

The Hike Report

By Bart Everson

The Second Annual Lafitte Corridor Rail Hike was a screaming success!

On Sunday, May 21st, eighteen of us hiked about three miles from Armstrong Park to Canal Boulevard, right through Mid-City following the old Norfolk-Southern rail line. The Louisiana Institute of Film Technology is building a film studio on a key parcel of this land, and they're including a bike path, which we hope will add momentum to our efforts. We plan to build a three mile bike path and linear park that will connect Armstrong Park to City Park and ultimately make it possible for people to walk or ride all the way from the river to the lake. Watch the MCNO website [mcno.org] for more information about how you can join the Friends of Lafitte Corridor (FOLC) and help make it happen!



The Lafitte Corridor in New Orleans known variously as the Carondelet Walk, the Choupic Trail or the abandoned Norfolk-Southern rail line.

The MCNO website is chock full of information about what's happening in Mid-City. Please check the website regularly for updates as we are posting news almost daily. We're at www.mcno.org. And you also might want to join our online discussion group. You can find a link on the website!

Mid-City Art Market & the Mid-City Bayou Boogaloo

A FREE ALL DAY FESTIVAL!

Saturday, May 27 10:00am-9:00pm
Along Bayou St. John from Orleans Ave., down N.Jeff Davis towards Canal St.

Mid-City Art Market will celebrate its 2nd Anniversary on this Saturday on the bayou this Saturday only in conjunction with the Bayou Boogaloo. It will return to its home in City Park's Botanical Gardens beginning June 24 and continuing the last Saturday of each month.

Future Market Dates:

June 24, July 29, August 26

Local and regional artists selling painting, pottery, jewelry, glass, metal, furniture, textiles, photography, and accessories.

Mid-City is a culturally diverse neighborhood and the festival will honor that with some of **Mid-City's favorite restaurants** including Parkway Bakery, Juan's Flying Burrito, Mona's, Asian Pacific, Nola Java and many more. Icy cold soft drinks, beer, frozen margaritas, iced coffee and snowballs will chill the day.

A day of music showcasing **local musical luminaries** including Anders Osborne, The Kevin O'Day All Star Quartet with Walter "Wolfman" Washington and James Andrews, Big Chief Monk Boudreaux and Delta Funk, the Revealers and many more. Casa Samba, the city's premier Brazilian music and dance ensemble, will entertain throughout the day on the neutral ground.

The **Bayou Boogaloo** will also feature a children's art activity tent, and a business fair with realtors, builders, contractors, and many non-profit organizations.

The festival benefits MCNO and is sponsored by MCNO, Mid-City Art Market, Mothership Foundation, Gambit Weekly and many neighborhood businesses.

Come support the rebuilding of the "Heart of New Orleans--Mid-City!"

For more information visit www.mcno.org,
www.mothershipfoundation.org,
www.midcityartmarket.org or call (504) 488-FUNK

Bring Back New Orleans: Planning for a Renewed Mid City

By Janet Ward Pease

New walking and bike paths, more residential development in major corridors, and a charter elementary school: all this and more will be in Mid City's plan for post-Katrina development according to MCNO President, Jim Taylor. Taylor spoke on March 20th in a meeting of Mid City residents with **Preservation Resource Center ("PRC") Executive Director, Patricia Gay.**

At this point in the neighborhood planning process, professional planners were expected to be working with New Orleans neighborhoods to advise on rebuilding plans. However, the promised federal money to hire planners has not been provided. Nevertheless, neighborhood leaders like Jim Taylor of MCNO, and Paul Ikemire, Director of Phoenix of New Orleans*, a neighborhood organization for the area bounded by Claiborne, Galvez, Canal & Tulane, and their memberships are proceeding to collect ideas to improve New Orleans as it is rebuilt.

The MCNO Rebuilding Plan for Mid City will include a number of exciting projects. Chief among them is the conversion of the John Diebert School on Orleans Avenue into a charter elementary school with an arts and environmental curriculum. The New Orleans Museum of Art, City Park, and Delgado Community College have agreed to partner with the school to provide curriculum resources and other assistance. School food services will be coordinated by the Tulane School of Public Health and the Crescent City Farmers Market. The MCNO board of directors submitted the application to create the Diebert charter school this spring and await a response.

To improve the quality of residential life in Mid City, the plan will propose creation of a recreational green space from Claiborne Avenue to Bayou St. John along the railroad tracks that serve the Masonry Products brickyard at 410 N. Alexander Street. If walls are built around the tracks to allow unfettered rail access to the brickyard, the surrounding area could be improved to

accommodate walking, biking and possibly other activities, turning an industrial zone into an attractive neighborhood park. **Patricia Gay also noted that the historic "Old Basin Canal" of New Orleans ran along this same tract. Reopening the canal to create a waterway within the walking/bike path could create an attraction similar to San Antonio's popular Riverwalk. The Old Basin Canal extended from the back of the French Quarter all the way to Lake Pontchartrain and gave "Basin Street" its name.**

Ms. Gay also suggested that the MCNO work on the rebuilding and beautification of major Mid City corridors (Canal Street, Carrollton Avenue, Broad Street, Jefferson Davis Parkway, and Tulane Avenue), and on planning for future residential development. Specifically, if under-used office and commercial space on Canal St. and Tulane Avenue were "recycled" as residential space, it would revive struggling properties and provide additional housing, particularly for LSU and Tulane University medical students who work and attend classes in the medical and research corridor on Tulane Avenue. Finally, Ms. Gay encouraged the MCNO to apply to have Mid City classified as a local historic district. This designation provides additional historic property protection than what is currently afforded the neighborhood under its "National Register District" designation.

