



Community Spotlight: Memphis-Shelby County

July 2009

Community Resilience Strategy Defined and Activities Underway

Community and resilience are two terms easily recognized in the Memphis-Shelby County area; when the two words are placed together you immediately find the work of the Community and Regional Resilience Institute's (CARRI) Team. In 2007 the CARRI Team embarked on more than a year-long journey across the Memphis-Shelby County area where they performed research and worked with members of the community to learn what makes them resilient. The Team talked with many individuals representing different interests in the community and held community meetings to talk about resilience and begin to identify areas of focus, which, if addressed, might increase the resilience of Memphis and Shelby County. The resulting products of these efforts were a deeper understanding about the history and characteristics of the community, which make it resilient, and the identification of fifteen focus areas for future work. Focus areas ranged from actions that community members, families and businesses could take to be better prepared for disruption - to major structural changes in buildings and the transportation infrastructure that are essential to the vitality of Memphis, Shelby County and the surrounding region. Along on this journey were leaders from organizations in the community, including the Mid-South Association of Contingency Planners; the University of Memphis and its Center for Earthquake Research and Information; the West Tennessee Seismic Safety Commission; Volunteer Mid-South; Shelby County Department of Public Works and Department of Health; Bartlett Chamber of Commerce; and MemphisFirst.

Community leadership is enthusiastic about efforts to strengthen current knowledge and expertise about resilience, and believes that sharing this expertise and learning across the county and region will help to forge new and valuable relationships leading to greater community resilience. In the spring of 2009 the Shelby County Joint Economic and Community Development Board (JECDB) took ownership of the resilience process for the Memphis/Shelby County Area. The Board will oversee and guide the actions necessary to address the fifteen focus areas identified by community members during the prior year's research phase. Among the focus areas identified, plans to accomplish several of the tasks are already underway. One of them, strengthening Small Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery, was initiated early in the summer of 2009. The Bartlett Chamber of Commerce and the Mid-South Association of Contingency Planners are collaborating to begin to address issues surrounding the small business

owners in Bartlett area, and hope to expand that effort to businesses attending the Emergency Preparedness & Incident Conference in September 2009.

Enhancing resilience is a community-driven process and one that will flourish through leadership, outreach and action. As the lead organization guiding the resilience process in Memphis and Shelby County, the JECDB will advance dialogue and collaboration with community and business leaders to further enhance the resilience of the community. To learn more about resilience efforts in the Memphis and Shelby County visit <http://www.resilientus.com/divisions/community-resilience-practice/memphis.html>.