

Development in New Orleans East: Its Past, Present, and Future Potential

A Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis will look into one of the largest geographic areas of economic development potential in New Orleans; the area known as New Orleans East. A look at its past will be explored as a gateway to the problems it has been faced with and why such large areas still remain unused. With the passing of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans East suffered tremendous damages. Presently New Orleans East has a clean slate to start and transform the errors of the past. A careful, yet creative look at revitalization in this area could produce economic wealth for the City. Various economic development strategies will be analyzed as a catalyst for generating economic growth for New Orleans East and a new path for the City of New Orleans, one that far surpasses the economic adversities and political corruption that is embedded in its history.

Foreword

Being born and raised in New Orleans, I have had the opportunity to experience all of its culture, food, people, and music. Underneath all of these elements that tourists travel from all over to see, there are basic functions of everyday life, that of which every city experiences. These basic functions like, working, shopping, recreating, eating, going to school, getting to the doctor's office, and so forth, are very essential to us. If we have access to these amenities within our communities, it makes living there much easier.

I have lived in New Orleans East for most of my adult life. During that time, I have had to enjoy most of these amenities in communities other than mine; therefore I would often ponder as to why. I was also often intrigued at how the economy in other communities was growing faster and was more vibrant than New Orleans East. The facilities were larger and there was always more to do in surrounding areas. I decided to make it my mission to find out what was going on with the economy in New Orleans East. In researching the economy, I found that there were great plans for New Orleans East; however with the collapse of the oil industry in New Orleans, those plans seemed to whither away along with the economy.

When I entered graduate school to obtain my Masters in Public Administration, there was no question what I would choose to research because it still bothered me that the economy in New Orleans East was not growing. After the passing of Hurricane Katrina, the economy there was more dismal than before; therefore I knew it was time to attempt to unravel the economy's mystery and hopefully find ways of improving it.

Chapter 1

Introduction

When analyzing economic development for the City of New Orleans, it would be almost impossible not to consider one of the largest geographic areas of potential developments known to many as New Orleans East. It is located to the east of the City of New Orleans and it encompasses “65% of the city’s land’ and ‘has been considered the logical growth corridor of the city.”¹ New Orleans East was once a very vibrant community enjoying the visions of massive economic development plans; but something happened. Some plans flourished, while other, much larger plans didn’t. With the outward migration of Whites from the area and the inward migration of Blacks into the area, many other development projects within the city seemed to take precedence. Was there just a lack of interest on the part of the residents, the business owners, or the government; or were there other extenuating and unforeseen circumstances that slowed development in this area? How were neighboring areas able to prosper and contribute to the success of the city?

Pre Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans East had a large minority population. The residents had a mixture of low, medium, and high incomes; but with the influx of Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers (a government program that “allow very low-income families to choose and lease or purchase safe, decent, and affordable privately-owned rental housing.”²), the population grew to include significantly more low-income residents. Crime, poverty, and unemployment became very prevalent in this

¹ City Planning Commission. April 1999. New Orleans Land Use Plan:206

² www.hud.gov.

community. Additionally, there was a decrease in homeownership, a rise in low performing schools, and a lack of adequate shopping, dining, and recreational facilities.

Since Hurricane Katrina, not many businesses or residents have returned to the area. The fate of this area seems uncertain to many, and with so much damage to the area, the uncertainty grows stronger with each month that passes. Although the future of New Orleans East appears gloomy, it doesn't have to be. This could finally be the opportunity for the area to develop to its fullest ability. Major investment into the area is vital in making this happen. New Orleans East will first have to overcome obstacles such as uncertainties regarding levee protection/future hurricanes; concerns about blighted properties; insurance availability or costs; utility costs; sewerage services; police protection; medical services; and lack of demand for goods and services if the population doesn't rebound. How does the city overcome these obstacles and still market this area for redevelopment? If it means demolishing many residential areas, how does the government win the approval of the very people this redevelopment could affect? How does New Orleans East factor into the Bring New Orleans Back Commission's economic development plan? How do calls to "shrink the footprint" of the city impact the area's revitalization potential? Are there particular economic advantages or strengths of New Orleans East that are not available in other parts of the city? A critical analysis of New Orleans East will be vital in determining the area's fate in the city's revitalization process.

There have been other catastrophes in our Nation, although none of a Katrina magnitude, where redevelopment strategies have been adopted with very dynamic results. How might some of those strategies apply to New Orleans East? What plan

could be adapted and be feasible for this area, while drawing upon the uniqueness of the city? The context of this study will examine these very issues and hopefully build a foundation of reference in seeking ways to help rebuild the great City of New Orleans.

This study will start by first examining the history of development in New Orleans East from the 1920s through pre-Katrina. This history will explore what generated residential, commercial, and industrial growth in the area and what, if any problems were associated with development in New Orleans East. Next, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis will be conducted on some major land use plans designed for New Orleans East. Three distinct periods of time were chosen for the SWOT analysis; this will aid in determining what changes may or may not have occurred in addition to outlining similarities or differences in issues relating to the plans. The three plans and time periods consisted of A General Plan New Orleans East, designed in 1959; the Orlandia Plan, designed in 1976, and the City of New Orleans' 1999 Land Use Plan. Next, the study will outline development in surrounding areas of New Orleans along with the development potential of New Orleans East; detailing how the various areas developed in comparison to New Orleans East. Also, redevelopment strategies from other tragic events will be explored along with the proposed strategies outlined for New Orleans post Hurricane Katrina; this will aid in determining how these various strategies might apply to New Orleans East. Lastly, this study will discuss the relevance of these strategies and how they could be applied to redevelopment in New Orleans East. All of these aspects will be shaped into a conclusion that details the findings and opens the doors for future research.

Chapter 2

Overview of New Orleans East

New Orleans East is a very large tract of land located east of the City of New Orleans. It is comprised of several neighborhoods including; Pines Village, Plum Orchard, West Lake Forest, Read Boulevard West, Little Woods, Read Boulevard East, Village de L'Est, Lake Catherine, and Viavant/Venetian Isles (See figures 1-9 in Appendix A). These neighborhoods are sectioned off into three planning districts. Planning district nine includes: Pines Village, Plum Orchard, West Lake Forest, Read Boulevard West, Little Woods, and Read Boulevard East. Planning district ten includes Village de L'Est. Finally, planning district eleven includes Lake Catherine and Viavant/Venetian Isles. The economic and developmental history of these neighborhoods dates back to the early 1800s.

In the early 1800s, there was the construction of Fort Pike and Fort Macomb in the Lake Catherine neighborhood. These two forts were “constructed to serve as a defense for the navigational channels leading into New Orleans.”³ Also built in the Lake Catherine neighborhood was the Rigolets Lighthouse, which was built to help guide passing ships. Other developments in the early 1800s were the construction of Chef Menteur land in Village de L'Est and a sugar cane plantation and refinery in Viavant/Venetian Isles. Construction of Chef Menteur Highway involved filling in the bayou in order to fix some drainage problems and create an access road. It took the land owner, Antoine Michoud, twenty-six years to complete (from 1827-1853) in addition to operating the sugar cane plant, which he did until he died in 1863. Chef Menteur was

³ www.gnocdc.org. *Lake Catherine Neighborhood Snapshot*

the only access road because it was the highest and driest land in New Orleans East. Much of New Orleans East contained wetlands, which created a problem for drainage in the area. One of the major dilemmas when developing the area was how to drain potential storm waters. “The drainage system of New Orleans East has followed a scheme completely different from that which exists in the Old City section of New Orleans. In lieu of a dry system where storm waters are collected and disposed of as rapidly as they are generated, the scheme of drainage development in New Orleans East has followed a wet system where surges in storm water are stored in a lagoon-lake system and then pumped out over a period of time.”⁴ In order for storm waters to drain, there had to be an avenue created for the waters to flow; this is how the “lagoon-lake system” was created. It is essentially a collection of small canals within various areas designed to assist with the flowing of water. In order to combat the drainage problem, the “lagoon-lake system” was built throughout most of New Orleans East along with a huge drainage canal and a pumping station. Water drainage and the limited road access of Chef Menteur were not the only problems that made development in New Orleans East lag; its location did not create a great connection with the rest of the City. “In addition to transportation, another barrier to development in the area was the Industrial Canal, completed in 1923, which separated New Orleans from the eastern section of the city. Before Interstate-10 and the Seabrook Bridge were completed in the 1960s and 1970s, draw bridges at Chef Menteur Highway, Gentilly Road and the Lake-Industrial Canal juncture were the only means of crossing the Industrial Canal north of Florida Avenue. That made New Orleans East rather isolated.”⁵ Although, New

⁴ A General Plan New Orleans East. New Orleans, LA. *Building for tomorrow*

⁵ www.gnocdc.org. *Pines Village Neighborhood Snapshot*

Orleans East didn't see widespread development until the construction of the drainage system, Interstate-10, and the Seabrook Bridge, there were some significant developments between the 1920s and 1960s.

1920s-1930s

Between the 1920s and 1930s, the Little Woods neighborhood, also known as Edgelake (because of its proximity to the lakefront), seemed to be the only area of development in New Orleans East. This area began to spew residential development on the lakefront, which paved the way for musicians to perform in the area and eventually for the construction of Lincoln Beach in 1939. Lincoln Beach began as a designated swimming area for Blacks and quickly evolved into an amusement park that thrived until the end of segregation in 1964. Also constructed in Little Woods during this period was the New Orleans Lakefront Airport. Constructed in 1934, it was originally the only airport in New Orleans. The Lakefront Airport is still in operation and although it is primarily used for general aviation and military training, it remains a very busy airport.

1940s-1950s

In 1943, the United States government constructed the world's largest building, known then as the Higgins Aircraft Plant, in the Viavant/Venetian Isles neighborhood. This plant produced cargo planes, landing craft, and tank engines for World War II and the Korean War. In the 1950s, after the dedication of the Plum Orchard Subdivision, development of single and double family homes began; about the same time as development of single-family homes in the Read Boulevard West Neighborhood. Also in the 1950s, the Pines Village neighborhood began to show signs of development of

single and double family homes. Prior to building these homes, major drainage channels had to be built to combat the draining problems. “In the 1950s, this marshy land was reclaimed by leveeing the area to establish a basic drainage system and lowering the water table by pumping, raising the level of construction sites by use of hydraulic fill and finally, building a drainage system consisting of a series of lakes and canals.”⁶

1960s

The construction of Interstate 10 and the Seabrook Bridge allowed additional developments to take place in New Orleans East. During the early 1960s, the Pines Village, Plum Orchard, and Read Boulevard West Neighborhoods continued to see substantial single and double residential developments. The Read Boulevard East Neighborhood also began to blossom during the early 1960s. One significant element in this area is Joe Brown Memorial Park, named after land owner Joe W. Brown. It was built on land donated by Brown’s wife shortly after his death in 1959. Additionally, the LaKratt Corporation purchased 5,000 acres of land from the Brown estate and began large scale developments in the area during this time. In 1961, the former Higgins Aircraft Plant located in the Viavant/Venetian Isles neighborhood, became NASA Michoud Assembly Facility. Under this new facility run by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the manufacturing of space vehicles began to take place. Also during this time, residential developments began in the Viavant/Venetian Isles neighborhood followed in 1964 with single and double residential developments in the Village de L’Est neighborhood. In the late 1960s, the Read Boulevard East and Lake

⁶ www.gnocdc.org. *Pines Village Neighborhood Snapshot*

Catherine neighborhoods experienced another surge of development including the opening of the East New Orleans Regional Library in 1968 on Read Boulevard and development of a very large residential subdivision in Lake Catherine called Venetian Isles. One of the last neighborhoods to develop in New Orleans East was West Lake Forest, which didn't begin developing until the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The 1970s-pre Katrina

After the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s and 1980s, New Orleans East experienced other significant developments including the Louisiana Nature Center located in Joe Brown Park within the Read Boulevard East neighborhood; the opening of Marion Abramson High School, Methodist Hospital New Orleans, and the Plaza Mall in the West Lake Forest neighborhood; and Delgado's Maritime, Fire and Industrial Training Facility and Folgers Coffee Plant in the Viavant/Venetian Isles neighborhood. The Village de L'Est neighborhood experienced a huge influx of Vietnamese immigrants, which eventually created growth in the neighborhood's residential area. With the migration of Vietnamese immigrants into the area, this created the need for two additional public schools (Sarah T. Reed High School and Village de L'Est Elementary) and a Vietnamese church (The Mary Queen of Vietnam Church).

In the 1990s and prior to Hurricane Katrina, economic development in New Orleans East was slow. With the influx of more Blacks into the area and the departure of many Whites from the area, there seemed to be another lag in development. "In 1990, the federal office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) introduced the Section 8 housing program, which created an opportunity for people with low-income to rent housing in the private market using government subsidies. Many landlords in this

area were approved for Section 8 rentals, and when the Desire, Florida and St. Thomas Housing developments closed, many low-income families moved here.”⁷ Some research suggests that an increase in low-income residents and a decrease in homeownership can be a contributing factor to a decline in development. In the book *Neighborhood Upgrading*, the author suggests that “Income shifts associated with racial change, rather than racial shifts per se, are a key cause of neighborhood decline.”⁸ In the article, “Alternative Perspectives on Neighborhood Decline”, authors Kerry Vandell and Arthur Solomon go a step further in explaining this by offering three theories of neighborhood decline. The first theory is Orthodox Economic Theory, which essentially states that as low-income families move into the neighborhood via rental property, many landlords do very little to repair and upgrade their properties. The second theory is Dual Theory, which states that low-income families are charged lower rent in order to compensate them for repairing the properties themselves as opposed to the landlords repairing them. The third theory, called Radical Theory, suggests that decline could be caused by marketing strategies designed to pressure homeowners into selling their property; this is usually created because of the power struggles between the private and public sector. The Radical Theory, also known as Block Busting is illegal under the United States fair housing laws. Vandell and Solomon’s three theories all result in neighborhood decline and neglect, which could decrease economic development in the area. In finding the causes of decline in economic development in New Orleans East, one must examine the outcome of the plans for this area. This will be addressed in the next chapter.

⁷ www.gnocdc.org. *West Lake Forest Neighborhood Snapshot*

⁸ Varady, David P. 1986. *Neighborhood Upgrading: A Realistic Assessment*. State University of New York Press, Albany

Chapter 3

Major New Orleans East Land Use Plans

There have been various land use plans developed for New Orleans East, some of which were plans that involved certain areas, while others were plans that involved the entire area of New Orleans East. A SWOT analysis of each of the most significant land use plans will be conducted as a way to measure the successes and/or failures of each. This analysis could also be used as a guide to generating a future plan that builds upon the strengths of those plans, creates an avenue to take great risks on the opportunities, seeks ways of combating the threats, and works to improve the weaknesses in the hopes of overcoming any past obstacles.

A General Plan New Orleans East

One of very early plans, A General Plan New Orleans East, was completed in 1959. This land use plan takes into account all aspects of development; from drainage, to developing roads, and transportation. During the developing stages of this plan, only a few neighborhood subdivisions existed in New Orleans East and the construction of the I-10 corridor had not taken place; therefore decisions like how many people would travel in and out of the area or how much commercial space was needed were very crucial to planning. “The proposed general plan will necessarily be refined and adjusted from time to time, but will provide a sound guide for securing an outstanding development.”⁹ At the time this plan was developed, New Orleans East had approximately 32,000 acres of undeveloped land; therefore there were infinite

⁹ Harland Bartholomew and Associates. April 1959. A General Plan New Orleans East:1

possibilities available for creating the plan and developing the area into a great urban region.

In the years prior to this general plan, the City of New Orleans experienced an increase in population and business developments. As evidenced by the industry table (Table 1), we find that new and expanding industry development in New Orleans had invested nearly one billion dollars into the economy between 1946 and 1958. In addition, the table shows that 12,268 new employees were afforded jobs as a result of this industry development. Based on the information in the tables, it appears that expanding this development into a large land base like New Orleans East would be very instrumental in developing the economy further. New Orleans was experiencing an increase in its population and needed to utilize available land space (Table 2). “The New Orleans area has a dynamic economy similar in many respects to many other large cities along and near the Gulf Coast...additional land for industries must be provided in the eastern portion of the city and particularly in the study area if the city is to continue to gain its fair portion of future industrial growth.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Harland Bartholomew and Associates. April 1959. A General Plan New Orleans East:8

Table 1 – New and Expanded Industry

NEW AND EXPANDED INDUSTRY
JANUARY 1946 to JANUARY 1959

New Orleans Area, Louisiana

Year	Approximate Investment			New Employees*
	New	Expanded	Total	
1946	\$ 2,501,000	\$ 28,790,000	\$ 31,291,000	502
1947	1,580,000	22,441,523	24,021,523	728
1948	6,152,426	10,349,063	16,501,489	811
1949	1,078,900	39,945,845	41,024,745	391
1950	5,155,000	15,036,567	20,191,567	1,019
1951	266,727,725	48,641,879	315,369,604	3,480
1952	99,961,915	15,685,680	115,647,595	1,296
1953	15,562,500	35,837,010	51,399,510	645
1954	27,745,914	8,421,837	36,167,751	905
1955	71,497,791	44,178,548	115,676,339	883
1956	1,136,053	84,985,155	86,121,208	183
1957	32,120,875	42,675,445	74,796,320	1,030
1958	<u>14,641,282</u>	<u>28,396,331</u>	<u>43,037,613</u>	<u>416</u>
Totals	\$545,861,381	\$425,384,883	\$971,246,264	12,268

*Figures are for employees added by new industries only. No figures available for expanded industries.

Table adapted from A General Plan New Orleans East

Table 2 – Population Growth Trends

POPULATION GROWTH TRENDS 1930 – 1958
New Orleans Area, Louisiana

	1930		1940		1950	
	Population	Percent Increase*	Population	Percent Increase*	Population	Percent Increase*
New Orleans City (Orleans Parish)	458,762	18.5	494,537	7.8	570,455	15.3
Jefferson Parish	40,032	85.7	50,427	22.7	103,873	106.0
St. Bernard Parish	<u>6,512</u>	31.1	<u>7,280</u>	11.8	<u>11,087</u>	52.3
Standard Metropolitan Area	505,306	22.1	552,244	9.2	685,415	24.1
Plaquemines Parish	<u>9,608</u>	-5.7	<u>12,318</u>	28.2	<u>14,239</u>	15.6
Total New Orleans Area	514,914	21.5	564,562	9.6	699,654	23.9
United States	122,775,046	16.1	131,669,275	7.2	150,697,361	14.5
Percent Total New Orleans Population to United States	.4193		.4287		.4643	

*Percent increase over preceding census.

