

CITY OF JACKSON

OFFICIAL CITY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2019

HOPE GROWS ON VACANT CITY LOTS



Pictured: YPOP Founder Diane Washington, Chairman Alex Curling & Administrative Assistant Desiree Miller

They were once just empty lots on the city's south side where houses used to stand.

While some may have seen urban emptiness, Diane Washington saw opportunity.

"We've had so many people stop by and tell us that it really looks nice and they appreciate us being here. It's very gratifying," Washington said.

Instead of weeds, tall grass and trash, hope now grows on the two vacant lots at the corner of Maple Avenue and Rockwell Street in the form of flowers, plants and vegetables.

"We are using this for community and neighbor-

hood revitalization, focusing on making beautiful spaces for our community, including youth development, nutrition, gardening, and all those types of things," Washington said.

Washington is the founder and executive director of YPOP, which stands for Young People of Purpose.

She says their goal is to empower youth to succeed through quality educational programming and creative opportunities.

YPOP is comprised of local youth from Kindergarten to 12th grade that participate in free summer and after school programming.

Special educational

sessions are also offered for adults and youth.

Over the past two years, a big part of YPOP's programs have centered around working in gardens on the empty lots.

Washington says while kids are learning hands-on skills through gardening and growing vegetables, she also hopes life lessons will sprout from the lots.

"I want them to learn to appreciate their environment and appreciate something they've been a part of and taking ownership over something they've done," Washington said.

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**NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS
CONNECTING RESIDENTS TO THE CITY**

Staying informed on neighborhood news and getting updates from your City Council representative has been made easier.

City government is bringing itself to residents on a regular basis in the form of neighborhood meetings.

In the past year, meetings for Wards 1, 2, 5 and 6 have been held periodically at community centers and local organizations.

It's an opportunity for residents to speak in person with their representative on City Council, along with learning about City programs, neighborhood

news, and police activity in the area.

At a Second Ward meeting in August at the Boos Community Center, neighbors heard from the Jackson Police Department about crime concerns in the area, along with an update from City officials on efforts to replace lead water service lines.

The meetings are open to all Jackson residents.

Meeting notifications are sent to residents through the City's mass communication system, CodeRED.

They are also promoted on the City's website, Face-



Second Ward meeting at Boos Center in August.

book page, and other social media platforms prior to the meeting.

Second Ward Councilmember Freddie Dancy says the neighborhood meetings help connect him with residents in his ward.

"It's a great opportunity for residents to meet with

me and get a better understanding of what's going on in the community," Dancy said.

To make sure you don't miss a meeting, go to the homepage of the City's website, cityofjackson.org, to sign up for CodeRED.

**INVESTING IN JACKSON
WHERE'S THE MONEY GOING?**

The skyline of Downtown Jackson is undergoing massive changes as several new developments and building renovations take shape.

While some worry this means all of the City's resources are going to the downtown area, new data from the City of Jackson sheds light on where the investment is really going in Jackson.

City staff recently released investment data from 2015 to July 2019.

Since 2015, the City of Jackson has spent more than \$42 million on City in-

frastructure (roads, street lighting, parking lots) and park improvements.

Data shows that 63.5% of the City's spending on infrastructure and parks, which amounts to \$27 million, has gone into neighborhoods all over Jackson.

That's nearly double the investment of the \$15.4 million that's been spent on parks and infrastructure improvements downtown.

There has also been some concern in the community about how much the City is contributing to downtown developments.

Investment data shows



that since 2015, Downtown Jackson has seen nearly \$100 million in private and public investment, with an estimated yearly tax benefit to the City of more than \$538,000.

Governmental investment in downtown developments

from federal, state and local funds only amounts to over \$3.5 million, with \$1.1 million coming directly from the City of Jackson.

That means just 1% of the investment in the resurgence of downtown has come from City funds.



MAYOR

Derek Dobies

COUNCIL

	Ward
Arlene Robinson	1
Freddie Dancy	2
Jeromy Alexander	3
Craig Pappin	4
Kelsey Heck	5
Colleen Sullivan	6

CITY MANAGER

Patrick Burch

MEETINGS & IMPORTANT DATES

Oct. 15 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting

Oct. 29 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting

Tuesday, Nov. 5
November General Election

Monday, Nov. 11
City Hall closed for Veterans Day

Nov. 12 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting

Nov. 26 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting

Thurs. Nov. 28 to Fri. Nov. 29
City Hall closed for Thanksgiving

Dec. 3 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting

Dec. 17 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting

**MAYOR, CITY COUNCIL
RACES TO BE DECIDED IN
NOVEMBER ELECTION
ELECTION DAY IS TUESDAY, NOV. 5**

Voters in the City of Jackson will have a lot to consider in the Nov. 5 General Election.

