

dedicated to research, education, and advocacy that promote the wise stewardship of the urban built environment and local economies

Iberville: Learning from St. Thomas

New Orleans is a city of growth and decay. Changes in the overall characteristics of neighborhoods, whether revitalizing or declining, tend to move gradually from one part of the city to another. The need to invest in infrastructure improvement, home renovations, and neighborhood beautification is a near constant imperative, which if delayed too long results in ever more costly remediation projects or the appearance that it would just be easier to demolish and rebuild.

You would be hard pressed to find anyone that would refute the condition of New Orleans major Public Housing sites constitute just such a state of neglect and deterioration. For decades, mismanagement and ineptitude within the Housing Authority of New Orleans combined with dysfunctional public education and lack of robust opportunities in employment, creating a situation in which the need for public housing was growing even as availability declined. Since the 1980s, the number of public housing units operated by HANO has dropped from nearly 14,000 to 6,000 housing units, less than half the number currently authorized. Given the massive reduction in public housing units available in the city, and the tremendous unfilled need for affordable housing, it is irresponsible and unconscionable to eliminate existing housing capacity.

Today's plans for capital investment and upkeep in New Orleans Public Housing reflect tough choices and inevitable hardships in the context of financial shortfall. Decisions are being made as to whether partial renovations, major redevelopment, or demolition are most appropriate for each of the major Public Housing sites. In all cases, the necessary remedial actions are presented against seemingly irreconcilable costs, setting up severe tradeoffs between attention to some at the expense of the others.

In these considerations, it seems little attention is given to the fundamental obligations inherent in public housing, that is, provision of affordable residences for the people of New Orleans that are most vulnerable and on the edge. Instead, quiet discussions are occurring that would allow developers to transform the historic buildings at Iberville and elsewhere to follow the model of the destroyed St. Thomas. While the mixed income model at St. Thomas has superficial

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StayLocal News: Audrey is Here!

I'd like to introduce myself to the Urban Conservancy community as the new Stay Local! program coordinator and tell you a little about our plans for the program in the near future. As many of you know, Stay Local! is a city-wide program of the Urban Conservancy to support a strong economy based on locally owned and operated business. Stay Local! encourages consumers to shop locally while helping independent businesses compete more effectively.

The next project coming up for Stay Local! is developing a directory of local independent businesses to empower consumers to actively seek out and support locally owned and operated New Orleans businesses. Over the next few months, we will be working on a new website that will incorporate a searchable database of local independent businesses. We will also publish a hard copy of this directory


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appeal from a certain standpoint, lack of candor in the planning process and an absolute failure to diligently look after the well-being of former residents is a serious flaw to this approach.

Canal Street is being targeted by the city and developers for a district level redevelopment, but there is reason for serious concern that these plans involve expelling a large number of the area's poor residents. It is not appropriate to destroy housing in Iberville for the purpose of providing a buffer for the wealthy tenants of newly built condominiums.

Moreover, appropriation of public housing units for market rate sale under the mixed income model must be called for what it is... a land grab.

Over the coming months, the Urban Conservancy will revisit the issues of public housing and consider recent historical trends and the change dynamics currently and in the near future. 

Top Ten Reasons to Shop Local!

PROTECT LOCAL CHARACTER AND PROSPERITY

New Orleans is unlike any other city in the world. By choosing to support locally owned businesses you help maintain New Orleans' diversity and distinctive flavor.

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Locally owned businesses build strong neighborhoods by sustaining communities, linking neighbors, and by contributing to local causes.

LOCAL DECISION MAKING

Local ownership means that important decisions are made locally by people who live in the community and who feel the impacts of those decisions.

KEEPING DOLLARS IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Your dollars spent in locally owned businesses have three times the impact on your community as dollars spent in national chains. When shopping locally, you simultaneously create jobs, fund more city services through local sales tax, invest in neighborhood improvement and promote community development.

JOBS AND WAGES

Locally owned businesses create more jobs locally and, in some sectors, provide better wages and benefits than chains do.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship fuels America's economic innovation and prosperity, and serves as a key means for families to move out of low-wage jobs and into the middle class.

