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A Healthier Community for Generations to Come: Creating Resilient and Equitable Development on Lower 9th Ward Corridors

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A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY FOR GENERATIONS TO COME:

CREATING RESILIENT AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT ON LOWER 9TH WARD CORRIDORS

RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS COMPLETED BY SPRING 2023
MURP 6720: PRACTICUM IN URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNING
STUDENTS UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF MARLA NELSON, PHD, AICP

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

Research for this report was completed by graduate students in spring 2023 as part of a capstone course, "MURP 6720: Practicum in Urban & Regional Planning," in the University of New Orleans' Master of Urban and Regional Planning program with the Department of Planning & Urban Studies. This report comprises the second phase of a two-part deliverable. Students initially delivered a briefing book to assist the Urban Land Institute's Technical Assistance Panel (ULI-TAP) with Sankofa Community Development Corporation (CDC) in March 2023.

Key findings and recommendations from this report were presented to Sankofa CDC on May 17, 2023 for their consideration.

Please contact **Dr. Marla Nelson**, Professor of Planning & Urban Studies, at mnelson@uno.edu with any questions about this document.

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URBAN LAND INSTITUTE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL

BRIEFING BOOK (PHASE I)

THE HARDIN PROPERTY

Site Analysis and Exploration of Programmatic Opportunities



SARAH BECHDEL | DOV BLOCK | SAMUEL MERCIER
5/18/2023

INTRODUCTION

Through discussions with Sankofa Community Development Corporation (Sankofa CDC), the two-acre parcel formerly home to Joseph A. Hardin Elementary in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward has emerged as a potential site for acquisition. Currently owned by the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), the Hardin site represents a significant opportunity for Sankofa CDC because of its size and proximity to the Sankofa Wetland Park & Trail entrance, which is currently under construction and slated to be the largest single piece of green stormwater infrastructure in the City of New Orleans and the centerpiece of a Florida Avenue revitalization strategy. Thoughtful planning and programming could catalyze growth around the proposed Florida Corridor Resilience District (detailed in another UNO-MURP report) and Sankofa Wetland Park & Trail while delivering significant community benefits. But what strategies are most appropriate for the site, and how should Sankofa CDC weigh them against its shortcomings?

To assist Sankofa CDC in evaluating whether such an acquisition aligns with the organization's mission, goals, and capacity, graduate students from the University of New Orleans's Master of Urban & Regional Planning program (UNO-MURP) have compiled the following framework approach for the Hardin site. This framework is intended to present feasible strategies Sankofa CDC or a mission-driven partner could pursue should they acquire Hardin. They are framed using a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) matrix and presented in an "à la carte" fashion with the understanding that the ultimate arrangement and type of land use would be vetted through community input.

The authors recommend exploring the use of the following strategies on the Hardin site, which are discussed in more detail in the report,

- Green infrastructure;
- Solar infrastructure;
- Flex space for educational and office use; and
- Affordable housing

HISTORY OF THE SITE

ADDRESS: 2401 ST. MAURICE AVE, NEW ORLEANS, LA

AREA: 2.095 ACRES (91, 260 FT²)

ZONING: S-RS (SUBURBAN SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT)

FUTURE LAND USE: RSF-PRE (RESIDENTIAL SINGLE FAMILY PRE-WAR)



Hardin Elementary School, 2006.

Image Source: BuiltStLouis.Net

2401 St. Maurice Ave, referenced in this document as the "Hardin site," "Hardin property," or simply "Hardin," is a large vacant lot spanning two city blocks in the Lower Ninth Ward that formerly housed the Joseph Hardin Elementary School. The lot measures 270 feet by 338 feet and is bounded by Dorgenois Street to the north, Tricou Street to the west, Tonti Street to the south, and St. Maurice Avenue to the east. Originally built in 1958, the Joseph Hardin School's namesake served as a prominent Black physician, politician, and community organizer within New Orleans during the early 20th century (Cherie, 2013).

AFTER KATRINA

Hardin Elementary, like many other structures in the Lower Ninth Ward, was significantly damaged during Hurricane Katrina. A 2006 L.A. Times profile of the city's public school system mentions its deteriorating condition: "blocks away from a levee breach in the city's Lower 9th Ward, Joseph Hardin Elementary sits amid an abandoned neighborhood of crumpled homes and rusting car frames. Classrooms once filled with the school's 650 students are a dark, moldy mess, with swaths of insulation hanging from collapsed ceilings, tables upturned and books scattered on the floor" (Rubin, 2006).

In 2007, the New Orleans Recovery District secured FEMA funding to demolish the buildings on the Hardin campus, a development that at the time was heralded as a "fresh start" for the district (Simon, 2007). In 2008, then-Superintendent Paul Vallas was quoted in a local paper saying "these buildings are eyesores in neighborhoods where people are struggling to rebuild. Unfortunately, some have become havens for criminals, even though we've worked hard to keep them secure. The bottom line is it's time for these buildings to go" (CityBusiness Staff Reports, 2008). Following demolition, the lot has remained vacant and is owned by the Orleans Parish School Board – it is one of the largest vacant single lots on the lake side of St. Claude Avenue and represents a key opportunity in Sankofa CDC's development of activation strategies.



Aerials of the Hardin site in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina (left) and in 2019 (right)

Image Sources: ConnectEXPLORER EagleView; Google Earth.

PROPERTY ACQUISITION

In March 2023, Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) conducted public outreach to consider the future of OPSB-owned vacant properties that are no longer needed for educational purposes. The Hardin site has been deemed a surplus property by OPSB.

MISSION-ALIGNED USES

Louisiana state law allows for the transfer of public property below market rate, provided that the public owner receives a demonstrable benefit from the property transfer. An OPSB mission-aligned use of Hardin presents a public benefit. In an OPSB online survey distribute during the public engagement period, three options were listed for use of vacant land (without existing structures) that stakeholders could chose from:

- 1.Community solar projects that lower energy bills
- 2.Recreational uses on vacant land
- 3.New homeownership uses on vacant land

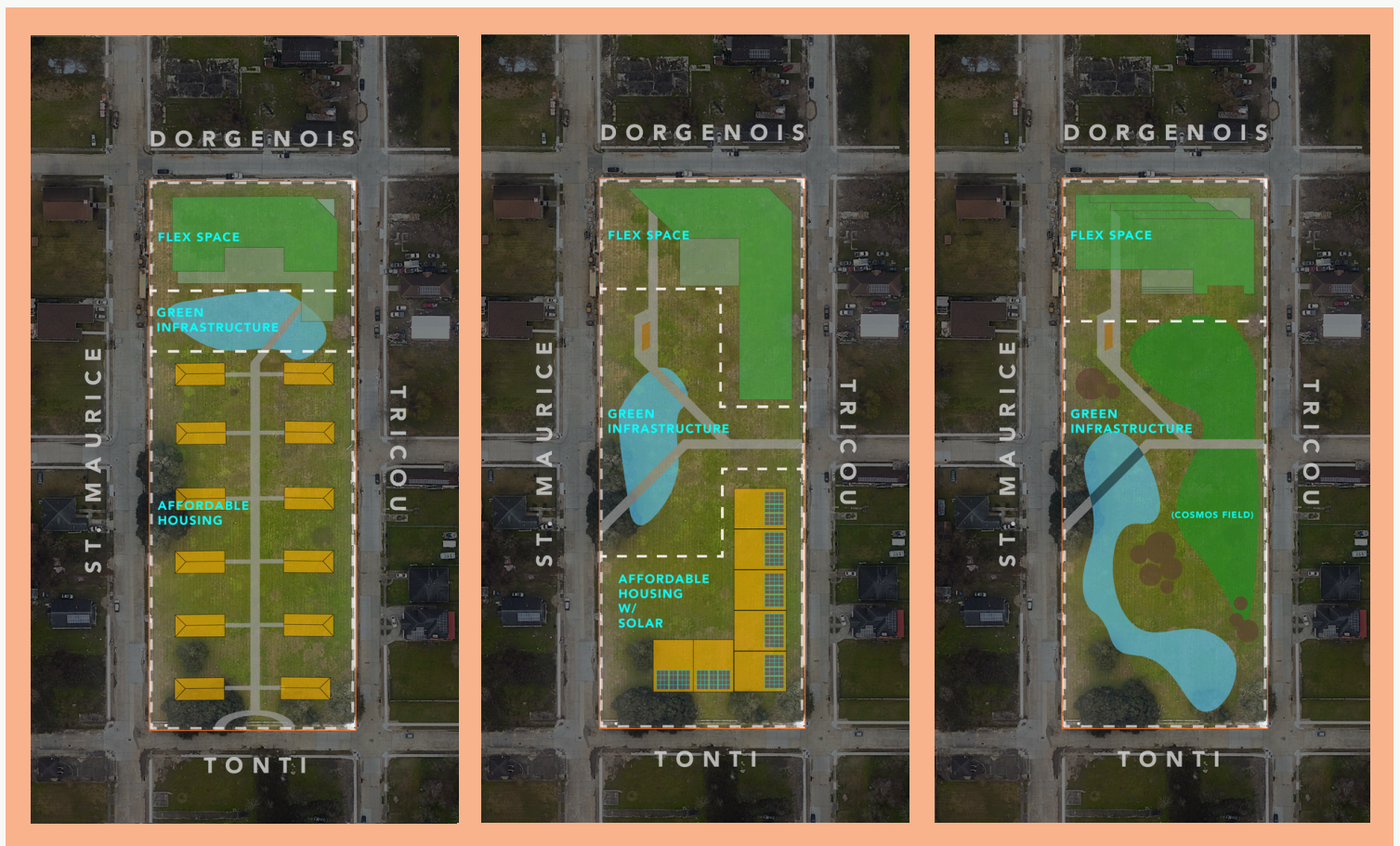
SWOT MATRIX

The Hardin site has strengths and weaknesses of the parcel for Sankofa CDC or another developer considering acquisition. This matrix highlights these to frame the strategies presented later in the document.



THE "À LA CARTE" APPROACH

The following sections outline a suite of possible programmatic opportunities for the Hardin site. Uses were selected to align with Sankofa CDC's mission of building healthier communities for generations to come and to reflect the "mission-aligned" preferences of the Orleans Parish School Board. Rather than view programmatic opportunities for the Hardin site as distinct or prescriptive, they are intended to be viewed flexibly and in combination with one another. The lot size of the Hardin site offers the potential to combine these uses in a variety of ways to reflect Sankofa CDC's needs and the preferences of the community.



Three hypothetical arrangements of uses for the Hardin property showing flexibility of proposed uses.
Image Source: Google Earth imagery (2019) with overlay designs by Samuel Mercier (2023)

PROPOSED USES

- GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE
- SOLAR
- EDUCATION "FLEX" SPACE"
- HOUSING

ZONING

Current zoning and future land use designations for the Hardin site are generally aligned with programmatic opportunities explored in this analysis. Conditional use approval and/or additional municipal hurdles are likely to be encountered in order to proceed with any use that is not single-family residential.

Zoning Designation: Suburban Single-Family Residential District

Purpose: The S-RS Single-Family Residential District is intended for single-family residential neighborhoods developed after World War II where a more uniform lotting pattern is evident with larger, generally uniform setbacks. Limited non-residential uses such as places of worship that are compatible with surrounding residential neighborhoods may be allowed.

Range of Uses: Single-family dwellings, stormwater management, and supporting public recreational and community facilities allowed (e.g. public parks and places of worship).

Development Character: New development will fit the character and scale of surrounding single-family residential areas where structures are typically located on smaller lots and have small front and side setbacks. Incorporate risk reduction and adaptation strategies in the built environment.

Minimum Lot Width and Depth: 50' x 100' (Minimum Lot Area is 6,000sf/du)

Hardin Lot Size: 270' by 338' (Lot Area is 91,260')

Source: City of New Orleans. (2023). Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

In proposing green infrastructure at the Hardin site, the authors recognize that because of Sankofa CDC's success at developing nature-based infrastructure in the Lower Ninth Ward, adding more may not be a priority for the organization. The Sankofa Wetland Park & Trail already ranks as the largest single green infrastructure project in the City of New Orleans. Instead, we lead with this strategy because it aligns with prior suggestions for the site identified in other plans. Green infrastructure also has the potential to be incorporated into some or all of the programmatic options that follow and could be used for short-term site programming.

Green infrastructure uses for Hardin represent an attractive opportunity to build on the Sankofa Wetland Park & Trail and provide community benefits through flood protection from rain events, eco-literacy, health and wellness functions. Such infrastructure could operate as a stand-alone use or component of a mixed-use proposal. It also aligns the use of the Hardin site with a UNO-MURP proposal for a resilience district along the Florida Avenue Corridor and fits within the framework of existing neighborhood planning, as green infrastructure at the Hardin site is proposed in several Lower Ninth Ward plans.

Green infrastructure encompasses a range of physical interventions that slow, store, and filter stormwater while providing benefits to a community's environment, economy, and equity (the "triple bottom line"). Those benefits may be tangible, such as reducing flood risk, or intangible, such as social benefits from an attractive common space. It is also multi-scalar: at "the city and regional scales, [green infrastructure] has been defined as a multifunctional open-space network. At the local and site scales, it has been defined as a stormwater management approach that mimics natural hydrologic processes" (Rouse & Bunster-Ossa, 2013).

At the Hardin site, green infrastructure could take the form of stormwater parks that detain water; plantings to enhance the urban tree canopy, or other interventions. These could be designed to relieve flooding around surrounding homes. We highlight approaches from several plans to inform what could be possible.



Rendering of the Lower Ninth Ward around Florida Avenue as stormwater parks and wetlands.

Image Source: Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan, Waggonner & Ball (2013).

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SHORT-TERM ACTIVATION

Beautification is an important component of planning strategies designed to provide a neighborhood point of pride, increase current residents' attachment to place, and attract new residents (Stewart et al., 2019). While plans for a physical space at Hardin are being considered or finalized, Sankofa CDC could plant the Hardin site with native plantings or a walking trail to encourage community health, provide ecological benefits, and reduce maintenance costs compared to mowed grass.

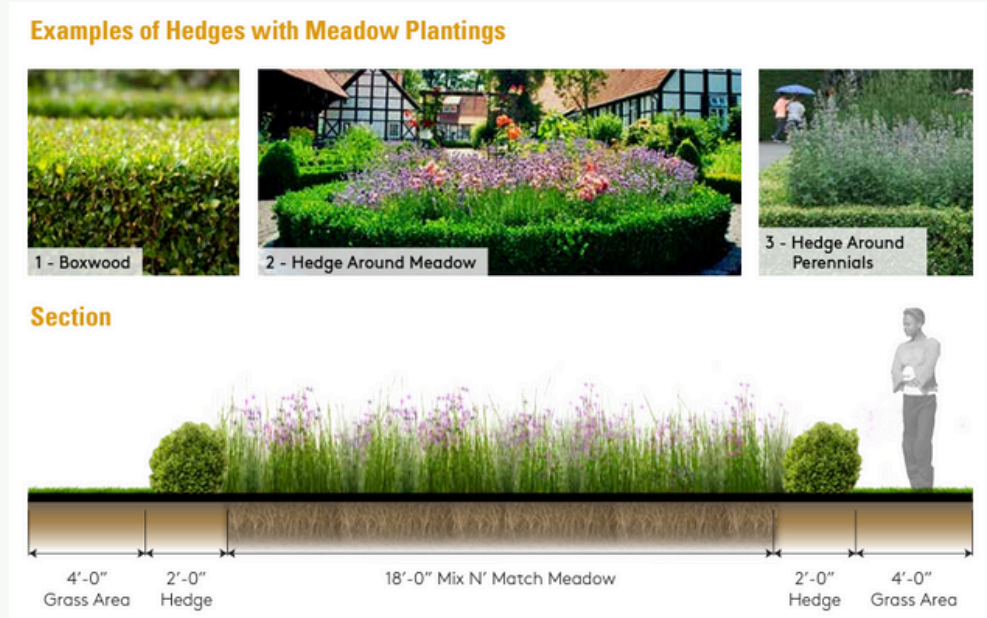


Image Source: Detroit Future City (2022).

