

Helm's Place: New to Farish Street Historic District

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Jackson Advocate Contributing Writer

Two Jackson churches and a night club owner purchased most of the plighted lots in their community, donated them to a developer, and with prayer their leap of faith will spark renewal for a district holding on at the seams.

"Helm's Place" a new housing development containing 88 two to three story townhouses between Monument and Lamar Street, which can bring 260 new residents to the community, will take applications soon.

"These units are on Monument, Church, Dreyfus, Cohea, Blair, and Lamar Streets," Pastor C.J. Rhodes said smiling.

"At the end of Mayor Harvey Johnson's administration, he approached me about buying vacant lots in the surrounding area and being a part of a housing development," Rhodes recalled.

"Our congregation prayed about being a part of the mayor's urban revitalization plan," Pastor Rhodes recalled. They decided action would be better than inaction.

Pastor Chris Taylor, Christ Temple Church of Christ Holiness U.S.A. on Lamar Street, and Harvey Freelon, Owner, Freelon's Bar & Groove on Mill Street, donated lots to the development too.

This district was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. By then, it was declining. Alamo movie goes chased integrated theatres with more movie choices; the rise of integrated franchises replaced soul food dining; and as mom and pop business owners aged and retired without succession plans their brand went with them.

By the late-90s, the last doctor said goodbye to his patient and went home. In the next decade the clerk at New

Deal bagged grocery for the last customer, and by 2006 the last pharmacist was selling more novelty items than pharmaceuticals.

District renewal promises attracted Freelon's Bar & Groove, James Meredith's building, Frank Jones Corner,

of the 20th century to after the Civil Rights Movement.

During the 1972-73 school year, Tonya Henderson recalled a memorable chance meeting with Muhammad Ali. "When I was in the fifth grade, me and my brother stood in front of the Alamo Theatre and watched a

She feels the 13 acre historic district needs many more occupied buildings to bring the district back to life."

Burke added, "Some people want to see the District packed with entertainment and others want it filled with businesses." She believes it is a burden to

attract a grocery store to the area. New Deal was the last grocery business in the district.

Angelique Lee, sister of Gene (Geno) Lee, II, who owns The Big Apple Inn on Farish Street, said, "I think any new housing downtown will benefit the Big Apple and Jackson.

Memphis and Bourbon Street in New Orleans, and that the buildings should be privately owned like they are in Fondren.

The Big Apple Inn has a location in Fondren on State Street. The Big Apple Inn and Collins Funeral Home maintain other sites outside of the district.

The developers of Helm's Place obtained tax credits to build the townhouses. Building covenants require renters to lease for 15 years before they can become eligible to buy the remainder of the mortgage.

"Homes will rent in the \$500 to \$800 price range. The planners are expected to begin accepting housing applications this fall," Rhodes stated. He is assured people will take pride in their new homes, and he is happy developers will teach renters home ownership values.

"I am pleased people who once lived in the community can afford to return," Rhodes noted.

The Dr. Jessie Mosley Drive was recently expanded. It now connects from Monument Street past the Smith Robertson Museum and the side of Johnny T's Bristro & Blues to Farish Street. Eric Jefferson, Director, City of Jackson Planning & Development, said, "Expanding the street has been in the making for a while."

Dr. Mosley's daughter, Dr. Wilma E. Mosley Clopton, Film Maker, NMHS Unlimited Film Production, said, "It is exciting the city is completing the street which will help make the museum a pivotal part of the historic district."

Mt. Helm Baptist Church will host a banquet this fall and celebrate its 180th year of service.

The district is full of history. Hopefully, the community is making a comeback one house and one building at a time.



Pastor C.J. Rhodes on Church Street (Photos: Meredith C. McGee)

and more recently Johnny T's Bristro & Blues to the district. Classic Printing has been serving customers for over 20 years. Collins and People's Funeral Homes have been in the district for over 70 years. The Big Apple Inn and Dennis Brothers' Shoe Repair have remained on Farish Street for some 76 years, and the *Jackson Advocate* is celebrating its 78th anniversary this month.

The Big Apple Inn has received rave reviews from CNN, is included in the tourist guides; Marshall's Music and Book Store has survived for decades too; but the shoe repair business has suffered with a declining customer base for decades.

Famous blacks from The Brown Bomber to Ike and Tina Turner were frequent visitors in the district from the turn

parade. Muhammad Ali saw me standing there, picked me up, and kissed me on the cheek." Tonya, who lived on W. Oakley Street, went home

minority business investors who lack resources to have to adhere to strict preservation contingencies.

