

# Mid-City Recovery Plan: ADDENDUM

December 7, 2006

**Addendum** to the “**Mid-City Neighborhood Planning District 4 Rebuilding Plan**” compiled by Lambert and Associates and Presented to the New Orleans City Council on October 25th, 2006.

## **General Comment:**

The residents of Mid-City New Orleans who have been participating in the Mid-City Recovery Planning Meetings and working hard to rebuild their neighborhood ask that the following “Addendum” be read in conjunction with the Lambert Plan.

We view the planning process for our neighborhood as an ongoing effort including not only post-Katrina recovery but also a longer-term vision. Specifically, we believe in an ongoing commitment to citizen-based planning and the establishment of a comprehensive New Orleans land use plan with the force of law.

We commend the Lambert Group for the work they have done in laying out recovery projects for Mid-City. This addendum adds to the Lambert Plan our perspective for Mid-City's growth beyond recovery. It also outlines our certain concerns we have with the Lambert plan; edits the Lambert funding matrix, and finally lists factual and typographical errors.

We would like to thank Lambert and Associates in general, and Clifton James and Steve Dominick in particular, for their hard work on the Mid-City plan. Dr. Jacob Wagner and Dr. Michael Frisch of the University of Missouri-Kansas City reviewed the plan and their input was very valuable. We would also like to thank Father Walter Baer for allowing us to meet every Monday night at Grace Episcopal Church since May of 2006 to join with our neighbors in planning for the future of our neighborhood.

*NOTE: We recommend that Mid-City's own ongoing recovery plan be read along with this document. It can be found at: [http://thinknola.com/wiki/Mid-City\\_Recovery\\_Plan](http://thinknola.com/wiki/Mid-City_Recovery_Plan)*

## Major Concerns

**1. Local Control.** We believe that increased self-governance is crucial to our recovery. Community oversight of the rebuilding process will be vital. The Lambert plan makes brief mention of the formation of Neighborhood Planning Units but more detail is needed. The Mid-City Recovery Plan outlines this important concern as follows:

If the recovery of New Orleans is to be successful, it is critical that every neighborhood be involved as a full partner. The traditional model of top-down governance should be decentralized in a way that gives the local community a formal and meaningful role in decisions.

Community input into the recovery plan is a start but it must be extended to include implementation decisions as well as ongoing post-recovery planning.

To this end, we recommend the formation of Neighborhood Councils, similar to those in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Missoula, Montana and many other communities. These Neighborhood Councils must have a legal basis under State law, the City Charter, and City ordinances. Each Neighborhood Council would represent one of the 100 plus neighborhoods in New Orleans.

We endorse the recommendations of the Bureau of Governmental Research ([BGR Report](#)) to amend the City Charter to give the Master Plan the force of law and to include neighborhood organizations in the required approval process for land use proposals. We request the immediate adoption by the City Council of interim ordinances to implement the BGR recommendations, including a formal system of participation by Neighborhood Councils in land use decisions.

However, we believe that neighborhoods are equally affected by operational decisions that impact housing, streets, parks, police, schooling, sanitation, drainage, budgeting, regulatory review, and other issues. Therefore, we also request that the City Council establish a committee of neighborhood organization representatives supported by City staff to propose a City Charter amendment to define the role of Neighborhood Councils in reviewing strategic operational decisions by City agencies. This committee should recommend an amendment to the City Council within four months.

We need increased neighborhood capacity to review planning and design, and we urge the City Council to adopt the City of New Orleans Planning Commission Land Use Plan. Residents are attracted to Mid-City because of its historic yet affordable character. However, there are conflicts emerging around the impact of large-scale land uses on historic commercial districts and residential areas, such as the growth of “big box” type commercial buildings on N. Carrollton Ave. Forming a Neighborhood Planning Council is essential - one that has direct input into the planning and development of our Mid-City neighborhood.