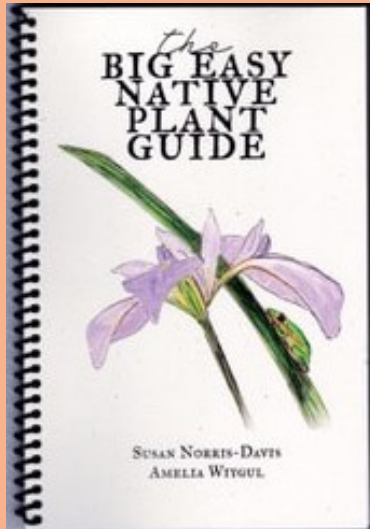
Any green pattern designs could be volunteer-planted, encouraging neighborhood activity and cardiovascular health. Detroit Future City's Guide to Vacant Lots provides downloadable toolkits to facilitate volunteer planting of vacant lots, including designs that deter illegal dumping and serve as community rain gardens. While these designs use plants native to the Midwest, a toolkit updated with native Louisiana plantings could serve as a model for Hardin's short-term activation (Detroit Future City, 2022). For additional detail about green pattern strategies for the neighborhood, please see the UNO-MURP proposal for the Florida Corridor Resilience District.



Volunteer rain garden planting in Maryland.

Image Source: Flickr

The Big Easy Native Plant Guide, written by Susan Norris-Davis and illustrated by Amelia Wigyl, provides a list of 47 species for the New Orleans environment. The guide describes suitable growing conditions, plant heights, and most appropriate wetland habitat type (Wetland Indicator Status).



The Big Easy Native Plant Guide (left) and short-term green patterning in New Orleans City Park: field of Cosmos (right)

Image Source: Dov Block (2023)

GREATER NEW ORLEANS URBAN WATER PLAN (2013)

The Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan, completed by Waggonner & Ball in 2013, is a comprehensive visioning strategy that arose from the “Dutch Dialogues,” a series of post-Katrina information-sharing sessions with engineers and professionals from the Netherlands. Out of these dialogues came the vision of a New Orleans region that embraces “living with water” by making the region’s coastal environment a focal point of new green infrastructure rather than relying on pipes and pumps for drainage.

In the Lower Ninth Ward, the Urban Water Plan advocates for a three-sectoral development strategy: “Historic Riverfront,” “Suburban Residential Zone,” and “Strategic Parklands.” Hardin falls within Strategic Parklands. The plan asserts that converting much of the area along Florida Avenue to wetlands would “provide stormwater storage, double as a buffer along a vulnerable edge, and bridge between the urbanized landscape and the Central Wetlands Unit” (Waggonner & Ball, 2013).

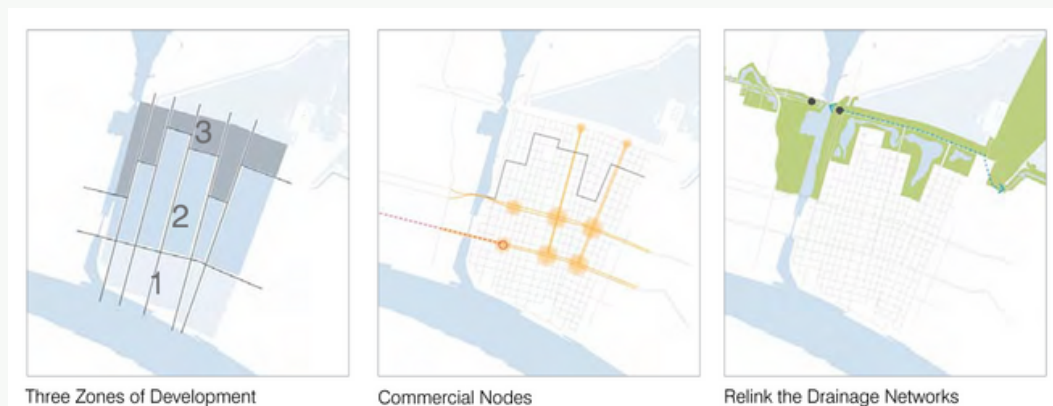


Image Source: Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan, Waggonner & Ball (2013).

AIA R/UDAT PLAN (2018)

The American Institute of Architects Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) used a community-based visioning process to identify scalable solutions that could be implemented to revitalize the Lower Ninth Ward. Like the Urban Water Plan, it proposed three phases: “L9 Central,” “Galvez,” and “Bayou.” The last phase is anchored by a restored Bayou Bienvenue and designed to provide “environmental education and recreational opportunities” and “Green jobs and infrastructure...to protect residents” (AIA, 2018). The Hardin site is marked as a combination of community and open space.

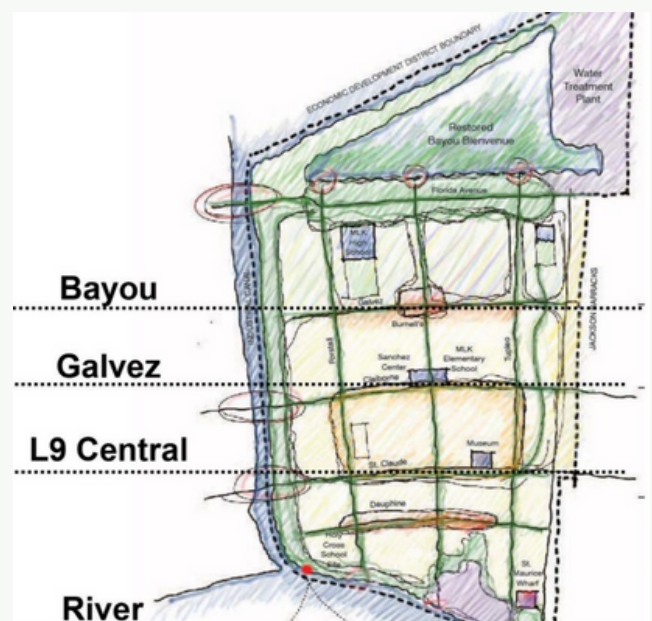


Image Source: AIA R/UDAT (2018).

SOLAR AT HARDIN

Solar power generation presents environmental and community resilience benefits that align with the Sankofa Wetland Park & Trail and Florida Resilience District concept. Various contexts for solar explored in this section, including community solar, microgrids, and conventional solar.

A range of opportunities exist for solar implementation at the Hardin site, each with strengths and limitations. A standalone solar farm could represent a sole use for Hardin, distinct from other programmatic uses in this recommendation framework. Yet solar generation can take many sizes and forms. Applications of solar may be added on to or augment any programmatic use Sankofa CDC considers for the Hardin site.

COMMUNITY SOLAR

Listed in the OPSB outreach survey as a potential use for vacant surplus property, community solar projects offer a renewable solution to reduce the energy cost burden for residents who may not have the means or proper conditions to install roof-top solar. In a community solar program, a group of residents, nonprofit, private entity, or utility company establishes a source of solar energy that residents can pay a fee to subscribe to. In return, subscribers receive a credit on their utility bill for solar energy generated by their subscription. The solar generation site can take the form of rooftop solar panels or be a standalone offsite location.

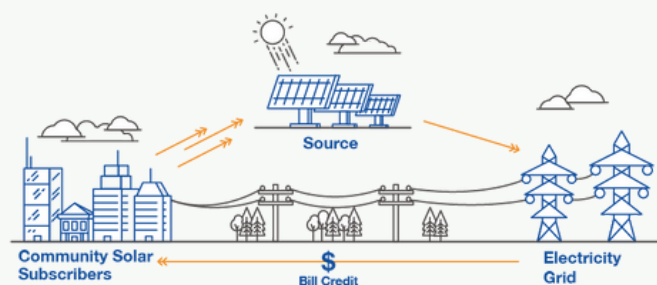


Image Source: Solar One (2021).

IMPLEMENTATION

Community solar programs are being successfully implemented across the country. Successful community solar programs have:

- clear subscription rules and benefits, which provides return on investment (ROI) for solar providers
- integration with local and state clean energy planning and benchmarks
- regulatory context for community solar on the state-level
- online access to information and community solar subscription

COMMUNITY SOLAR AT HARDIN

The current regulations do not present a financially feasible pathway for use at the Hardin site. Residents do not receive a fair discount for energy produced at a community solar facility because of the tariff rate structure. Entities interested in establishing a community solar facility are disincentivized because they will not recoup their investment.

NEW ORLEANS CITY COUNCIL'S COMMUNITY SOLAR PROGRAM

The New Orleans City Council's Community Solar Program was established in 2019 to expand renewable energy access for residents through Community Solar Gardens (CSG). The program is administered by Entergy New Orleans and allows individual users to "subscribe" to a community solar project. A "subscriber organization" is responsible for installation, operations, and maintenance costs associated with the community solar site. The power generated is sold to Entergy New Orleans in the form of account credits to subscribers' utility bills (New Orleans City Council, 2019). Since the Community Solar Program's launch, no CSG projects have been developed.

A SPACE FOR ADVOCACY

The context for community solar in the City of New Orleans and two-acre lot size of the site present the largest limitations to larger-scale community solar implementation at the Hardin site. However, advocacy work to reform the City's Community Solar Program is taking place and offers an engagement point for Sankofa CDC to enter the community solar space. Organizations like Together New Orleans and the Alliance for Affordable Energy have been working towards amending the tariff rates under the current Community Solar Program and creating an environment that incentivizes CSG construction (Alliance for Affordable Energy, 2019). Currently, the supply- and demand-sides of community solar are not incentivized to move forward.

MICROGRIDS

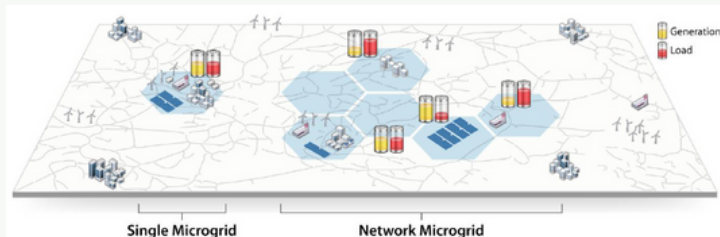


Image Source: Sandia National Laboratories (2021).

It is no surprise to residents of New Orleans that natural disasters threaten the City's electrical grid. Microgrids provide localized, autonomous support to communities during power outages. Capable of disconnecting from the traditional electrical grid, microgrids can operate during prolonged power outages and serve as a resource to the traditional grid to improve response and recovery time. Microgrid systems can be fueled by conventional energy sources alone or integrate renewable energy sources to complement the system.

THE HARDIN MICROGRID

Catalyzing on new developments with microgrids in the Lower Ninth Ward, Sankofa CDC can explore microgrid designs in partnership with the adjacent Beulah Land Baptist Church (2436 St. Maurice) and Together New Orleans to serve as a Community Lighthouse Location. Regardless of the scale of development envisioned for Hardin, microgrid capabilities can be incorporated into the space. The Community Lighthouse Project aims to position a lighthouse within one mile of every New Orleanian (Together New Orleans, 2022). With studies underway exploring a microgrid at the Sanchez Multi-Service Center and Central Missionary Baptist Church, Hardin could serve as a source of resilient energy supply for the Florida Avenue side of the Lower Ninth Ward.

MOVEMENT TOWARD MICROGRIDS IN LOWER NINTH WARD

In January 2023, The City of New Orleans received a \$220K grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Building Resilience Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program to design a solar-powered emergency generator at the Sanchez Multi-Service Center. The City's Hazard Mitigation Office will also be investigating the feasibility of expanding the project to build a neighborhood-wide solar-powered microgrid. In 2022, New Orleans received a technical assistance award through the U.S. Department of Energy's Local Energy Action Program (LEAP). Working with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), the primary focus of the assistance is to provide a technical roadmap for community resilience microgrids and energy storage to advance the City Council's Renewable and Clean Portfolio Standard.

Together New Orleans' Community Lighthouse Project is working to build a network of congregations and community institutions across New Orleans with solar power and storage capacity to serve as hubs during power outages. Community Lighthouses will conduct need assessments during power outages and in the aftermath of natural disasters to determine residents' needs and provide residents with charging stations, food distribution, cooling/heating stations, and oxygen exchange.

The Community Lighthouse Project has started construction on Phase I, installation of 16 Community Lighthouses across the City of New Orleans. The Lower Ninth Ward's Central Missionary Baptist Church (1438 Alabo) is a planned site for solar and battery storage. Part of the FEMA BRIC feasibility study will explore ways of connecting the Community Lighthouse with the Sanchez Center's generator to begin creating the Lower Ninth Ward Energy Resilience Grid (Sledge, 2023).

CONVENTIONAL SOLAR

Individual solar panel installation is the most common form of solar power generation in New Orleans. This solar scheme allows the property owner to offset energy costs by feeding directly into the utility meter subsidizing the cost of energy (i.e., net metering). Backup battery storage capacity is critical for structures to maintain power during nighttime hours and prolonged outages. Individual solar systems with battery capacity can function like a single structure microgrid.



Glassblower Ben's solar powered studio
St. Ferdinand & Urquhart
Image Source: Solar Builder Magazine (2022).

CONVENTIONAL SOLAR AT HARDIN

As a renewable source of energy supplying individual structures, this application of solar has the most flexibility and the clearest pathway forward for financing and installation for the Hardin site. Whether installed on residential housing, an educational flex space, or as a standalone open structure, there are numerous applications for solar panels at Hardin that fit other co-uses and development types.

SOLAR FOR ALL NOLA

Solar for All NOLA launched in 2020 to increase access to individual solar for residential and commercial buildings. The program contracts PosiGen and Solar Alternatives to provide free solar evaluations to all potential homeowners and small business owners (City of New Orleans, 2020). Both companies offer solar panel leases or purchasing options. Leasing guarantees no upfront costs and requires no credit check. Purchasing a solar system includes a 25-year guarantee with financing. Backup power can be explored through the purchase option.

RESIDENTIAL LEASING VS. PURCHASING & ROI

For individual homeowners, leasing solar systems through the Solar for All NOLA program offers a low-cost entry point to reap the benefits of household solar. For a monthly fee, homeowners opting to lease solar panels can enjoy energy savings on their utility bill. Purchasing a solar system requires significant cash upfront or access to credit for financing.

	Lease	Cash Purchase	Loan
Leads to Panel Ownership	No	Yes	Yes
Good Credit Required	No	No	Yes
Average Initial Cost Before Federal Tax Credit	\$0	\$23,940	Often \$0
Average Federal Tax Credit Available	N/A	\$7,182	\$7,182
Average Initial Cost After Federal Tax Credit	\$0	\$16,758	Often \$0
Typical Payback Period	N/A	11 years	15 years
Average Long-Term Savings	\$5,000	\$22,379	\$17,000
Access to Net Metering	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Simms (2023)

EDUCATION "FLEX SPACE"

A recurring theme in stakeholder interviews and the ULI-TAP report-out session was the desire to establish the Sankofa Wetland Park & Trail as a destination within the City of New Orleans, both for recreational uses and educational ones. Sankofa CDC has previously expressed support for aligning its programs with the nascent “green economy” to facilitate job training for Lower Ninth Ward residents. However, the Wetland Park and Trail is currently located in a landscape of vacant lots with little space programmed for education or meeting. Sankofa CDC’s headquarters space is almost 2.5 miles from the entrance to the Wetland Park and Trail and does not contain dedicated meeting space.

To this end, a flexible space that could be used as a classroom facility, a meeting space for Sankofa CDC, and a welcome/informational center about the Sankofa Wetland Park & Trail on the north end of the Hardin site. Sankofa CDC's role is proposed as the owner of this space, which would be used primarily for Sankofa CDC-driven programs. Rather than pre-programming a use into this building, it would be designed to flex between several key uses for Sankofa CDC and its outreach and partnerships: classroom, welcome facility, meeting space, etc. Sankofa CDC is partnering with JOB1 to offer a workforce development training program focused on green infrastructure jobs. They are also partnered with Delgado Community College on their Clean Water Certificate (CWC) program. Students learning urban agriculture or horticulture might attend a lecture in this building, then walk two blocks to see those concepts firsthand in the Wetland Park and Trail.

