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Front porches make good neighbors

Charm is 'eclectic feel,' diversity of the residents

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PHOTO BY EMILY ADAMS KEPLINGER

This sculpture at the corner of Jefferson and McLean adds artistic flair. It is one of several sculptures by local artists Roy Tamboli and Carol Buchman that can be found throughout the area.

Gathering on front porches is a time-honored tradition, especially in the South. And that tradition lives in the tiny jewel of a neighborhood known as Tucker-Jefferson — albeit with a twist — neighbors recently gathered for a "Progressive Porch Party." The intent was to draw neighbors outside to visit with one another, which is certainly nothing new to this social group. The newness of the visit came from moving from house to house as the evening and the courses went along.

Kathy McAllen has lived in Tucker-Jefferson for almost 15 years. She said she was drawn to the eclectic feel of the neighborhood, both in terms of the styles of houses and their inhabitants.

"We have single-family homes and retirement homes, renters and owners, businesses and restaurants — and more lately, art students," explained McAllen.

With about 600 households, including apartment dwellers, in the area bounded by Cooper on the east, McLean on the west, Poplar on the north and Madison on the south, the area is affectionately known by those who live there as "where The Park (Overton Park) meets The Square (Overton Square)." Sculptures by local artists and residents Roy Tamboli and Carol Buchman can be spotted throughout the neighborhood, adding to the artistic flair.

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PHOTO BY EMILY ADAMS KEPLINGER

Photos by Emily Adams Keplinger/The Commercial Appeal The porches on the houses in the Tucker-Jefferson area of Midtown add a distinctive flavor to the neighborhood, as well as encourage neighborly visits.

The Tucker-Jefferson Neighborhood Association is open to all of its residents. The group holds quarterly meetings at one of the area's restaurants, The Bar-B-Q-Shop on Madison, where plans are regularly made for the group. Annual events include participating in National Night Out with front-yard cookouts, caroling at an area nursing home during the holidays, a community yard sale, and meeting for dinner at area restaurants just to socialize.

When asked what they liked about their neighborhood, residents Bryan and Rachel Baddorf both answered, "The walkability of the area." The couple is serving as TJNA co-chairmen this year. Rachel added, "There is such a strong sense of community here. And it is a great place to be able to walk to either the park, the Levitt Shell or Overton Square for entertainment."

Brandon Russell and his family are among the newcomers to Tucker-Jefferson. Besides being friendly and welcoming Brandon says he likes the accessibility of the area. "You can easily hop on Madison to head downtown, or Poplar or Sam Cooper to head out east."

His wife, Lily, says she loves the turn-of-the-century charm of the houses and the big trees, but mostly she likes feeling like she could live in the area without a car.

"We have a world class zoo, an art museum, a city park, a dog park and an entertainment district all within a few blocks of our house. The area is just so family-friendly."

And putting a kid's eye view on the benefits of the area was daughter Jane, 4.

"We have great backyards, and streets filled with nice neighbors. And I really love that we can walk to the zoo.

Oh, and we can walk to Starbuck's, for a treat. I like to

get hot chocolate with whipped cream."

Yep — it seems Tucker-Jefferson does have a little something for everyone.

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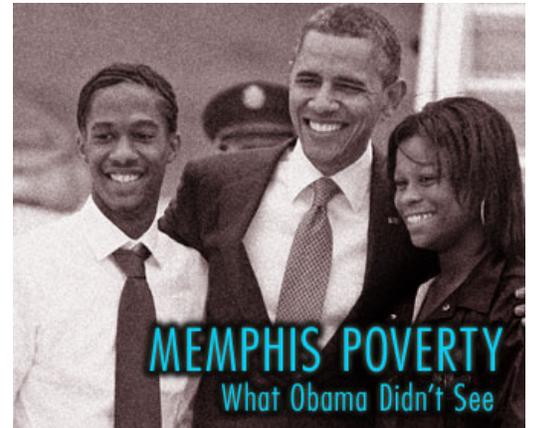
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