Meet Abby Sheridan, the recently hired COO of the Memphis Medical District Collaborative (MMDC), admits that her knowledge of Memphis was limited. She had not been to the city before she applied for the job.

Sheridan grew up in Maine and spent the past 16 years at the Congress for the New Urbanism in Chicago. She officially started at MMDC last week.

"I likened [Memphis] to that smaller city, where everyone seems to know each other to some extent or knows the person that knows the person. So, it’s really easy to get connected and involved," she said. "And, it seemed to me like there"
were a lot of people that were passionate about making Memphis a better place and improving the reputation that maybe is a little rough at times or misunderstood."

Sheridan said that the MMDC will release its strategic plan soon — an outline of the next five years.

Sheridan is a runner and sees her new role through that lens.

"We've been running a full out sprint, 100-meter dash," she said of the MMDC. "Maybe we need to step back to like a 5K pace, slowing down just a little bit, and get a few more things standardized and written down on paper."

She said she sees a lot of opportunity for growth. One focus is on public spaces and street improvements.

"How individuals interact with the built environment is really vital," she said. "I put it in three buckets — like our community economic development work is also commercial. And, a lot of work that we're doing with our anchor institutions [is] around the higher end of 'buy local' and supporting our local businesses — all the kind of grants and incentive programs that we've been able to develop to help support those local individuals and businesses. Then, the real estate piece is the other one that's kind of that trifecta. I finally had a chance to sit in on our monthly [meeting] on incentives, where we're reviewing the applications for pre-development work and facade work. So, to start to see those things translate into real tangible work is exciting."

A big advocate of walking and biking, Sheridan said she is looking into infrastructure improvements in the Medical District.
Sheridan replaces Abby Miller, who was VP of the MMDC. Miller has moved to Atlanta to work with the Carter Center. When interviewing for the job, Sheridan met with MMDC president Tommy Pacello, who passed away in November.

"Tommy leaves tremendous shoes to fill, and I don't intend to even attempt to do that. [I want to] continue the work in his honor," she said. "I think he and Abby really pushed this organization to grow and achieve so much in such a short amount of time."

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