The building could be developed using green building strategies, including potential solar installations as detailed in this report, and with key green infrastructure elements and stormwater best management practices (BMPs) to showcase the benefits of green infrastructure. "Flex space" could also be incorporated into a denser development on the Hardin site and combined with other uses such as housing.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FLEXIBLE EDUCATIONAL SPACES

In 2021, the Columbia University Center for Teaching and Learning released several guiding principles around educational space that should be observed when considering space needs and building design for Hardin. These include:

- **Space for people.**
 - Seating: At a minimum, students and instructors need seating.
 - Remote students: Students logging into class virtually also need a seat at the proverbial (and physical) table.
- **Teaching styles.** Instructors should consider how their teaching goals and style will translate into the space they occupy.
- **Space for students’ learning materials and other belongings.** This includes teaching surfaces and materials; learning surfaces; and considerations around the placement of outlets.
- **Accessibility & Movability.** The location should provide ample space to accommodate students with disabilities and varied pedagogical styles.

HOUSING AT HARDIN

A point highlighted in the ULI-TAP report-out session was the community's preference for single-family and two-family homes as a way of providing affordable housing for residents. Development of affordable housing also directly supports the Lower Ninth Ward's legacy of homeownership. The Hardin site is a large plot of land that may interest housing developers keen to subdivide it into single-family properties. If the land were developed without changing its current zoning (see page 7), approximately 15 single-family homes could be built on the parcel. Conventional single-family homes of this nature would need to be subsidized in some way to make them affordable, either through the use of housing tax credits, a community land trust, or foundation money for subsidies.

Rather than exploring traditional models of single-family homes, this section will explore alternative architectural and construction designs alongside thoughtful site-planning, with a vision of creating a "naturally affordable" housing as part of a community-oriented space for people and families interested in intentional community, or for a nonprofit to develop housing for a specific individuals (i.e., veterans or youth).

There are significant limitations to using the Hardin site for housing development: in particular, portions of the site sit in the 100-year floodplain. This means the site has a 1% chance of flooding in a given year and a 26% chance of flooding at least once during the lifetime of a typical 30-year mortgage. These risks could be offset with appropriate elevation and hardening of new developments, which may add cost to homes constructed at the site.



Image Source: Jacob's Well Cottage Court. (2019). Cottage Court.

ALTERNATIVE VISION: CO-HOUSING COMMUNITIES

“Co-housing” is a community development model that combines private homes with shared indoor and outdoor spaces to enhance community building (CoHousing, 2023). In some cases, co-housing communities are made up of private homes built around a “common house,” where residents prepare family-style meals.

The Louisiana Himalaya Association (LHA) is a local example of a co-housing community. LHA bought a collection of shotgun-style housing on a block of North Rendon in MidCity and split some of them into smaller studio apartments. The structures are clustered around a common house and large courtyard, where residents have access to common meals and activities. Individuals living in the community rent from LHA.

Other examples of intentional communities include those built to fulfill specific needs of residents. In Gentilly, Bastion Community of Resilience is a planned community for injured and ill veterans to live among retired and civilian volunteers. Each cluster of four units is designed facing a common courtyard, and a wellness center exists on site (Bastion, 2023).

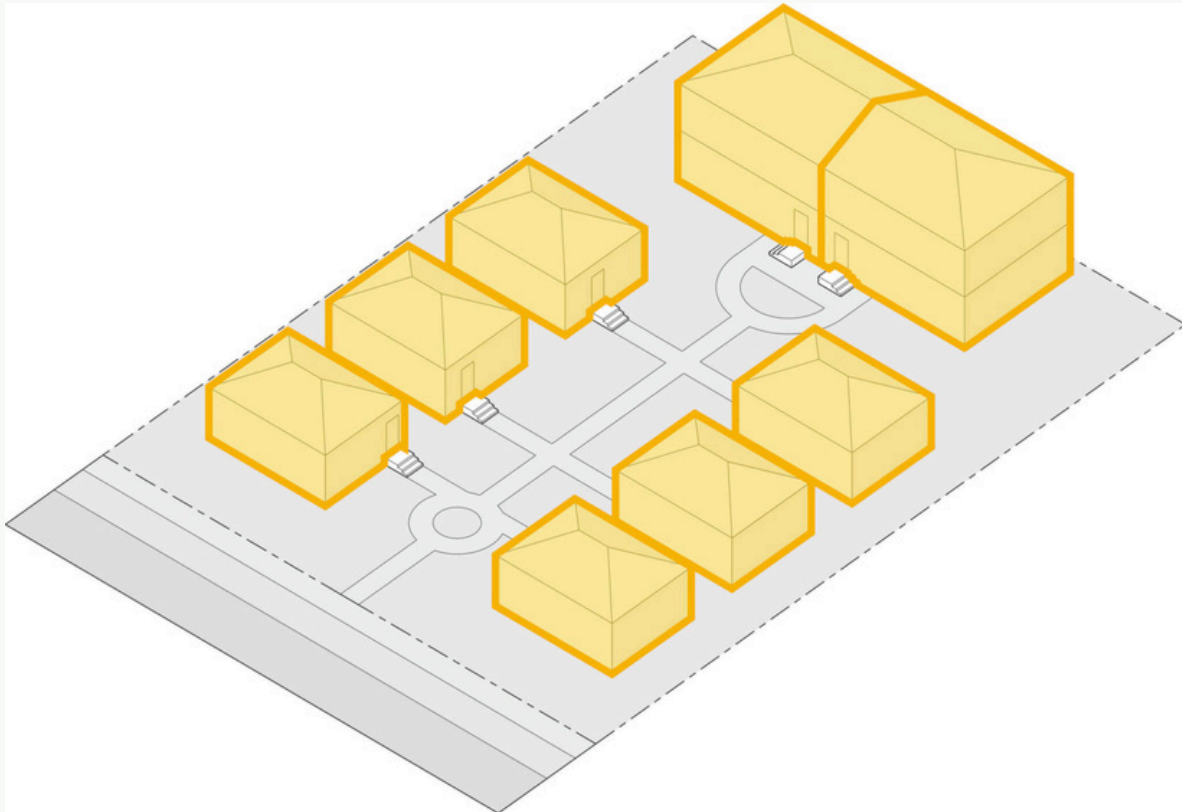
In California, the Wiyot Tribe developed the Dishgamu Humboldt Community Land Trust, which melds the traditional CLT model of community land ownership with additional workforce development and green development goals (Wiyot Tribe). The Wiyot received a \$14 million state grant to convert two properties into clustered housing for homeless youth and provide wraparound youth services, including workforce development (Nonko, 2023). In the case of Dishgamu Humboldt, the longstanding community land trust model is modified to suit the tribe’s needs, and the CLT itself is a unit of the tribe rather than a standalone nonprofit. The Wiyot were able to assemble the available land after the local government recognized longstanding structural racism by agreeing to return the land to the Wiyot people without restrictions on its use.



Bastion Housing Units in Gentilly. Image Source: Bastion Community of Resilience. (2023).

DESIGN DEVICE: COTTAGE-COURT HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

To achieve communal spaces, alternative community design models are needed that encourage residents to interact with one another. Cottage-court housing developments are a group of small (1 to 1.5 story) homes that are arranged around a shared court visible from the street. The court is typically designed to foster community among neighbors, with pathways, gardens, and sometimes non-residential structures for community gatherings. Hardin could be divided into several small lots for a group of cottages with a shared structure in the middle. Sankofa CDC has mentioned an interest in building a space that could be used for as a flexspace, and the space could be built with that use in mind while also incorporating residents' desired uses.



Example of a cottage-court development, with homes turned inward from the street.

Image Source: Missing Middle Housing. (2023). Cottage Court Designs. [Cottage Court – Missing Middle Housing](#).

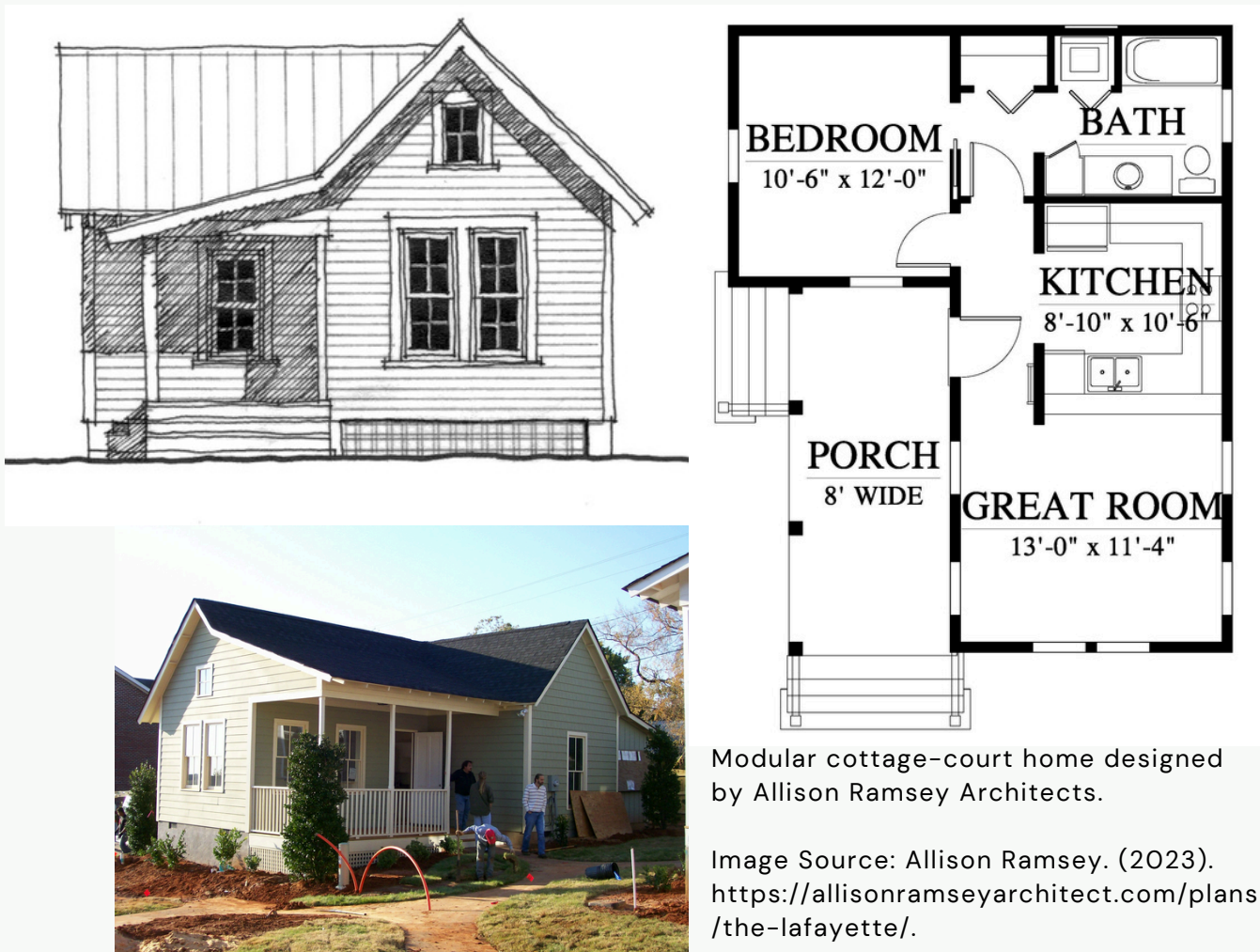
Among housing developers, cottage-court developments are sometimes considered "naturally occurring affordable housing," because their affordability stems from the design rather than the use of subsidies (Robinson, 2019). Because cottage unit sizes are small—typically 500 to 800 square feet—construction costs can be more affordable and homes are more energy efficient (Missing Middle Housing, 2023). It is important to note that cottage-court developments are not designed to be inherently or permanently affordable. In Redmond, WA, (where housing costs are 102% higher than the national average), two-bedroom/two-bath cottage-court units sold for \$334,500–\$425,000 (National Association of Home Builders). Also, significant zoning changes would be required on the site to make such a development feasible.

AFFORDABILITY DEVICE: MODULAR CONSTRUCTION

Modular construction can be utilized to enhance the affordability of a cottage-court development. Modular homes are a type of prefabricated home, but they differ from manufactured housing. Manufactured housing is designed to be portable and shipped in one piece to the site location (NerdWallet, 2023). Modular homes are pre-built in factories, like manufactured homes, but shipped to the site location in pieces and assembled at the lot. Building a modular house can have some advantages over building a traditional home, such as faster construction, lower cost, higher quality control, and less environmental impact (NerdWallet, 2023). Studies suggest that modular construction can be 10%-35% more affordable than traditional construction costs, primarily due to assembly-line efficiency.

Some modular homes are constructed with an emphasis on sustainability. EcoCraft Home Builders, based in Pittsburgh, PA, use green materials, install energy-efficient HVAC systems, and design homes with solar-ready features (EcoCraft, 2023).

Residents may be skeptical of modular construction, and of manufactured housing more generally. However, local modular construction company Shibuya Systems is currently working with lowernine.org to build a modular headquarters in the Lower Ninth Ward (Biz New Orleans, 2023).



Modular cottage-court home designed by Allison Ramsey Architects.

Image Source: Allison Ramsey. (2023).
<https://allisonramseyarchitect.com/plans/the-lafayette/>.

EXAMPLES OF COTTAGE COURT DEVELOPMENTS

[Saluda River Cottage Court](#) – Allison Ramsey Architects (constructed using modular housing)

[Modular House Plan Collection](#) – Allison Ramsey Architects (modular housing examples)

[Studio E Architects › Bungalow Courts](#) – [Tiny Homes 1.0](#)

[The Cottage Company - Danielson Grove Site Plan \(Site Plan\)](#)

[The Cottage Company - Danielson Grove \(Community overview\)](#)

EXAMPLES OF MODULAR DEVELOPERS

[Studio Shed](#)

[EcoRanch Custom New Home Construction Floor Plans \(ecocraft-homes.com\)](#)

LOCAL MODULAR AND MANUFACTURED HOME DEVELOPERS

[Shibuya Systems](#)

[Home One Homes | Metairie LA | Read Reviews + Get a Bid | BuildZoom](#)

[About Us | Clayton Homes of Houma \(claytonhomeshouma.com\)](#)

[Cajun Bungalows Gallery of Tiny Homes](#)

[Modular Homes By Chris Tabor](#)

STRENGTHENING HOMEOWNERSHIP IN THE LOWER NINTH WARD



Image Source: Washington Post. 2015.

SARAH BECHDEL
5/18/2023

INTRODUCTION

Sankofa CDC's vision is of a Lower Ninth Ward (LNW) that is a self-sustaining, viable community that honors its cultural legacies with intergenerational continuity and resources that support everyone's right to a healthy quality of life. Accordingly, Sankofa CDC values both 1) ensuring that current residents can remain in the LNW and 2) encouraging an increase in the neighborhood's residential population. Community members and stakeholders from the LNW expressed at the ULI Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) how important homeownership is to the character of the neighborhood and how much they value maintaining the LNW as a single-family residential community. ULI experts mentioned developing a community retention plan as a possible next step for community development.

Sankofa CDC is not and may not want to serve as an affordable housing developer. However, it can position itself as a key communicator in the LNW, both as a connector and an accountability mechanism. As a connector, it can encourage organizations to bring innovative affordable housing models into the LNW without disrupting the character of the neighborhood. As an accountability mechanism, it can be involved in regular conversations with developers and the community, serving as a liaison and advocating for community needs in the development world.

To assist Sankofa CDC in evaluating its role in the conversation about affordable housing and neighborhood retention, students from the University of New Orleans's Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) Program compiled research on mechanisms for increasing affordable homeownership opportunities for residents. The brief includes a proposal for the future development of a Neighborhood Retention Plan for the LNW, centering affordable homeownership as its primary goal.



A double shotgun home in the Lower Ninth Ward. Homeownership is one of the LNW's great historical assets: prior to Hurricane Katrina, the neighborhood had the highest Black homeownership rate in the city (Adelson, 2015).

NEIGHBORHOOD RETENTION STRATEGIES

Community “retention” strategies, also referred to as “anti-displacement” strategies, are often utilized in places that are facing rapid gentrification and accompanying displacement of long-term residents. However, many retention strategies are relevant to communities with softer real estate markets. The State of Oregon organizes anti-displacement strategies by neighborhood typology and recommends specific strategies for neighborhoods that are affordable but want to ensure their future housing production strategies can lock in current residents, rather than locking them out (Table 1). Table 2 explores categories of community retention strategies as defined by Oregon State’s Anti-Displacement Toolkit, examples of programmatic activity in those categories, and examples in practice.