PUBLIC BENEFITS AND COSTS

Local stores in town centers require comparatively little infrastructure and make more efficient use of public services relative to big box stores and strip shopping malls. Local stores help to sustain vibrant compact, walkable town centers—which in turn are essential to reducing sprawl, automobile use, habitat loss, and air and water pollution.

COMPETITION

A marketplace of tens of thousands of small businesses is the best way to ensure innovation and low prices over the long-term.

PRODUCT DIVERSITY

A multitude of small businesses, each selecting products based not on a national sales plan but on their own interests and the needs of their local customers, guarantees a much broader range of product choices.

*Adapted from the work of Stacy Mitchell at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance.
www.hometownadvantage.org*

Forest Bradley-Wright Joins The Urban Conservancy

As the new program coordinator for the Urban Conservancy, I thought I might take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Forest Bradley-Wright. A native of Eugene, Oregon, I was raised believing that community self-determination is a fundamental right, but a right that must be fought for--sometimes at tremendous odds.

Social and environmental considerations are central features in my understanding of complex development issues. Aligning my core values with academic and professional pursuits, I am a sustainable development advocate, working towards initiatives that benefit communities, the environment, and enhance long-term quality of life.

Through my professional work to date, I have always emphasized collaboration and innovation, targeting accessible opportunities while seeking actions that produce discernable impacts. I will continue this approach in my role with the Urban Conservancy while drawing on my interdisciplinary academic experience in urban planning issues, environmental law, international development, and tourism. At present I am completing my masters thesis on sustainable development as part of a graduate degree in Latin American Studies at Tulane University.

After years exploring New Orleans' unique cultural landscape, I have also become increasingly engaged in the New Orleans community organization arena. Presently, I am working with Mid-city residents to build a platform for community driven influence in response to the planned closure of Whole Foods Market on Esplanade. Additionally I am an active advisor for the Alliance for Affordable Energy's newly formed Energy Corp., which strives to improve the energy efficiency of local businesses in the New Orleans area. Meanwhile, I continue to immerse myself in the efforts of a wide variety of local groups as I strive to develop an integrated understanding of the Urban Conservancy's role within this broader context. To this end, I have been in consultation with local community leaders regarding existing needs

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The Challenges of Sustainability

All progressive organizations, especially those working at the grassroots level, must meet the challenge of sustainability. The financial component is an important part of the sustainability challenge, but not the only part. Progressive organizations face challenges maintaining programmatic and organizational viability as well. When we formed the Urban Conservancy in 2001, we envisioned an organization that would have relevance and meaning far beyond big box battles and zoning controversies. We saw the need for an organization that would democratize the understanding of what makes the neighborhoods and communities of New Orleans so special and brings the best lessons from anywhere on the planet that relate to community building, local control and sustainable economics.

The fact that we have been able to keep the lights on at the Urban Conservancy due to our generous donors is a validation that many people, in New Orleans and elsewhere share a hope in the future of communities and that we can create "Great, Good Places" everywhere. It is the belief that every community has assets to be leveraged for the benefit of its residents. At the same time, we face a challenging future in our own backyards and in our wider world to maintain local control of our communities, to care for our underserved and to stave off the culture of fear and greed that leads to short sighted decisions.

The Urban Conservancy has to take the step into this new future by expanding its work and increasing the pace of its activity. The Urban Conservancy has been a "think tank," researching and educating people on issues of relevance to communities. We hope our new team members help us take more projects into action and into more communities. Our technological focus has allowed us to reach many people in an efficient and economical fashion, but we also know that community building has to cross the "digital divide." All revolutions are at arm's length. A progressive agenda is still most solidly built by face to face, person to person communication. Our greatest strength at this point is our new staff members. They help us maintain momentum and add consistency to our work. They help us identify new approaches and complement our existing strengths. They help us cover territory it was not humanly possible for us to cover in the past, especially when as an all volunteer organization, we still had all of the responsibilities that everyone else does – working

and maintaining relationships with family and friends, on top of this very rewarding work with the Urban Conservancy.