Table adapted from A General Plan New Orleans East

In looking at table 2, we find that population in the New Orleans area increased tremendously between 1930 and 1950. There was a 9.6% increase between 1930 and 1940 and a 23.9% increase between 1940 and 1950. We see that these percentage increases are more than what the country experienced; namely a 7.2% increase from 1930 to 1940 and an increase of 14.5% from 1940 to 1950. However, if we compare the areas within Metro New Orleans, we find that Jefferson Parish and St. Bernard Parish experienced population percentage increases that were much larger than those of Orleans Parish. While St. Bernard Parish's population percentage increased 11.8% from 1930 to 1940 and 52.3% from 1940 to 1950, Jefferson Parish's population percentage increased at a faster rate of 22.7% between 1930 and 1940 and a substantial 106.0% between 1940 and 1950. Jefferson parish was much better prepared for development than other areas of Metro New Orleans. "The basic reason for the rapid growth within the Jefferson area is vacant land and available basic facilities, especially drainage and water."¹¹ Other reasons for Jefferson's rapid growth were very low property taxes, costs, and relatively lax land use and zoning regulations. The New Orleans East area could provide the city with an opportunity for expansion at a faster rate, provided great plans were generated. In examining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of A General Plan New Orleans East, a conclusion could be made as to whether it was a great plan for the area.

Strengths

Prior to development in New Orleans East, there needed to be infrastructure in place for protection in the event of a hurricane or high tides. A strength that sparked

¹¹ Harland Bartholomew and Associates. April 1959. A General Plan New Orleans East:10

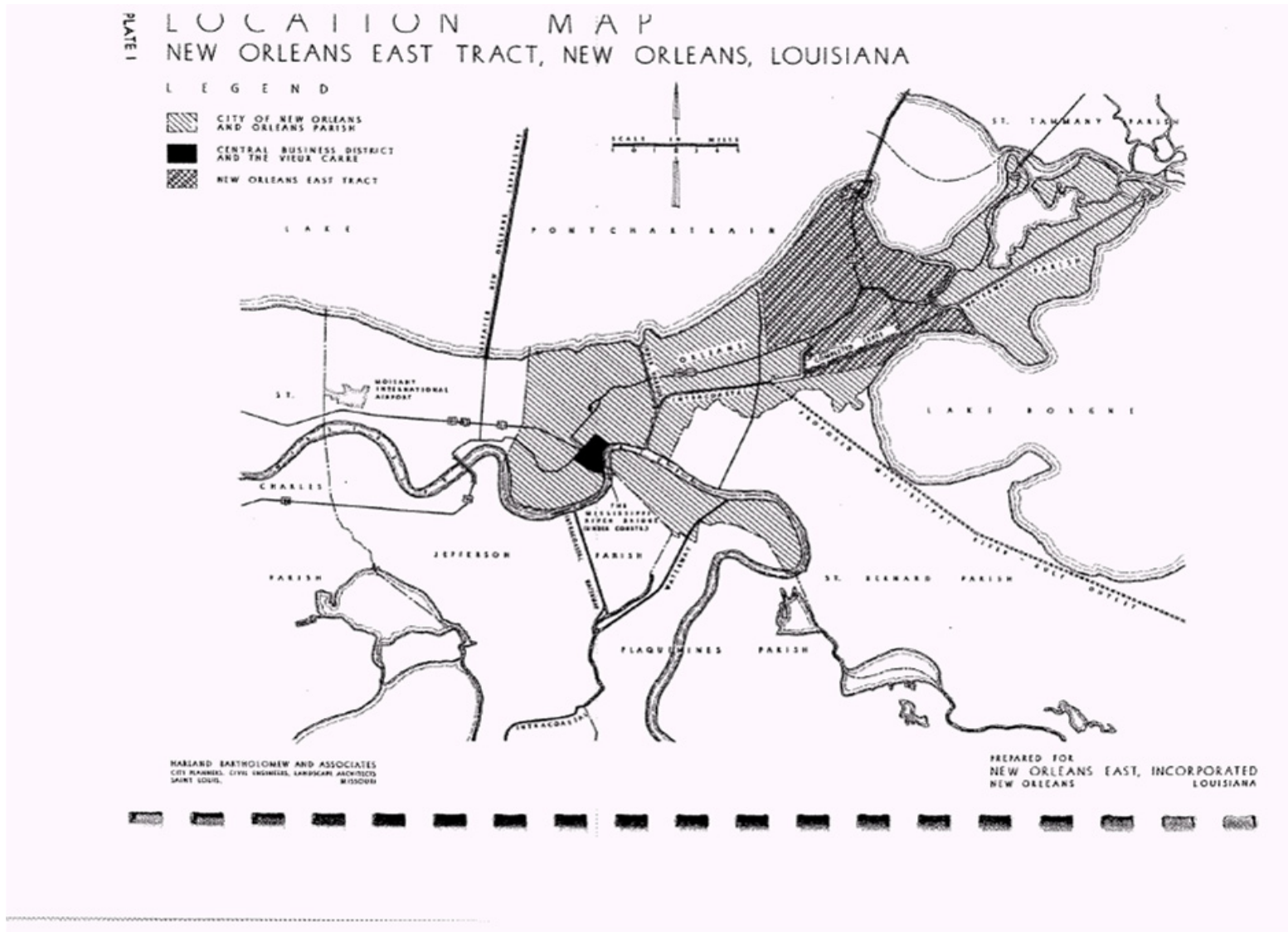
planning in the area was the completion of the levee (see figure 10 below). New Orleans East had a large land base and great development potential; with the addition of the levee, the planners could begin to envision and strategize on what was needed in the area. One of the very first decisions was to plan a drainage system for the area. In A General Plan, Harland Bartholomew and Associates recommended that small canals be placed throughout New Orleans East along with a pumping station that would pump the water from the smaller canals into a larger canal. This drainage system would add additional protection for the area as well as a method for eliminating excess water. The planners also took into consideration the design of the plan in the event problems arose. “The storm drainage system must be designed with flexibility, first to insure its operation under adverse conditions such as mechanical failure of a pump and secondly, because of the ultimate desirability that after substantial development has been achieved, low water drainage flow not be pumped into Lake Pontchartrain.”¹² The plan also suggested the digging of wells in order to determine the availability and quality of the water supply. To draw industrial development into the area, there was a need for an ample supply of water; therefore sources of additional water were also considered. Sanitary sewerage would be essential to development in the area; therefore the plan proposed utilizing existing treatment facilities and placing additional facilities in the area.

Initial infrastructure plans were in place; therefore the design for transportation in and out of New Orleans East was considered. It was projected that there would be a need for various types of road access to accommodate residents traveling within and outside of the communities, as well as traffic traveling through and into the communities. There would also be a need for access roads for large trucks traveling to and from the

¹² Harland Bartholomew and Associates. April 1959. A General Plan New Orleans East:12

industrial areas. Several types of roads were suggested, such as limited access roads for traveling to other portions of the city; major streets for non-residents traveling within New Orleans East; distributor streets for traveling within the area's residential neighborhoods; and minor streets for residents traveling throughout the area. These plans are strengths because they are required for any successful new development to occur. Without basic drainage, sewerage, and water supply, there would not be any interest drawn into the area. Additionally, the variety of ways to access the area would be very beneficial for potential residents and business owners.

Figure 10 – Map of New Orleans East and Completed Levee



Other mandatory elements of successful development included the design of neighborhoods, schools and recreational facilities. It was proposed by the plan that the area should consist of a combination of residential developments; including single and double-family homes and multi-family apartment complexes. It was suggested that there be a mix of garden-type and larger waterfront complexes. Additionally, the neighborhoods would be constructed on minor streets, thus allowing seclusion from high traffic volumes. It would be important to plan a mix of school types to encourage interest in a variety of potential residents. Another strength that was suggested by the plan was to provide space for public, parochial, and private schools that would accommodate elementary, junior high, and high school students. In addition, the development of playground areas adjacent to the elementary schools as an element within the neighborhood would be a great feature. The plan also suggested the use of several types of recreational facilities, which included: neighborhood parks for use by all residents; playfields for competitive sport games; special purpose parks for fishing, boating, beach going, and the like; and large regional parks for use by the general public. These recreational facilities would aid in the growth of the community. "Past experience in modern urban development has revealed that an adequate system of park and recreation facilities is one of the most effective means of insuring desirable residential areas and of maintaining their value over a long period. It is sound economy...even at the loss of some property that otherwise might be used for residential development."¹³

With industry and commercial development, the plan proposed a few ideas that would be strengths in their design. It was suggested that only one major water facility

¹³ Harland Bartholomew and Associates. April 1959. A General Plan New Orleans East:17

be provided for industrial use; any additional facilities needed would have to be provided by the specific industries. This would be beneficial to the city by keeping its construction costs down. “Three major types of commercial facilities have been considered for the study area. These are: (1) shopping facilities, both regional and neighborhood; (2) highway commercial; and (3) administrative office areas.”¹⁴ These commercial facilities would provide an array of available space for development. It also could be used as an attraction for additional growth into New Orleans East.

Weaknesses

Since A General Plan was developed during a time when New Orleans East was very underdeveloped, any major land use plan could have been beneficial for the area. For this reason, some weaknesses identified in the plan are based on what has happened as a result of a particular idea within the plan. The very first weakness noticed in the plan was within the area unprotected by the levee. During the planning phase, there were approximately 8,250 acres of land that were not protected by the levees. It was suggested that this area be filled and used for residential purposes and future industrial use. One problem with this suggestion is that it could be very difficult to market an area which is not protected from rising waters. Additionally, if these areas were to be damaged by rising waters, it could require state and/or local funding to assist in rebuilding efforts. Another weakness in the plan was that there was no plan in place for industrial waste treatment and disposal. The planners agreed that this would be the responsibility of the various industries. Having the industries develop their own means for treating and disposing of waste may be cost effective for the city; however it may not

¹⁴ Harland Bartholomew and Associates. April 1959. A General Plan New Orleans East:18

be a great way to market the industrial park areas. It seems as if a plan was in place for handling waste, this would be one problem industry leaders would not have to mull over when locating their facility into the New Orleans East area.

Other weaknesses in the plan included building small resort-type motel developments along the highway. While this might be a way to attract visitors into the area, the plan suggested low density motels with only 20 units per acre. Higher density motels would appear to attract more tourists or business professionals seeking to stay outside of the French Quarter area. Smaller motels usually attract more one night stays. The plan also suggested the development of motel units along Chef Menteur Highway. This plan did not produce great long-term results; in more recent years, it has encouraged prostitution in the area. A large portion of Chef Menteur Highway is zoned for single-family housing; therefore the plan suggested that this pattern continue along much of Chef Menteur as an attraction to the area. Because Chef Menteur is a major highway in New Orleans East, it could attract more visitors into the area if it were zoned as a commercial district. For example, the commercial developments along Veterans Boulevard in Jefferson Parish have not only attracted visitors into the area, but it has been the reason for much of their residential development. Chef Menteur could possibly have the same or similar results if it was utilized only as a commercial area.

Opportunities

Most of the opportunities in the planning of A General Plan are within commercial, industrial, and public developments. "Of particular importance are the 6,600 acres zoned for industrial purposes. This is in addition to the 2,750 acres zoned for industry south of the Intracoastal Waterway, and can be a major influence in

attracting important industries within the city.”¹⁵ The largest area within the City of New Orleans for potential growth is New Orleans East; therefore industrial development within this area could not only spur growth for New Orleans East, but it could also be a catalyst for future growth of the city’s economy if the city were to revitalize this area. The industrial land in New Orleans East is very large and can accommodate many industries; this would be an attraction for industries that needed a large land base. Additionally, the industrial area is located on the Intracoastal Waterway, which would be very beneficial for shipping industries. Another benefit and growth opportunity for the industrial area includes a proposed administrative and recreational center located at the entrance of the industrial site.

An opportunity for the boating community, which was suggested by the plan included development of a residential area on the water and additional residential areas that included beach clubs, marinas, and yacht clubs. These ideas could encourage homeownership with boat owners and residents who enjoy recreation on the water. Another type of recreational facility planned for New Orleans East includes development of a resort area adjacent to Pointe aux Herbes, which is a lighthouse located on Lake Pontchartrain. In addition to planning for various types of parks, plans have been designed for development of playgrounds adjacent to elementary schools. One feature that future home owners look for when buying a home is the availability of recreational facilities; therefore all of these proposals are great opportunities for growth.

The plan proposed several types of commercial developments including regional shopping centers, neighborhood shopping centers, highway commercial facilities, and administrative offices. “The shopping centers provide one-stop facilities for the

¹⁵ Harland Bartholomew and Associates. April 1959. A General Plan New Orleans East:7

purchase of family needs...Regional shopping centers serve many neighborhood areas and provide all types of stores and usually contain competitive stores for comparative shopping. Highway commercial includes those facilities that do not belong in a shopping center. The administrative office areas are: research laboratories; insurance companies; local offices of national firms such as building materials, oil companies, and various types of supply houses."¹⁶ All of these commercial facilities are great opportunities because they would encourage growth in New Orleans East through either business or residential developments. The plan suggested developing the administrative offices along the interstate, while developing some shopping centers at major intersections and building church sites around these shopping facilities. All of these ideas would allow the commercial developments to be in plain view of residents, customers, potential business owners, and the like; this could also assist in the growth of the area.

Threats

A major threat to development in New Orleans East was levee protection and drainage; with the completion of the levee and plans in work for a drainage system, A General Plan did not face many other threats in its land use design. However, there are a few threats to development in the proposed plans. One involves the Louisville and Nashville Railroad located at Lake Pontchartrain; the owners have rights over the railroad, but if removed it could be very valuable for the city and allow more space for industrial development along Lake Pontchartrain. Purchasing this land could not only generate problems, it would also cost the city a great deal of money. The plan

¹⁶ Harland Bartholomew and Associates. April 1959. A General Plan New Orleans East:18

suggested that the industrial area between Chef Highway and Old Gentilly Road be developed first because it doesn't require much drainage. One threat to this would be if industry leaders chose not to utilize this area, but instead wanted to develop on an area that required extensive drainage. The plan should ensure that the entire tract of land has been drained and ready for development. Another hindrance to development at the time the plan was designed is along the proposed water front area. Before development can begin on the water front area, it must be drained and dried; therefore if there was a huge demand for development within this area, other temporary measures would have to be taken before construction could begin. The last threat to development is that construction of the resort area at Pointe aux Herbes depends on the construction of the highway. Because Pointe aux Herbes is located far from other developments, there is no readily available water and sewerage. Additionally, it may not attract many visitors because of its distant location. If the highway is not constructed prior to the development of the resort area, it could be very difficult to market the area for additional commercial expansion.

Orlandia Plan

The Orlandia Plan is a "comprehensive plan for the area generally bounded by Paris Road, Lake Pontchartrain, Chef Menteur Pass, and an area generally south of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway."¹⁷ (Figure 11) This master plan was developed in 1976 to amend the City's existing comprehensive plan and adopt a new plan for development of the Orlandia area. The plan was analyzed by the City Planning Commission; therefore for sake of discussion, their recommendations will also be considered in the SWOT

¹⁷ City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia:1

analysis. In order for the City Planning Commission to adopt the Orlandia Plan as a master plan for New Orleans East, they had to first review it, and then make decisions based on its planning. “The proposed plan of Orlandia does provide the opportunity to ask and answer the most basic Land Use question: should all or part of the subject area undergo urbanization?”¹⁸ An analysis of Orlandia’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, could afford the opportunity to answer this question.

The Orlandia area includes about 28,173 acres of land and the plans are divided into five categories. The categories are: A non-urban area, which is outside of the levee protection and includes 9,646 acres; an industrial area, which contains 5,072 acres; a main residential area that contains 8,968 acres; the metro-corridor, which parallels Interstate 10 and includes 2,232 acres; and the Lake residential area, which lies along the lake and consists of 1,810 acres. As noted on (Table 3), the total proposed percentage of acreage designated for industrial use is 22.1%, while the percentage of acreage for commercial is only 5.6%. There is also a total of 42.5% designated as open space. The following SWOT will also attempt to analyze whether enough land has been provided for commercial developments, considering the total acreage of 26.7% for residential use. There may or may not be enough commercial developments for residents to shop within their communities.