Table 1: Neighborhood Typology Representing Different Characteristics and Risks of Displacement, as defined by the State of Oregon

	Income Profile	Vulnerable People	Precarious Housing	Housing Market Activity	Neighborhood Demographic Change
Affordable and vulnerable	Low	Yes	Yes	No	–
Early gentrification	Low	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Active gentrification	Low	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Late gentrification	High	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Becoming exclusive	High	No	No	Yes	Yes
Advanced exclusive	High	No	No	High home value and rent	No

Source: State of Oregon. Implementation Guidance: Anti-Displacement Analysis. www.oregon.gov.

Table 2: Categories of Community Retention Strategies and Examples Relevant to Communities with Soft Real Estate Markets

Category	Example	In Practice
Zoning and code changes	Inclusionary zoning	<u>New Orleans Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning (optional in LNW)</u>
Reduce regulatory impediments	Flexible regulatory concessions for affordable housing	<u>Morrow County, OR Housing Strategies Report</u>
Financial incentives	Density bonuses	<u>New Orleans Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning</u> <u>Portland, OR Density Bonuses for Manufactured Housing</u>
Financial resources	Housing Trust Funds Appraisal Gap Financing	<u>Austin, TX Housing Trust Fund</u> <u>Detroit Home Mortgage Program</u>
Tax Exemption and Abatement	Property Tax Relief Community land trusts Restoration tax abatements	<u>Colorado Senior Property Tax Exemption</u> <u>People's Housing+</u> <u>RTA Program NOLA</u>
Land, Acquisition, Lease, and Partnerships	Blight remediation policies	<u>New York State Zombie and Vacant Property Remediation Initiative</u>

RETENTION CASE STUDIES

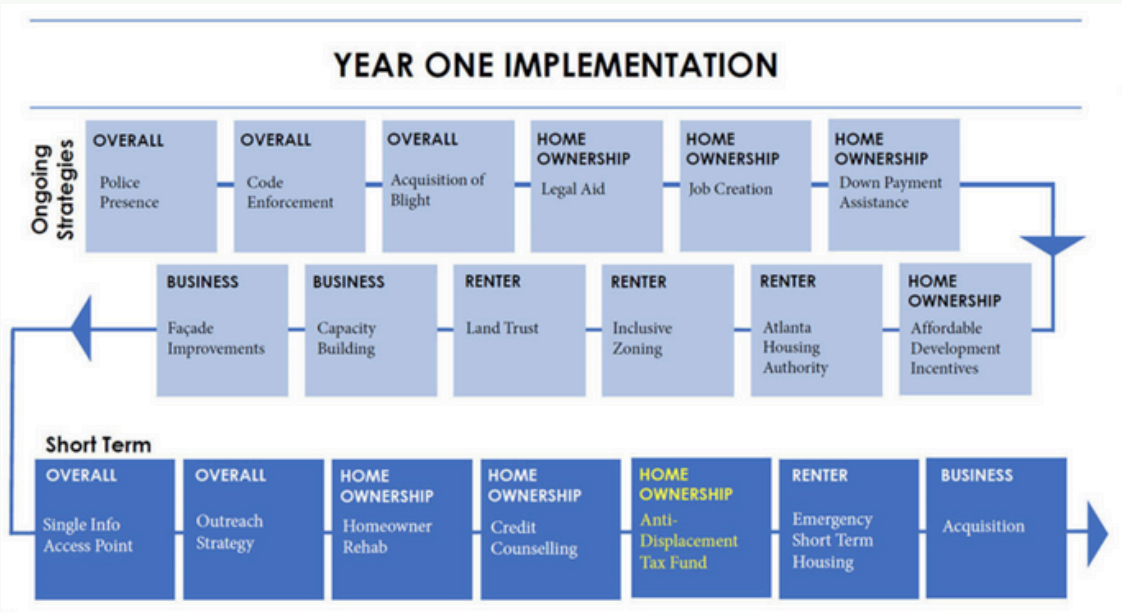
THE ATLANTA BELTLINE AND COMMUNITY RETENTION PLAN

ULI experts mentioned using the Atlanta Westside Future Fund's Community Retention Plan as a possible case study for the LNW. The plan was developed for neighborhoods on the Westside of Atlanta that have been affected by the development of Atlanta's new greenway, the BeltLine.

The Atlanta BeltLine is a 22-mile loop of revitalized rail corridor encircling the city of Atlanta that provides residents with mixed-use trail space, public parks, and transit. Planning for the project began in 2004, resulting in the 2005 BeltLine Redevelopment Plan (Atlanta BeltLine, 2011). Much of the future BeltLine was planned in predominantly Black, low-income communities, and real estate investment began immediately. Two studies, conducted in 2007 and 2017, showed that real estate values jumped significantly faster in Atlanta neighborhoods adjacent to the developing BeltLine than those farther from it (Immergluck, 2023).

In 2016, the BeltLine's Westside Future Fund created a Community Retention Plan, a series of strategies aimed at reducing displacement in the Westside of Atlanta (ADP, 2020). The initial strategies, displayed in Figure 1, include **zoning changes** (inclusionary zoning), **financial resources for homeowners** (downpayment assistance, assistance with homeowner rehab, emergency short-term housing for renters, etc.) **tax exemption policies** (including a community land trust, which owns tax-exempt land), and **land acquisition policies** (in the form of blighted property acquisition and remediation).

Figure 1: Westside Future Fund Community Retention Plan Strategies



Source: ADP Urban Planning Management. (2023). Westside Future Fund Community Retention Plan. <https://apdurban.com/projects/westside-future-fund-community-retention-plan/>.

The Westside Future Fund also moved into affordable home construction, building homes for sale and rent-to-purchase beginning in 2020. Through corporate donations, the fund offers down payment assistance to eligible homeowners and financial counseling for renters interested in homeownership.

The centerpiece of the plan, however, is a subsidy covering future property tax increases for homeowners with an income below 100% of the Area Median Income in the designated Westside boundary. Known as the Anti-Displacement Tax Fund, this financial resource program is funded until 2030 and provides a grant that pays increases in property taxes for eligible homeowners beginning in the year 2018 (Atlanta BeltLine, 2023).

Notably, the Anti-Displacement Fund began in 2018, 13 years after the city released the BeltLine Redevelopment Plan. In the intervening period, property values had already placed significant pressure on Atlanta neighborhoods. The BeltLine serves as an important reminder that anti-displacement mechanisms should be in place from the beginning of redevelopment strategies in divested neighborhoods.

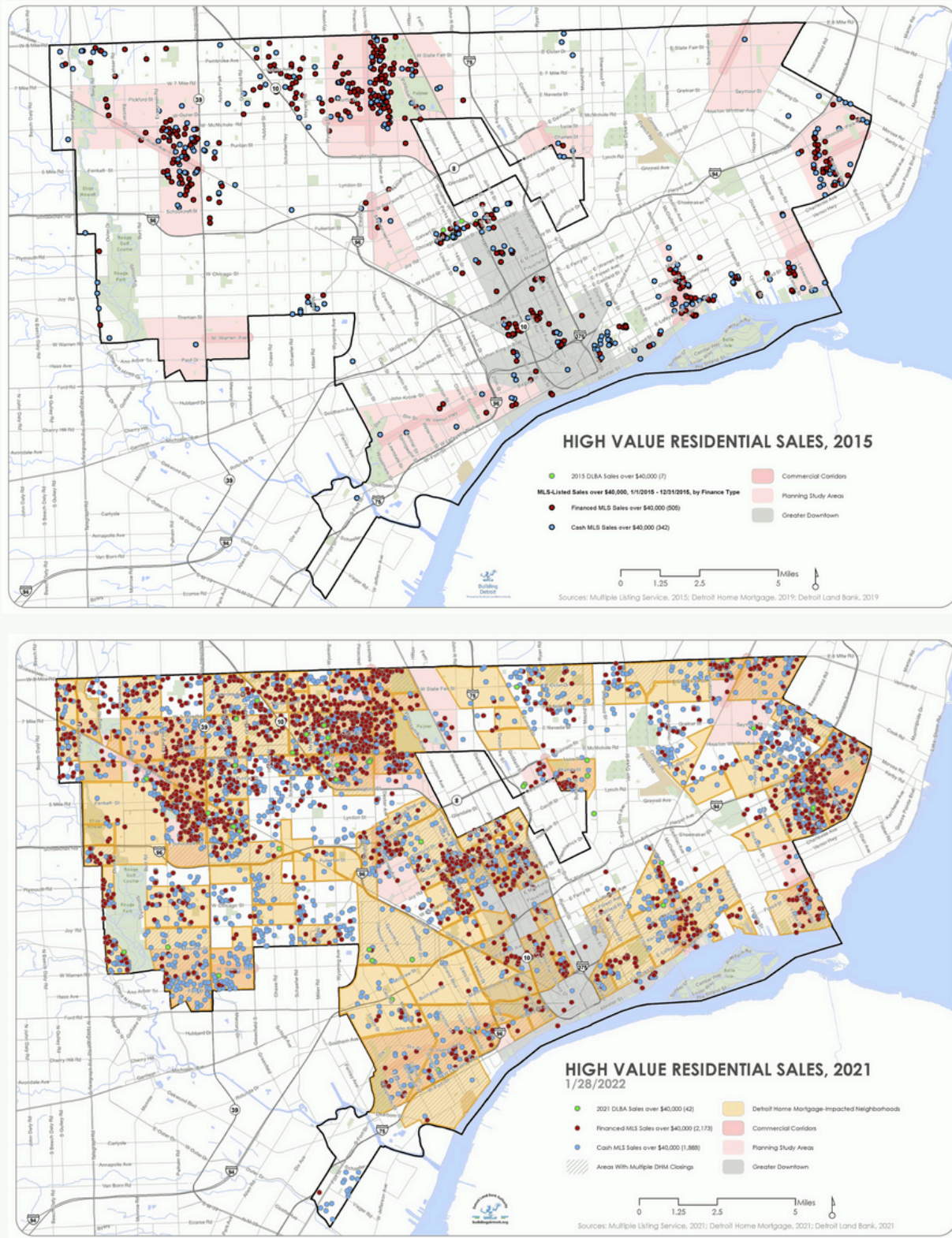
THE DETROIT HOME MORTGAGE PROGRAM

The City of Detroit experienced major population loss in the second half of the twentieth century due to white flight, racist redlining policies, and deindustrialization. The subprime mortgage crisis hit city homeowners a second time: studies show that nearly a third of mortgages made in Detroit between 2005 and 2007 by subprime mortgage lenders fell into foreclosure by 2008 (Detroit Eviction Defense). Home values in many Detroit neighborhoods remained low more than a decade after the end of the recession, causing a widening "appraisal gap" for homeowners: homes were for sale on the market for more than their appraised value, putting potential homeowners in an impossible financial position (Blac Detroit, 2016). Many homes in the city also needed substantial renovations, adding expenses onto homes with low appraisal value. To close the appraisal gap, the Detroit Home Mortgage Program (DHMP) was designed to provide additional financing to purchasers at low mortgage rates.

Through participating lenders, the program provided two fixed, low-interest mortgages: one for 96.5% of the appraised value of the home, and a second mortgage for an amount higher than the appraised value of the home up to \$75,000 (DHMP). The program required homeowners to participate in two educational courses, a general homebuyer education course and a course explaining the Detroit program and its inherent risks. Lending through the program ended in the fall of 2021. Funds for the program were initiated by the Kresge Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and five participating banks.

According to the Community Reinvestment Fund, who spearheaded the initiative, Detroit's approved mortgage rates doubled between 2016 and 2019. The program manager argued that DHMP played a catalytic role in increased investment, because banks use "comparable sales" to assess home values in neighborhoods (Detour Detroit, 2021). Figure 2 shows increases between 2015 and 2021 in home sales on city blocks where DHMP sold mortgages.

Figure 2: Increased Residential Sales in Detroit Neighborhoods, 2015 vs. 2021



Source: Detroit Home Mortgage Program. (2021). <http://www.detroitthemortgage.org/>

MODELS OF AFFORDABLE HOME DEVELOPMENT

In the TAP, stakeholders discussed how current residents of the Lower Ninth Ward overwhelmingly agree that multifamily rental housing is out of step with the prevailing character of the neighborhood and that pathways to affordable homeownership are a major neighborhood priority. Affordable homeownership involves strategies solving the “financing gap:” the development cost of a new or renovated home and the mortgage affordable to a low-to moderate-income household. While community land trust (CLT) models currently operate in New Orleans, which serve to remove land from the speculative real estate market and place it into community ownership, other creative models for maintaining affordability can also be explored.

PARITY DEVELOPMENT COMPANY



In West Baltimore, an “equitable development” nonprofit named Parity has amassed seed investment from corporate donors, state grants, and philanthropic fellowships to renovate and resell 96 affordable row homes (Abello, 2022). The firm developed a “buyer’s collective” of dozens of households who, in addition to purchasing the homes at an affordable cost, underwent a

6-month curriculum on financial planning, home repair, community building, and structural racism in the housing market. Buyers can select from six available floor plans for the renovated homes, including options that split the homes into multiple units to provide rental income. Parity resells the homes to families making \$40,000 – \$60,000 per year and also works with the neighboring community to prevent displacement, in part by providing small grants to local homeowners to avoid tax sales (Peters, 2021). Crucial to the long-term funding of the program is 2022 Maryland legislation creating “the Appraisal Gap from Historic Redlining Financial Assistance Program,” which aims to make \$4 million in state dollars available per year to help affordable developers close financing gaps in historically redlined neighborhoods (Maryland Department of Budget and Management, 2021).

CLEVELAND HOUSING NETWORK (CHN) HOUSING PARTNERS

In some situations, affordable homeownership is achievable through the construction or redevelopment of properties using the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). Cleveland Housing Network (CHN) Housing Partners, an affordable housing developer created by a coalition of Ohio CDCs, has developed more than 1,000 properties for homeownership using Extended Use Agreements (EUAs) on their leases (CHN Housing Partners). In other words, CHN develops and rents properties to families, but uses the EUAs to leave open an option for the renter to lease-to-own at the end of the 15-year period that the property must remain rented under LIHTC (Johnson, 2019). A.J. Johnson, a real estate developer, notes that EUAs are most successful with single-family homes and under conditions in which the mortgage payment is lower than LIHTC rent and the families receive housing counseling services and support (Ibid).

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER HOMEOWNERSHIP PROGRAM

The Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) implemented its Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program in 2001. The program enables Section 8 Voucher recipients to use their vouchers to make mortgage payments rather than to pay rent (HANO). Qualifying applicants must earn at least \$14,500 per year, have at least \$3,000 in savings, and show a credit score of at least 640. They are required to take financial fitness and homebuyer education courses prior to securing a mortgage. HANO's Homeownership Department assists eligible voucher-holders with technical assistance



throughout the process: contacting lenders, applying for mortgages, selecting homes, and closing on loans (HANO). The program has helped more than 500 New Orleans families become first-time homebuyers.

Image Source: HANO. <https://www.hano.org/>

"NATURALLY OCCURRING" AFFORDABLE HOUSING

As discussed in further detail in the UNO MURP proposal for the Hardin Property, "naturally occurring" affordable housing refers to housing that does not require a subsidy for homeowners or developers to be affordable. These properties are generally affordable because they are smaller, more energy efficient, and/or constructed using different processes or materials. A common phrase is "missing middle" housing, or housing typologies between the single-family home and the mid-rise apartment building (Figure 3). Proponents of changing New Orleans zoning to permit Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), small units built adjacent to a primary residence, also argue that they are naturally occurring affordable housing because of their size and cost.

Figure 3: Missing Middle Housing Typologies



Source: Opticos Design. (2020). Missing Middle Housing. <https://missingmiddlehousing.com/>

Manufactured and modular housing is also cheaper to build without necessarily sacrificing material quality or architectural design. While manufactured housing is constructed at a factory and shipped to a location for installation, modular housing is built in pieces and assembled on site. Shibuya Systems, a newly-formed New Orleans modular home construction company, is working with Lowernine.org to build a modular headquarters for the nonprofit on Jourdan Avenue (Biz New Orleans, 2023). The benefits and drawbacks of modular construction are explored in further detail in the UNO MURP proposal for the Hardin site.