**2. Housing.** We need to develop a targeted homeownership program for Mid-City. In 1990, 26% of Mid-City houses were occupied by homeowners according to the U.S. Census, and this increased to 30% in 2000. We would like this trend to continue. Additionally we should establish a Mid-City Redevelopment Corporation, or at the very least, demand that the handling of properties that go to the LRA or any other recovery authority be handled by a local, neighborhood level agency. Mid-City needs support for the preservation and renovation of existing historic residential structures. Existing programs that encourage renters to return to New Orleans and become homeowners in the renovated historic neighborhoods such as Mid-City should be fully funded by the LRA, CDBG, and other public agencies.

**3. Public Library.** The Lambert plan correctly identifies our community's need for a public library/community center (p. 21). The Lambert Plan suggests that this be located at the lot adjacent to Warren Easton High School (formerly Physician's Hospital). Geraldine Harris, the chief librarian for the New Orleans Public Library, has stated that the library board very much supports a new branch in Mid-City, however, she said it would have to be in Council District A. We have secured a grant to put a temporary branch in Mid-City, likely at the Mid-City Center in Council District A (330 N. Carrollton Ave), which should operate for three years. During this time we would like to find an appropriate location and build/renovate so that we can have a permanent branch of a public library and an excellent community center to serve as a cornerstone for our neighborhood.

**4. “Midtown New Orleans” and Local Business Development.** The proposed development of the large transportation hub called “Midtown New Orleans” in the Lambert plan is intriguing, but this idea has not gained the support of the community. This is a proposal of Lambert, not Mid-City. It may be a good idea, but the community needs to have control over if and how it proceeds. The impact of the Mid-Town High Density development is unknown and poorly outlined in the plan. Its scale appears to be inconsistent with the neighborhood. We also are concerned that this plan encourages suburban style “big box” national chains to locate in Mid-City without a clear understanding of their impact on local businesses and on our neighborhood's character. While the Lambert Plan contends that commercial development at Mid-Town would prevent the leakage of retail sales revenue to Jefferson Parish (p. 23), we believe it will undermine locally owned businesses and send the bulk of revenues to out-of-state national chains. The Lambert plan says we should support small business development while at the same time supporting large-scale commercial development. We need additional information on how this balance is to be achieved and increased neighborhood input into Midtown project plans.

**5. Parking on Jeff Davis:** In discussing the redevelopment of Comisky Park, Lambert’s plan mentions “open parking along the Jeff Davis corridor” (p. 18). This specific proposal was rejected by the community and should be removed from the plan. We would like to keep the Jefferson Davis neutral ground as a neutral ground/park, and do not want to use this space or any other neutral ground in Mid-City as a parking lot.

**6. Health Care.** The Lindy Boggs site should be studied to determine if it can be used as a medical complex. The restoration of the Lindy Boggs complex to commerce is an important element to the neighborhood’s revitalization. If Lindy Boggs cannot open as a hospital, we believe it would be a good site for housing a comprehensive senior services center. This complex should not only house seniors but provide a geriatric clinic, senior community center, senior daycare services and be affordable to all either through government funding or subsidized means-based programs. A complex such as this would be unique to Mid-City and would assist seniors throughout the city.

**7. Economic Development:** In general, the Lambert plan utilized a draft version of the Economic Development Committee’s work; thus it needs to be updated to reflect several specific recovery projects.

- Develop a knowledge-based business incubator for Mid-City. This business incubator will focus on small businesses, which then provide good, quality jobs with little to no commute for area residents. A business incubator can further support a smart mix of retail and non-retail businesses, and ultimately help ensure appropriate density in the commercial zones. A feasibility study is needed to begin work on this project.
- Modify existing vacant commercial space as appropriate into mixed-use, combining residential and commercial use. A successful example is the American Can Company, although the commercial use does not have to be retail in nature.
- Focus redevelopment of the Carrollton Avenue commercial corridor on walkability, with street-side storefronts, and rear parking, in line with the existing Carrollton Avenue Design Overlay. Architectural design of these businesses should be in line with the historical architecture of the neighborhood. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve a “Main Street” feeling, and to populate this area with locally-owned and operated retail businesses. An example of how we would like this area to look and feel can be seen on Magazine Street, particularly between Nashville and Jefferson Avenues, but with improved parking.
- Create an online business reference center that can match available properties and current property owners with interested businesses, and provide needed reference materials to those thinking of opening new businesses in the area. This forum could also be used to facilitate business partnerships with business owners, local banks and needed professionals such as notaries, lawyers, etc.
- Assure the return of the Endymion parade to Mid-City, and encourage the return of the Krewe of Mid-City and possibly other parades.