It is sometimes very difficult for the founders of organizations to relinquish control over something they have nurtured and built. However, any business or organization can only go so far without new talents and thinking. For the Urban Conservancy, the time to grow is now. We are thankful to everyone who has helped us add talented people to our team. We



Visual Lies...Unplug the TV


also have a request. It requires deliberate effort to create the world we want to live in. If you feel this endeavor is worth growing, we hope you will consider joining the Urban Conservancy. If you are already a member, we hope you will consider making an extra contribution to help the Urban Conservancy take its work to a new level. This time is one of opportunity and risk in our communities. Your support for the Urban Conservancy helps strengthen one small part of the solution.

www.urbanconservancy.org/support

www.urbanconservancy.org/membership

UC on Your TV

Dispatch from the City
Every Friday 9:30am and 9:30pm
Orleans Parish Cable Channel 77

UC on Your TV: For those of you who were not able to attend the premier showing of Unbroken Line of History: Faubourg Marigny, there is still a chance to catch it. The Urban Conservancy's TV show, "Dispatch from the City" will be showing it this month on Friday night at 9:30 PM on Orleans Parish Cable Access Channel 77 

Take It Online

The Urban Conservancy supports democratic control of neighborhoods by their residents. A critical part of democracy is the open sharing of information. The Internet is a part of that communication process and can be a way of quickly and inexpensively sharing information related to your neighborhood.

The Urban Conservancy has learned a number of lessons from our website and e-mail list which received the Gambit award for Best Activist Use of the Internet in 2002. Now we want to share that knowledge with neighborhood groups and other organizations throughout the city for a price that is more economical than almost anywhere else. Learn More: Call us at 504-566-0330 or visit: www.ucno.org/training

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and learning ways in which the Urban Conservancy can coordinate projects.

Having lived in New Orleans for over 8 years now, I am honored to be helping spearhead community self-determination in the city I love. I look forward to working with you all over the course of the coming year.

Forest-Bradley Wright
Program Coordinator



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regularly and distribute it widely throughout New Orleans, so that you will be able to find your local computer technician even when the internet goes down. If you are a locally owned and operated business, you can sign up for a free listing in the directory today at www.staylocal.org/add_your_business.html.

From now until the launch of the new website, we are offering a special Stay Local! membership package to reward those who are willing to invest early in our new Stay Local! directory. Businesses who become members now will receive an extra year of membership perks, including an enhanced listing in the online and paper directories, and permanent acknowledgement as a "Founding Member". Memberships are \$100 (or \$200 for businesses grossing more than \$300,000/yr) and can be purchased online at www.staylocal.org/join.html.

I am thrilled to be working on the Stay Local! program at such an important time in this city's history. I can't wait to talk with local business owners and shoppers about your experiences running businesses and spending money in New Orleans' local economy.

Audrey Warren, Program Coordinator, StayLocal!



Audrey Warren, left, Stay Local's newest coordinator

The StayLocal! program encourages supporting our locally-owned and managed businesses.

We would like to thank the following people, businesses, and organizations for supporting StayLocal!

Founding Member Businesses:

AIDAN GILL FOR MEN
CAFE ROSE NICAUD
CYBERSPACE CENTRAL COMPUTER CONSULTANTS
THE DARKROOM
GRAFFITI GRAPHICS
HAASE'S
LAKESIDE CAMERA
PERLIS

Founding Supporters:

KEITH HARDIE
MID-CITY NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION

join us. MEMBERS RECEIVE: SUBSCRIPTION TO BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER • COPIES OF ALL REPORTS AND ANALYSES ISSUED BY THE URBAN CONSERVANCY • INVITATIONS TO URBAN CONSERVANCY BRIEFINGS AND EVENTS • A VOICE IN SHAPING THE URBAN CONSERVANCY'S RESEARCH PROGRAM AND PRIORITIES.

Name

Address

City..... State Zip

E-Mail Phone

Individual Membership \$35 Household Membership \$60

Discounted and No-Charge Memberships Available. Contact Barter@ucno.org

additional information
WWW.URBANCONSERVANCY.ORG OR 504.566.0330

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