A COMMUNITY RETENTION PLAN FOR THE LOWER NINTH WARD

In 2000, the Decennial Census reported that 59% of LNW residents owned their homes, compared with 47% citywide. While the recovery from Hurricane Katrina continues, 2021 American Community Survey estimates suggest that approximately 47.7% of LNW residents own homes, compared with 49.8% citywide. As repeatedly discussed in the TAP among stakeholders and residents, the LNW once had the highest Black homeownership rate in the city, and homeownership remains a fundamental value for the neighborhood. This homeownership difference pre- and post-Katrina could be the centerpiece of a LNW community retention plan. How can the LNW increase its homeownership rate to reach pre-Katrina homeownership levels?

This section serves to outline some of the data needs and analysis for the development of a community retention plan, as well as possible funding sources for the development of the plan.

Table 3: Possible Components of a Neighborhood Retention Plan

Component	Description
Housing Needs Assessment	Demographics and measures of housing affordability and stock
Housing Trends Analysis	Data on residential sales and rents
Investment Risk Analysis	Possible impact of proposed investments (housing developments, parks, etc.)
Housing Strategy Review	Existing affordable housing strategies at work in LNW
Housing Policy Framework	Identifying appropriate policies and next steps for affordable housing development in the LNW

Source: Local Housing Solutions. Developing an anti-displacement strategy.
<https://local housingsolutions.org/plan/developing-an-anti-displacement-strategy/>

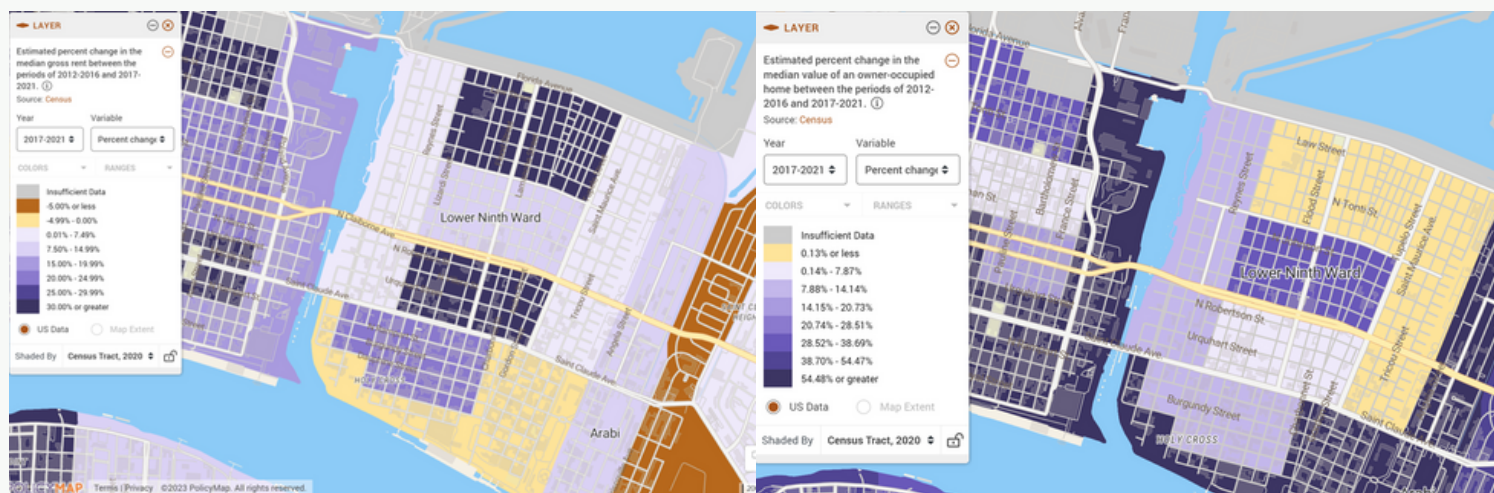
HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A housing needs assessment would present data and visualizations of current demographics and affordability measures in the LNW. This data could be largely compiled from the existing TAP briefing book, data and information presented from ULI's final recommendations, and freely available data provided by HousingNOLA and Local Housing Solutions (Figures 4 and 5).

In addition to available data from the briefing book, this data could include:

- The demographic make-up of current LNW homeowners, including age cohorts, number of children, and change over time (i.e., whether homeowners are generally older or middle-aged, their income brackets compared to the neighborhood as a whole, etc.)
- Longitudinal changes in median gross rents and median value of homes (see Figure 4 and 5), as well as a comparison of data with Orleans Parish as a whole
- Number of HANO Section 8 vouchers are being used in LNW, and whether and how Section 8 use has changed in LNW over time
- Data that can be used to assess LNW renters' abilities to transition to homeownership, such as data collected by HANO or through a neighborhood survey
- Condition of occupied housing stock generally, including the extent to which homeowners need and cannot afford repairs

Figures 4 & 5: Percent Change in Median Gross Rent and Owner-Occupied Homes, 2012–2021



Source: Local Housing Solutions. Housing Needs Assessment Tool. <https://local housingsolutions.org/housing-needs-assessment/>

HOUSING TRENDS ANALYSIS

A housing trends analysis may entail detailed data on residential sales and rents, as well as other existing trends in the neighborhood. Some of this data may be privately held, such as sales listings datasets provided by Redfin, Zillow or private data collection companies. This data could include:

- Data on most recent 6–12 months of home purchases in the LNW, including the number of sales, prices of homes, and recent trends in the market, as well as a comparison with Orleans Parish and national trends
- Available predictions or forecasts on home price trends available from private companies
- Data on mortgage and tax foreclosures in the LNW and how they have changed over time
- Data tracking renter trends in the neighborhood, including rent prices and forecasts, and the number and a spatial analysis of evictions (data available from the First Parish Court and possibly from Professor Davida Finger and Jane Place Sustainability Initiative, who provide data to the nationwide Eviction Lab)

INVESTMENT RISK ANALYSIS

An investment risk analysis would analyze any upcoming investments in the LNW from an economic perspective and their possible effect on the neighborhood real estate market. This analysis could include economic impact analyses on the following changes or projects:

- Short-term rentals
- The Sankofa Wetland Park and Trail
- The Sankofa Fresh Stop Market
- The Tate, Etienne, and Prevost Center (TEP Center)
- Any upcoming housing developments



TEP Center on St. Claude Avenue. Source: Leona Tate Foundation. (2018). The History & Future of the McDonogh #19 School Building.
<https://www.leonatatefoundation.org/mcdonogh-19>.

HOUSING STRATEGY REVIEW

A housing strategy review would include data on existing and new city initiatives and their effect on the LNW, as well as nonprofit advocacy and nonprofit and for-profit residential development in the LNW. The review could include:

- How many homebuyers participating in the HANO Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program have purchased LNW homes
- Existing community land trust holdings in the LNW, including those operated by People's Housing+
- Current strategic plans of People's Housing+, Jericho Road, Providence Community Housing, and other nonprofit residential developers, and how those strategic plans affect the LNW
- Recent initiatives by the City of New Orleans (see the Appendix for a non-exhaustive list of initiatives in the past year)



HOUSING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The housing policy framework would bring the above datasets to the public in the form of community meetings and participation, and ultimately produce a series of community retention strategies chosen for and by the people of the LNW. As previously discussed, this framework could center homeownership—and increasing homeownership in the LNW to pre-Katrina levels—as its primary goal. Some of the possible strategies are included in Table 2 and the case studies highlighted above.

Shotgun house in Holy Cross neighborhood of the Lower Ninth Ward

APPROPRIATE LEADERS FOR A COMMUNITY RETENTION PLAN

Cities, states, and CDCs and nonprofits have all served as the leaders of community retention plans. The Westside Future Fund, which developed the Atlanta Beltline Westside Community Retention Plan, is an initiative launched by the Atlanta Committee for Progress, a coalition of leaders from Atlanta's for-profit and nonprofit industries (Westside Future Fund). Crucially, the Atlanta Committee for Progress and its initiatives were supported by Atlanta's former mayor, Kasim Reed. The Detroit Home Mortgage Program was spearheaded by the Community Reinvestment Fund, with the City of Detroit, Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), and several foundations, nonprofits, and banks serving as partners. Whether Sankofa CDC sees itself as poised to take on a community retention plan, its effectiveness will depend on city participation.

FUNDING MECHANISMS FOR DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY RETENTION PLAN

Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Grant

HUD funded the Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Grant in fiscal year 2022 to help local governments ensure housing needs are considered as part of their larger infrastructure investment plans. Units of local government can receive grant funding if they want to address housing needs in disadvantaged communities in accordance with their housing and/or equity goals.

CDBG and HOME Funds

The New Orleans Consolidated Action Plan for 2022 - 2026 lays out funding goals for development of new rental housing, rehabilitation of existing housing stock, and stabilizing owner and rental occupied housing stock. These funds are primarily earmarked for development initiatives, but more research could be done to consider applying for funds for a Neighborhood Retention Plan.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: 2022–2023 NEW ORLEANS HOUSING STRATEGIES

Mayor's Office of Housing Policy and Community Development (OCD)

- OCD used COVID-19 Emergency Solutions Grant CARES Act funding to rehouse approximately 2,200 unsheltered individuals by December 2022.[1]
- \$30 million will become available in 2023 for additional services to reduce homelessness, including for rent payments and nightly hotel rates, street outreach and supportive services.[2]
- OCD is using \$1 million in 2023 for a Health and Safety Owner-Occupied Housing Program, which will provide up to \$35,000 per homeowner to make needed repairs that will maintain the home's habitability.[3]
- OCD allocated \$13 million for down payment assistance programs supporting first-time homebuyers.

Finance New Orleans (FNO)

- In 2023, FNO is establishing a Green Mortgage Program for first-time homebuyers with household incomes under \$99,000. The downpayment assistance provides 2% - 5% of the first mortgage as a forgivable loan.[4]

New Orleans Redevelopment Authority

- In 2022, NORA partnered with developers to redevelop 174 existing vacant properties throughout the city. The proposed developments will result in an estimated 168 affordable rental units and 73 affordable homeownership opportunities.[5]

Housing Authority of New Orleans

- HANO received 106 Emergency Housing Vouchers in addition to its current stock of Section 8 vouchers to assist individuals and families who are homeless, at-risk of homelessness, fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, or were recently homeless or have a high risk of housing instability.[6]
- HANO is one of 4 local Public Housing Authorities to receive 34 Stability Vouchers, providing additional assistance to families at risk of homelessness.[7]

[1] [Mayors Office - News - Articles - November 2022 - City Partners with Housing Agencies and Community Organizations to Prioritize Aggressive Housing Initiatives - City of New Orleans \(nola.gov\)](#)

[2] [\\$30 million targeted for street homelessness | News | nola.com](#)

[3] [Health-SafetyOwnerOccupiedProgram-2023NOFA-GIP.doc \(live.com\)](#)

[4] [Green Mortgages Program – Finance New Orleans \(financenola.org\)](#)

[5] [NORA Newsletter: Winter 2023 \(mailchi.mp\)](#)

[6] [Emergency Housing Vouchers | HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)

[7] [Fact Sheet: HUD Announces \\$486 Million in Grants and \\$43 Million for Stability Vouchers to Address Unsheltered and Rural Homelessness | HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)

MAIN STREET STRATEGIES

ST. CLAUDE AVENUE LOWER NINTH WARD



Bailey Bullock | Ellis Combes

THE LOWER NINTH WARD MAIN STREET

The St. Claude Avenue corridor in New Orleans, Louisiana, is being revitalized into a thriving, mixed-use destination as the Lower Ninth Ward Main Street. In the Lagniappe Application to the Louisiana Main Street Program, Sankofa wrote that “many residents express a deep nostalgia for St. Claude Avenue’s past as a vibrant and walkable commercial corridor with a candy store, skating rink, tool shop, and other amenities” (Sankofa CDC, 2021, p. 31). Although a number of small businesses and entrepreneurial endeavors are active along the corridor today, many, if not most commercial amenities and basic necessities lie outside of the community’s geographic borders. Through the Main Street program suite of initiatives, Sankofa has the opportunity to foster commercial revitalization that enriches the Lower Ninth Ward as a “hub of cultural, civic, and faith-based activities” that foster “an incredibly strong sense of community identity and culture” (Sankofa CDC, 2021, p. 31).

The Lower Ninth Ward District Rebuilding Plan, adopted by the City of New Orleans in 2006 following Hurricane Katrina, traces the vacancy and blight that pre-existed Katrina to “the decline of industrial activity in the City during the mid to late twentieth century and the resulting job loss” (City of New Orleans, 2006, p. 2). Despite this, community identity and ties remained strong. In 2008, the Lower Ninth Ward was designated as a Louisiana Cultural District. The application to the state program articulates a vision of the community as “focused on re-developing an economic base that once again taps the long-held entrepreneurial spirit and talents that have characterized and enriched this community for years” (Louisiana Cultural Districts, 2008, p. 12). Sankofa’s efforts to activate the economic potential of St. Claude Avenue carry forward the rich history of civic engagement and community development in the neighborhood.



PHOTOS FROM LOWER NINTH WARD MAIN STREET LAGNIAPPE APPLICATION

ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS

According to Main Street America (2016), the concept of an entrepreneurial ecosystem refers to bringing together public and private efforts in a strategic manner to foster the development of entrepreneurship and innovation in a specific place. Emporia Main Street in Emporia, Kansas is an entrepreneurial ecosystem which has offered support to local businesses at all stages, whether in the idea phase or trying to establish itself into a brick and mortar space (Emporia Main Street, Programs). Emporia Main Street offers cohort-based programming, pitch events, one-on-one business consulting, and advertises retail storefronts available for lease. They also connect small businesses with partner agencies to access alternative financing including grants, loans, and tax credits. These are services that Sankofa could offer as part of the Main Street program.

Sankofa has already secured the site for a Main Street headquarters which will be a central node of the entrepreneurial ecosystem of St. Claude Avenue. A precedent for establishing a physical business enhancement hub is Emporia Main Street, which funded the construction of their headquarters through its Home Grown Capital Campaign, raising \$750,000 (Emporia Main Street, Home Grown Capital Campaign). The building was completed in 2018 and houses Emporia Main Street's headquarters, the headquarters of a local business, and a Business Incubator (Figure 1 below).

Emporia Main Street's Business Incubator hosts small businesses in a mixed-use storefront space for up to 18 months, with the first six months free, the second six months at \$400 in rent per month, and the final six months at \$600 per month, with no penalty for breaking the lease early (Emporia Main Street, Business Incubator). Furthermore, businesses are provided with free phone and internet donations by a local provider and support from Emporia Main Street and its member businesses in the form of assistance in preparing to move to a permanent space, targeted training, and capital resources. So far, Emporia Main Street has hosted two businesses in its incubator space and is currently accepting applications.

FIGURE 1 – EMPORIA MAIN STREET HEADQUARTERS AND BUSINESS INCUBATOR



SOURCE: GOOGLE MAPS

In the future, Sankofa could engage in redevelopment of vacant and blighted properties on St. Claude Avenue to directly expand retail and commercial activity along the corridor. Since the Main Street headquarters will already exist, Sankofa could construct a space dedicated to business incubation, and/or permanent locations for businesses to locate across the corridor. Ownership models could take the form of a commercial community land trust or a fractional ownership approach that allows businesses to be part owners of the building instead of leases, potentially mitigating displacement effects of rising rents associated with development and amenities.

The current conditions of St. Claude Avenue are a primary consideration in identifying paths for commercial revitalization. Figure 2 below shows the distribution of blighted and vacant lots along the St. Claude Avenue corridor. With strategic and coordinated efforts, these properties can be transformed into mixed-use and commercial spaces (ULI-TAP Briefing Book, 2023). While a significant share of the empty buildings are in good condition, many properties will need to have structures renovated, demolished, and/or built from the ground up.