However, Rhodes is

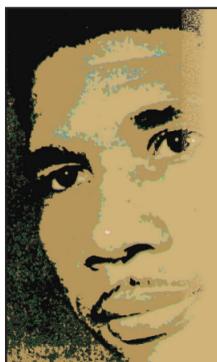


Helm's Place construction

and told her mother Curtisine Artis about the incident, who said enthusiastically, "Girl you just got kissed by a celebrity."

Rowena Burke said, "The Farish Street District is the ELEPHANT in the room."

optimistic the new development will spark progress in the area. He said, "Once these houses are occupied, residential demands will spearhead the revitalization of the area." He assumes the new residents may



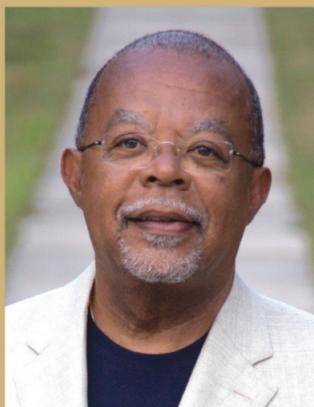
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Medgar Evers

LECTURE SERIES

Henry Louis Gates Jr.

*author
professor
television host*



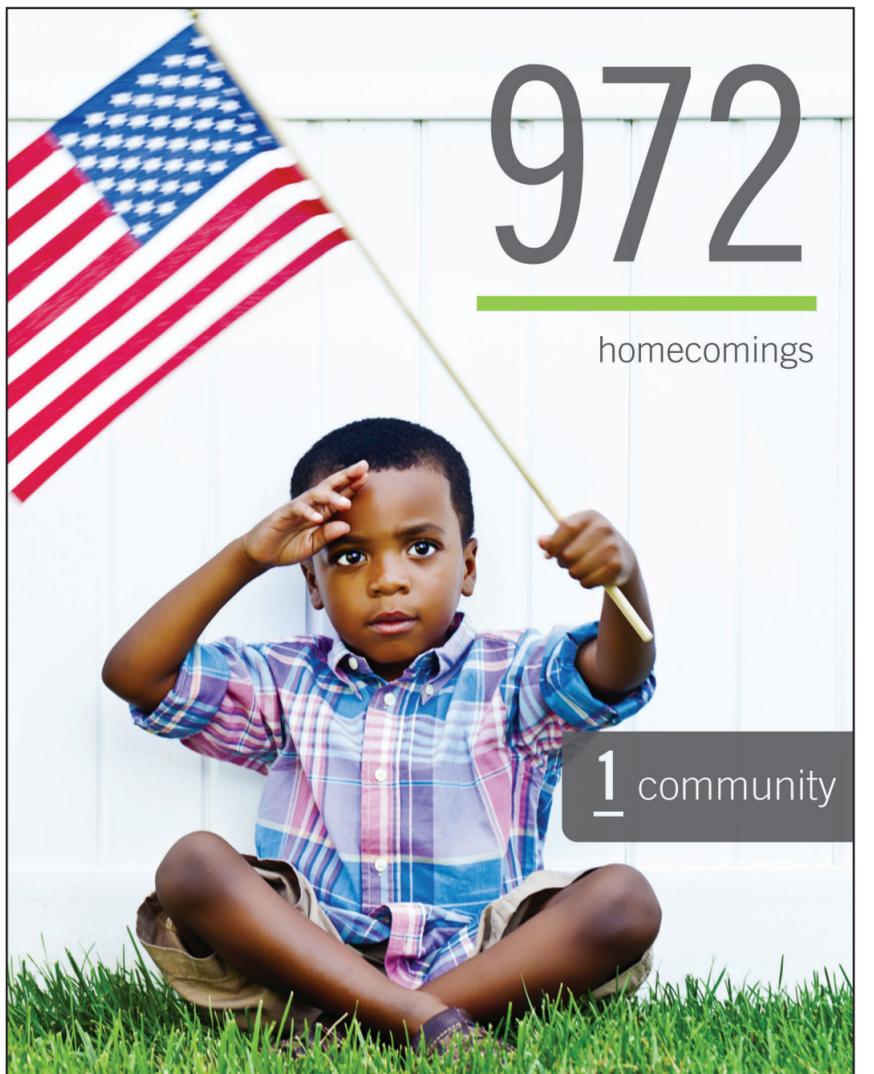
Tuesday, October 13

7PM • FREE

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Congratulations to the *Jackson Advocate* on celebrating 78 years!

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