## Minor Concerns

**1. Bike Paths.** The description of the Jeff Davis neutral ground on page 9 should make mention of the bike path which is the only such path in the central part of the city. The description of improvements to street signage and way-finding (p. 15) should include the Jeff Davis bike path. The enhancement of the Jeff Davis neutral ground (p. 22) should include improvement of the bike path. The description of the Lafitte Rail Corridor (p. 10) makes mention of its infrequent use. It should be emphasized that most of the corridor is not used at all, and most of the rails have already been removed. Securing a servitude for the Lafitte Linear Park is a neighborhood priority.

**2. Recycling.** Restoration of ordinary public services (p. 17 and p. 21) should specifically include recycling.

**3. Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.** The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance already has the force of law, so there is no need to recommend its adoption (p. 21). We believe that enforcement is the issue rather than adoption.

**4. Other Health Concerns.** To increase health and wellness, we need a free and open walking and fitness circuit, as well as an exercise facility and full-fledged fitness center. We need a pharmacy drug store, expansion of school based clinics, Community Care Clinics, a wellness center. We also need increased emphasis on good nutrition in our homes and schools and believe that an open air farmer's market would further this goal.

**5. New Architectural Forms.** We should add the following to page 11 paragraph 8. "new structures should be in scale with the surrounding conforming uses and should be consistent with a street-front, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood. We believe that new architectural forms reflecting 21<sup>st</sup> century culture should be a part of Mid-City's growth, however these forms should not clash with the historic motifs which give our neighborhood its distinctive architectural character."

**6. Affordable Housing Set-Asides and Homeownership.** The Lambert Plan does not mention appropriate minimums and maximum limits for affordable housing set asides. Enforcement of such guidelines is critical to create true mixed-income development and to avoid creating concentrated pockets of poverty. Also, on p. 26 the bullet item to "sell adjacent lots and blocks of lots in public ownership to experienced for-profit and non-profit developers" appears to be inconsistent with our call for higher home ownership in neighborhood appropriate housing units.

**7. Hispanic Owned and Oriented Business.** Prior to Katrina, Mid-City had a higher than average Hispanic population (10%) for a New Orleans neighborhood. There were also several businesses that served the Spanish-speaking population, especially around Tulane Avenue and Carrollton. We would like to plan for the presence of the Hispanic community in our neighborhood plan and would like to encourage growth of small locally owned businesses that serve a growing Latino population.

**8. Mardi Gras Parade Routes.** Endymion, Mid-City, and other interested krewes need to return to the Mid-City parade route. This will boost local business revenues and give a greater sense of community to the residents of Mid-City.