¹⁸ City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia:4

Figure 11 – Map of Orlandia Plan

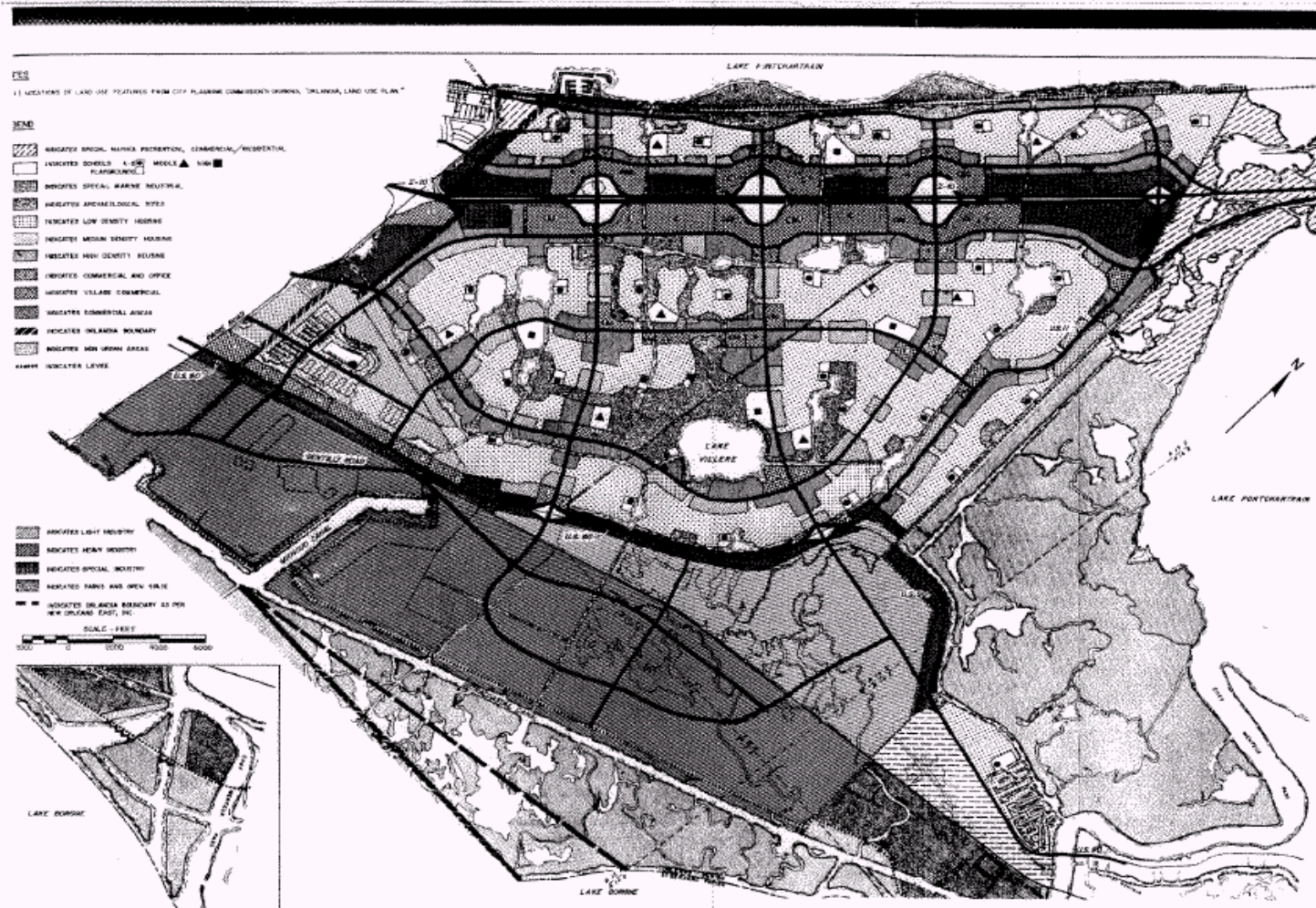


Table 3 – Total Acreage in Orlandia

Total Acreage in Orlandia		
Category	Acreage	% of Total
Residential		
Low	4,620	16.7
Medium	1,056	3.8
High	1,725	6.2
Commercial		
Neighborhood	333	1.2
Office	600	2.2
Other	618	2.2
Schools	873	3.1
Open Space*	11,772	42.5
Industrial		
Light	2,972	10.7
Heavy	<u>3,159</u>	<u>11.4</u>
Total Acres	27,728	100.0
(gross acres including streets)		
Street R. O. W. (Major street plan only)	<u>445</u>	
GRAND TOTAL	28,173	

* Includes a non-urban area of 9,646 acres which would not generally be utilized by residents of Orlandia.

Table adapted from Orlandia Plan

Strengths

There were several strengths pointed out in the Orlandia plan; of particular importance is the undeveloped land portion of the plan. One proposal was to have the 9,646 acres of unprotected land remain undeveloped; the plan has not even assigned streets for this area because it will not be developed. “Since the open space and recreational/wildlife land uses of the plan correlate to areas subject to tidal inundation, the designated separation of these land uses from that of the urban uses is highly

appropriate and desirable.”¹⁹ By allowing this portion to remain undeveloped, the city could avoid costly repairs to structures if damages from water were to occur. This also allows time for more definitive plans for this area to take place as well as time to evaluate the outcome of the areas within the levee protection. If the residential, commercial, and industrial areas within the levee protection system are able to withstand rising waters from hurricanes and flooding, then a determination may be made about the undeveloped land areas. The plan was designed to protect a majority of the land area within the levee from a hundred year storm/hurricane chance. Additionally, the area was designed to be protected from a two-hundred storm surge. The plan also suggested that the residential areas located between Interstate 10 and Lake Pontchartrain should be developed on pillars that are higher than the maximum flood elevation levels; this would allow for additional protection from rising waters. The City Planning Commission proposed that if development takes place in the area between Interstate 10 and Lake Pontchartrain, it should have the requirements as designated by the Orlandia plan and be built above the flood elevation levels.

Other strengths in the Orlandia plan included informing consumers and City public service facilities of the possibility of additional property maintenance costs that could arise as a result of the subsiding soil. Planners estimated the soil in Orlandia would be subject to eighty or ninety percent subsiding, because of its poor characteristics. If potential occupiers of the land were informed of the potential construction costs that may result from broken sewer lines, cracked pavement, or the like, this could protect the city from the extensive costs that might be associated with

¹⁹ City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia:12

repairs of this nature. The plan also suggested the development of a drainage system with pumps and canals to drain storm waters. This system is also designed to treat storm waters by preventing pollution of Lake Pontchartrain and it would also help minimize subsiding soil. The plan also prepared for preserving the wildlife and fisheries habitat; the planners used caution when developing the area to avoid possible harm that could occur.

The City Planning Commission felt that the land use plans proposed by Orlandia were consistent, which is a great aspect when planning. In the Orlandia plan, the percentage of space allocated for streets is upgraded by using less space, thus creating a more contemporary look. This makes the area more marketable to potential buyers and investors. The City Planning Commission also designed other methods of marketing the Orlandia area by suggesting the development of landmarks; "These design features can take place in a break in transportation such as traffic circles, major transit stops, formal squares, and so on. The inclusion of landmarks and nodal features provides the opportunity for the placement of monuments, formal gardens, water features, and other elements of ornamentation that are particularly identifiable."²⁰

The plan had several proposals regarding land use for industrial, commercial, and residential purposes that were advantageous. The plan proposed that the industrial area should only be used for industrial purposes because of its proximity to water, rail, and the highway. It was also suggested that the industrial area should contain a barrier that separates it from the residential areas. The only exception to development within the industrial area was the construction of recreational facilities that would be utilized by

²⁰ City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia:52

the industries. The Orlandia plan designed most of the commercial land use along Interstate 10 as opposed to within the residential areas, to allow more privacy and less traffic in neighborhoods. The planners also anticipated being able to accommodate the entire metropolitan area by locating commercial facilities along the interstate, also considered as the metro-corridor. In addition, the plan proposed that 33.4% (approximately one-third) of land use be designated to low density, single-family residences. This idea could encourage more homeownership and less renting, which could assist in raising the value of the area.

Another proposal in the plan was to strategically place elementary schools in locations where students would not have to cross major streets or highways when traveling to school. This idea takes into consideration possible accidents that could occur while children are walking across the street; one that would be a great aspect for potential homebuyers of the area. Other ways that the plan has accounted for safety include: providing a separate bike and pedestrian system for ease of transition between neighborhoods; and designing separate truck routes to reduce the environmental problems associated with large trucks, such as noise, flying debris, and the like. "The Orlandia Plan goes beyond the scope of the adopted Major Street Plan for New Orleans East by addressing the transit, bicycle and pedestrian modes of transportation, and by making recommendations for the incorporation of each mode into the Orlandia transportation system."²¹ The streets in the Orlandia area have been designed in a way that approximately eighty percent of the New Orleans East population would live within a three block radius of a major street, thus to encourage the use of buses as opposed to

²¹ City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia:99

automobiles when traveling to the Central Business District (CBD). The bus waiting areas have been designed with shelter to protect travelers from adverse weather conditions and an express bus has been proposed to allow direct travel to the CBD. This will allow faster traveling time for travelers, in addition to lower costs associated with traveling to the CBD, such as gas and parking.

Weaknesses

The Orlandia plan is a very well thought out plan that takes into consideration every aspect of development, however there are areas that show weaknesses in the plan. For starters, the plan proposed the development of wetlands, which can cause further subsiding of the soil. Although this can be minimized by the use of porous pavement in certain areas, it cannot be eliminated. The planners should have weighed their options to consider whether the benefits of developing on the wetlands surpass the costs and problems associated with subsiding soil. "The site of the proposed Orlandia development is predominantly marshland, much of which is contained within the existing levee system."²² Development in the Orlandia area could encounter many problems associated with sinking soil. Because the land base is extremely large, it presents an array of opportunities for developing the economy; however various methods of controlling soil problems will continue to be an issue. Another weakness associated with drainage is that the plan proposed the use of fewer major canals; this would require more drainage lines and create higher costs for the public. Additionally, the plan proposed using the canal system for recreational purposes; however this could not only cause pollution, but the city would not hold itself responsible in the event of injury or

²² City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia:35

death resulting from use of the canals. The public should not be held responsible for additional costs or be subjected to possible injury resulting from insufficient planning. The plan should consider the use of more major canals and eliminate the use of the canal for recreational purposes. An additional suggestion that should be reevaluated is that the plan only proposed one sewerage treatment plant because it should be enough to accommodate the Orlandia sewerage. However, "The Sewerage, Water, and Drainage Plan for Orlandia (Black and Veatch, 1968) called for the construction of two sewerage treatment facilities."²³ Future unforeseen problems with sewerage could result with the use of only one treatment plant.

Some problems associated with the Orlandia plan that were observed by the City Planning Commission involved the design of the plan. The City Planning Commission felt that the Interstate-10 corridor separated two communities with similar characteristics and that the plan could have been designed to link these communities together to create better cohesion. They also thought that the plan could have linked the industrial areas with the residential, commercial, and other areas by providing landscaped streets, water fronts, or green space between them. Additionally, the City Planning Commission did not agree with the plan's proposal to have village commercial centers located at major street intersections because it could cause safety problems for bicyclists and pedestrians traveling to and from the centers.

The Orlandia plan also exhibits some weaknesses associated with space allocation and estimations. "High density residential accounts for 8.1% of the overall land use in Orlandia which is almost three times higher than the City-wide average of

²³ City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia:59

3.6%.”²⁴ (Table 4) The percentages appear too high, which could encourage the development of more rental units as opposed to more homeownership throughout the Orlandia area. The plan also does not include a regional shopping center because its population estimates of 144,678 would not be enough to support a facility of this size. The City Planning Commission suggested that if the Orlandia plan used a population range, perhaps from 144,000 to 260,000, then a regional shopping center could be probable. Another weakness is that the plan has proposed placing playgrounds across from schools with no plans for larger parks; however, the City Planning Commission suggested replacing this proposal with a large centrally located park or several smaller parks. It could be more feasible to include both playgrounds across from schools and a large centrally located park; this could accommodate a wider range of uses. “The City of New Orleans has pursued a policy of playground acquisition adjoining school facilities. This policy has been central to the evaluation of school acreage demand and reflects the multi-purpose use of playgrounds for school activities during school hours and additional recreational activities after school and on weekends.”²⁵ There is no proposal in the Orlandia plan to have a playground for each school in the area. Additionally, not enough space was proposed and/or allocated for other park spaces, such as playfields, neighborhood parks, or the like. One final weakness observed is that in looking at tables 5 and 6, we find that the Orlandia plan reduced the total acres allotted for schools. If there is a future high demand for investment in the Orlandia area,

²⁴ City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia:68

²⁵ City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia:82

there may not be enough space allocated for schools in the event a large growth occurs, if we rely on these same plans for future development post-Katrina.

Table 4 – Land Use Comparisons

LAND USE COMPARISONS (GENERAL; IN PERCENTAGES)			
	City of New Orleans*	East New Orleans**	Orlandia (Master Plan— excluding the non urban area)***
Land Use Residential	31.3%	40.8%	31.1%
Low	19.1	20.6	18.7
Medium	8.6	14.1	4.3
High	3.6	6.1	8.1
Commercial	3.7	12.6	6.3
Industrial	13.3	12.4	24.8
Open Space/Public- Semi-Public	14.1	12.4	11.4
Streets	<u>37.6</u>	<u>21.8</u>	<u>26.4</u>
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

* 1965 Community Renewal Plan, New Orleans City Planning Commission. Percentages reflect actual land use survey of developed property. Vacant property not included in percentages.

** 1973 Land Use Plan for East New Orleans Area, New Orleans City Planning Commission. Percentages reflect proposed land use plan which includes both existing developed and vacant property. Percentages for streets is adjusted to reflect 13% for high density.

*** Figures adjusted to reflect 25% deduction for streets in all categories but open space/public semi public and a 13% street deduction for high density.

Table adapted from Orlandia Plan

Table 5 – Proposed School Acreage

THEORETICAL ACREAGE BASED UPON ENROLLMENT SUPPLEMENT

Elementary (K-5)	15 acres
Middle	32 acres
High	46 acres

Table adapted from Orlandia Plan

Table 6 – Revised School Acreage

<u>APPLICATION OF REVISED SCHOOL STANDARDS</u>			
	Total Schools	Acres/School	Total Acres
Elementary (K-5)	32	5	160
Middle	7	22	154
High	4	30	<u>120</u>
			434

Table adapted from Orlandia Plan

Opportunities

Aside from weaknesses in the Orlandia plan, it also presents great economic opportunities. The plan recommended that Big and Little Oak Islands be preserved and used for passive recreations since both islands are listed on the National Register of Historic places. This could be an opportunity for travelers to visit the area. The plan has also recommended that the wildlife and fisheries areas remain undeveloped to retain and preserve their natural state, which is another opportunity to draw visitors. Additionally, the Orlandia plan designed village commercial centers near lagoons and park spaces; this could give the area an aesthetic appeal, while creating a welcoming environment. The special marina recreational areas designed by Orlandia could also encourage an array of commercial and recreational investments into the area. The City Planning Commission recommended the development of a large regional park near Blind Lagoon and two additional smaller parks as opposed to the one large park suggested by the Orlandia Plan. This affords the opportunity for a variety of uses and recreational activities. The City Planning Commission also agreed with the plans' proposal of either preserving the lakefront for public recreational use or developing it in

a way that preserves its natural state; this would allow for a range of development options.

According to the City Planning Commission, if the Orlandia plans are adopted as is, the districts could be developed at zoning district maximums, which could result in a larger population than the 144,678 Orlandia originally proposed. A larger population base could be an opportunity for additional growth in the area. If Orlandia changes its population estimates of 144,678 to a range of 144,000 to 260,000 as suggested by the City Planning Commission, this could also be an opportunity for additional development into the area. Another opportunity for growth involves the open space in Orlandia. The City Planning Commission has observed that the total open space allotted in the Orlandia plan exceeds the city's open space averages; this provides additional space for future expansion. Although these opportunities could have been feasible pre-Katrina, it may not be practical for future developments post-Katrina.

“The metro corridor can contribute significantly to attracting regional headquarters of various firms to the New Orleans area and, thus, increase the City's economic and employment base.”²⁶ Because the development of the metro corridor could be an opportunity to serve the entire metropolitan area, the Orlandia Plan has suggested that the area be carefully designed to include the type of facilities that are in great marketing demand; this is another opportunity for growth. “Almost 25% of the total land use in Orlandia (excluding non urban) is proposed for industrial usage. Most of this acreage is located in the proposed industrial park.”²⁷ A large industrial area

²⁶ City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia:74

²⁷ City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia:80

encourages growth; it can attract many industries to the area and create more employment, thus encouraging more residents into the area. The City Planning Commission also felt that the industrial park area is in a great location, with access to everything that is needed like water, rail roads, and highways. Other opportunities for growth observed in the plan include the recommendation to add visual effects down the metro corridor, such as trees and other scenic features to showcase the metro corridor as the center of Orlandia. Additionally, the plan proposes to extend Lake Pontchartrain to create additional space for parks and other recreational facilities. All of these proposals would aid in developing the economy of Orlandia and increasing its possibilities for growth.

Threats

Many threats in planning could create problems that hinder development. One major threat in the Orlandia plan is the land that it sits on. “The geologic evolution of this area has produced a natural deltaic setting which has created both tremendous assets such as a fertile estuarine eco-system, and serious problems such as susceptibility to flooding and subsiding soils which makes urban development difficult.”²⁸ According to the plan, the soil in the area is highly organic and causes many structural problems. Delays in construction could also arise, requiring additional time for careful planning and filling of the soil. In the Orlandia plan, it was suggested that the area between Interstate 10 and Lake Pontchartrain remain in its natural state or sold to the public; however if the area was purchased by the public, it would mean an increase in taxes. Another suggestion was that if the area could not be sold to the public, then it

²⁸ City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia:17

should be developed. Problems associated with these suggestions are the threat of additional taxes and development on marshland. The public may not want to purchase property that would cost them more money, especially if there is no specific plan for the area. Additionally, if development were to occur on the marshland, it could pose more construction problems in addition to the soil problems the area is already facing. “The most significant environmental condition that affects design is the functioning marsh estuary between the I-10 right-of-way northern edge and Lake Pontchartrain. Its future viability as an estuary could be seriously affected by urban development within this area.”²⁹ Another problem in the Orlandia area is that it is subject to storm surges from Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Borgne; this could pose a threat when marketing the area for both residential and commercial development.

The City Planning Commission recommended that the Orlandia plan improve the design of their plan by creating a better cohesion and community relationship between all aspects of the community. They felt that community functions such as residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, and recreational all create a great community and that the Orlandia plan did not fully address or accommodate this function. When seeking areas of development, investors may look for areas that offer a variety of mixed uses, therefore if this is not addressed in the plan, it could hinder development. It was also recommended that the plan include buffers such as landscaping and other barriers in areas where residential communities and industrial and commercial facilities border each other. Another threat to development in Orlandia is its water supply. Since Sewerage and Water Board did not have enough finances to serve future development

²⁹ City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia: 124

in Orlandia, it would be the responsibility of the developers to finance additional water facilities.

