

Businesses Along the Greenway: NOLA Paddleboards and Bayou Kayaks

Excited for the forthcoming bike trail and pedestrian access points, businesses along the Lafitte Corridor Greenway are ready for increased local and tourist traffic. At Bayou St. John, the enthusiasm is shared by more than business owners located along the bayou, but also by owners who consider their business' home base to be more than along the bayou, but on the bayou.

Recreational business owners Jeff Lakey of [NOLA Paddleboards](#) and Rhonda Ardoin of [Bayou Kayaks](#) are two such local entrepreneurs who call the waters of Bayou St. John their unofficial company headquarters.

Lakey, a New Orleans resident and outdoor enthusiast, began his paddleboard business in April 2011. Through NOLA Paddleboards he offers guided lessons, paddleboard rentals, and fitness and yoga paddle classes to the everyday adventurer in all of us. Paddleboarding on the bayou is great, he says, because it allows for “a new view of the city that lets people explore what has been an under-utilized section of New Orleans [Bayou St. John].”



Paddleboarding has gained quite a following in recent years due to its versatility and accessibility. The hard-core sports enthusiast can paddleboard for a heart-racing workout while the leisurely nature-lover can progress slowly, taking in the sights and sounds of their surroundings. Easy to learn, especially under Lakey's professional guidance, paddleboarding “is a fun way to showcase the bayou as a community resource and special gem” unique to our city, he states. And the arrival of the Greenway can only be a good thing for his business as it “adds exposure and helps the bayou blossom.”

Bayou Kayaks owner Rhonda Ardoin agrees. A New Orleans resident since 2005, she recognized the potential for the waterways unique to our urban-scape. Hoping to highlight the bayou and showcase another side of the city, she began her kayak rental business in May 2011 to “bring kayaking to Bayou St. John, Mid-City, and the people of New Orleans.” Calling the banks of the bayou her storefront, Ardoin commits to “keeping it beautiful by sponsoring regular bayou clean-ups.”



She is happy to provide a service that allows residents and visitors to enjoy the outdoors from the under-explored vantage point of Bayou St. John’s gentle waters, saying “We don’t use the bayou like we should, so I am glad I can offer the equipment to people who otherwise might not be able to experience kayaking or the bayou.” For Ardoin, it’s about “getting people out there” to put watersports like kayaking and paddleboarding on the level of running and biking.

Ardoin is eager for the arrival of the Greenway, seeing it as another way of ‘getting people out there’ and increasing the accessibility of the sports upon the waters she holds so dear. Ardoin anticipates the bike path will help revitalize a seemingly forgotten part of the city, augment “the outdoor-activity population, and help draw people to her business” on the bayou.

Excited for the Lafitte Corridor to maximize their business’ visibility and provide an influx of community members and visitors alike, both Lakey and Ardoin look forward to sharing their love for recreation and the outdoors with more customers looking to experience the city of New Orleans from a fresh perspective along the Greenway- afloat upon the waters of Bayou St. John.