For the Preservation Resource Center's tips on rebuilding and for information on renovation loans, grants and many other programs, see www.prcno.org .

* See the Phoenix of New Orleans website at: www.pnola.org . You can download its rebuilding plan at: <http://www.pnola.org/Assets/PNOLAexecsummary.doc> .

Photo Essay: “Katrina Contenders”

By Janet Ward Pease

From the movie “On the Waterfront” comes Marlon Brando’s regretful line “I coulda been a contenda”. No such regret haunts Mid City residents whose spunk in the face of Hurricane Katrina’s wrath is apparent in any walk through the neighborhood.



Post-Katrina Surveys of Mid City

By Douglas R. Pease

In preparation for the Bring New Orleans Back commission neighborhood planning process, two Mid City residents have organized surveys of the area to document recovery efforts.

Virginia Blaque and friends have twice surveyed the area from S. Carrollton to S. Jefferson Davis and from Canal Street to Banks Street. Using a color coded scheme, they have identified properties as occupied, empty, or coming back (some evidence of renovation). This part of Mid City is mostly residential with commercial activity mainly along Canal and S. Carrollton.

Doug and Janet Pease canvassed the area from N. Carrollton to City Park Avenue and from Canal Street to Orleans plus sections along S. Carrollton near Tulane Avenue. Doug and Janet use similar categories for their survey. This area is a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial. The Pease's plan to expand their canvass as time permits.

The surveys were conducted in January and early February. Initial results from both surveys were presented at the MCNO meeting in February. The results confirm that Mid City is solidly on the road to recovery!

35% of the residences are already occupied and another 32% are coming back or rebuilding. That's over 2/3 of the properties examined! Highest occupancy rates are on the north side of Canal near City Park Avenue where flood water was lowest. But areas with higher flood water are also

returning. Many homes are already occupied and many more are in the process of rebuilding.

Businesses are also coming back! 62% of commercial property has reopened or is rebuilding. Corner stores, gas stations, and neighborhood hangouts dot the map of reopened businesses on the MCNO website (www.mcno.org). National chains, like Save-A-Center and Major Video, are returning.

Mid-City is one of the first flooded areas in New Orleans to strongly recover. Lots of work still needs to be done to get our neighborhood all the way back. Mid City is both an example and a resource for other neighborhoods.

As we move forward toward full recovery, Mid City offers hope, shelter, and basic necessities (like food and gas) to our neighbors from Lakeview, Gentilly, Broadmoor, the Lower 9th Ward, and Chalmette. Our new neighbors are not always the same as our old neighbors but The Heart of New Orleans remains strong and ready to help.

More areas remain to be surveyed. If you are interested helping, contact MCNO at administration@mcno.org for more information.

Faces of Recovery

By: Natalie Lafont

As we like to say in Mid-city, the mood is always upbeat! Here are a couple of our fellow residents and their stories. I hope you will enjoy the first of a continuing series. If you have a story or experience you'd like to share, please contact me at 504-488-6759.



Monique Pilie decided to ride out Katrina with her family at their Covington retreat house. Her entire life, Monique has formed very fond memories of that place and its spectacular abundance of oaks. She describes her loss as major due to her love for the oaks that we lost during the storm. Monique spent her post Katrina nights on the porch of the retreat house and truly realized the significant area-wide tree destruction. And, for Monique, a real nature lover, this was devastating. It didn't take long for her to decide to incorporate both her love for nature and our trees along with her life's dream to hike the Appalachian trail. So she quit her job of 12 years at Fed-ex, sold her home to finance her venture, and developed "Hike for Katreena". She began a training program that included weight training, jogging up and down the levee and Tad Gormley stadium. She always wore her 40 pound back pack daily while training day in and day out. On April 8th, Monique set out on her 6 month adventure to hike the entire Appalachian trail. Monique's non-profit organization has received contributions from all over the world. Her plan is simple...to GREEN up New Orleans. Her goal is on track...for every one of the 2175 miles that she will hike during her 6 month journey a tree will be planted. She is scheduled to finalize her trek in September when she will then will begin the

estimated 2 year process of purchasing trees from local growers and planting them. When all is done, she plans to pursue employment in Park Service.

To learn more, make a contribution, or just wish her well, please log on to www.hikeforkatreena.org



Nick Digiorgio & Scot Craig, catering partners want very much to be back in the neighborhood. In fact they put on a great Cinco de mayo celebration! Scot, owner and operator of Katie's restaurant was very touched by the number of residents who showed to mingle and catch up with one another. For the storm, Nick evacuated to Dallas and Scot was off to Little Rock. Upon his return, Scot had to be faced with the reality that his restaurant had been destroyed by 7 feet of water and that all of the fantastic sports memorabilia that once decorated Katie's restaurant had been looted. Following the storm, the pair decided to combine their 40 years in food industry, push forward, and take on the opportunity to cook for the CNN staff. Nick and Scott, back in town early on, cooked for the CNN staff, as well as rode out Rita with the crew. Their story is one simply of the realization that they needed CNN and CNN

needed them. They currently prepare healthy meals for the CNN staff everyday. So when asked what's the plan for Katie's Restaurant, both Scot and Nick proudly said that they are definitely coming back. Scot is back home living above his restaurant that is set to reopen after hurricane season. In the meanwhile they would like to have neighborhood block parties such as they hosted on Cinco de Mayo. Future plans include a focus on the signature dishes that Katie's has offered to the neighborhood for years. Their ultimate goal is to return to being part of the heartbeat of Midcity!