There will be citywide elections for Mayor and Treasurer, along with three elections for Jackson City Council representatives.

Derek Dobies and Jeromy Alexander are on the ballot for the Mayor's race.

Another citywide election is the City Treasurer position.

Martin Griffin is the only name on the ballot for that race.

Wards 2, 4 and 6 are all having elections for the City Council.

For the Second Ward, Freddie Dancy is the only name on the ballot in that race.

Laura Dwyer Schlecte and Laura Beth Stephens are on the ballot for the council seat in the Fourth Ward. For the Sixth Ward, Colleen



Sullivan and Will Forgrave are on the ballot for that council seat.

Write-in candidates have until Friday, Oct. 25 at 4 p.m. to officially register as a write-in candidate with the City Clerk's Office.

Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day.

Voters in the City of Jackson can find their polling place and learn more about the November election by visiting the Elections page of the City's website, cityofjackson.org.

LEAF PICKUP

With autumn leaves starting to fall, you most likely have a lot of cleaning up to do around your yard.

The City of Jackson is conducting its Bagged Leaf Pick-Up Program from Oct. 26 to Dec. 7 all over Jackson.

On each Saturday during that period, excluding Nov. 30, crews will be out in a different section of the City picking up bagged leaves that are placed curbside.

The bags must be biodegradable



paper leaf bags that can be found at hardware stores.

A detailed schedule and map of pick-up services is being mailed to residents and is available on the City's website, cityofjackson.org.





From the Desk of the Mayor
Derek Dobies

New housing developments are reaching the sky, blank walls are getting bright new murals, and businesses are filling storefronts.

It's an exciting time to be in Jackson as we watch the downtown area return to good health.

As we watch that progress, City officials are also making sure our neighborhoods continue their paths to vitality.

At our meeting on Sept. 17, the Jackson City Council voted to move forward with getting \$2.5 million in bonds to fully renovate the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center.

Road construction in our neighborhoods ramped up this summer, with 16 streets all over Jackson receiving new pavement and substantial infrastructure improvements.

There are also smaller projects that are set to make a big difference.

Projects are planned in both Loomis Park and Exchange Park to provide new and improved lighting around playground areas.

Our City street lights are also seeing improvements.

At our meeting on Sept. 3, the council approved changes to the City's lighting contract with Consumers Energy.

This means energy-efficient and cost-saving LED street lights will soon be burning bright on all our streets.

At the same meeting, the purchase of a new street sweeper was approved to boost our ongoing efforts to insure our streets are clean.

As you can see, there are projects big and small to be excited about.

Making this an exciting time to be in Jackson, no matter what part of the city you live in.

Sincerely,
Derek Dobies

HOPE GROWS: Continued from front page



Photos of YPOP participants courtesy of Diane Washington.

Earlier this year, YPOP finalized the purchases of the vacant lots from the City of Jackson.

"We appreciate the City of Jackson for allowing the residents to use these lots for wonderful purposes," Washington said.

With vacant lots dotting Jackson's landscape, Washington is satisfied her group is doing something positive for the city, and hopes this positivity will spread to other neighborhoods.

"I believe it does make the

city better, and it has made the city better. It's kind of contagious too. When people see something, that might inspire somebody else to do something, and add to their property. We want to make our community better," Washington said.

Washington says YPOP is currently focused on these two lots, but could spread the joy to other vacant lots in the future.

Watch a video version of this story by visiting the City's [YouTube](#) page!

Get the latest news from the City of Jackson



NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP WORKS TO IMPROVE SECOND WARD COMMUNITY

It started in 2008 with six neighbors with a drive to make a difference in their community.

"We just wanted to have our neighborhood safer and build better relationships with the police department," said Carie Meadows, founder of the B2 Watchers Neighborhood Watch.

11 years later, the B2 Watchers have developed into a vigilant neighborhood watch group in Jackson's Second Ward.