FIGURE 2 - ST. CLAUDE AVENUE VACANCY AND BUILDING CONDITION



SOURCE: SANKOFA CDC ULI-TAP BRIEFING BOOK, 2023

Retail businesses looking for a storefront are not the only potential clients of business enhancement programming. Main Street Eureka Springs is home to the Northwest Arkansas & River Valley Artist & Maker Incubator, more widely known as the Ozark Incubator (OZ INC). Similar to some of the Emporia Main Street Programs, OZ INC offers a cohort-based program that helps entrepreneurs and small businesses expand their enterprises (Main Street Eureka Springs, Ozark Incubator). This program is specifically tailored for people who are engaged in creative endeavors and light manufacturing, and is advertised as being inclusive to LGBTQ+ and 50+ artists and makers. At the end of the 10-week program, OZ INC hosts a two-day Wholesale Market to connect participants to retailers who might want to stock their wares (Main Street Eureka Springs, Welcome NW Arkansas Retail Buyers). If Sankofa were to host a wholesale market for artists and makers, the retailers need not be from the Lower Ninth Ward exclusively. A wholesale market could invite retailers from the entire New Orleans metropolitan area, inviting outside investment into the community. The strategy of connecting entrepreneurs with retailers is a way for a Main Street organization to support entrepreneurship beyond the scope of the retail storefront.

Digitally-based startups are another type of enterprise that Main Streets can support in getting off the ground. Emporia Main Street offers the E-tech Startups program in partnership with the Small Business Development Center at the local Emporia State University, Hereford Cowork Space, and the Center on Rural Innovation. The intensive five-week course convenes fifteen participants for two three-hour sessions each week. One of the goals is to promote “awareness of efforts to build an inclusive tech economy in Emporia” (Emporia Main Street, E-Tech Startups). Through supporting inclusion in tech, Main Streets can empower local residents to participate and innovate in lucrative and high growth industries. Data from the Venture Forward tool suggests that in general, the presence of a microbusiness (defined as “online ventures with predominantly less than 10 employees”) in a community is associated with higher median household incomes and lower unemployment (Venture Forward, Explore Microbusiness Data Tool). Supporting digitally-based startups is an impactful way that Main Street organizations can diversify and strengthen the local economy.

A recent local precedent for cohort-based business enhancement programming is the Scale Up! Louisiana program. In 2022, the Urban League of Louisiana partnered with the Lower Ninth Ward Economic Development District to launch the fifth cohort of Scale Up! Louisiana, targeting small businesses in the Lower Ninth Ward. The program, hosted by the Urban League of Louisiana’s Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, provides early-stage entrepreneurs with education and resources, giving small business owners the support they need to become scalable, profitable ventures. Participants received 8 hours of direct technical assistance along with the opportunity to become eligible for a \$1,600 micro-grant (Urban League of Louisiana, 2022). Sankofa could expand existing efforts by hosting this type of programming at their new Main Street Headquarters in partnership with the Urban League of Louisiana or other strategic partners. Sankofa could also offer opportunities for Lower Ninth Ward entrepreneurs who have already received initial assistance from a resource such as Scale Up! Louisiana to take the next step in developing and expanding. Such opportunities could include assistance in identifying a suitable office, warehouse, or retail space; connecting small businesses with retailers or distributors; placement of workforce development participants as employees at local businesses; and connecting enterprises with prospects for funding, financing, and investment.

Sankofa can also incorporate business incubation and workforce development into the community health and healthy foods programming at the future Fresh Stop Market, building on the success of their Fresh Corner Initiative which expanded access to fresh produce at corner stores in the Lower Ninth Ward. A precedent is the Milam Street Kitchen Incubator & Community Kitchen in Shreveport, Louisiana, which was established by the City of Shreveport as part of the implementation of the Transformation Plan produced through the Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant awarded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2010 (Milam Street Kitchen Incubator & Community Kitchen, History). In partnership with Southern University at Shreveport, the organization offers ServSafe certification preparation and exams, classes on how to start a food-related business, fresh produce pop-ups, and cooking classes for kids, among a variety of other programs and initiatives. Further, Sankofa's could leverage their community test kitchen at the Fresh Stop Market to provide business incubation and professional development in coordination with a partner such as the New Orleans Culinary and Hospitality Institute (NOCHI). This would complement the educational programming that will be offered in partnership with the LSU Health Center and Xavier University Wellness Center.

In the Scope for the Urban Land Institute Technical Advisory Panel (ULI-TAP) held in the Lower Ninth Ward in March, 2023, Sankofa asked, "How can L9W sites be marketed nationally, so that it can find a developer who can create a high quality development, based on current market conditions, and within a reasonable timeframe?" An initial step could be putting together a guide identifying opportunities for development and projections of return on investment. On their website, Emporia Main Street has a Business Investment Guide which includes information on demographics, existing businesses, community assets, and business incentives (Emporia Main Street, Business Investment Guide). It includes a market analysis, including market gaps and total potential, and survey results on most requested businesses. Sankofa could use this type of resource to present developers with compelling evidence on the value of investing in the Lower Ninth Ward.

CORRIDOR CLEAN UP

Sankofa is dedicated to shepherding in a new era of revitalization on the St. Claude Avenue corridor in the Lower Ninth Ward. Sankofa can create a corridor clean up program to make St. Claude more beautiful and welcoming to commercial investment. This clean up endeavour can initially involve simple litter pick up and evolve into a more involved in-house "code enforcement" program via the Lower Ninth Ward Main Street program. Clean up is important in the sense that commercial revitalization is reliant on business interests' impressions, and appearance plays a large role in perception.

H Street in Washington, D.C. is only blocks away from the Capitol Building. Located in Northwest D.C., H Street was once a vibrant commercial corridor serving the Black community of Washington. The street was lined with small businesses, movie theaters and grocery stores, much like what St. Claude Avenue once was. However, H Street began to see decline in the late 20th Century due to disinvestment and suburbanization. H Street became notorious in the 1980s as crime and drug ridden. In 2002, with support of a new mayor, H Street became part of the official Main Street America Program. Much like St. Claude Avenue, H Street had vacancy and blight problems. When H Street Main Street completed their main street comprehensive plan, their goal was to remediate blight and beautify the streetscape in order to foster a more business friendly environment. This plan guided H Street Main Street's first step to revitalization which was clean up of the corridor. To achieve this goal, H Street hired homeless and formerly incarcerated residents to clean the streets, dubbed the "Clean Team". This act of community action catalyzed an all inclusive movement to repair sidewalks and basic services such as trash collection and city code enforcement. Festivals, new businesses, and jobs have flooded into H Street since the 2002 founding. H Street Main Street has attracted more than 400 new businesses and more than 5,000 new jobs to the community (Main Street America, 2017).

FIGURE 3 – H STREET MAIN STREET



SOURCE: TED EYTAN (2017), "NEW VIEWS OF H STREET NE, WASHINGTON, DC USA 8560"

A major theme of The 2021 Lower Ninth Ward Main Street Lagniappe Community Application is blight remediation and development of vacant and underutilized lots with the goals of lot maintenance/blight reduction, commercial revitalization, affordable housing development, and increased private investment (Sankofa CDC, 2021). Using the H Street Main Street Clean Up Crew program as a precedent, and Sankofa can coordinate a concerted effort to clean up the St. Claude Avenue corridor, fostering an environment that is more attractive for commercial investment. Groundwork New Orleans has a youth empowerment program where young people can help serve the community through clean up with the Green Team or working with green infrastructure projects with the Ground CREW (Groundwork New Orleans, Programs). Integrating Groundwork New Orleans' network of the Green Team and Ground CREW into the Lower Ninth Ward Main Street Program and leveraging the current partnership with Delgado Community College can provide avenues for beautification and implementation of green infrastructure along the St. Claude Avenue corridor to generate the positive outcomes demonstrated by the H Street Main Street.

A local, recent example is the Lower Ninth Ward Clean Up Project in 2022 (Lower Ninth Ward Economic Development District, Lower Ninth Ward Clean Up Project). The Lower Ninth Ward Economic Development District partnered with small businesses to provide pressure washing of all of the public bench seating on Claiborne Avenue and to sponsor art installations on electrical boxes. These measures improve aesthetics of the neighborhood and could be expanded to incorporate green infrastructure and arts investment. Sankofa could partner with the Lower Ninth Ward Economic Development District to repeat the Clean Up project on St. Claude and other thoroughfares or simply build on the idea in the launch of a new, distinct corridor clean up program. These efforts connect with other components of Sankofa's broader set of goals initiatives to support revitalization of the St. Claude corridor through the Lower Ninth Ward Main Street program.



PHOTOS FROM LOWER NINTH WARD MAIN STREET LAGNIAPPE APPLICATION

THE FLORIDA CORRIDOR RESILIENCE DISTRICT

Laura Harris | Maya Struhar



SUMMARY

Sankofa Community Development Corporation envisions the New Orleans Ninth Ward as a livable community, whose residents can access goods, services, healthy foods, and arts and cultural resources right in their own neighborhood. Sankofa CDC aims to build a community that can sustain its current resident population and welcome the generations to come. We propose focusing on the Florida Avenue Corridor, which runs parallel to Bayou Bienvenue, as a special resilience district within the Lower Ninth Ward. The concept of a resilience district supports the vision of Sankofa CDC and creates a framework that promotes the public health of the neighborhood. Residents will enjoy increased access to a rich natural environment, improved connections within the neighborhood and to neighborhoods beyond, space for recreation, and reap the benefits of an expansion upon already existing strong stormwater management initiatives.

The Florida Avenue Corridor in the Lower Ninth Ward is an optimal place for a new resilience district. The area is already home to the Sankofa Wetlands Park and Trail, one of the largest stormwater management projects in the City of New Orleans (Sankofa, n.d.). Also nearby is the Bayou Bienvenue Wetlands, a stormwater management asset of four hundred acres of wetlands (Carter, 2016). This project proposes resiliency projects and/or strategies that can be implemented in the area, to designate it as an official resilience district, referred to as the “Florida Corridor Resilience District.” The Florida Corridor Resilience District is unique because it doesn't just encourage environmental resilience, but also community resilience.

This resilience district aligns with Sankofa CDC's goals, focusing on Florida Avenue for a complete streets project, and leverages the historic wetlands park investment. Development of Florida Avenue as complete street, a recommendation of the ULI Technical Assistance Panel, will encourage walking, biking and investment in the neighborhood through enhanced street infrastructure to increase safety and comfort for all modes of travel. The strategies included in this resilience district proposal may provide immediate benefits to members of the neighborhood, by providing them a safe and enjoyable place to walk and bike, and discouraging illegal dumping along the Florida Corridor. In the long run, these strategies intend attract visitors to the Lower Ninth Ward, promote commercial and residential development along the corridor, and enhance recreational and environmental assets for residents to enjoy. For this project, we have researched best practices to create the Florida Corridor Resilience District.

This proposal offers three suggested design and activation strategies for the resilience district: a Florida Avenue Open Streets Even; vacant property activation strategies for vacant lots in the Corridor; the creation of the Florida Greenway. Together, these strategies build the foundation of the Florida Avenue Corridor Resilience District to promote both environmental and community resilience.

LOCAL RESILIENCE DISTRICT PRECEDENTS

A resilience district is an area that takes a focused approach to social, environmental, and economic adaptations for climate change impacts, helping communities with their flexibility to change, and ability to bounce back after a disaster (King, 2022). Resilience districts are being integrated into plans in communities across the United States. Their impacts will become increasingly more important as these communities feel the impacts of climate change. Most resilience districts are localized and range in size from one square block to one square mile (Berger et. al., 2020). The Gentilly Resilience District (Figure 1) and the North Arabi Resilience District have been created and implemented in the New Orleans Metro Area since 2010.

The Florida Avenue Corridor is an ideal location for a new Resilience District in New Orleans. The corridor already has stormwater management projects (such as the Wetland Park and Trail) in progress, and it directly connects with the North Arabi Resilience District on the other side of the parish border. The Florida Corridor Resilience District is a new style of resilience district, strengthening not just environmental resilience, but also community resilience. The Florida Corridor Resilience District is project-based, similar to the Gentilly Resilience District, and complements its neighbor, the North Arabi Resilience District. However, unlike these other local precedents, the Florida Corridor Resilience District intends to enhance the already strong sense of the community within the Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood, giving residents and visitors alike a place to enjoy spending time, while strengthening the community's stormwater management.



Figure 1. Project in the Gentilly Resilience District

There are two resilience districts local to the Lower Ninth Ward. These resilience districts exist in Gentilly in Orleans Parish and North Arabi in St. Bernard Parish. While it is beneficial to look at precedents from all over the nation, to best-select the best strategies, local precedents can be helpful to know and understand what can and is already working in the area.

GENTILLY RESILIENCE DISTRICT:

The Gentilly Resilience District was the first Resilience District in the City of New Orleans. It comprises seven different projects and three ongoing programs. These projects and programs were funded in 2014 with a \$141.2 million grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development through the National Disaster Resilience Competition. The goal was to build multiple, small-scale projects in the area to help the neighborhood be more resilient to future storms following the impacts of Hurricane Katrina (2005) and Isaac (2012). The City of New Orleans partnered with the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) and Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans (SWBNO) on multiple projects within the Gentilly Resilience District to bring its vision to life (Figure 2).

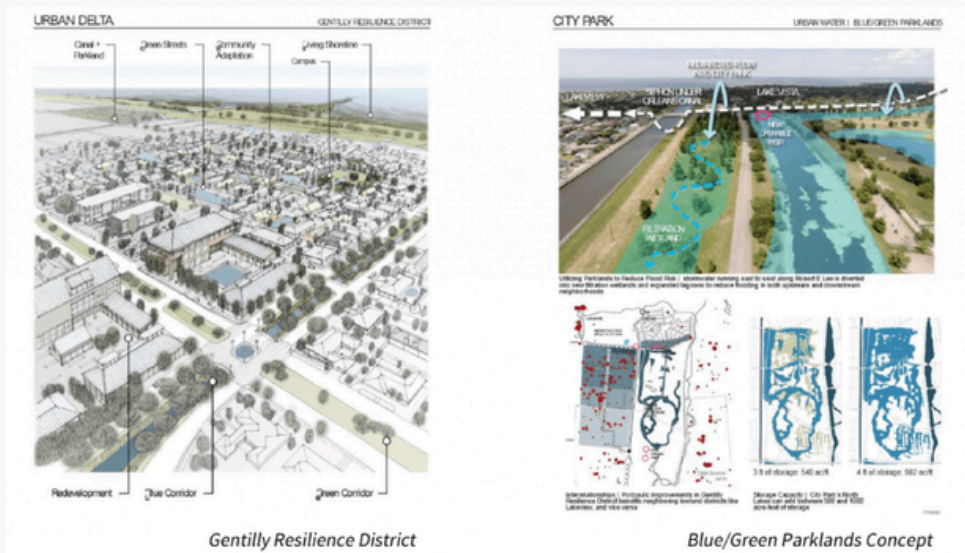


Figure 2. Natural Disaster Resilience Competition Proposals for Gentilly Resilience District

NORTH ARABI RESILIENCE DISTRICT:

The North Arabi Resilience District is a zoning overlay in St. Bernard Parish that sets specific requirements for new construction (Figure 3). These requirements include having one tree per lot to help with tree canopy and stormwater management, structures must be elevated higher than in other parts of St. Bernard Parish, and more. The fact that the North Arabi Resilience District is a zoning overlay sets it apart from most other resilience districts, as it is a set of requirements rather than a list of projects and/or programs, causing it to be low-cost to the Parish to implement.



Figure 3. Example of a new construction home in the North Arabi Resilience District in St. Bernard Parish.

DESIGN AND ACTIVATION STRATEGIES

FLORIDA AVENUE OPEN STREETS EVENT

"Open Streets" events close streets to automobile traffic for a limited time, allowing people of the community to enjoy the street as a place of exercise and play (Figure 4). Building off the success of Sankofa's previous activation events such as the Nature Fest Crawfish Boil, an open streets event on Florida Avenue would bring residents, visitors, and businesses alike to the area to "re-envision" their perception of the Florida Avenue Corridor as a place for people. This Open Streets Event has the potential to happen as early as Fall 2023, and may be repeated annually or semi-annually for years to come.