There are also threats identified in the plan resulting from population estimates, design, and land use concepts. The first is that according to the City Planning Commission, population estimates from the Census Bureau has showed a continuous decline; therefore simply providing more land for the city to expand, will not necessarily cause an increase in the City's population. Also, since the Orlandia plan may have underestimated the population (144,678), the traffic volumes may also have been underestimated. A miscalculation in traffic volumes could mean that the area may not have the capacity to handle larger volumes of traffic, thus causing major traffic congestion. The City Planning Commission recommended that the Orlandia plan change its zoning requirements in the metro corridor in order to achieve the great marketing demand they are expecting. The Orlandia plan seeks to attract the entire metropolitan community to the metro corridor, however if the zoning is not changed to reflect a better marketing impression, interest in the area may not occur. The City Planning Commission also suggested that the plan provide additional land for major parks and school playgrounds. Parks and other recreational facilities are features that many look for when purchasing a home and if there is no space for it in the plan, this could deter potential homeowners. One final threat in the entire land use concept is that development in the Orlandia area may not be feasible; creating doubt in land use planning for the area. "In the Environmental Section of the analysis it was concluded that on the basis of the information now available there is a serious question as to the viability of this area. From the demographic and land use analysis section it was

concluded that there is no demonstrable community economic or social need for this area to be developed at this time. Thus...leads to the recommendation that this property be designated as a non-urban area on the land use plan at this time.”³⁰

1999 Land Use Plan

The 1999 Land Use Plan is a plan designed for the entire city of New Orleans. According to its introduction, it “chronicles change in a succinct manner, showing where the city has come from and where its citizens want to be...The goal of this 1999 Land Use Plan is to present agreement about ways to steer change in our city, based on modes of development which sustain and support the community in a sensible and responsible manner.”³¹ The Land Use Plan is separated into sections by district. New Orleans East is comprised of Districts Nine, Ten, and Eleven. The plans discuss population trends and current land use plans, which are both very crucial in developing any future plans. The data from the trends and current plans demonstrates precisely what the Land Use Plan is designed to show; where the area comes from and the direction that it is going.

Population tables (Tables 7, 8, and 9), from the 1999 Land Use Plan, show the demographics of each district. This is important because it shows us how the population has changed and how these statistics might influence the SWOT analysis. As we see from District Nine (Table 7), the overall population grew from 1980 to 2002; however as the Black population increased significantly, the Non-Black population decreased significantly. Additionally, as the percentage of residents under age 18 decreased slightly, the percentage of residents over age 64 increased significantly

³⁰ City Planning Commission Staff Analysis. April 7, 1976. Proposed Land Use and Transportation Plan for Orlandia:122

³¹ City Planning Commission. April 1999. New Orleans Land Use Plan:1

(especially from 1980-1990). While the average household income decreased from 1980-1990; it increased slightly from 1990-2002, although not to what it was in 1980.

Table 7 – District Nine Population Table

District Nine							
	1980	1990	1997	2002	% Change 80-90	% Change 90-97	% Change 97-2002
Population	62,381	75,518	73,649	71,837	21.1%	-2.5%	-2.5%
Black Population	25,260	50,866	52,790	53,413	101.4%	3.8%	1.2%
Non-Black Population	37,121	24,652	20,859	18,424	-33.6%	-15.4%	-11.7%
% Black	40.5%	67.4%	71.7%	74.4%	66.3%	6.4%	3.7%
% <18	31.4%	29.8%	29.1%	28.3%	-5.1%	-2.4%	-2.8%
% >64	5.5%	8.9%	9.6%	9.7%	61.9%	7.7%	1.3%
Households (HH)	21,271	26,876	25,969	25,289	26.4%	-3.4%	-2.6%
Average HH Size	2.92	2.77	2.79	2.79	-5.1%	0.8%	0.0%
Average HH Income*	\$22,580	\$20,042	\$20,662	\$21,448	-11.2%	3.1%	3.8%

*1980 Dollars
Source: Claritas, Marketquest System

In District Ten (Table 8), we find a growth in the population; that population growth was mainly due to a huge increase in the Black population. The Non-Black population decreased from 1980-1990, but then increased from 1990-2002. We find the same pattern with the average household income; a decrease from 1980-1990, then an increase from 1990-2002. Similar to the pattern in District Nine, we find that while the population under age 18 decreased slightly, the population over the age of 64 increased significantly.

Table 8 – District Ten Population Table

District Ten							
	1980	1990	1997	2002	% Change 80-90	% Change 90-97	% Change 97-2002
Population	12,839	13,947	15,459	16,105	8.6%	10.8%	4.2%
Black Population	4,527	6,954	7,542	7,727	53.6%	8.5%	2.5%
Non-Black Population	8,312	6,993	7,917	8,378	-15.9%	13.2%	5.8%
% Black	35.3%	49.9%	48.8%	48.0%	41.4%	-2.2%	-1.7%
% <18	41.1%	37.6%	39.5%	38.8%	-8.4%	4.9%	-1.8%
% >64	5.5%	8.7%	7.5%	7.6%	59.0%	-13.7%	1.5%
Households (HH)	3,637	4,018	4,388	4,557	10.5%	9.2%	3.9%
Average HH Size	3.47	3.33	3.39	3.40	-4.0%	1.7%	0.5%
Average HH Income*	\$17,519	\$15,124	\$16,556	\$18,162	-13.7%	9.5%	9.7%

*1980 Dollars

In District Eleven (Table 9), although the total population decreased slightly, the Black population became non-existent. The Non-Black population increased from 1980-1990, but then decreased from 1990-2002. As seen in Districts Nine and Ten, the under age 18 population in this district also decreased while the over age 64 population increased. The average household income in this district has increased significantly, although there are fewer residents.

Table 9 – District Eleven Population Tables

District Eleven							
	1980	1990	1997	2002	% Change 80-90	% Change 90-97	% Change 97-2002
Population	1,827	1,655	1,626	1,595	-9.4%	-1.8%	-1.9%
Black Population	683	0	0	0	-100.0%	N/A	N/A
Non-Black Population	1,144	1,655	1,626	1,595	44.7%	-1.8%	-1.9%
% Black	37.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-100.0%	N/A	N/A
% <18	23.6%	16.7%	12.9%	12.0%	-29.1%	-22.8%	-7.3%
% >64	16.5%	16.9%	22.6%	23.3%	2.7%	33.4%	3.1%
Households (HH)	673	690	672	660	2.5%	-2.6%	-1.8%
Average HH Size	2.46	2.40	2.42	2.42	-2.6%	0.9%	0.0%
Average HH Income*	\$14,675	\$19,378	\$22,569	\$27,676	32.0%	16.5%	22.6%

*1980 Dollars

Source: Claritas, Marketquest System

Based on the statistics in the tables, we find that the average household income did not increase as the population increased in Districts Nine and Ten; however in District Eleven, the average household income increased significantly as the population

decreased. There are patterns in all three tables that show an increase in the Black population while the Non-Black population and household income decreased. In District Eleven as the Black population became non-existent, the average household income increased significantly. It could be concluded that as more Blacks moved into the area, the average household income decreased perhaps because of lower incomes. Also, the increase in the population over age 64 usually means more residents on a fixed income, which may also have contributed to the decrease in average household income. It can also be determined from the statistics that the spending patterns in the types of goods and services needed in the area has changed as a result of the shifts in income; less money usually means less spending. Less spending contributes to a decline in economic activity.

1997 was the most current land use data at the time the 1999 Land Use Plan was conducted; therefore for sake of discussion, the 1997 data tables for each district are used (Tables 10, 11, and 12). Only 11.3% of the total existing land in New Orleans East is occupied by commercial use; while 48.6% of the total existing land is occupied by residential use. Additionally, 37.4% of the total existing land is occupied by industrial use; while only 2.7% of the total existing land is occupied by institutional use. This data is also an important component in analyzing the Land Use Plan. In order for the economy in New Orleans East to grow, there must be additional income generating entities in the community. One way to do this is to create an economy that draws residents from other communities into New Orleans East by enhancing commercial opportunities. Currently, many residents in New Orleans East travel outside of their community for goods and services offered in other areas of the city. With only 11.3% of

the available land being designated as commercial use, New Orleans East has not offered what its residents need; quality goods and services, specialty stores, unique shops, etc. Thus, not only are there limited commercial attractions in New Orleans East to encourage the residents to spend money within their community, there is also relatively little to draw residents from outside of the community to come in and spend money. A SWOT analysis of the 1999 proposed land use plans will help in determining what land structure would have been most beneficial to the area's success.

Table 10 – District Nine Land Use

**Existing Land Use
District Nine**

	Acreage	% of Planning District
Residential-Single Family	3,634	28.4%
Residential-Single/Two*	1,054	8.3%
Residential-Multifamily	583	4.6%
Residential-Marine	0	0.0%
Commercial	1,344	10.5%
Industrial	3,203	25.1%
Institutional	328	2.6%
Wetland	1,634	12.8%
Parkland	955	7.5%
Unclassified	37	0.2%
Total	12,772	100.0%

*The category "Residential-Single/Two" describes areas where there is either a mixture of single and two-family houses, or where two-family houses predominate.

Table 11 – District Ten Land Use

District Ten		
	Acreage	% of Planning District
Residential-Single Family	595	2.6%
Residential-Single/Two*	0	0.0%
Residential-Multifamily	197	0.9%
Residential-Marine	23	0.1%
Commercial	187	0.8%
Industrial	2,634	11.4%
Institutional	8	0.1%
Wetland	5,202	22.6%
Parkland	14,123	61.3%
Unclassified	56	0.2%
Total	23,025	100.0%

*The category "Residential-Single/Two" describes areas where there is either a mixture of single and two-family houses, or where two-family houses predominate.

Table 12 – District Eleven Land Use

District Eleven		
	Acreage	% of Planning District
Residential-Single Family	207	0.5%
Residential-Single/Two*	1	0.0%
Residential-Multifamily	0	0.0%
Residential-Marine	1,348	3.2%
Commercial	0	0.0%
Industrial	378	0.9%
Institutional	1	0.0%
Wetland	32,304	77.7%
Parkland	7,091	17.1%
Unclassified	247	0.6%
Total	41,577	100.0%

*The category "Residential-Single/Two" describes areas where there is either a mixture of single and two-family houses, or where two-family houses predominate.

Strengths

In order to propose land use plans for New Orleans East, the City Planning Commission began by recognizing the many strengths of the area. This is crucial to determining a way of building upon those strengths. "New Orleans East has many significant physical assets that are important both to the entire city, and to the three

planning districts comprising this part of town. New Orleans East contains all of the various land uses that make up the city of New Orleans as a whole.”³² According to the 1999 Land Use Plan, New Orleans East has many strengths such as; the only shopping center available in the city of New Orleans other than those located downtown, is located right in the center of New Orleans East; the largest land available for industrial use is located in New Orleans East; New Orleans East holds the largest public recreational and natural use land in the city; and the population decline in New Orleans East has been minimal compared to that in the city of New Orleans, which makes the community very sustainable.

The Land Use Plan recommended that the wetlands located in New Orleans East be protected from large scale development and that any future development be limited to educational use. New Orleans East has been able to maintain its wetlands for many years and since Bayou Sauvage is recognized “as one of the dominant land uses in the East and a resource critical to well-being of the entire city”³³, preserving these wetlands and adding an educational component could generate needed funds for New Orleans East. The Plan also recommended redevelopment of Kenilworth Mall and The Plaza Shopping Center and the new development of other major commercial plans in order to attract visitors to the area. As evidenced in the 1997 land use tables above, only 11.3% of the available land is designated for commercial use; therefore, New Orleans East would benefit greatly if more of its land was designated for future commercial use. Other areas of the city, such as Jefferson Parish and the West bank have been able to not only attract visitors, but they have been able to create additional development

³² City Planning Commission. April 1999. New Orleans Land Use Plan:219

³³ City Planning Commission. April 1999. New Orleans Land Use Plan:221

because of their large-scale commercial activity. Another strength of the Land Use Plan is its recommendation to reduce the amount of multi-family residential units to include more office space and neighborhood businesses. The development of more office space and neighborhood business will generate more jobs for New Orleans East, thus reducing the unemployment rate and creating a boost to the economy.

The 1999 Land Use Plan recommended completion of the following studies in order to serve as a guide for future plans in New Orleans East:

- Transportation studies to identify and pursue improvements in traffic management on the high rise bridge and alternatives to the few corridors into and across New Orleans East. Consideration of transit alternatives should be included, with particular reference to how public transportation can complement and improve land use patterns.
- Enforcement of zoning regulations and other city codes
- Monitoring for any increase in area or number of blighted structures;
- Monitoring to anticipate new capital projects for additional police and fire stations and other city services.
- As part of the work on the revision to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, develop a “New Orleans East strategic renaissance plan” for future development decisions that ensures successful development of current projects, supports new projects, maximizes present and future capital improvement resources and balances growth, economic development and the quality of life in New Orleans East in accordance with the City Planning Commission’s Strategic Renaissance District Administration Policy. This strategic renaissance plan should include the development of design guidelines for specific neighborhoods and commercial areas to ensure harmonious relationships between existing, proposed and infill developments.³⁴

The Plan seeks to cover all aspects of the economy with recommending the completion of these studies. It could give potential investors some assurance that New Orleans

³⁴ City Planning Commission. April 1999. New Orleans Land Use Plan:223-224

East is striving to create a very vibrant community, while increasing economic development for the city of New Orleans.

Weaknesses

Although New Orleans East has development potential, there are many weaknesses in the area that may need to be corrected prior to development. The 1999 Land Use Plan recognizes these weaknesses as such: the residential and commercial decline has created huge vacancies, especially along I-10 that create negative impression for potential investors; old and decaying apartment complexes; and large-scale development may affect the wetlands, park areas, and low-density residential communities. Other major weaknesses of New Orleans east include:

- Limited transportation corridors as alternatives to the high rise bridge, and problems with traffic management on the high rise;
- Improved public services (street surfaces, drainage, maintenance of public facilities) and the timely anticipation of needed new services (especially police and fire) as the area grows;
- Illegal dumping;
- Problem corridors such as Chef Menteur, with concentrations of alcoholic beverage outlets, adult entertainment, massage parlors, live entertainment and similar problematic uses; and
- Overall enforcement not only of zoning regulations but also of public standards regarding litter, loitering, management of ABO's and so forth.³⁵

These weaknesses of New Orleans East are important in analyzing the weaknesses of the 1999 Land Use Plan.

The Plan has several recommendations that may not be valuable, thus outlining several weaknesses of the plan. To begin with, the Plan suggests mixed use

³⁵ City Planning Commission. April 1999. New Orleans Land Use Plan:220

development on the west side of Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge. If their earlier recommendation called for preserving Bayou Sauvage, creating mixed use development could promote additional development, thereby preventing preservation of this area. Currently, there is an archeological site on Oak Island that the 1999 Land Use Plan has marked for possible development; however the site is privately owned and therefore the Plan's recommendation must create zoning that helps preserve this site. This is considered a weakness of the plan, because it anticipates potential development around a site that it truly has no control over. Since the site is privately owned, potential development surrounding the site could fail because of improper zoning and therefore should not be considered in the plan. "Two of the goals of the 1999 Land Use Plan are to concentrate industrial land uses in New Orleans Regional Business Park and along the Industrial Canal, and to create buffer zones as transitions to other land uses, particularly residential land uses...The 1999 Land Use Plan for New Orleans East allows for future development of residential areas, while also strengthening and improving current residential and commercial uses...Multi-family uses are projected to continue along the service corridors, primarily through redevelopment at lower densities of the blighted housing along these areas."³⁶ One aspect that these three recommendations have in common is additional residential land use; this creates a weakness in the Plan's proposal. The residential area in New Orleans East covers approximately 48.6% of the total available land, of which some of these residential areas are blighted and/or in need of renovation. In order to boost economic development in New Orleans East, there needs to be more commercial and possibly institutional uses as opposed to additional residential uses. Additionally, industrial land

³⁶ City Planning Commission. April 1999. New Orleans Land Use Plan:223

uses may involve working with hazardous materials, thus as some research shows, adding residential land use near the industrial land use could create more of a income/racial divide of lower income individuals and minorities. “Environmental justice activists and researchers argue, among other things, that the poor, the working class, and people of color are disproportionately burdened by environmental hazards...if residential segregation consistently aggravates racial inequality, then residential segregation should increase black representation in environmentally hazardous neighborhoods.”³⁷

Opportunities

One major opportunity that New Orleans East has is the availability of land. There are vast areas of undeveloped land in New Orleans East that could potentially build a great economy for this community as well as for the City of New Orleans, if properly developed. “Long term, these development opportunities represent not only population increases but also significant potential employment for the city.”³⁸ Although the population in New Orleans East has not declined as fast as the city’s population, an increase due to additional job opportunities could encourage more homeownership. Additional homeownership in New Orleans East could help change its image by creating a cleaner, safer, and more productive community.

The 1999 Land Use Plan offers some recommendations, which are great opportunities for New Orleans East to take advantage of. The Land Use Plan suggests preserving and/or improving all of the recreational and natural areas of Joe Brown Park, the Louisiana Nature and Science Center, the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge,

³⁷ Downey, Liam. 2003. *Spatial Measurement, Geography, and Urban Racial Inequality*. University of Colorado at Boulder. Social Forces:939-940

³⁸ City Planning Commission. April 1999. New Orleans Land Use Plan:219

and redeveloping the old Lincoln Beach. Additionally, the Plan suggests creating more green space as a buffer for possible rising waters from the Industrial Canal. By preserving these areas, New Orleans East may be able to attract more visitors to the area and thus create an opportunity for growth in the long-term. Another suggestion included in the Land Use Plan is to develop Chef Mentuer Highway and Almonaster Boulevard's lakeside into mixed use areas; this can also promote growth in the community. The Land Use Plan further recommends developing the I-510 corridor, near the former Six Flags Theme Park area, into commercial land use and also additional development of single-family homes in the Eastover subdivision. Both recommendations are excellent opportunities for growth. With additional commercial sites, such as restaurants, hotels, and other entertainment venues, the city would have a perfect opportunity to build the economy by displaying assets other than the Canal Street and French Quarter areas. This could also be a great way to market the economy for a new theme park or entertainment venue, since Six Flags will not return to the area. Additionally, Eastover is a very high income subdivision that includes a golf course; thus, continued development of this area could generate additional taxes for the city and possibly bring some well known golf tournaments into the area.

