in Middle Tennessee, and the fourth in the state. It is located approximately 1.5 miles from I-24, off Exit 4 and just north of the Clarksville-Montgomery County Corporate Business Park. "We're actively recruiting industry," Bowers says.

The city and county is going jointly before the Tennessee Aeronautics Board to request help for funding an airport terminal. "Outlaw Field has a landing strip and excellent runways," Bowers says, "but we need \$3.5 million for a new terminal—money that doesn't come easily without a revenue source. An airport terminal would be attractive to businesses and corporations." Another traffic-related project under consideration is a bargeport. "TDOT has studies showing how many trucks are removed from the highways when a river town builds a bargeport," Bowers says. A bargeport on Clarksville's river would make the town even more attractive to corporations looking to open facilities in the area.

Qualities for Life

Living, working and shopping within the county is of primary importance for a vital community. Clarksville is the midpoint between Nashville and Land Between the Lakes. "Montgomery County loses \$200 million in revenues to Nashville yearly," Piper says. "Folks need to spend their money here." Piper believes that expanding entertainment opportunities and venues will help make Clarksville a gathering and destination point for citizens and tourists alike. The city and county had already integrated a number of amateur sporting events into their tourism programs and offer amenities to attract amateur sports tournaments. Catfish fishing, soccer, basketball and dodgeball tournaments all have been hosted within the county.

The Division of Environmental Conservation performed a study of Montgomery County's parks, Bowers says, and the county is developing plans to make better use of its parks and facilities. Improvements are in the works for the St. Bethlehem Civitan Park, the Woodlawn Baseball Fields, and Rotary Park. "We're also looking at building a park facility in the Cunningham area," Bowers says. "The face of the Cunningham and

An advertisement for Heritage Bank. On the left, a white coffee mug filled with black coffee sits on a newspaper. The mug has the Heritage Bank logo and name on it. The newspaper is open to a page with the word "BUSINESS" visible. A red horizontal bar across the top of the ad contains the text "WE'RE MORE THAN A BANK, WE'RE YOUR NEIGHBORS!". Below this bar, the text "Stop by an office near you today and see just how neighborly a bank can be." is written. At the bottom, the Heritage Bank logo is shown next to the name "HERITAGE BANK" in large, bold letters. Below the name is the website "WWW.BANKWITHHERITAGE.COM" and the text "MEMBER FDIC EQUAL HOUSING LENDER".



Cumberland Heights community is changing—it's not just rural anymore, and those people need facilities as well.

A Foundation of Education

There are some new kids on the block in Clarksville and Montgomery County, too. Tim Hall, the new president of Austin Peay State University, and Michael Harris, director of the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System, are both excited about their roles in the Clarksville of the new millennium.

"It's nice to be in a city again," President Hall says of his new position in Clarksville. Hall came to Clarksville from the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Miss., and began at Austin Peay on Aug. 1, 2007. Hall says that with a smile, because one of the things he most enjoys about Clarksville and Austin Peay State University is that while his new town is bigger, his new university still offers that feeling of community and inclusion. "We're focusing on continuing Austin

(cont. on page 12)

Two Austin Peay State University students perform in the Concert Hall, featured in 2006 by *The Robb Report* as one of the top 10 "premiere concert halls" in the nation.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY



Tourism revenues are important for a city of Clarksville's size—tourists bring in dollars but do not require infrastructure to meet their needs. Of the many tourism initiatives planned and implemented by the Clarksville-Montgomery County Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), the "Rivers & Spires Festival" is one of its most important. The Rivers & Spires Festival began in 2003 as a tribute to the returning soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). Since its inception, the festival has grown, although it continues to follow its original purpose of honoring the soldiers and their spouses.

Each April, the city, county, Austin Peay State University, Fort Campbell and the school system all work together to make the

PHOTO COURTESY OF CLARKSVILLE-MONTGOMERY COUNTY, ED C



RIVERS & SPIRES Festival

Clarksville, Tennessee

event a positive and fun one. "Everyone brings something to the table," says Theresa Harrington, executive director of the CVB. There are six stages of major entertainment, 21 tents with free events in the a kids' area, a teen area, wine tastings, and arts and crafts, all on approximately five city blocks. This year's festival is April 17-19, 2008, and there will be over 100 entertainers on all the stages, including Lonestar, the Second Story Guys, and "King of

Kazoos" Rick Hubbard. Leading up to Rivers & Spires is "Warrior Week," with events for the spouses of deployed military, including cocktail parties, movies in the park, picnics, salon services, and a ceremonial laying of the wreath at the statue in Public Square.

The Rivers & Spires Festival is a major economic development tool for the city and county. It is representative of the regional appeal of the area and invites people to come and check out Clarksville. In 2007, the festival won the prestigious International Festivals & Events Association's Gold Grand Pinnacle Award in its category for festivals that charge no admission fees. It was also awarded the State of Tennessee's Tourism Spotlight Award and has been recognized



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"The Rivers & Spires Festival is representative of our history, growth and community spirit. We don't have to sell brick and mortar—we sell our spirit."

—Doug Barber, special events manager for the CVB



as among the "Top 20 Events in the Southeast" by the Southeast Tourism Society and one of the "Top 100 Events in North America" by the American Bus Association.