## Revisions to the “Funding Matrix”

Projects & Phase	Critical (1) Needed (2) Desired (3)	Notes and changes from Lambert plan
<b>Early Action Plan</b>		
<b>Capital Projects</b>		
Restore and improve underground utilities	1	
Repair streets, sidewalks, traffic signals/signs, street lights, and replace missing drain, manhole, catch basin and water meter covers	1	
Add trees and benches to the area by Bayou St. John near the post office.	1	
New Public Library/community center	1	We added “community center”
Study the Development of a Mid-City Community Health Care Clinic with a Senior Housing & Medical Care Complex at Lindy Boggs site or site nearby (cost only)	1	reversed “Care Health” to “Health Care”
Secure servitude for linear park	1	referenced in Mid-Term Plan
Secure land formerly known as Physician’s Hospital adjacent to Warren Easton High School for use as a community center.	1	referenced in Long-Term Plan. Alternatively, purchase the land for Warren Easton for their future use as an athletic field similar to Jesuit’s.
Secure Albertson’s and YMCA for use as a revitalized playground, community center and indoor sports complex	1	we added this to matrix
Study construction of internal flood protection levees	1	This was a “Long Term Plan” in Lambert, we moved it up to “Early Action Plan.”
<b>Recurring Operations</b>		
Remove debris and hazardous substances once a week in every neighborhood	1	
Restore and improve postal and city services	1	
<b>Housing Initiatives and Other Policies</b>		
Aggressively protect Mid-City’s historic and architectural character through institution of a neighborhood-based Historic Landmark Commission, and protect and improve its quality of life, including the walkability of the neighborhood	1	Changed from “Aggressively protect Mid-City’s historic and architectural character and protect and improve its quality of life”
Urge City Council to adopt the City of New Orleans Planning Commission Land Use Plan	1	
Urge the formation of Neighborhood Councils such that recovery and plan implementation can be lead by the neighborhood.	1	Not in Lambert financial matrix, but part of our efforts to increase self-governance.
Rehabilitate damaged & blighted housing structures	1	This was part of the “Long Term Plan” in Lambert.
Restore pre-Katrina public transportation options	1	This was not in Lambert Matrix.
<b>Mid Term Plan</b>		
<b>Capital Projects</b>		
Turn former Norfolk-Southern railroad right-of-way into a public linear park extending from Basin Street at the Municipal Auditorium to the cemeteries on Canal Blvd (Rails to Trails)	2	
Enhance and fence the playgrounds at the Jefferson Davis neutral ground.	2	We added this to Lambert matrix.
Redesign St. Patrick’s Park at S. St. Patrick and Baudin St. to include both a field and multi-use recreation complex.	2	
Enhance the Jefferson Davis Parkway and Orleans Avenue neutral grounds with additional trees and public flower gardens.	2	
Create Mid-City dog park.	2	
Add four small community gardens in Mid-City.	2	

Revitalize elementary public school in Mid-City, with sufficient capacity for the returning population (John Dibert)	2	Currently Dibert is an RSD school. We would like BESE to allow Mid-City Charter Schools to charter Dibert as pre-K through 5 and Thurgood Marshall as 6-8 as a feeder school into Warren Easton. Mid-City Charter Schools will have a strong ESL component based on the changing demographics of our city.
Revitalize elementary public school in Mid-City, with sufficient capacity for the returning population (A.D. Crossman)	2	Added to Lambert matrix.
Revitalize elementary public school in Mid-City, with sufficient capacity for the returning population (Fisk-Howard)	2	Added to Lambert matrix.
Revitalize middle public school in Mid-City, with sufficient capacity for the returning population (Thurgood Marshall)	2	
Revitalize middle public school in Mid-City, with sufficient capacity for the returning population (Israel Augustine)	2	Added to Lambert matrix.
Revitalize public high school in Mid-City, with sufficient capacity for the returning population (Warren Easton)	2	
Renovate the YMCA and Comisky Park to become a revitalized playground, community center & indoor sports complex.	2	This was in the "Long Term Plan" in the Lambert matrix.
<b><u>Recurring Operations</u></b>		
School Operations	2	
Fund youth outreach, vocational training, classic crime prevention techniques, and a judicial liaison program to ensure neighborhood safety.	2	
<b><u>Long Term Plan</u></b>		
<b><u>Capital Projects</u></b>		
Study Commercial Redevelopment of Carrollton Ave from Tulane Ave to City Park Ave, Canal St from the cemeteries to Claiborne Ave; Tulane Ave from Carrollton Ave to Claiborne Ave; Broad St. from Tulane Ave to Bayou Road, and the Conti Street Corridor (study cost only)	3	
Build community centers on public school campuses or nearby to encourage interaction between students and teachers and others in the community.	3	
Provide a light rail system along Tulane Avenue to connect the New Orleans Central Business District with the Louis Armstrong International Airport with a stop in Mid-City.	3	We added "with a stop in Mid-City."
Study development of Midtown high density, commercial, housing, entertainment, retail with train station and hotel elements as part of a Regional planning node.	3	In Lambert matrix this read: "Study gap funding amount, encourage and assist as necessary Development of Midtown high density, commercial, housing entertainment, condominiums, retail, Xavier University development with train station and hotel elements (study cost only)." Our objective is to recognize this as a Regional node and not to give any indication that this idea of Midtown came from the neighborhood.
<b><u>Recurring Operations</u></b>		
Community Center Operations	3	
Light Rail Operations	3	
<b><u>Housing Initiatives and Other Policies</u></b>		
Endorse full funding for City Park from public	3	

revenues		
Extend and improve existing transportation options and maintain the walkable nature of the neighborhood.	3	We added "Restore pre-Katrina public transportation options" to Early Action Plan.