Threats

Although New Orleans East could be a potential growth avenue for the city with great economic opportunities, there are currently some major threats to development in this area. To begin with, if the city is not able to rebound or shows very slow signs of recovery post-Katrina, this could not only be detrimental for the City but also for other areas surrounding the City, including New Orleans East. New Orleans' economy is

currently faced with not having enough employees for businesses to be fully staffed; therefore many must reduce the times that they are open. Additionally, there could be a rise in unemployment rates due to the lack of professional jobs available. Many corporate businesses have not returned to New Orleans due to the uncertainty of the economy. This could pose a threat to the City's economy. If the city is not able to generate the resources needed for financial stability, then this causes a problem for the nation; possibly creating a National recession.

Some of the residents of New Orleans East have returned and begun the rebuilding process on their homes; some with the intent of living in their homes, while others with the intent of selling or renting them. Which ever decision the homeowners make, there must be significant money generating within the area for survival. With not much sign of rebuilding from the commercial businesses, especially supermarkets, gas stations, food services, etc., the future of New Orleans appears bleak at best. The 1999 Land Use Plan recommends commercial development in New Orleans East, which could currently present a problem. "The local residential base cannot support an unlimited amount of commercial activity...While new commercial areas are indicated in the Plan, their development should be dependent on either a new regional market, or sufficient growth in the surrounding area to support both existing and new commercial activity."³⁹ The city must find ways to draw a more creative market in New Orleans East, while seeking to reduce the crime and poverty rates. There must be sufficient buying power and income generating within the area. One way to do this could be by reducing the number of low-income housing and improving the schools available in the area; this could be a way to attract major investors. Currently New Orleans East has a

³⁹ City Planning Commission. April 1999. New Orleans Land Use Plan:222

clean slate due to Hurricane Katrina; this area should be carefully redeveloped to support the city's new visions.

Chapter 4

Development in Surrounding Areas of New Orleans

The city of New Orleans has a long history of successful developments. Many areas have been able to flourish and sustain their growth amidst any obstacles they may have been faced with. Three examples of such areas are St. Tammany Parish, Jefferson Parish, and the West bank (a community to the west of New Orleans that includes parts of Orleans and Jefferson Parishes). These areas have proven to be very viable when it comes to development in Metropolitan New Orleans. They are very vibrant communities that seem to have far surpassed New Orleans East in their development plans and future potential.

The article, “Balanced Ethical Perspective to State and Local Economic Development Policies”, defines “economic development’ more broadly as a process of creating and managing economic growth with the objective of enhancing residents’ quality of living and providing support for the pursuit of human values.”⁴⁰ In looking at the following parishes, it is evident that their plans for economic development have fostered an environment for growth that has improved the quality of life of its residents and promoted the very aspects of what its residents feel are important in a great community.

St. Tammany Parish

St. Tammany Parish has a population of over 200,000 residents and covers approximately 540,000 acres of land (Figure 12 in Appendix B). It is located to the east of New Orleans East, separated by a 24 mile bridge. St. Tammany Parish is

⁴⁰ Ho, Alfred Tat-kei. 2000. *Balanced Ethical Perspective to State and Local Economic Development Policies*. Iowa State University. Global Virtue Ethics Review:176

conveniently located approximately 30 minutes from the City of New Orleans, less than 50 miles from two of the largest ports, and less than 100 miles from other metropolitan areas. Noted as “the fastest growing parish in Louisiana”⁴¹, St. Tammany Parish has enjoyed great economic success.

There are many aspects of St. Tammany Parish that have promoted growth in the area. To begin with, St. Tammany Parish started as a large residential community; this allowed many businesses to migrate there. What began as an initial need for retail and service related venues, quickly evolved into a “big business” based environment employing many of St. Tammany’s residents. Corporations have been able to flourish in the parish due to its low cost of doing business and excellent business environment. This has allowed the parish to enjoy a tremendous increase in its future economic and employment growth, which aids in its low unemployment rates. Another contributor for growth in St. Tammany Parish is its high quality of life. The parish’s crime rates and costs of living are both lower than that of the City of New Orleans. The residents of the parish have higher educational levels, which makes the median income higher than the City’s. St. Tammany Parish has a nationally recognized public school system, whose students’ standardized and college entrance average tests scores are higher than the nation’s. The parish also offers a wide array of leisure activities. It has a very high-tech public and private health care industry that offers extraordinary service to its clients. St. Tammany also offers leading retirement communities servicing independent and assisted-living individuals. Following Hurricane Katrina, many residents from other areas of the city chose St. Tammany Parish as their new home, which tremendously increased the Parish’s population and generated extensive traffic congestion. The

⁴¹ www.stedf.org. St. Tammany Economic Development Foundation. *About St. Tammany Parish*

Parish will need to reevaluate its current land use plans and organize additional developments in order to maintain the stability of this area.

In comparison to New Orleans East, St. Tammany Parish is equivalent in scope and size, but in looking at the tremendous growth of its community, New Orleans East fails in comparison. In looking at the two qualities of economic development that Alfred Tat-kei Ho defines (enhancement of quality of life and supporting human values), one finds that St. Tammany Parish has accomplished this, which is proven in its growth record. The parish summarizes its community as having a “superb quality of life”, offering ‘low business costs, availability of labor, superb school system, low crime rate, and first-rate medical facilities.’⁴² If these characteristics were measured against New Orleans East, we would find that New Orleans East has not committed itself to achieving successful “economic development”.

Jefferson Parish

Jefferson Parish is the first suburban area of New Orleans, with a population of over 455,000; it is comprised of two economic areas (Figure 13 in Appendix C). The areas are separated by the Crescent City Connection Bridge on one end and the Huey P. Long Bridge on the other end. One area is located on the East bank of the bridges and the other is located on the West bank. The entire parish sits to the west of the City of New Orleans and is the largest parish in Louisiana, covering approximately 370 square miles.

There are various characteristics of Jefferson Parish that encouraged growth into the area. To begin with, many people who were seeking to escape the busy and noisy

⁴² www.stedf.org. St. Tammany Economic Development Foundation. *About St. Tammany Parish*

city life sought solitude in Jefferson Parish. The opening of the Crescent City Connection Bridge in 1958 created an easier access to New Orleans and thus generated an increase in development in the parish. Jefferson Parish is located only 15 minutes away from downtown New Orleans, has easy access to railways and two of the largest ports. It is also home to a major airline facility for the entire city; the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. "Its proximity (immediately adjacent) to New Orleans and its position around the Mississippi River have spurred both residential and industrial development."⁴³ Located in Jefferson Parish are two nationally recognized hospitals, Ochsner Clinic Foundation and West Jefferson Medical Center, specializing in the top heart and cancer treatments. These hospitals along with other businesses in the parish present it as a great place for businesses to operate. The high quality workforce, business and tax incentives that are offered, allowed many businesses to migrate there. Once businesses moved into the area, it attracted more residents seeking quality jobs with higher paid salaries, which allowed the unemployment rates to decrease. Jefferson Parish was also able to spur development into the area by offering a place rich in its culture and heritage; it offers some of the top recreational opportunities such as bird watching and fishing. In addition to the low sales taxes and low costs of living⁴⁴, the parish offers its diverse community many large shopping venues and specialty stores. However, since Hurricane Katrina, Jefferson Parish has been plagued with escalated crime rates and higher than average traffic volumes, which may eventually deter potential residents and business owners if these issues are not diminished. Aside from these problems, the residents of this community

⁴³ Angelou Economic Advisors. March 2000. *The Jefferson Edge*:5

⁴⁴ www.jedco.com. Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission. *Jefferson Parish Profile*

still enjoy the benefits of a high quality of life with an array of activities, events and eating facilities. The residents of this parish do not have to travel very far to enjoy all that the parish has to offer, which is another great incentive for living in Jefferson Parish as opposed to living in the city.

In comparison to New Orleans East, Jefferson Parish is much larger in scope and has more residents, which has not prohibited the parish from creating a great quality of life and a great economy for its residents. In looking at Alfred Tat-kei-Ho's description of "economic development" above, we find that Jefferson Parish has been very successful in growing its economy and generating a place where its residents' values come first. Evidence of Jefferson Parish's efforts to grow the economy can be seen in its early development plans. "Economic development planning efforts in Jefferson Parish can be traced back to the Overall Economic Development Plan created by the Regional Planning Commission in 1977. This plan recommended targeting growth industries to diversify the economy."⁴⁵ After each decline in the economy, Jefferson Parish immediately sought other measures and development plans for boosting its economy. In 1982 another economic development plan was generated by the Greater Jefferson Port Commission; followed by the formation of another group in 1986 called the Economic Development and Growth Effort. In 1987, a revitalization plan for the Harvey Canal was developed by Morphy, Mokofsky, Mumphrey, and Masson; and the Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) was created to promote a lucrative market for the parish. Additionally, JEDCO developed the Overall Economic Development Plan (1992), the Strategic Operational Plan (1999), and The Jefferson Edge (an economic development strategic plan developed with

⁴⁵ Angelou Economic Advisors. March 2000. *The Jefferson Edge*:7

Angelou Economic Advisors, Inc., 2000). In 2005, JEDCO updated its Jefferson Edge plan with the assistance of GCR & Associates and the University of New Orleans Center for Economic Development. Based on these proactive measures Jefferson Parish has taken, the area seems to have remained on the forefront when it comes to economic development, which demonstrates the sustainability of its communities.

The West Bank

The West Bank of New Orleans consists of the Algiers (Figure 14 in Appendix D) and New Aurora/English Turn (Figure 15 in Appendix E) areas of the city. “Algiers and English Turn encompass that portion of Orleans Parish on the West Bank of the Mississippi River. Algiers is bounded by the River, the Intracoastal Waterway, and the Jefferson Parish line. English Turn is bounded by the River, the Intracoastal Waterway, and the Plaquemines Parish line.”⁴⁶ Development in both areas began in the early 19th century and currently, there are nine separate neighborhoods included in Algiers and English Turn.

Ferry service in the Algiers area carried residents from the East bank to the West bank on a daily basis. The customers using the Ferry were so pleased with the service that it generated residential development in Algiers. Residents seeking to escape the crowded city also found refuge and higher grounds on the West bank. Irish, Italian, German, and freed African Immigrants migrating to the West bank sparked population growth along with increases in the job market because of the trade industry. The creation of jobs at the Railroad Yard near the Mississippi River in the early 19th century also increased development of the area. In the 1950s, after the opening of the

⁴⁶ City Planning Commission. April 1999. New Orleans Land Use Plan:225

Mississippi River Bridge, the Aurora neighborhood in Algiers began to see significant growth; this created an avenue for additional residential and commercial developments. Additional residential development began with the opening of the City's last public housing community. The William J. Fisher Housing Development opened in 1965, generating approximately 1000 housing units for low-income families and elderly residents. In order to ease traffic congestion, a second bridge called the Crescent City Connection was constructed in the 1980s; this also generated additional growth for the West bank. Many people began to migrate to the area because of the ease of traveling from one side of the river to another. As a result of the increase in residents, more business development began due to the need for goods and services. The Algiers area also includes a Navy Base that continues to generate residential and commercial demand in the area.

Unlike Algiers, English Turn is more rural and did not see significant development until after the opening of the Mississippi River Bridge and again after the opening of the Crescent City Connection Bridge. English Turn did not see additional development until 1990 with the opening of the English Turn Subdivision. This subdivision is a gated community for very high-income residents seeking a private and upscale life equipped with a golf course and country club. Although development was slower than that of Algiers, this area is much smaller in population. It has large areas of undeveloped land which could create additional growth. English Turn includes a Wilderness Park and the Audubon Species Survival and Research Center, which continues to encourage future growth potential for the area.

Much like New Orleans East, the West bank has a large residential base, which covers approximately 61% of the land. However, the West bank's residential base include more single and double family housing, where New Orleans East includes more multi-family housing. Additionally, the West bank has large amounts of undeveloped land; a characteristic we also see in New Orleans East. What separates the two is the fact that the West bank is continuing to spur developments both residential and commercial. The West bank offers massive transportation access to and from the area via various bridges and ferry services. The West bank has very low crime rates, several country clubs that provide an atmosphere for upscale living and activities, and there is also an excellent school system with nationally recognized schools in this area. Both New Orleans East and the West bank are communities of Orleans Parish, however very different in nature. The West bank's community has an economy that is more diversified than New Orleans East, creating a great hub for development. Its proximity to downtown New Orleans and Jefferson Parish (a very large growing community) is also a unique feature of the West bank. The West bank includes historic neighborhoods and development in the area is further fueled by those interested in preserving these historic areas. The West bank has also proven itself as a viable community that improves the quality of life offered to its residents as described in our earlier example of "economic development" (Ho, Alfred Tat-kei. 2000). People in support of this area boast of having a great economy. "...with quick and easy access to the New Orleans Central Business District, explosive commercial growth, rapid neighborhood development, and a growing population of young professionals and families. Algiers lives up to its reputation as New Orleans' gateway to great living."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ www.aedf.com. Algiers Economic Development Foundation. *About Algiers*

Chapter 5

New Orleans East Economy Post Katrina and Its Development Potential

New Orleans East has been completely devastated by Hurricane Katrina. The economy appears dim at best. One year since the storm, there are still no signs of medical services, police and fire stations, supermarkets, gas stations, or other essential services and supplies in the area. Many residents still have not returned to the area and remain uncertain of whether or not they should. Residents and business owners of New Orleans East are hesitant about rebuilding because of the uncertainty of the area's viability. Future development in this area may be based on the city's plans; since the current state of New Orleans East is very similar to most of the city. There are various components of the New Orleans East economy that need to be reviewed prior to determining what its development potential might be.

Currently New Orleans East has a clean slate. There is an opportunity to undo any previous plans that did not work or that did not generate enough resources for the city. The infrastructure however needs a vast overhaul for this community to be safe from future hurricanes and flooding. "The best flood protection is common sense and self-actuation...the government must also provide infrastructure, such as police and fire protection, pump operators, and of course levees to protect people and property that might be left behind."⁴⁸ In order for residents to feel safe, there must be an improved protection system planned and implemented in the area. "In New Orleans East, the Maxent levee along Paris Road...needs to be strengthened and raised, and combined with the railroad right of way which runs near Highway 90, could provide a number of

⁴⁸ Infrastructure Committee. Levee and Flood Protection Sub-committee. January 18, 2006. Bring New Orleans Back:8-9

containment areas in New Orleans East.”⁴⁹ The flood walls surrounding New Orleans East were scheduled for completion at pre-Katrina levels in June of this year. June of next year (2007), the flood walls are scheduled for completion at higher levels of protection. Additional flood control structures that are needed will take approximately five years to complete. These deadlines mean that it will take years for the communities to be considered safe; this does not give some of the residents much hope. “The East Bank of New Orleans suffered severe flooding and loss of life. It is here where the community is most sensitive and anxious for solutions”⁵⁰

Many of the residents are adamant about rebuilding the economy of New Orleans East; they want to return and are willing to commit themselves to helping in the efforts. Areas on higher ground that did not sustain as much flooding, such as Chef Mentuer Highway and Haynes Boulevard, are ready for immediate rebuilding. There are some smaller businesses that have re-opened in these areas. “The Chef Highway’s high ground location is one example of the multiple uses of existing elevated conditions as part of internal levee and storm water management system.”⁵¹ Other commercial and residential areas outside of the high ground locations suffered extensive flooding and damages. Currently, only a very small percentage of residents have begun rebuilding, but there are no signs of rebuilding from larger businesses like The Plaza Mall, Wal-Mart, Sams, Eastlake Mall, fast foods restaurants, Winn Dixie, Sav-a-Center, etc. This means there are few jobs in New Orleans East. The New Orleans East Branch Library, Pendleton Memorial Methodist Hospital, Lakeland Medical Center,

⁴⁹Infrastructure Committee. Levee and Flood Protection Sub-committee. January 18, 2006. Bring New Orleans Back:10

⁵⁰ Infrastructure Committee. Levee and Flood Protection Sub-committee. January 18, 2006. Bring New Orleans Back:8

⁵¹ Urban Planning Committee. January 20, 2006. Action Plan for New Orleans Executive Summary:8

Ochsner Clinic, all of the other medical and dental facilities, and all of the office buildings were also tremendously damaged and show no signs of re-opening. There is only one public elementary school available, which did not open until late April; another public high school was scheduled to open for the 2006-2007 school year. Additional problems that New Orleans East is faced with include the potential rise in insurance premiums and increasing energy costs. Also, the City of New Orleans has to endure extensive sewerage and water costs in order to pump enough water into the area for those that have returned. These massive problems may deter many of the businesses and residents from returning. If the residents do not return to the area it will be very difficult for the economy in New Orleans East to survive. With a very grim outlook on this economy, it will also be very difficult to lure potential investors into the area. Given the uncertainty of the economy, the city will have to put forth much effort and be very creative if it wants this area to recover.

Although New Orleans East has a huge land base and the potential to develop on this land could be great for the city's economy, many experts do not feel that the area should be rebuilt in the near future. "The last zone' (according to expert panelist, the last investment zone that should be rebuilt) 'which included some of the city's hardest hit neighborhoods, needs additional study, but could have the potential for mass buyouts and future green space,...Those areas include most of eastern New Orleans east and Gentilly; the northern part of Lakeview; and parts of the Lower 9th Ward, Broadmoor, Mid-City and Hollygrove."⁵² There are however, taskforces such as the New Orleans East Business Association and some community groups that have worked to change this outlook, plan better neighborhoods, and help market New Orleans East

⁵² Karr, Martha. November 19, 2005. Times Picayune. *Rebuilding should begin on high ground, group says.*

as a great place for potential development. The Bring Back New Orleans Commission has made plans for the New Orleans Regional Business Park. Development in this area could create great potential for the rest of New Orleans East. “For the maritime, oil and gas, military, and film industries the plan includes...Prioritizing investments in the New Orleans Regional Business Park in Eastern New Orleans for new manufacturing industry development.”⁵³ By creating a new industry in an area of New Orleans that has a huge land base, the city may be able to market this area for new commercial and residential developments. New industry would mean more jobs, which could spur other developments such as workforce training facilities, child care facilities, additional food services, more homeownership, more public education sites, etc. The potential for development in New Orleans East could be great if the right plans are set in motion. This area could finally see the type of growth that has happened in other surrounding areas of New Orleans.