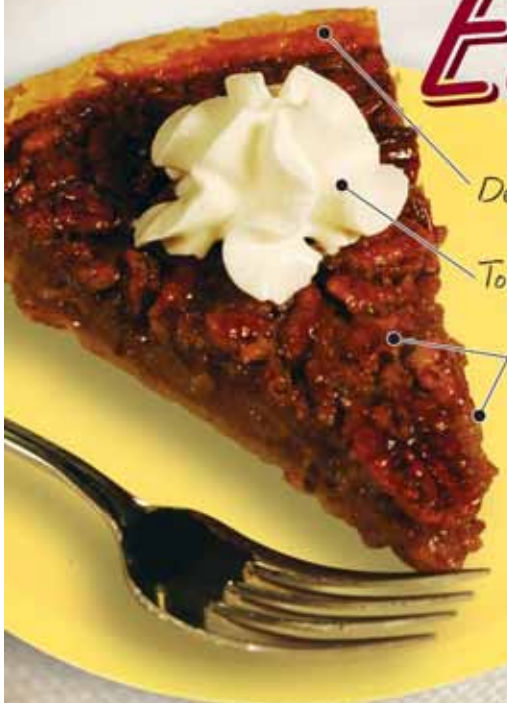
"The Rivers & Spires Festival is representative of our history, growth and community spirit," says Doug Barber, special events manager for the CVB. "We don't have

to sell brick and mortar—we sell our spirit."

For more information, visit www.riversandspires.com.

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**Tim Hall, president
Austin Peay
State University**

(cont. from page 19)

Peay's tradition of excellence, but in a 'high-touch' environment," Hall says. "People do not want an impersonal environment—they want to be known."

Students enjoy the personal attention they receive from their professors at Austin Peay, citing the availability of one-on-one contact between faculty and students. Opportunities abound outside the classroom to bring faculty and students together, too, including cultural events through The Center for Excellence in Creative Arts and lecture series.

Austin Peay has a long tradition of excellence in agriculture and education—the university began as a rural academy in 1806 and grew into a normal school named in honor of former Gov. Austin Peay. Over 200 years later, Austin Peay is in the process of seeking approval to offer its first doctoral program—an Ed.D. for practicing educational professionals. But the university is not resting on its considerable laurels in the education arena. "That continues to be an impor-

tant part of who we are," Hall says, "but we're staying on the cutting edge with our science programs as well." The university has 60 physics majors currently—the most in the state. "We graduate eight physics majors per year, which is big," Hall says. "The top schools in the country graduate only 10 or so."

Austin Peay has shown the fastest growth of any university in the state over the last seven years, expanding approximately 30% since 2000. The student body numbers approximately 9,000 students, including those at Fort Campbell. Through its partnership with Fort Campbell, Austin Peay is the first institution to build a facility on a military base, breaking ground in December 2007. The facility will be completed in August of 2008, in time for the fall semester.

In conjunction with the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System, Austin Peay is developing a Middle College that will bring high school students to the campus for study opportunities. The high school students will study under their own faculty and college faculty members, too.

Michael Harris is wrapping up his first two years as director of schools, and his goal for students in the Kindergarten through high

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school years aligns with that of President Hall: personalization. "We're making the high schools personal places, with our Freshman Academies and Middle College," he says. "Our goal for the Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools is to make them more rigorous, more relevant and more personal."

Harris can be proud of his schools' report card. Current ACT test scores are higher than both the state and national averages, and the county has a higher percentage of schools scoring A's than any other district in Middle Tennessee. The school system is also ISO-9001 Certified for efficient processes by the International Standards Organization. "We're doing business like a business," Harris says, "and developing processes and work flows like any great business does."

In 2007, the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System was the second district in Tennessee to receive district-wide accreditation. That is significant because it was certified as a district and not just the individual schools. Harris points to a high focus on quality literacy programs; benchmark assessments, data charts and a team approach to solving instructional problems; and state-of-the-art classrooms as keys to the district-wide accreditation. "Within two years, all core classes will be Model Technology Classrooms," Harris says.

In addition to Middle College, the school system offers after-school tutoring in 100% of its K-12 schools; "virtual" high school with Internet-based courses to help students graduate by making up needed classes; an AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program to prepare students in the academic middle for four-year college eligibility; and Academic Coaches—master teachers who assist other teachers.

"Our school system is focused on prepping kids for college and work," Harris says. "That focus is on developing good thinkers, good teamwork and good problem solvers. That's what businesses want, and we're delivering."

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Rivers & Spires Festival on
Franklin Street in Historic
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Forward March

Historically, Clarksville and Montgomery County have been viewed as a military community due to the proximity of the Fort Campbell military reservation—and as such subject to the caprices of troop deployments during war time. The community is proud to be associated with the base, but also proud of its expanded ability to grow and prosper independently of troop deployment, too. Troops deploy, but families don't move away as they did in years past. And military retirees return to Clarksville to enjoy the cultural diversity, affordable cost of living and mild weather.

"We're poised for great growth," Bowers says. "We have a great quality of life here with an excellent labor pool, good shopping and restaurants, and an array of cultural activities." As the fifth-ranked city in the state of Tennessee, the seventeenth fastest-growing city with a popula-

tion of over 100,000 nationwide, and a per capita income that has increased over the last few years from thirteenth in the state to seventh, Clarksville's community spirit is keeping pace with its brick and mortar. **tn**

Aerial view, north looking south, of Corporate Business Park

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