"We've grown into the longest running neighborhood watch in the City. We also have about 450 people from our neighborhood on our Facebook page," Meadows said.

The name "B2" comes from a term the Jackson Police Department once used to reference the northeast section of the city north of E. Michigan Avenue.

Organizers of the B2 Watchers say their watch area follows those boundaries set by police.

"We've found that getting neighbors together and working closely with the police department has improved the safety of the neighborhood over the years," Meadows said.

While neighborhood safety remains a top priority, B2 has evolved into an



B2 members Sarah Allison, Laurie Lewis & Carie Meadows pose with the new swing.

active community organization.

The B2 Watchers hold monthly meetings at the Boos Community Center in the summer months, along with organizing neighborhood cleanups and garage sales.

They organize National Night Out in Loomis Park, which is an annual event that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make communities safer.

Earlier this year, the group secured a grant from the Jackson Community Foundation to fund a new parent-child swing for the Loomis Park playground.

They also make daily

connections with neighbors through the B2 Watchers Facebook page.

B2 member Sarah Allison says the Facebook page helps build the neighborhood's identity and has helped form personal connections amongst neighbors.

"I think that it is a good neighborhood feel and it doesn't leave us all isolated," Allison said.

Allison says an important function of the Facebook page is to warn neighbors about neighborhood crime concerns like break-ins or suspicious people.

"We've also had people upload actual video from their security cameras and I really think that helps us all to be aware and to

keep an eye on each other," Allison said.

Laurie Lewis, a B2 member for 10 years, says neighbors in other parts of Jackson should consider organizing neighborhood groups.

She says while it is a lot of work, the results of a safer neighborhood and better relationships with the community benefits everyone.

"I think having an organized group does allow us to have that sense of community. I think the more groups we have in the city, the better off the city will be," Lewis said.

Go to the [Jackson Police Dept. page of cityofjackson.org](#) to learn about starting a neighborhood watch group.

LOCAL POSTAL WORKER RECEIVES HERO AWARD

She's being honored for delivering the gift of life.

United States Postal Service Letter Carrier Martha Olsen was honored at a special event in August where she received the Postmaster General Hero Award.

Olsen, a Jackson resident and letter carrier on the city's southwest side, is being recognized for her donation of a kidney to a woman in Texas.

She was also given a Letter of Recognition from the City of Jackson, presented by Sixth Ward Councilmember Colleen Sullivan.

Olsen decided to become an organ donor after seeing a request for a kidney transplant on Facebook.

The letter carrier says the rewards of helping someone far outweighs the operation and recovery.

"I am also glad to hear that my story is inspiring others to consider organ donation and saving a life," Olsen said.



Councilmember Colleen Sullivan presents Martha Olsen with a Letter of Recognition from the City of Jackson.

IMPROVED DOWNTOWN ALLEY RENAMED FOR WOMAN WHO FOUND FREEDOM IN JACKSON



A revitalized alley in Downtown Jackson has been named for a woman who came to Jackson seeking freedom on the Underground Railroad.

At their meeting on Sept. 3, the Jackson City Council unanimously approved the renaming of Victory Lane on W. Michigan Avenue for Emma Nichols.

The alley is now known as Emma Nichols Garden.

Before the name change, the alley underwent major structural changes due to improvements to neighboring buildings.

It now features a new walking path, landscaping, murals from the recent Bright Walls Mural Festival, and a patio that will be utilized by the new Vertitas restaurant.

An effort to rename the area was launched by City staff to better reflect the improved area.

Emma Nichols was born a slave in Virginia in 1830.

Research indicates she escaped

slavery in Virginia and came to Jackson seeking freedom on the Underground Railroad.

Jackson has been identified as an active stop on the Underground Railroad, with residents aiding escaped slaves.

Nichols and her husband, Richard, made Jackson their home, living in a house on Biddle Street for their remaining years.

She died in 1916 and is buried in Mt. Evergreen Cemetery.

Fifth Ward Councilmember Kelsey Heck says renaming the alley for Nichols reflects Jackson's diversity and promotes inclusivity in our public spaces.

"This renaming honors the bravery and legacy of Nichols and other people who sought freedom in our community. It also honors Jackson residents who assisted the Underground Railroad and helped others achieve freedom," Heck said.

New signage is in the works for the alley to reflect the new name.