## MINOR FACTUAL ERRORS and TYPOS

1. St. Louis Street is not a "key secondary street." In Mid-City it is discontinuous and only runs a few blocks at a time. (p. 3)
2. The Canal Streetcar was discontinued in 1964 and reinstated 40 (not 30) years later in 2004 (p. 3)
3. A goal on p. 4 states that an effort should be made to encourage the relocation of "dislocated homeowners" from more heavily damaged areas. While we hope to increase home ownership in Mid-City, we welcome all dislocated residents (whether homeowners or not) to settle in Mid-City. In the long-term, our hope is that relocated renters will consider becoming Mid-City homeowners.
4. Language on p. 5 and p. 19 needs correction. Specifically these sections make it sound as if we were working on a plan "prior to the involvement of the consultants." While this is flattering it is not true. Our grassroots planning effort was in fact spurred by the involvement of the Lambert consultants. It also makes it sound as if MCNO directed the planning process. In fact MCNO promoted and spearheaded the planning efforts, but the Monday evening meetings have been open to all Mid-City residents and business persons and were not MCNO meetings as stated here. Also, the committee structure was established in June of 2006 (not July).
5. Page 11, paragraph two, discusses the intentions of absentee landlords saying they maximized profits by putting as little investment into properties as possible. However the report does not offer data in support of this statement.
6. Throughout: Comisky Park is sometimes spelled "Cominsky."
7. Members of Committees. The Lambert's Plan list of Mid-City Recovery Plan committee chairs and members contained a number of inaccuracies. The following list should be used instead:

### **Education Committee**

Michael Homan (Chair)  
Shawn Anglim  
Mary Jo Decareaux  
Diana Dyer  
Dee Hurtt  
Doug Joubert  
Elizabeth Kennedy  
Amy Lafont  
Jo Ann LoRusso  
Rick LoRusso  
Jennifer Molina  
Diane Nowik  
Nancy Ortiz-Surun  
Mary Jane Parker  
Christy Paxson  
Jeannette Thompson  
Jackie Tinguay

### **Housing Committee**

Mark Folse

### **Governance Committee**

Bart Everson (Chair)

Eva Alito

Virginia Blanque

Pattye Brignac

Tammy Hathaway

Wendy Laker

Billy Wright

### **Green Space / Public Space Committee**

Joan Arnold

Charles Belonge

Virginia Blanque

Kathy Fischer

Mary Gubala

Dee Hurtt

Mary Jane Parker

Kathleen Porter

Ariel Wallick

### **Zoning Committee**

Miles Trapolin (Chair)

Betty Cole

Val Dansereau

Hervin Guidry

Amelia Henderson

Larry E. Jones

Bev Mann

Bill Mann

Doug Pease

Janet Ward Pease

Mary Schumann

Jake Springfield

Cheryl Wagner

### **Economic Development Committee**

Jennifer Weishaupt (Chair)

David Greengold

Diane Handly

Rob Lackowicz

Lynn McLean

Bob Rivard

Tracey Romero

Jared Zeller

### **Transportation Committee**

Dawn Loebig (Chair)

Mae Falgout

Tracy Hamlin

Larry E. Jones

Bob Rivard

Billy Wright

**Healthcare Committee**

Al Arnold  
Jennifer Avegno  
Mary Baudouin  
Diane Handley

**Security and Crime Prevention Committee**

Joe Porter (Chair)  
Charles Belonge  
Mary Gubala  
Romney Richard  
Paul Stark

**City Services Committee**

Eva Alito  
Mary Gubala  
Jake Springfield  
Billy Wright

**Hearts and Lives Committee**

Virginia Blanque (Chair)  
Bart Everson  
Susan Finch  
Mary Gubala  
Tammy Hathaway  
Doug Joubert  
Joe Porter  
Kathleen Porter

**Modern Energy Efficiency**

Eric Price