

Memphis REDi graduates inaugural class of women, minority developers

By [Elle Perry](#).

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Chet Jackson (right) and Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland (left) hand out plaques and certificates during a graduation ceremony Dec. 16 for the inaugural class of the Memphis REDi program, which is aimed at developing more minority and women developers. (Patrick Lantrip/Daily Memphian)

Twenty Memphians gathered Monday, Dec. 16, to present their development proposal for a Binghampton site then graduated in a ceremony at Memphis Bioworks.

It was the conclusion to 14, three-hour sessions that began back on Aug. 19 as part of RegionSmart's first Memphis REDi (real estate diversity initiative) class. The aspiring and active developers, working in teams, each came up with a marketing plan, pro forma analysis and site plan for a hypothetical development in Binghampton.

The Memphis REDi program, which has a goal to increase minority and women developers, involves a real-life case study and a curriculum taught by a volunteer real estate professional faculty.

Memphis REDi is open to anyone interested in learning about real estate development in the city, but preference is given to minority candidates. The first class was composed entirely of women and/or people of color. The program costs \$300 for participants.

Juan Self and Jimmie Tucker, principals of Self+Tucker Architects and Self Tucker Properties LLC, were part of the class.

The latter entity redeveloped the historic Universal Life Insurance building on the corner of Martin Luther King Junior Avenue and Danny Thomas Boulevard.

Self said he and Tucker participated because they're interested in community redevelopment.

"One of the things that inspired me was when (architect and urban planner) Maurice Cox came and spoke at Clayborn Temple last year. One of the things he said was, 'Downtowns are the hearts of cities, but neighborhoods are the souls of the city.' ... I



Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland (right) hands a certificate of completion to Jimmie Tucker during the Dec. 16 REDi graduation ceremony. (Patrick Lantrip/Daily Memphian)

think it's something that the city of Memphis needs, more developers who really have the soul of the city at the top of mind."

Self said he plans to put the knowledge gained from the Memphis REDi experience into practice very soon.

"We have the Universal Life Insurance building, we were able to secure that entire block, so we're planning a new development on the east side of that block," Self said. "We also have property on South Parkway that we're developing, and partnering with other developers in the Orange Mound area, so we're planning to put this to use immediately."

Another participant was Jonathan Nyaku, a certified public accountant.

Nyaku wanted to be able to better advise his real estate clients, he said, adding that he also has an interest in real estate development.

"I think a lot of thought went into selecting the instructors and the panelists that we interacted with," he said. "It didn't seem like it was random, an experiment."

Memphis REDi is a partnership between RegionSmart, ULI (Urban Land Institute) Memphis, the Downtown Memphis Commission, Memphis and Shelby County Division of Planning and Development and the city of Memphis Division of Housing and Community Development.

RegionSmart was founded in 2015 as the convening organization for the Mid-South Mayors Council but has broadened its scope to channel local resources into community-based development projects.

"This REDi class goes a step beyond encouraging minority development through percentage goals," Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland said at the graduation ceremony. "This program is about building capacity and growing the base of local firms operating in the real estate industry to be representative of our community. I think that's an incredible goal."

Anna Holtzclaw, RegionSmart executive director, said the organization sees the REDi class as a way to help build a larger network of developers focused on small-scale developments.

It's not the only RegionSmart initiative. Memphis REDi is part of RegionSmart's Pathways for Developers Program, which includes a team planning simulation called Urban Plan; one-day workshops for aspiring developers; two-day boot camps where participants bring an actual project to be vetted by experienced developers; and more informal networking and mentoring opportunities.

The organization is committed to providing Memphis REDi participants ongoing support, Holtzclaw said.

"We also know that we can start to become a resource when projects become available," she said. "People come to us and we can connect the talent with the projects that need to happen and become a pipeline for that connection, too."

Applications for the next Memphis REDi class will be released in April and be due in May.

TOPICS

MEMPHIS REDi

JUAN SELF

JIMMIE TUCKER

JONATHAN NYAKU

REGIONSMArt



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Elle Perry covers Hickory Hill, Orange Mound, South Memphis and Whitehaven for The Daily Memphian. The Memphis native and two-time University of Memphis graduate has written for publications including The Memphis Business Journal, Memphis Flyer and High Ground News, and previously served as coordinator of The Teen Appeal.