⁵³ Bring New Orleans Back Commission. May 2006. Rebuilding New Orleans. *Economic Development*:23

Chapter 6

Other Redevelopment Strategies

Although Hurricane Katrina has been considered one of the worst natural disasters in the nation, it certainly has not been the first and it probably will not be the last. What determines a city's resilience is not if they are prepared for the disaster; it's how well they plan after the disaster. It's like the famous quote, "if you fail to plan, you plan to fail". Planners, governmental officials, citizen groups, and others have been using their resources to strategize after disasters for many years. Some plans have had great outcomes while others have been met with adversities. For a metropolitan city like New Orleans to rebound after such a horrible disaster, there must be great master planning in place. This can happen not only by hiring the best, but also by looking into what has been accomplished by others under the same or similar circumstances. Some other disasters in our history that could serve as examples for various reasons would be Hurricane Andrew in Florida and the Hanshin Earthquake in Kobe, Japan. Additionally, looking into New Orleans' current strategies post Hurricane Katrina and weighing it against what has worked, just might give some insight on ways to rebuild New Orleans East.

Florida's strategies after Hurricane Andrew

On August 24, 1992, Miami, which is located in south Florida's Dade County, was hit with devastating Hurricane Andrew. Much like Louisiana prior to Katrina, Florida's emergency preparedness plans were not in place prior to Andrew. Approximately 250,000 people were immediately displaced from Miami-Dade County. Prior to Katrina, Andrew was the costliest hurricane to ever hit the United States. It

caused approximately 26 billion dollars of damage (Hartwig, Robert P., 2002) and caused 100,000 residents to leave south Florida permanently (Pittman, Craig, 2002). There was also a permanent loss of approximately 20,000 jobs and a loss of one of Florida's largest economic engines; Homestead Air force Base, which employed about 8,000 people and generated \$400 million per year for Florida's economy, was significantly damaged by Hurricane Andrew. The government could not afford to rebuild the facility that was 97% damaged by the hurricane. It was clear that Florida had a great deal of work to do in rebuilding their economy.

The governor during Hurricane Andrew was Governor Lawton Chiles; he immediately began creating tougher building codes on rebuilding residential and business properties. Florida's Small Business Emergency Bridge (SBEB) began providing short term, emergency loans that offered free interest, quick approval, and no payments during the 90-180 day maturity period. Additionally, the EDA offered recovery and redevelopment programs that provided \$50.9 million in grants. Governor Chiles decided to begin making preparations for future possible disasters by creating a model emergency management system. This system involved plans such as creating a sales tax to provide funding for future recovery efforts and designing programs to strengthen intrastate and interstate preparedness. Governor Chiles spearheaded the efforts to create an Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), which was an interstate compact where states would help one another during disasters. "The Emergency Management Assistance Compact began as a regional state initiative in which southern states banded together to proactively remove "red tape" to help one

another more efficiently in the face of future severe social stresses.”⁵⁴ It was clear following Hurricane Andrew that Florida’s emergency planning was overlooked; however, Governor Chiles combated this by ensuring that his emergency preparedness plans would be beneficial for many years. “One of the biggest differences between how Florida and other states handle natural disasters lies in the degree of cooperation between cities, counties and the state. In Florida, they are in constant communication with one another as storms advance and during the recovery phase...Florida law enforcement officials in each county hold monthly conference calls to discuss disaster coordination.”⁵⁵

Kobe, Japan’s strategies after the Hanshin Earthquake

Kobe is a city in Japan and prior to their disaster, had 1.5 million residents and was the sixth largest city in Japan. Kobe was similar to New Orleans in size and also had one of the nation’s largest ports. On January 17, 1995, Kobe Japan was hit with their worst natural disaster, the great Hanshin Earthquake. There were nearly 80,000 homes destroyed and 6,400 people died in this earthquake. More than 300,000 people sought shelter in Kobe and for weeks were under horrible conditions and without basic necessities. Some of these statistics sound very similar to what happened in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, but what happened after the disasters passed is what could set them apart. “Differences between the disasters in Kobe and New Orleans are as marked as the similarities. For one thing, Kobe was better prepared, not for the quake—they are far less predictable than hurricanes—but for rebuilding.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Suburban Emergency Management Project. April 20, 2006. *SEMP Biot #351:Emergency Management Assistance Compact*

⁵⁵ Kam, Dara, Gomez, Alan. September 10, 2005. Palm Beach Post. *Lack of plan hurt Katrina-hit states’ response: 2*

⁵⁶ Horne, Jed. December 3, 2005. The Times Picayune. *Carving a better city:2*

Mayor Kazutoshi Sasayama of Kobe began making rebuilding plans immediately following the earthquake. Right away, Mayor Sasayama enforced a moratorium that did not allow anyone to rebuild. Within days progress was being made; trailers were set up and schools were back in session and power was restored in every area except the most devastated. The Mayor, a former city planner, gathered up other planning and disaster experts to assist in generating plans. Community groups were also allowed to take part in the rebuilding process. The plans would cost Kobe some of its residents; since most plans of this nature take almost 30 years to completely materialize, residents living in Kobe at the time of the earthquake were not factored into the decision making. The experts predicted that most of the current residents would have either moved away or died within those 30 years. Additionally, instead of discharging city workers, Kobe borrowed money from the bank to cover any shortages in their budget. Mayor Sasayama ensured that the redevelopment plans were completed in time for their annual national budget requests on April 1, 1995. The Mayor wanted to avoid having large portions of undeveloped land; therefore he utilized quick thinking skills when he developed the rebuilding process. He also utilized his prompt decision making to maximize the resources received from the central government. "The abbreviated timetable guaranteed that Kobe would steer clear of the expensive wish list that Louisiana's U. S. senators threw into the congressional hopper weeks after Katrina. Instead Kobe set forth plans that looked toward a sharply upgraded city but that were consistent with the central government's known funding proclivities."⁵⁷ Kobe was given \$58 billion by their central government to repair its infrastructure within the first three years. The plans called for eliminating the traditional one and two story houses while

⁵⁷ Horne, Jed. December 3, 2005. The Times Picayune. *Carving a better city*:4

adding clusters of high-rise towers. More open spaces and parks were also a part of the redevelopment design; this was deemed necessary for protection in the event of future earthquakes. The plans would involve readjusting the existing land, which required removal of properties. This process affected many neighborhoods permanently and it temporarily required that entire neighborhoods move into provisional housing.

Mayor Sasayama took great risks in planning his strategies for redevelopment, but it paved the way for a better Kobe. “The consensus that immediately prevailed within the governing class was to rebuild, not as it was but as it needed to be to assure greater public safety in the future.”⁵⁸ It took 5 years for all of the temporary housing to be removed and while only 1 in 5 of the current residents are victims of the earthquake, the population is back to its pre-earthquake numbers and still growing. “Cities come back but they can come back quite different from what they were.”⁵⁹ For this, Kobe, Japan was very equipped to deal with.

New Orleans proposed strategies post Hurricane Katrina

The Governor, Mayor, other city officials, and stakeholders have been working diligently to come up with a revitalization plan for the City of New Orleans. Mayor Ray Nagin’s office has appointed a commission, called Bring New Orleans Back Commission (BNOBC), to work on a plan for revitalizing New Orleans. The BNOBC has released its plans, which among other issues, calls for “helping residents rebuild their neighborhoods by providing the information and expertise needed to plan community

⁵⁸ Horne, Jed. December 3, 2005. The Times Picayune. *Carving a better city*:8

⁵⁹ Horne, Jed. December 3, 2005. The Times Picayune. *Carving a better city*:9

rebuilding; investing in neighborhoods that residents want to return and rebuild”⁶⁰ The plan commits to rebuilding parks, schools, transportation, medical facilities, social services, housing, the criminal justice system, and the culture. It also pledges to help businesses get back on their feet by offering tax incentives, etc. Additionally, residents along with appointed rebuilding experts will have approximately four months to plan the development of their neighborhoods. If the communities are not able to rebound, then the city may begin plans to “shrink the footprints of the city”; whereby the city will take steps in reducing the size of neighborhoods. Under this plan, some of the most damaged and unpopulated areas could become marsh/wet lands. Neighborhoods where only a few people have returned would be moved into more populated areas; thereby creating smaller communities.

Several committees were formed to help bring key elements of the strategic plan together. The committees consisted of: land use, infrastructure, culture, education, health and social services, economic development, and government effectiveness. “The prerequisite for the economic recovery of New Orleans rests upon implementing the recommendations of each of the BNOB Commission Committees.”⁶¹ In order for the city to rebound, each aspect of its economy must be modified and/or renewed in some way. The committees had to make decisions on what was needed in their particular industry to help with revitalizing the economy of New Orleans. Land use for New Orleans would require effective planning in a way that would allow space to be utilized in the most appropriate way, while allowing residents and business owners the

⁶⁰ www.bringneworleansback.org. Bring New Orleans Back Commission. May 2006. Rebuilding New Orleans. *Framework*:1

⁶¹ www.bringneworleansback.org. Bring New Orleans Back Commission. May 2006. Rebuilding New Orleans. *Mt Auburn & Associates Economic Development Recommendations*:4

opportunity to rebuild. In order for any rebuilding to take place, the infrastructure needs to be in place. New investors, current business owners, and residents need reassurance that they will be protected in the event of another hurricane. Levees need to be restructured to at least a category five, while pumping stations need to be upgraded or replaced to fit newly required standards. New Orleans is not “New Orleans” without its culture; therefore there must be methods in place for bringing back the music, food, entertainment, and the people. It would be very difficult for the tourism industry to rebound without the original culture of New Orleans. The educational system in New Orleans was very poor and many families have experienced better education in other parts of the country; the educational system in New Orleans must be completely overhauled in order to draw people back into the city and create an environment for new investment. Health care post-Katrina has diminished tremendously; not many health care professionals have returned and there was great damage to many hospitals and doctor’s offices. There must also be a system in place to return the healthcare industry back to New Orleans for the residents to once again enjoy a great quality of life. Finally, there must be a consensus among the city’s government on the best way to build buying power in New Orleans. The government must do away with the politics of the past and find new ways of gaining the trust of potential business investors. These decisions, among others, were key elements for the committees in devising an economic development strategy. As a result, four goals were developed for the Commission to focus on in the city’s rebuilding efforts.

“Achieving the economic vision for the New Orleans economy requires a set of strategic initiatives focused on the following four goals.

1. Goal One: Support short term recovery
 - Stabilize local businesses and non-profit institutions
 - Help returning residents benefit from rebuilding opportunities
2. Goal Two: Restore the economic base
 - Strengthen core sectors of the pre-Katrina economy
3. Goal Three: Reduce economic disparities
 - Support economic opportunities to residents and small businesses
4. Goal Four: Reposition and Strengthen Competitiveness
 - Invest in the critical economic building blocks
 - Support new areas of competitive strength⁶²

Goal one involves assisting businesses and non-profit institutions with grants, loans, and various tax incentives to help in their rebuilding process. It affords the opportunity for local construction firms, minority, and women business owners, to reestablish their businesses by awarding them a percentage of the city's rebuilding contracts. This also allows employment opportunities for returning residents. Additionally, residents would benefit from job training programs, return to work incentives, and other plans designed to help with job placements. Goal Two involves strengthening vital areas of New Orleans, such as its non-profit cultural and healthcare industries as well as its food, hospitality, and maritime trade industries. These industries were very instrumental to the economy of New Orleans; therefore they are very important for the city's recovery. Goal Three focuses on reducing the huge income gap between the city's rich and poor. This would involve creating programs for low-income residents that would allow them opportunities for financial investments as home owners, small business owners, and the like. Goal Four involves strengthening existing industries such as the city's technology industry, along with developing a base for new industries like the construction and

⁶² www.bringneworleansback.org. Bring New Orleans Back Commission. May 2006. Rebuilding New Orleans. *Mt Auburn & Associates Economic Development Recommendations*:5

costal reservation and preservation industries. These four goals will be implemented with the assistance of grants, loans, etc; they will be the foundation for how New Orleans rebuilds.

Another redevelopment plan, generated by Governor Kathleen Blanco, called “Louisiana Road Home”, is currently in its development process. This plan is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development through its Community Development Block Grants (CDBG); it is a housing program aimed at helping rebuild homes, rental properties, and restoring communities. Assistance will be available to homeowners by helping them restore or rebuild their homes to pre-Katrina value; if homeowners do not choose this option, the program will be available to assist them in relocating through the buyout option. With the buyout option, the state will purchase the property and restore it for resale, affordable rental property, or green space. Through this Road Home program, assistance will also be given to help restore rental housing, enabling the city’s workforce to return and live in affordable rental housing. Additionally, portions of the CDBG will be used to help reestablish housing for the homeless and to create incentives for attracting developers into the city. A combination of both the Mayor and Governor’s revitalization plans, could help to ensure a great revitalization of New Orleans; one that many would be very proud of.

Chapter 7

Possible Strategies That May Be Applied and Their Relevance to New Orleans East

Just as the City of New Orleans has a redevelopment plan, each area within the City should also have a redevelopment plan in place for their particular areas. Mayor Nagin's Bring New Orleans Back Commission has appointed a rebuilding expert for each area of the City to assist in their rebuilding efforts. It will be determined by the experts and the residents how the areas return. Certainly, no plan would be a great plan without the determination and resilience of the residents regardless of the City's uniqueness. New Orleans East is in a great position for rebuilding; many of its residents are determined to return and there is plenty of rebuilding space and opportunities. Careful planning will be the determining factor on whether the area returns better than what it was pre-Katrina. Perhaps, New Orleans East could benefit by applying strategies from other great planning ideas. In looking at these various strategies and how they might be applied to New Orleans East, their significance as it relates to the area will also be explored.

One of the first strategies that come to mind when considering reconstruction after a disaster is Mayor Kazutoshi Sasayama's moratorium plan. Mayor Sasayama was the mayor of Kobe, Japan during the time of the great Hanshin Earthquake. He decided to suspend reconstruction for all residents and businesses until definitive plans were in place. New Orleans East could greatly benefit from this strategy. If a moratorium were placed on rebuilding anything in New Orleans East, this could give planners a clean canvas to work with. Planners would be allowed to develop the area in

the best way possible; important aspects such as evaluating what areas, if any, should be rebuilt and how, would be essential in their process. The planners could also research the development history of the area to see what problems may or may not have evolved as a result of previous planning efforts. This also allows an opportunity for residents and business owners to give feedback on whether or not they are returning to the area. Additionally, it gives the planners an opportunity to market potential developers into the area. Currently, some residents are returning to New Orleans East, but they are scattered throughout the area. In some neighborhoods, half of the residents have returned and in others only one or two residents have returned; the moratorium would avoid this and allow time for the creation of whole neighborhoods.

Mayor Nagin's Bring New Orleans Back Commission has an Infrastructure Committee that focuses on rebuilding the infrastructure of New Orleans; this would also be a great approach to redevelopment for New Orleans East. A group could be selected to just focus on rebuilding the infrastructure of New Orleans East. In looking back on the history of New Orleans East, we find that in the early 1800's there were drainage problems with the land, which has been a constant concern for land developers. We also find from these early years and earlier plans like A General Plan New Orleans East, that before the land use plans were developed, planning for the infrastructure took place. If the land now is essentially in a state of starting from scratch, then planning for the infrastructure should take place first. It could begin by first rebuilding the levees, drainage, and pumping stations to enable these systems to manage a hurricane greater than a category four or five. Another problem that should be assessed is coastal erosion and the marshlands in New Orleans East. There should

be a way to revive these natural protectors as a defense aid in the event of another disaster. Next, the wetlands that were previously developed should be re-evaluated to observe whether redevelopment should take place or if it should be reverted back to its natural state. Only after the process of determining which land to rebuild, could the design for neighborhoods take place.

Another part of rebuilding that could be modeled after St. Tammany Parish is marketing for residential development first and allowing the migration of businesses to follow naturally. To do this, New Orleans East could begin by rebuilding schools, libraries, social service facilities, parks, and other recreational facilities first. As we also learned from A General Plan, having a great system of parks and recreation is an advantage for building residential communities. Once these systems are in place, it could be easier to gain the interest of business developers and additional residents. While working with the rebuilding experts appointed by the Bring New Orleans Back Commission, the residents and planners could design some very aggressive marketing techniques for luring businesses into the area. The Louisiana Road Home program has developed incentives for attracting housing developers into the area; this strategy could also be applied in attracting business developers to New Orleans East. A huge portion of New Orleans was damaged from the storm, so there is a large land base for potential development. Having a marketing plan that advertises New Orleans East as the best area for development could be a challenge considering the drainage, wetland, and levee problems, but with careful planning, it could be done.