Addressing concerns about the neighborhood's perception as brought up during the ULI TAP Report-Out, an open streets event:

- Highlights the Sankofa Wetland Park and Trail as a neighborhood asset
- Encourages active transportation through the corridor
- Provides an opportunity to showcase potential vision for a healthy and vibrant neighborhood

Potential partners such as Bike Easy could set up a Kids Learn to Ride workshop as part of the event to encourage attendance, promote safety and engage neighborhood youth in celebrating active transportation in the area.



Figure 4. Open streets event in Minneapolis, MN.

VACANT PROPERTY ACTIVATION STRATEGIES

In the Lower Ninth Ward, there are currently more parcels than there are people to live on them. This is especially true closest to Florida Avenue and the under-construction Sankofa Wetland Park and Trail; a 2023 land use survey by Sankofa recorded an 81% vacancy rate for parcels along Florida Avenue (Figure 6). At the same time, stakeholder conversations during the 2023 ULI TAP indicated that the high proportion of permeable land from vacant parcels may reduce stress on the rest of the area's drainage by functioning as informal green infrastructure. Green patterning offers scalable solutions to use these vacant parcels as a neighborhood asset by implementing strategic planting to grow the urban forest (Figure 5).

Working in tandem with the Sankofa Wetland Park and Trail and targeted nodes of development throughout the corridor, this idea seeks to catalyze development of the area as an "eco-corridor" while turning vacant land into an ecological and community asset. Green spaces will provide both short-term and long-term benefits by: decreasing costs and maintenance demands, improving health, consolidating parcels and preparing land to encourage future redevelopment, integrating stormwater management, parks, and green spaces for multiple benefits, and incorporating strong sustainable urban design practices into new developments for a sustainable future. Transforming these vacant properties into spaces that are visibly vibrant and cared for will discourage illegal dumping in the area, an issue that disproportionately effects residents of the Lower Ninth Ward.

The many vacant parcels of land in the Florida Avenue Corridor in the Lower Ninth Ward offer an opportunity for future development in line with the vision and mission of Sankofa CDC. The activation of vacant land will connect to the Florida Greenway and the greater active transportation network in the Florida Avenue Corridor Resilience District and beyond. Other vacant properties in the area provide activation opportunities on a smaller scale.



Figure 5. Photo by Chris Swan, University of Maryland Baltimore County, used with permission. Baltimore's "Clean and Green" vacant lot strategy, Green Pattern Book.

MAP OF VACANT PARCELS IN THE FLORIDA AVENUE CORRIDOR



Figure 6. Map of Vacancy in the Florida Avenue Corridor

SCALABLE STRATEGIES

Strategic Planting

- Maintaining low installation costs while addressing the long-term goal of rebuilding the urban tree canopy.
- Adding several trees in a manner where they would not encroach upon the lot's buildable area. Through the addition of strategically placed trees, this lot strategy will provide the fundamental greening to improve aspects of the neighborhood ranging from improved property values to resident health. At the same time, the trees will grow to a decent size prior to the development of housing, and can improve marketability and decrease the time it takes to sell the property. Additionally, the trees will create additional value for the property once the lot has been developed.

Environmental Enhancement

- Wetland plantings confined to a portion of the site can mitigate street/sidewalk ponding and reduce loads on municipal drainage systems.

Running Groundcover

- Enhances the strategic plantings scheme in order to provide an alternative ground cover option that is hardy, visually pleasant, and requires no mowing.
- Running ground cover can break the homogeneity of vacant lots and provide greater complexity along the street front.

SITE-SPECIFIC ACTIVATION STRATEGIES IN CONJUNCTION WITH GREEN PATTERNING



Figure 7. Tree nursery site-specific strategy, Jericho Road.

Tree Nursery

- A land-holding community organization may allow partner groups such as SOUL or Front Yard Orchard to utilize vacant properties in exchange for activating and maintaining the lot (Figure 7).

Food Truck Lot

- A food truck park near the Wetland Park and Trail would provide visitors with options for meals or snacks alike while promoting the area as a destination (Figure 8). The lot would require water and electric hookup; however, additional amenities may be supplied by food truck vendors. The food truck park could incorporate strategic planting as well green infrastructure to harvest rainwater and provide a solar energy source for use by the vendors and patrons.



Figure 8. Green Acres Food Truck Park
Boise, Idaho

Welcome Center

- A welcome center would provide additional amenities to make the Wetland Park and Trail more accessible and encourage visitors to spend more time at the park. The building would provide information on the park, educational installations on the nature of the area, shade and shelter from sun and rain, as well as bathrooms to offer more comfort to the visitor's time in the corridor (Figure 9). The building and lot will also incorporate green building methods, strategic planting, as well a facilities such as bike parking to encourage active transportation to the area.



Figure 9. Walnut Creek Urban Wetland Education Center
Raleigh, NC

THE FLORIDA GREENWAY

A blue-greenway active transportation corridor will connect people to the existing Sankofa Wetland Park and Trail, bridging the Ninth Ward to St. Bernard and beyond by providing a way for residents to walk or bike to the park (Figure 10–11, 13). This linear multi-use non-motorized path will extend along Florida Avenue from the Industrial Canal to be connected downriver to a trail continuing through St. Bernard Parish, serving as an active transportation corridor between the parishes. In the future, the greenway may be extended upriver to continue along Florida Avenue and connect to New Orleans' existing bicycle network (Figure 12).

- Aligning with the goals of Sankofa as well as the City's Complete Streets policy, this pathway benefits Lower Ninth Ward residents by increasing access to nature, improving connectivity across neighborhoods, and enhancing stormwater management as well as future economic development opportunities.
- Complete streets elements included in the trail may include safe pedestrian crossings, connections to transit, solar-powered lighting, stormwater retention landscaping features, and places for resting and gathering.



Figure 10. Future vision for the Florida Greenway – a “blue greenway” along Florida Ave., serving as a connector for both people and wildlife between the Upper Ninth Ward, St. Bernard Parish and beyond.



Figure 11. Local trail precedent: Lafitte Greenway



■ Bike network as mapped in City "Moving New Orleans Bikes" plan

Figure 12.

In order for the Florida Greenway to extend into St. Bernard Parish, infrastructure will need to be adapted and/or built to ensure the safety of those using the Greenway.

To create a downriver connection, the existing street network could be adapted to include complete streets elements, such as protected bikeway infrastructure along Delery Street from Florida Avenue to Claiborne Avenue, then east into St. Bernard Parish.



Figure 13. East Coast Greenway

Alternatively, a more complete connection could be achieved by constructing a path to continue where Florida Avenue currently terminates to cross the railroad and continue along the levee, across the wetlands of Bayou Bienvenue (Figure 15).



Figure 14. Rendering of Future 40 Arpent Trail in Arabi from St. Bernard Parish Bikeway and Pedestrian Plan Update, 2017.

This wetland-crossing trail would provide a unique opportunity to serve as both a transportation connection, and an attraction for residents and visitors alike to enjoy the natural beauty of bayou. Precedents of a bike and pedestrian paths crossing water include the East Coast Greenway and the Tammany Trace.

The increased connectivity and access to nature provided by the greenway project may tie into potential funding sources such as the Department of Transportation (DOT) Safe Streets and Roads Grant Program, Trails Capacity Program, and Safe Routes to School Programs.



Figure 15. Proposed connection to St. Bernard Parish 40 Arpent Trail

RESILIENCE DISTRICT POTENTIAL PARTNERS:

OPEN STREETS:

- L9 HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
- NEW ORLEANS COMPLETE STREETS COALITION
- BIKE EASY
- DELGADO
- A COMMUNITY VOICE
- LOCAL CHURCHES
- LOCAL FOOD VENDORS

VACANT PROPERTY ACTIVATIONS:

- JERICO ROAD
- SOUL
- FRONT YARD ORCHARD
- GNO, INC.
- DELTA FLORA
- LOBELIA COMMONS
- MERAUX FOUNDATION

FLORIDA GREENWAY:

- ST. BERNARD PARISH GOVERNMENT
- JACKSON BARRACKS
- CITY OF NEW ORLEANS
- VEOLIA
- NORD
- URBAN CONSERVANCY
- ST. BERNARD PROJECT
- REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
- ST. BERNARD PROJECT
- UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE

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A Healthier Community for Generations to Come:

Creating Resilient and
Equitable Development on
Lower 9th Ward Corridors

ULI TAP BRIEFING BOOK: MARCH 2023



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SANKOFA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Sankofa CDC's Vision: A world where health and well-being are accessible to all. New Orleans' 9th Ward is a self-sustaining, viable community that honors its cultural legacies with intergenerational continuity and resources that support everyone's right to a healthy quality of life.

Sankofa CDC's Mission Statement: Sankofa works to build healthier communities for generations to come.

Sankofa Community Development Corporation (Sankofa CDC) was founded in the Lower Ninth Ward (LNW) during July 2008. Founder and CEO Rashida Ferdinand is a fifth-generation resident of the LNW. Sankofa CDC focuses its neighborhood development efforts on fostering comprehensive community health. Table 1 outlines the gradual development and expansion of Sankofa CDC's work over the past 15 years. The Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel (ULI-TAP) partnership with the organization is part of a comprehensive approach to community and economic development work in the LNW. This includes examining community wealth-building and infrastructure enhancement, equitable use of land, affordable housing development, and business development systems to build a healthy, resilient, and thriving community and address persistent neighborhood vacancy and blight.

Table 1: Sankofa CDC's Focus and Activities Over Time

Years (Approximate)	Focus	Key Activities
2008–2015	Fresh Food for a Healthy Community	Volunteer-Driven Programs
2016–2022	Infrastructure for a Resilient and Healthy Community	Staff-Driven Programs and Community Development Projects
2023–2030	Comprehensive Community Development for a Healthy, Resilient and Thriving Community	Partner and Staff-Driven Community and Economic Development, Planning, and Advocacy

Sankofa CDC continues to sustain and build on the many programs and efforts created from its inception, which offer diverse community assets in the LNW. These include:

- **A community food pantry** that serves vulnerable residents of Orleans Parish experiencing food insecurity through a Second Harvest Food Bank to provide free, heart-healthy food.
- **A community garden** that has been officially designated as a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) People's Garden. Sankofa CDC offers free garden plots to community members with demonstration and garden education programs.
- **A native plant nursery** that grows Louisiana native plants and trees for the Sankofa Wetland Park and to contribute to green infrastructure development in the Greater New Orleans area.
- **The Sankofa Wetland Park and Nature Trail** that is transforming 40 acres of land north of Florida Avenue into a resilient ecosystem where Louisiana native wildlife, flora, and fauna thrive. The Wetland Park is being developed on City of New Orleans public land under a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) with Sankofa CDC. Twenty acres of the Wetland Park have been completed with the remaining 20 projected by December 2023. The completed area of the park already hosts K-12 STEAM education programs with Orleans Parish Public Schools; a green infrastructure job training and Clean Water Certification program with Delgado Community College; an intergenerational fishing educational program; yoga classes; birdwatching hikes; and Scout badge programs, as well as other recreational and educational activities. It is also open to the public as a space for recreation. The Wetland Park's bioretention ponds function as a stormwater overflow system for Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes.
- **The Fresh Stop Market**, a fresh produce retail and nutrition educational space that is under construction at 5029 St. Claude Avenue. Sankofa CDC began the Fresh Stop Market as an open-air produce market that offered fresh produce and other local food products on Saturdays. With a Healthy Food Retail Initiative loan from HOPE Enterprise and a Fresh Food Retail Initiative grant from The Reinvestment Fund, the organization is developing a healthy food hub that will open during August 2023. The Fresh Stop Market will provide consistent access to fresh produce and healthy grab-and-go options in the LNW. Nutrition education and healthy food preparation workshops will be held in the teaching kitchen facility within the Fresh Stop Market and operated in partnership with Xavier University's Center for Health and Wellness Center-College of Pharmacy.

- **The Lower Ninth Ward Main Street Program** fosters historic preservation, business growth, design, and promotion efforts along the St. Claude Avenue corridor in the LNW. Louisiana Main Street and the City of New Orleans Office of Economic Development are supporting Sankofa CDC's ongoing efforts on the Main Street, including:
 - A completed survey of physical conditions for all properties on the Main Street.
 - Acquisition of properties including a formerly blighted property encompassing two parcels of land located on the southeast corner of St. Claude Ave and Lizardi St. Sankofa CDC will develop this property following the design of the creole cottage that formerly inhabited the space, to house the Lower Ninth Ward Main Street office. In addition to a business incubator program, Sankofa CDC is researching growth opportunities for the Main Street corridor on St Claude Ave and working with its Community Action Advisory Board and business advisors to identify the types of incubators that would be most beneficial for the neighborhood.
 - Efforts to beautify the corridor have included holiday lighting and cleanup of the St. Claude Ave welcome sign.

THE ASSIGNMENT

The Lower Ninth Ward has extensive challenges of blight and vacancy that were exacerbated after the Hurricane Katrina disaster of 2005. Sankofa CDC is working to target two mixed-use commercial corridors in the area for investment opportunities.

We would like the TAP to focus on these two corridors and describe opportunities for them to comprehensively stimulate investment within the neighborhood as a whole, including identifying catalytic project opportunities that could enhance resilience and support equitable community development.

- **Florida Avenue:** This corridor is the northernmost east-west street in the LNW, with one of the three bridges that connect the neighborhood to areas across the Industrial Canal. Florida Avenue is directly south of the Bayou Bienvenue Wetland Triangle, a major wetland resource. Sankofa CDC is currently working on the major 40-acre Sankofa Wetland Park investment, parallel to and on the north side of Florida Avenue, through a CEA with the City of New Orleans. The Wetland Park is restoring environmental character, securing stormwater overflow, and inviting visitors who want to experience the LNW's natural environment. We are seeking development of a vision to remediate blighted and under-resourced vacant property along the Florida Avenue corridor. Sankofa CDC is particularly interested in exploring opportunities for green/sustainable technology development that supports neighborhood job creation in the LNW, as well as ecotourism uses that capitalize on the proximity of the Wetland Park and Bayou Bienvenue to downtown New Orleans.
- **St. Claude Avenue:** Sankofa CDC worked with Louisiana Main Street – Louisiana Department of Historic Preservation, the State of Louisiana, legislators, local business leaders, community stakeholders, and others to gain Main Street designation for the entire St. Claude Avenue corridor within the Lower Ninth Ward area. This is one of the neighborhood's primary commercial corridors with a historical concentration of small businesses. Sankofa is working to bring The Fresh Stop Market, a fresh produce retail outlet, to the corridor and has already secured HHFI from Hope Credit Union and FFRI funding from The Reinvestment Fund for its construction. Sankofa CDC has also taken a number of other efforts related to beautification, and recently purchased another two vacant and blighted lots on the corner of Lizardi St. and St. Claude Ave. These properties will become the Lower Ninth Ward Main Street headquarters with space for a business incubator and innovation hub. However, many vacant lots and blighted buildings along the corridor remain, with a recent inventory count of more than 70 vacant properties. We would like to gain ULI panelists' perspective on the top opportunities for catalytic investment and where Sankofa CDC should focus its efforts.

