

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **Five Years of Progress Celebrated with Memphis Fast Forward Luncheon**

Memphis – May 21, 2012 – The organizations and leaders who have been the driving forces in Memphis Fast Forward will celebrate the success of their five-year agenda at a May 23 community luncheon spotlighting the countywide economic growth plan’s national role in the “collective impact” movement.

“What Memphis Fast Forward proves once and for all is that when we come together as a community and set bold goals, there is nothing we can’t do,” said Memphis Mayor A C Wharton. “I can recall many major community strategic plans that have come and gone when public support wanes and when progress doesn’t come fast enough. Memphis Fast Forward is different. It is an ambitious, comprehensive initiative with staying power and sustained commitment.”

His Shelby County counterpart, Mayor Mark Luttrell said: “When we began, some people questioned whether it could really be done. Those questions have been conclusively answered. An important reason for this success is because the people and organizations involved in Memphis Fast Forward have been willing to work strategically, learn from their mistakes, hold themselves accountable to each other, embrace new partners, and seize new opportunities.”

The mayors co-chair Memphis Fast Forward with Gary Shorb, CEO of Methodist LeBonheur Healthcare, who represents Memphis Tomorrow’s involvement in the effort. He described the five-year economic growth plan as a “a unique coalition of Memphis Shelby County leaders from government, business, nonprofit organizations, grassroots groups, and foundations that agreed our community needed a detailed strategic agenda and a road map to achieve it, and set out to get it done.”

The Memphis Fast Forward luncheon, “Memphis Fast Forward: The Power of Collective Impact,” will be held from noon until 2 p.m., Wednesday, May 23, at the Memphis Hilton Hotel, 939 Ridge Lake Blvd.

The luncheon theme comes from an article from the highly respected *Stanford Social Innovation Review* which named Memphis Fast Forward as a national model for the collective impact movement. The author, John Kania, managing director at FSG, will be keynote speaker. He described Memphis Fast Forward as an example of the highly structured collaborative efforts that have achieved substantial impact on a large-scale challenges.

Other speakers include Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam, Mayor Wharton, Mayor Luttrell, and Shorb. The luncheon will also feature a panel discussion and a video about Memphis Fast Forward’s results.

A few of the accomplishments to be highlighted at the luncheon are:

- Major violent crime down by 22.8%
- Major property crime down by 25.5%
- New mandatory sentencing for gun crimes and aggravated robberies enacted
- Business robberies down by 67.7%, carjackings by 69.5%, and bank robberies by 60.6%
- New anti-blight laws enacted and 500 problem properties lawsuits pursued
- More than 15,000 new jobs created with average wage of \$39,943 annually
- New capital investment of \$4.2 billion
- New minority business receipts of \$576 million
- The Gates Foundation-funded Teacher Effectiveness Initiative and Tennessee’s Race-to-the-Top award placed Memphis on the cutting edge of national K-12 education reform
- Memphis City Schools expanded the number of students in PreK by 50%, from 2,746 to 4,120
- City and county government executed efficiency strategies that saved more than \$75 million

“There are impressive numbers, facts, and figures that illustrate the positive impact of the past five years,” said Blair Taylor, President of Memphis Tomorrow, who oversaw the work of Memphis Fast Forward, “but equally impressive is the new approach, born from this effort, for how a community can successfully address challenges and opportunities. We now know that collaboration and multi-sector partnerships -- when highly organized, inclusive and results oriented -- are powerful vehicles for propelling progress. ”

Memphis Fast Forward has four major initiatives: creating jobs with Memphis ED, making our community safer with Operation Safe Community, producing a better-educated workforce with PeopleFirst, and creating a more efficient local government. Each initiative is backed up by a data-driven plan of action, a scorecard to measure results, a team of engaged players quarterbacking each initiative, and an overall leadership team - the Memphis Fast Forward Steering Committee – that concentrates on leveraging the strengths of diverse people within a disciplined, higher performing, mutually reinforcing collective framework.

Memphis Fast Forward has launched its second five-year plan of action. Along with the four initiatives, it has added a fifth: Healthy Shelby, a program to improve the health and fitness of Shelby County citizens. In addition, for the second phase of Memphis Fast Forward, Memphis ED will become the Memphis Shelby Growth Alliance.

In addition, Memphis Fast Forward will launch its new website, [www.memphisfastforward.com](http://www.memphisfastforward.com), to provide all of its scorecards, news updates, public policy agenda, and detailed information about each initiative.

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