Another strategy taken from Mayor Sasayama, which could also be useful, is to gather focus groups comprised of community leaders, experts, business owners, and

residents to discuss redevelopment plans. This approach could allow various ideas to feed off of each other and be evaluated to establish which plans would be best for New Orleans East. One other important aspect of this approach is that residents will be allowed to express their opinion about how their communities can be rebuilt. Other strategies that could be applied to New Orleans East are to assign committees and develop planning goals like the Bring New Orleans Back Commission. With the development of various committees, such as infrastructure, land use, education, health and social services, economic development, and recreation, participants could concentrate on their particular areas to get the best possible outcome. These committees could be comprised of community leaders, planners, experts, business owners, and residents, who would be charged with generating plans and goals for each of the areas. It is always beneficial to have a set of goals in place to assist in staying on track; therefore developing a set of planning goals, could help ensure that rebuilding is progressing in the most efficient way possible. There is probably no amount of strategic planning that could guarantee a perfect land use design, but with the combination of previous plans that have worked and new cutting-edge plans, a great redevelopment plan could be achieved.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

There is no discounting the fact that New Orleans East has a vast amount of drainage problems, which have been in existence since the beginning of development in the area. We see that it was a development problem during the early 1800s because of the wetlands. It also created difficulties with development in the three plans discussed earlier (A General Plan, Orlandia Plan, and 1999 Land Use Plan). Drainage and sewerage problems, subsiding soils, and building on wetlands, were all pointed out as weaknesses in the plans. In the article “Thoughts on Rebuilding (and not Rebuilding) New Orleans”, author Jason Henderson (2005) points out that, “This (Hurricane Katrina) was not an act of God, nor a natural disaster—this was a public policy disaster.”⁶³ The author states that losses incurred as a result of Hurricane Katrina was basically caused by urban sprawl and the policies relating to this type of development. He also states that governmental policies did not take measures in combating Louisiana’s coastal erosion problems and other problems associated with rising waters surrounding New Orleans. Coastal erosion occurs when the coastal waters wear down the land near the coast due to constant battering from storms, hurricanes, raging waters, and the like. In looking at coastal erosion as a reason for the tremendous damages caused Hurricane Katrina, one might find that perhaps not enough funding was spent by Louisiana’s government in preventing further erosion. However, it could have been possible for any hurricane to hit New Orleans and not inflict as much damage to the residential and

⁶³ Henderson, Jason. September 26, 2005. *Thoughts on Rebuilding (and not Rebuilding) New Orleans*. www.planetizen.com/. The Planning and Development Network.

business communities as Hurricane Katrina did. One might ask how that is possible; this brings up another issue the author raises, which is urban sprawl.

There are many definitions for urban sprawl; however one definition that fits this discussion is adapted from various authors. It states; “By transforming pastoral farmland into often-unattractive suburbs, sprawl is thought to disrupt a natural balance between urban and non-urban land uses, leading to a deplorable degradation of the landscape’ (see Mills, 1972, Ch. 6). ‘This sentiment is often translated into policy through zoning restrictions designed to inhibit the conversion of land from agriculture to urban use (see Bryant and Conklin (1975)).”⁶⁴ We could take this to mean, some areas in the City of New Orleans, including New Orleans East, have been constructed on wet/marsh lands and has resulted in urban sprawl. One could argue that the City has expanded into areas that were formally intended as natural resource land; areas designed to protect the City from hurricanes, storm surges, and rising waters. If this is so, it could be stated that areas like New Orleans East were devastated because public policy should have been designed long ago to prevent development in the area; therefore, redevelopment of the area could be detrimental. Let’s take another look at New Orleans East and determine if rebuilding it would be beneficial.

Some research has suggested that much of New Orleans East should be reverted back to wetlands and green space. In the article “Seven Rules for Building a New New Orleans, the author states that “It is not sustainable to rebuild these areas the way they were before. They should either be replaced with coastal wetlands, which are allowed to trap sediments to rebuild the land, or replaced with buildings on pilings or

⁶⁴ Brueckner, Jan K. and Fansler, David A. August 1983. *The Economics of Urban Sprawl: Theory and Evidence on the Spatial Sizes of Cities*. Review of Economics and Statistics, Vol. 65, No. 3:479.

floats that are adapted to flooding.”⁶⁵ Additionally, in the months following Hurricane Katrina, the Urban Land Institute suggested rebuilding strategies for the City. Within those strategies, it was suggested that New Orleans East be one of the last areas to rebuild and that the land be reverted back to wetlands. Many people opposed this decision, sighting discrimination. These rebuilding plans were ridiculed by community organizations, such as the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), Citizens for a Strong New Orleans East (CSNOE), and many affluent black community members and leaders; this forced many politicians to oppose the adoption of the Urban Land Institute’s rebuilding strategies. Mayor Nagin has since stated that every area of the City will be rebuilt and every resident will be allowed to return.

In looking at New Orleans East, we find that throughout its more than thirty years of development, there has never been a disaster that has been as devastating as Hurricane Katrina. The area even escaped Hurricane Betsy in 1965, although there was as not much development in New Orleans East at that time (Figure 16 in Appendix F). In its history, however, there were some problems associated with being constructed on marshland such as the May 1995 flood and various problems associated with subsiding soils, like cracking sidewalks, huge potholes, and costly residential and business drainage problems. Therefore, it could be stated that the damage resulting from Katrina had nothing to do with urban sprawl, coastal erosion, sinking land, or the like. In fact, much of the area did not sustain damage until after the passing of the hurricane; it started once the levees broke. Hence, redevelopment of New Orleans East could be quite possible, providing measures are taken to ensure that the levees are designed to protect the land. Ways to do this would not only involve reconstructing the

⁶⁵ Brown, Joshua. June 29, 2006. *Seven Rules for Building a New New Orleans*. University of Vermont.

levees to sustain a category five or greater hurricane, but also taking additional steps to guarantee safety, such as closing off the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (MR-GO) to deep-draft vessels. The MR-GO is located along the Industrial Canal leading to the lower 9th Ward and St. Bernard Parish. Many people felt that during Hurricane Katrina, a large barge in the MR-GO could have possibly caused the levee at the Industrial Canal to breach and flood the lower 9th Ward, St. Bernard Parish, and New Orleans East. “Critics of the channel say their opposition goes far beyond its past economic failures. They see it as the culprit in hundreds of deaths in St. Bernard, eastern New Orleans and the 9th Ward. Katrina’s surge overwhelmed the levees along the channel in St. Bernard and funneled through the upper reach of the MR-GO to breach levees along the Industrial Canal.”⁶⁶ Currently, there is a push to raise the requirements in the MR-GO, by not allowing large vessels to pass through; however this decision is being opposed by many supporters of the MR-GO. Additionally, the levees are in the process of being repaired and plans are in place to have them reconstructed to sustain a category 5 hurricane. These could be the first steps in providing security for New Orleans East and the surrounding areas; once this is completed, New Orleans East could begin their rebuilding process.

With all of the infrastructure elements in place, the next procedure to ponder would be how New Orleans East could rebuild. One of the reasons the Urban Land Institute suggested that the city only rebuild portions of the city and convert the remainder to green space was to avoid a “jack-o-lantern” effect, whereby only a few residents would return to a neighborhood, while other neighborhoods would remain completely empty. The Urban Land Institute stated that this could be very detrimental to

⁶⁶ Brown, Matthew. September 22, 2006. The Times Picayune. *Shipping interest pushing for MR-GO:1*

the economy of New Orleans; property values would decrease tremendously, the city would consistently lose money in funneling basic services to the area, and development would be at a standstill. It seems that New Orleans East is currently experiencing this “jack-o-lantern” effect. Many people want to come back and rebuild their communities, but the fact remains that many have not returned. Some could be waiting on funding from the Louisiana Road Home program, but no one can be sure whether residents will rebuild or sell their properties. This could be a major reason why many businesses in New Orleans East have not executed their rebuilding plans. It is now more than a year since Hurricane Katrina and residents are being allowed to plan their own neighborhoods. In looking at past economic development for New Orleans East, we find that master plans were in place to design the development of the area. A General Plan, Orlandia Plan, the 1999 Land Use Plan, and other such plans, were master plans that were formed to determine how the development of the area should take place. This required extensive research, evaluation, and discussion; one would presume that this should be the same process that should take place in rebuilding New Orleans East post-Katrina. Experts agree that, “A year later, New Orleans is in the midst of a halting, sloppy recovery. Many problems persist because there’s no master plan for the city’s future.”⁶⁷ Let’s suppose another year passes and the outlook on New Orleans East has not changed; not many businesses or residents have returned. If other areas in the City experience these same effects, the City could be forced to shrink their footprints as previously suggested by the Urban Land Institute. The process would involve “abandoning the neighborhood and forcing residents to sell their properties to

⁶⁷ Konigsmark, Anne Rochell. August 23, 2006. USA Today. *New Orleans’ recovery slow and slippery process.*

the city and move to more populated sections of town.”⁶⁸ If this were to happen, it could mean that New Orleans East would be reconstructed to be much smaller than it is now or residents would be completely removed from the area and placed in other areas of the City.

Imagining New Orleans East as a smaller place takes away all of the factors of it being the largest geographic area for potential development in the City of New Orleans and a possible great economic hub for the city. In the past, the City of New Orleans has had big plans for the New Orleans Regional Business Park located in New Orleans East; if the City were to reduce in size, these plans might not be possible. The Business Park could perhaps be relocated to another industrial area of Louisiana, such as Baton Rouge, this could mean that New Orleans East would not have this area as potential industry development. It could now be pictured as an area that is comprised mainly of residential communities. If this were so, perhaps planners could focus their rebuilding efforts on making the area a safe suburban community, where residents go to seek solitude from the everyday hustle and bustle of the city. The area could be marketed as a small, but safe community with recreational features, such as parks with biking, walking, and nature trails. As we learned from St. Tammany Parish’s development history, this sort of community could eventually spark business development. This way, New Orleans East would be allowed to naturally develop into an economic engine, whereby plans would be designed based on the area’s future outlook.

Another possibility for New Orleans East could be another year later, most of the residents have returned. If this were to occur, then it would be most beneficial for the

⁶⁸ Konigsmark, Anne Rochell. August 23, 2006. USA Today. *New Orleans’ recovery slow and slippery process.*

City to again seek master planners to design this area to its fullest economic potential. Experts could look at some of the weaknesses and threats of the area, such as commercial decline, blighted housing, illegal dumping, loitering, crime, poverty, prostitution, and the like. Ways to rebuild the area to reduce these weaknesses could be to reduce the number of low-density motels; reduce the number of high-density residential facilities; develop more single-density residences, reduce the number of corner stores, while imposing hefty fines for loitering and prostitution; and increase security near illegal dumping sites. These issues have long haunted New Orleans East and have been an eye sore for potential residents and business owners; by reducing these problems, it could be possible for the area to gain a better economic status. By redeveloping Chef Mentuer Highway into a large commercial area with a variety of specialty stores and shopping venues, it could be recreated as the focal point for New Orleans East and aid in attracting interest into the area. Additionally, the City could utilize funding from the Louisiana Road Home or another funding source to renovate blighted housing and either sell or lease these properties. These steps could definitely assist in boosting the economy and increasing the number of commercial business developments. Other ways of boosting the economy of New Orleans East would be to market the New Orleans Regional Business Park in a way that encourages a variety of industries to relocate their facilities to the park and allows every acre of the park to be filled. The development of the Business Park has been one of the most underutilized opportunities in previous plans of New Orleans East; therefore marketing it will require very innovative techniques that have not been tried before.

In looking at the two options available for New Orleans East, which are to redevelop smaller or redevelop as it was before while reducing weaknesses and threats of the area; it would appear that the most feasible plan would be to redevelop smaller. Currently, there are no defined neighborhoods in New Orleans East. "In the planning of residential areas, a neighborhood unit is generally considered to be that area that can be served by an elementary school. This allows the elementary school and its playground to become the center of the area and gives the neighborhood an identity."⁶⁹ Only two public schools have opened in New Orleans East post-Katrina and only one is an elementary school; therefore if this one elementary school cannot service the entire New Orleans East, is the area then not identified as a neighborhood? It could take years before other schools are opened in the area because of the horrible conditions they are in. Additionally, the area is not serviced by basic services such as supermarkets, gas stations, eating places, fire stations, police, or medical services. An urban community simply may not be able to function this way long term.

It seems as if Mayor Nagin, city representatives, and other political figures are doing themselves and the citizens of New Orleans East a great dissatisfaction by not recognizing the facts. The fact that not many people have returned and may not return to the area; the fact that the area cannot rebuild as it was before; the fact that New Orleans East is situated on land with tremendous problems; the fact that the City's economy was obliterated by the downfall of the oil industry and has had difficulties recovering; and the fact that the City has not rebounded post-Katrina. David Voelker, of the Louisiana Recover Authority, explains the recovery efforts best by stating, "My fear

⁶⁹ Harland Bartholomew and Associates. April 1959. A General Plan New Orleans East:15

is the city is coming up with a plan that is all repair, with no dreams for the future.”⁷⁰

Rebuilding the City cannot be about a popularity contest, it has to be about creating a better place for the residents. To do this, planners could focus on recreating the culture of New Orleans by defining what its future should look like; only then can neighborhood planning begin. During Kobe, Japan’s devastating earthquake, Eiji Tarumi (head of Kobe’s housing department during the Hanshin Earthquake) stated, “Planning had always operated in a 30-year time frame...From that perspective, it had never been necessary to factor current residents into the equation because in all likelihood they would be dead or dispersed by the time the 30-year plans came to fruition.”⁷¹ When designing for Kobe’s redevelopment, Mayor Sasayama, his colleagues, and planners, decided that they could not design the city as it was before; they had to design it for the future. “Absent from the rebuilding is a vision for New Orleans as a whole, a way to use this tragedy—and the city’s portion of \$27 billion in federal rebuilding money earmarked for Louisiana—to transform a city that was decaying for decades before the storm hit.”⁷² Perhaps Mayor Nagin, with the help of the Bring New Orleans Back Commission and input from residents and experts, can come up with a better vision for New Orleans. New Orleans is very unique and each area within the city has its own distinctive identity; therefore the future possibilities for the City of New Orleans and our area of research, New Orleans East can be endless.

⁷⁰ Konigsmark, Anne Rochell. August 23, 2006. USA Today. *New Orleans’ recovery slow and slippery process.*

⁷¹ Horne, Jed. December 3, 2005. The Times Picayune. *Carving a better city:5*

⁷² Konigsmark, Anne Rochell. August 23, 2006. USA Today. *New Orleans’ recovery slow and slippery process.*

