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# Good Morning, East Nashville

Across the Cumberland River, a revitalized neighborhood offers an eclectic atmosphere with loads of charm.



**left:** Many neighborhood residents start their day at Bongo Java Roasting Company's East Nashville location.

**below:** Grocer John Dyke, owner of The Turnip Truck Natural Market, chats with a customer. The store offers local organic produce in season.



PHOTOGRAPHS: ADAM BARNES

**E**ast Nashville feels like a small-town dream.

A copy of *The Tennessean* lies, freshly tossed, on a lawn; a pair of joggers chat as they pass by; and the smell of coffee wafts invitingly. From riverside Shelby Park, Fatherland Street leads like the proverbial yellow brick road into this brightened community.

Bongo Java Roasting Company, packed with locals, sits as a hub to the East Nashville neighborhood. The coffeehouse anchors the five-point intersection where Woodland Street disperses Nashvillians into different pockets on the east side of town.

Lynn Taylor, a home designer, meets her neighbors at Bongo Java several mornings a week. "These people are family to me," she says. "I love that an artist, a plumber, and a lawyer sit at a table and share the paper over coffee."

This neighborhood, once thought of as the eyesore of Music City, has risen. Spend time in its lunch spots, boutiques, art galleries, and grocery store, and a sense of familiarity fills you. As you visit with residents, you pinpoint it: East Nashville is back to how things used to be.

"Here, the front yard is a room," says resident Tim Walker. "There are sidewalks, and they all set up relationships between people."

As local baker Dan Einstein puts it, "It's an old-fashioned neighborhood again."

## Family Ties

John Dyke opened his grocery, The Turnip Truck Natural Market, just as the fuse of revitalization was lit in 2001. In a matter of months, two other businesses—Bongo Java and

**"I love that an artist, a plumber, and a lawyer sit at a table and share the paper over coffee."**

*Lynn Taylor, East Nashville resident*





The architect of The Ryman Auditorium designed and once owned the East Nashville home now occupied by Michael and Christine Kreyling. "This newel post is why we bought the house," says Christine.

the French/Italian eatery Margot Cafe and Bar—opened near Five Points. In the years since, it's been a friendly flow of new businesses.

"Almost everyone here knows everyone," John says. Much of the growth stems from existing mainstays such as his quaint grocery. Before opening the Red Wagon Café, chef Meg Giuffrida catered soup and sandwiches at John's during the week and made Sunday brunch on a camping stove at Bongo Java.

"The neighborhood gets behind someone with a new idea," Meg says of her "global comfort food" restaurant across from the post office. "If I get sick tomorrow, I can call the chef from The Family Wash [a former laundromat turned urban pub] to fill in."

Meg's husband, Paul Burch, a musician who regularly performs at The Family Wash, agrees about the neighborhood's interdependency. "If we need haircuts," he says, "we give the barbers lunches as a trade."

### Ruins to Renaissance

Neighborhood layouts can be designed and constructed, but true renewal requires something special. Dan and Ellen Einstein, owners of Sweet 16th bakery, witnessed a com-



**above, left:** Co-owners Jay Frein and Margot McCormack offer fine dining at Margot Cafe and Bar. **above, right:** The Red Wagon Café usually holds a capacity crowd.



munity reborn after a tornado ripped through East Nashville in 1998.

"The tornado really cemented us into a neighborhood," Dan says. "I remember everyone walking at dusk with flashlights to a meeting with the mayor, and later we helped repair each other's homes."

Resident Christine Kreyling recalls another bonus to the mess. "After the tornado, people finally had the money to do things to their houses," she says.

Christine's home, an Eastlake Victorian built in 1885, sits on a corner lot on Holly Street and is surrounded for blocks by wonderfully crafted houses. Romanesque Revivals, Craftsman bungalows, and even a patch of Spanish mission homes reside up and down the streets and avenues. Some wear fresh coats of bright paint; others patiently wait for renovation.

As Lynn Taylor points out, "It's like a fever. Once a house gets renovated, it catches on."





above, left: Neighbors Sarah and Tony Earley (left) and Jud Adams (right) help artist Herb Williams at a crayon-cutting party. above, right: After clipping the crayons with cigar cutters, Herb carefully applies them to the life-size dog piece he is creating.



Dan and Ellen Einstein own and operate Sweet 16th, a neighborhood bakery in East Nashville.

### A Peek Inside

A few years ago, artist Herb Williams and his wife, Amy, moved onto Fatherland Street, next door to author Tony Earley and his wife, Sarah. The couples have formed the kind of close friendship that springs up all over this neighborhood.

Herb didn't have to look more than a few feet away for helping hands to assist him with a massive sculpture project involving tens of thousands of crayons. "Once a week, we had crayon parties," Herb says. "Everyone sat around the table, cutting the crayons and gluing. It's a great way to spend time." He adds, "Sarah knocked out about 3,000."

Inside the Earley home, a piece of artwork hangs over the mantel. A

Herb Williams original, the three-dimensional assemblage showcases the old Holly Street Fire Hall, a neighborhood structure built in 1914. The display emphasizes, once again, the connectedness and charm of East Nashville.

Something special exists among the streets leading east out of down-

town over the winding Cumberland River and past Shelby Park. If you listen closely, you can even hear it. "I open my window to hear the sounds of the neighborhood," Christine confides. "A church choir on Sunday morning, a football practice in the afternoon—it's all a part of the week."

TAYLOR BRUCE

## A New School of Thought

East Academy began in 2000 with only a few students and one teacher. Today, the private kindergarten-through-sixth-grade, multiple-intelligence school in East Nashville educates 120 children and works closely with the neighborhood. "We've had a grandparents' brunch at the Rose Pepper Cantina and a fund-raiser in the Plowhouse Art Gallery," says Heidi Saunders, founding teacher. These kids live up to the school's motto: "Reflect our community with joy."