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Appendix A

Figures 1 – 9

Maps of Neighborhoods in New Orleans East

Figure 1 – Pines Village



Figure 2 – Plum Orchard

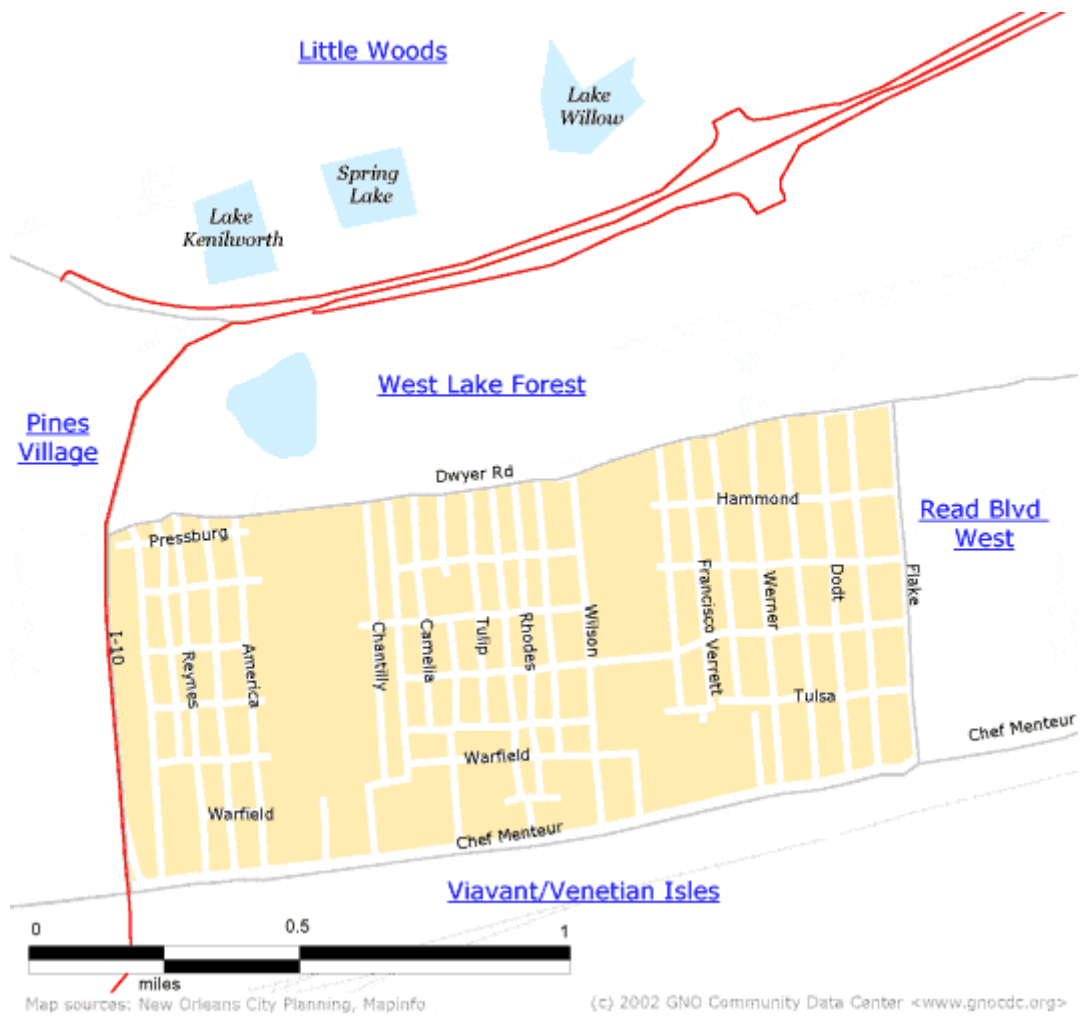


Figure 3 – West Lake Forest

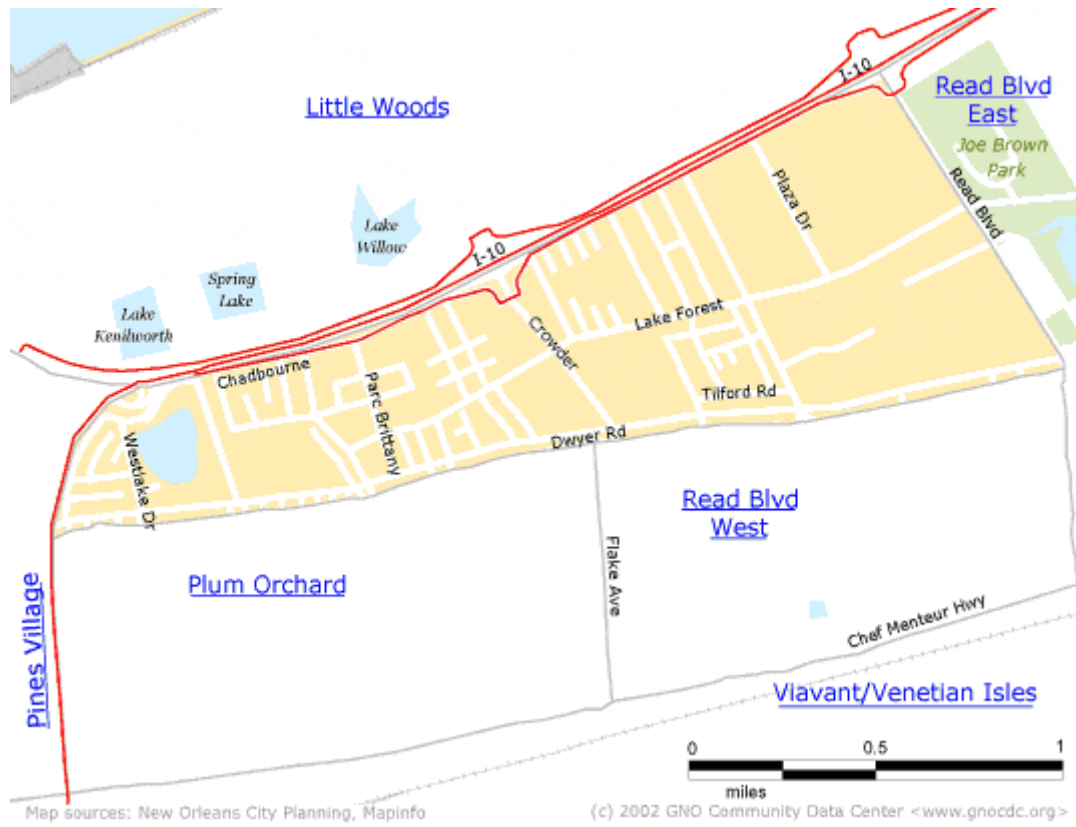


Figure 4 – Read Boulevard West



Figure 5 – Little Woods



Figure 6 – Read Boulevard East



Figure 7 – Village de L'Est



Figure 8 – Lake Catherine

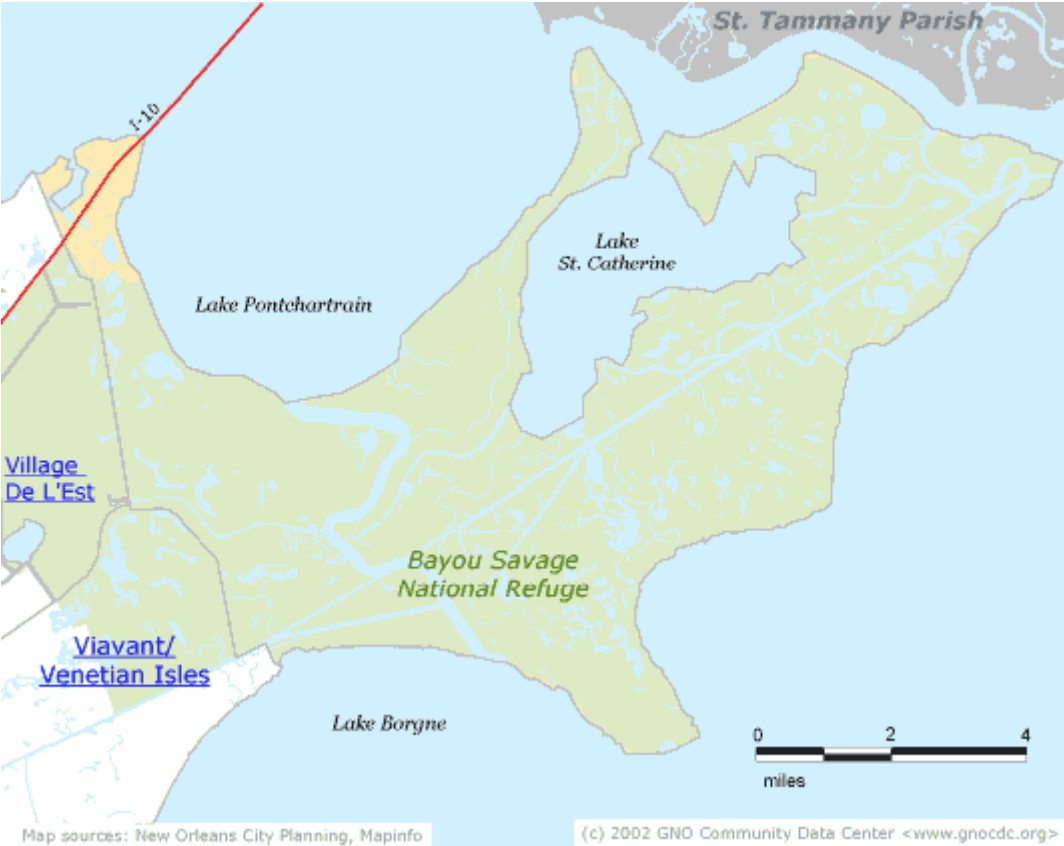
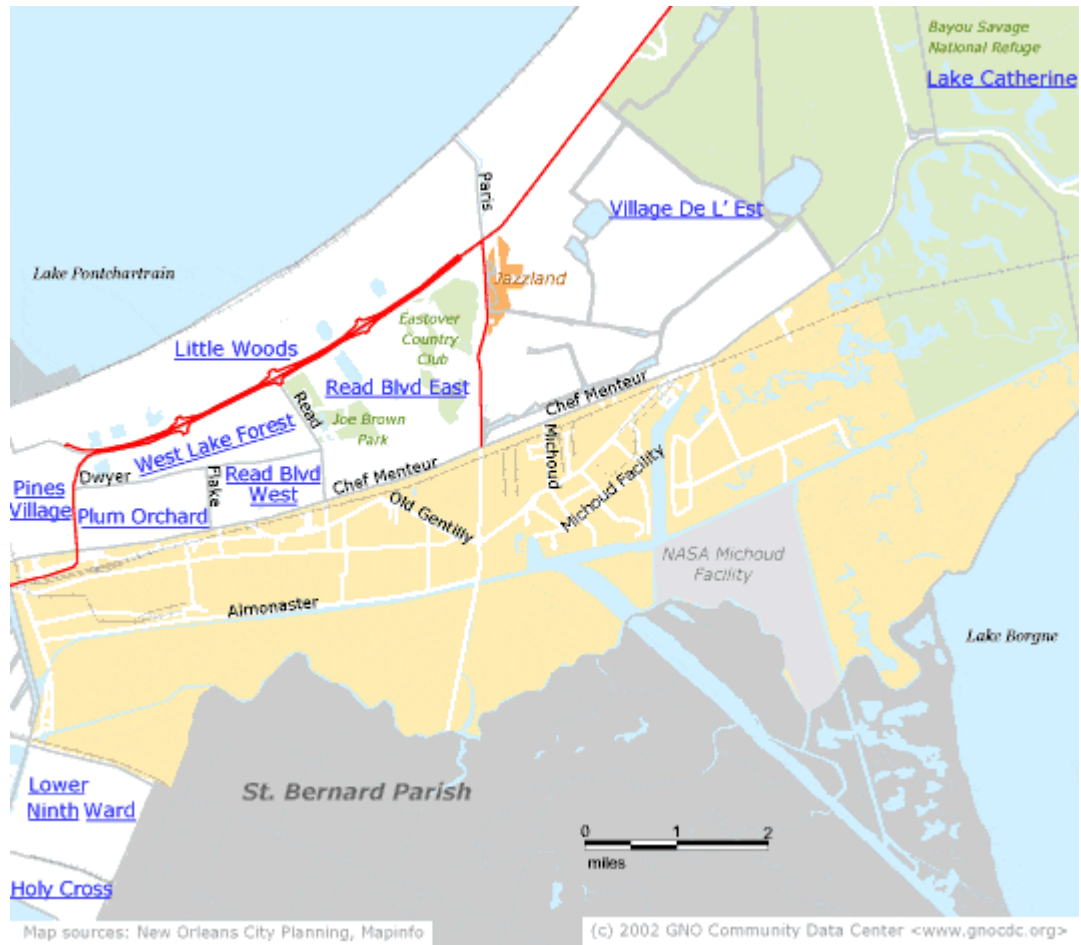


Figure 9 – Viavant/Venetian Isles



Appendix B

Figure 12

Map of St. Tammany Parish



Appendix C

Figure 13

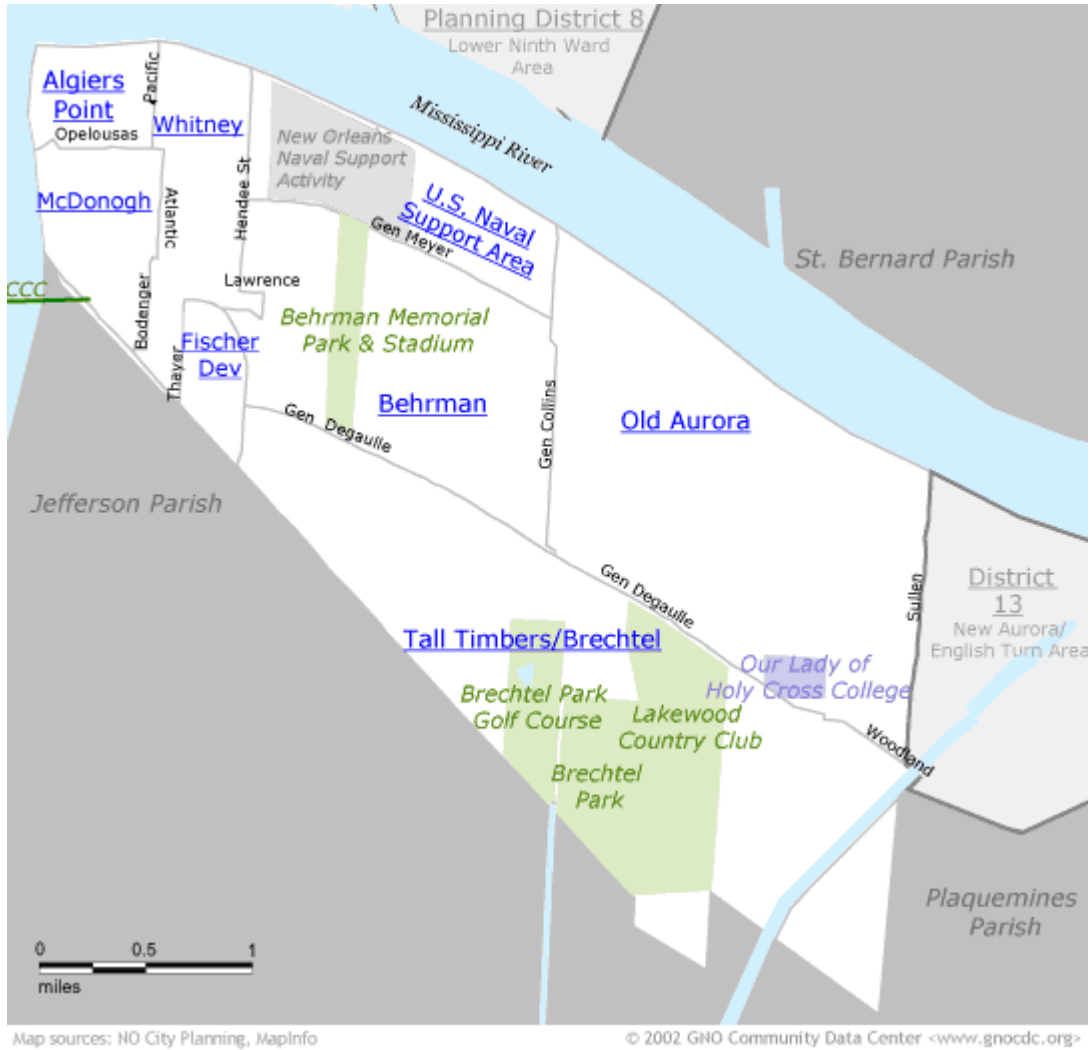
Map of Jefferson Parish



Appendix D

Figure 14

Map of the Algiers – West bank

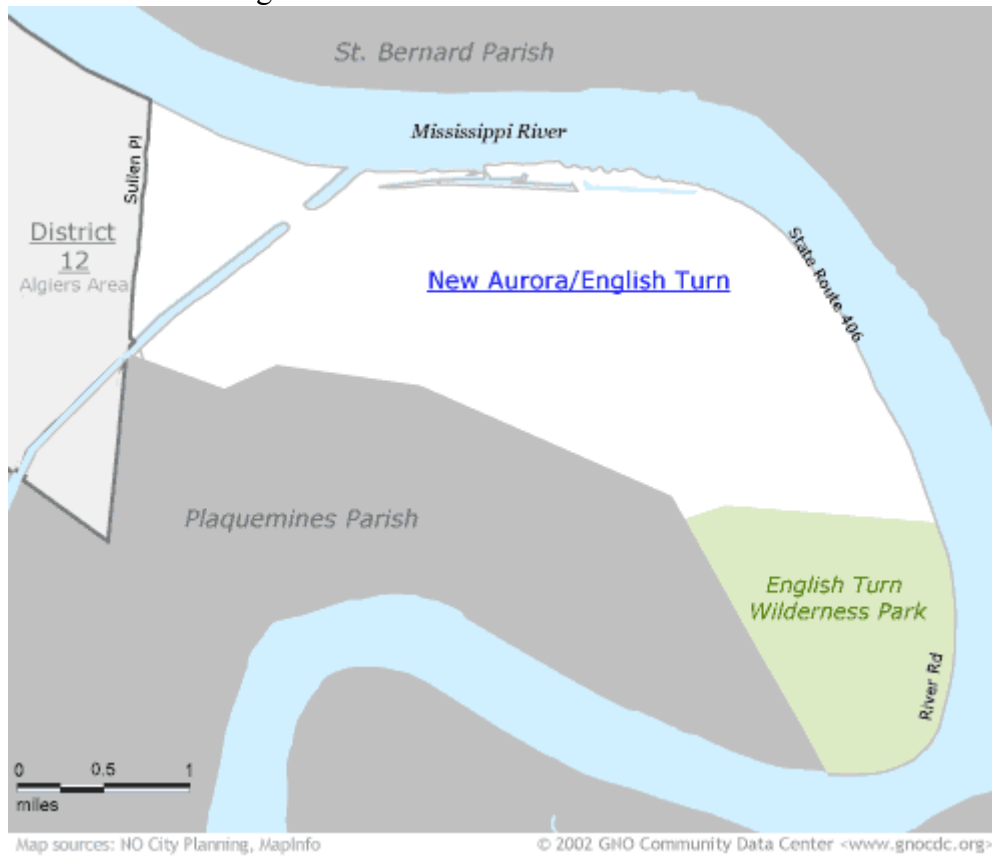


Appendix E

Figure 15

Map of New Aurora/English Turn – West bank

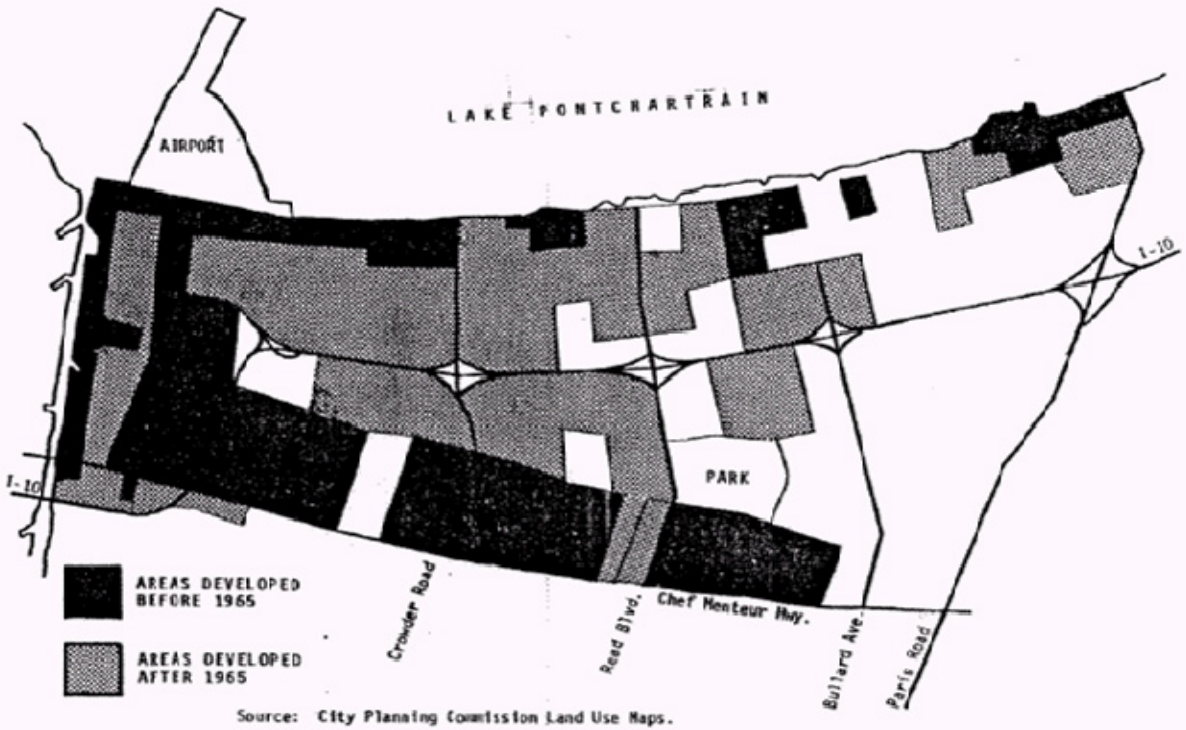
Click on a neighborhood below to see 2000 Census data about it...



Appendix F

Figure 16

Map of New Orleans East before and after 1965



ECONOMIC

This map illustrates the progress of New Orleans East development..

Vita

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