Key Issues to Address

The largest issues or policy-based obstacles that this 2-day TAP can begin to address are:

- Pervasive blight and vacancy overwhelming the LNW neighborhood
- Lack of a plan that addresses environmental justice
- Need for a plan to connect Sankofa CDC anchor project developments to an overall resilient community development plan (Wetland Park, Fresh Stop Market, soon to be Lower Ninth Ward Main Street headquarters)
- How to reuse vacant and blighted properties and bring them to support a circular economy

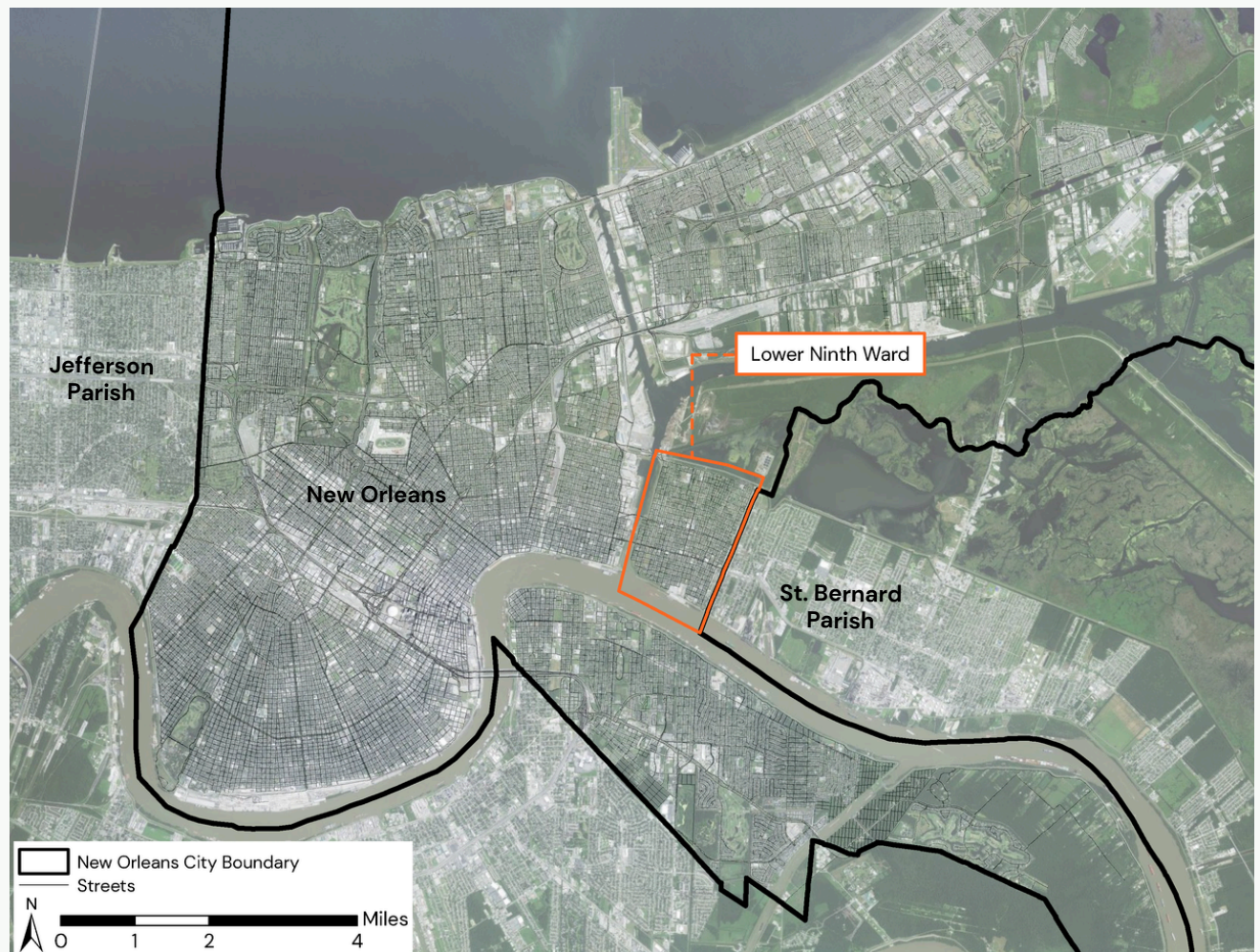
Questions for TAP Panelists

- What are feasible development goals for the Lower Ninth Ward that will produce equitable, resilient, and environmental justice-oriented outcomes?
 - What are the opportunities to expand development and reduce vacancy in the LNW?
 - What are specific catalyst projects for the following corridors?
 - The Lower Ninth Ward Main Street (St. Claude Avenue)
 - Florida Avenue
 - How can LNW sites be marketed nationally, so that we can find developers who can create high quality development, based on current market conditions, and within a reasonable timeframe?
- How can local businesses leverage new development to strengthen the district (e.g. residential construction, condo conversions, commercial and mixed-use)?
- What are top-priority projects, programs, and policies that should be included in a resilience plan for the LNW?
- Would a land trust or another community-based ownership structure help realize equitable community development? Sankofa CDC would like to ensure land is protected and afforded to Lower Ninth Ward residents that have experienced land loss and marginalized & vulnerable populations that may have challenges with accessing wealth and land.
- Who are important partners that Sankofa CDC should seek to engage or expand engagement with to fulfill the recommendations?

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

The Lower Ninth Ward (LNW) is located on the eastern side of the City of New Orleans' East Bank. The New Orleans City Planning Commission refers to the area as Planning District 8, and further divides the district into two neighborhoods: Lower Nine to the north, and Holy Cross to the south. However, both neighborhoods are colloquially referred to as just the Lower Ninth Ward. The City of New Orleans and Orleans Parish are interchangeable terms referring to the same geographical boundary; for the purposes of this report, terminology referring to the City of New Orleans will be used.

Figure 1: Lower Ninth Ward Regional Context Map



The study area for the ULI-TAP effort covers the entirety of the LNW, from the Bayou Bienvenue Wetland Triangle in the north to the Mississippi River in the south, and from the Industrial Canal in the west to the National Guard's Jackson Barracks and the St. Bernard Parish line to the east. Sankofa CDC is specifically interested in strategies that focus on the Florida Avenue and St. Claude Avenue corridors, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Study Area and Key Corridors Map



The study area is surrounded by water to the north, south, and west. To the north, the Bayou Bienvenue Wetland Triangle and Main Outfall Canal separate the area from New Orleans East. Although now open water, Bayou Bienvenue was once a thriving cypress swamp. Construction of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) in the 1960s introduced salt water from the Gulf of Mexico, destroying the swamp ecosystem. The Mississippi River is located to the south of the LNW.

The Industrial Canal (Inner Harbor Navigation Canal), which was constructed between 1918 and 1923, lies to the west of the LNW and separates it from the rest of New Orleans. Three bridges cross the Industrial Canal and provide access from the LNW to the rest of New Orleans: the Florida Avenue Bridge, Claiborne Avenue Bridge, and St. Claude Avenue Bridge. All three are active lifting or drawbridges that provide access for Port of New Orleans marine traffic. The Port of New Orleans owns and operates the St. Claude and Florida Avenue Bridges, while the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD) maintains the Claiborne Avenue Bridge.

The eastern boundary of the LNW is marked by the St. Bernard Parish border and the Louisiana National Guard's Jackson Barracks. Due to the Jackson Barracks' large footprint, access into Arabi and Chalmette in St. Bernard Parish on the eastern side of the LNW is limited to two major roads: St. Claude Avenue and Claiborne Avenue. All together, these three bridges and two roads represent the only avenues for automobile traffic into or out of the LNW. Pedestrian and bicycle travel is even more limited, as the Claiborne Avenue Bridge is restricted to automobile traffic exclusively.

Claiborne Avenue (LA-39) and St. Claude Avenue (LA-46) are the two largest thoroughfares of the LNW. These two thoroughfares account for most travel in, through, and out of the LNW. Both thoroughfares also house much of the commercial activity in the area, although residential uses are common as well. Fats Domino Avenue and Tupelo Street are the two largest north-south connector boulevards between the Mississippi River Levee and Bayou Bienvenue Wetland Triangle.

The LNW has a higher rate of vacancy than most neighborhoods in the City of New Orleans. As visualized in Figure 3, the highest rates of vacancy in the LNW exist north of St. Claude Avenue, as structures become more and more sparse closer to Florida Avenue.

Figure 3: Vacancy Map of the Lower Ninth Ward

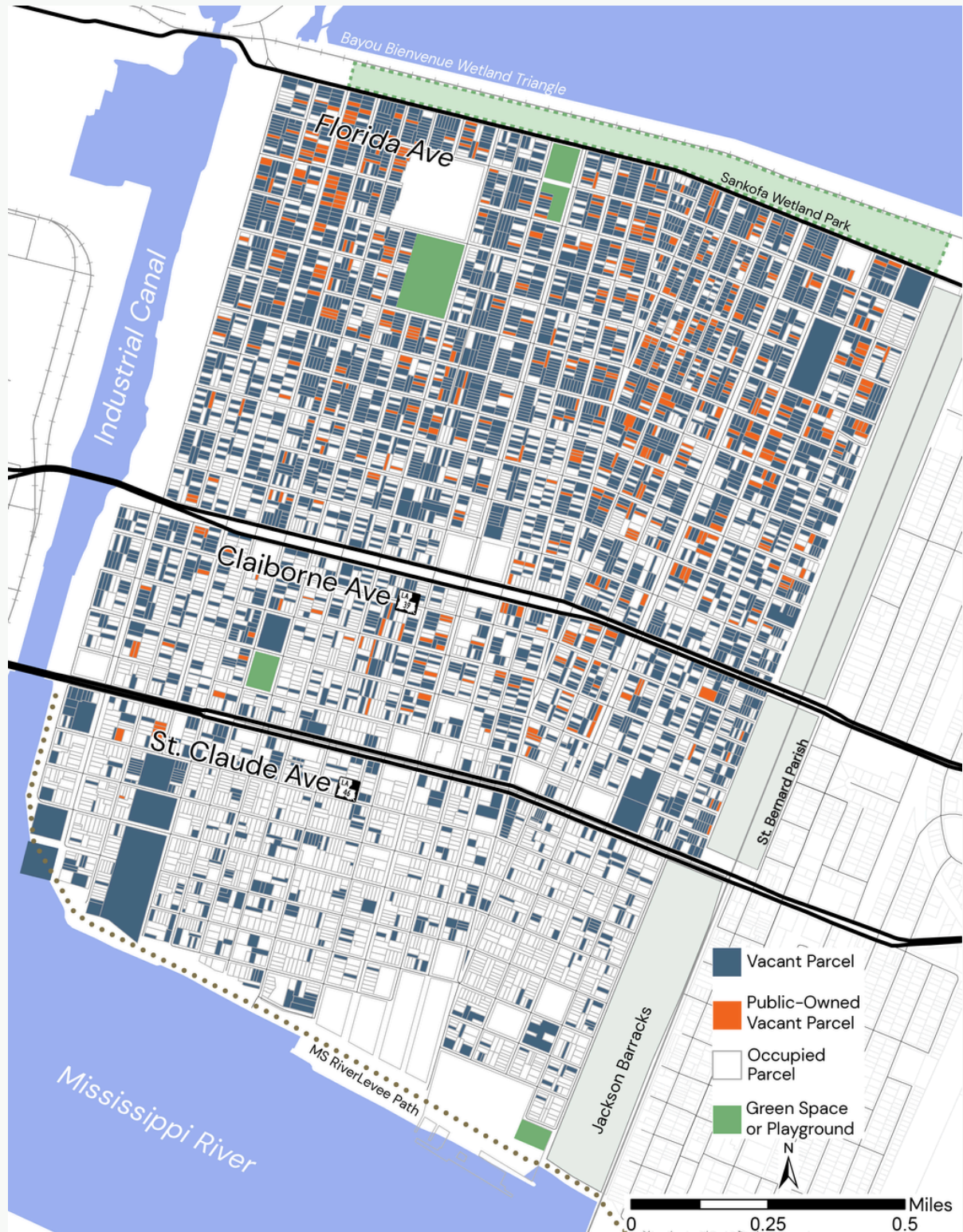
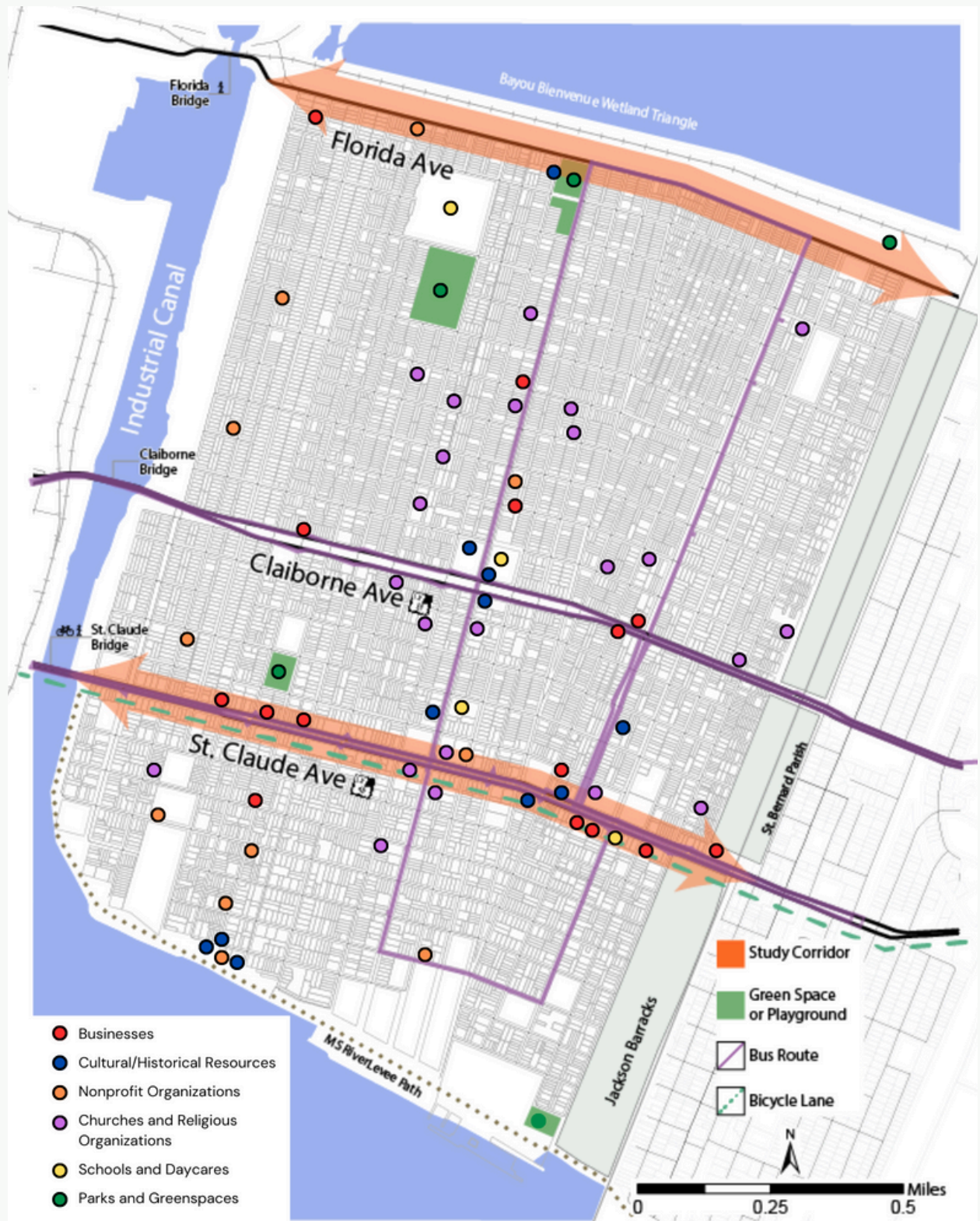


Figure 4: Community Asset Map of the Lower Ninth Ward



STUDY AREA HISTORY

Flooding of the LNW by levee failures during the Hurricane Katrina disaster created devastation and the vast majority of vacancy in the area today. However, Katrina is not the beginning or end of the neighborhood's story.

In order to understand perspectives of LNW residents on the past, present, and future possibilities for the neighborhood, it's important to understand the history of the area before the 2005 Hurricane Katrina disaster. Sankofa CDC recommends that all panelists read the article "The Forgotten People of New Orleans" by Juliette Landphair located in the shared Briefing Book background materials under "Neighborhood History," in order to better understand the pre-Katrina history of the LNW. The book "Overcoming Katrina: African American Voices from the Crescent City and Beyond" by Keith C. Ferdinand is another valuable resource to review.

Figure 5: Building Footprints Before and After Hurricane Katrina



Source: Building footprints in the Lower Ninth Ward Pre- and Post-Katrina – Lower Ninth Ward Planning District Rebuilding Plan, 2006.

GOVERNMENT AND PLANNING IMPACTS ON THE STUDY AREA

This section describes applicable plans for the Lower Ninth Ward, zoning processes, and discusses the relationships between policymaking and power.

New Orleans Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO)

In the current CZO, the LNW includes the following zoning districts, displayed graphically in Figure 5: Historic Urban Two-Family Residential District (HU-RD2), Historic Urban Multi-Family Residential District (HU-RM1), Suburban Single-Family Residential District (S-RS), Medium Intensity Mixed-Use District (MUM), Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District (HU-B1), Light Industrial District (LI), Maritime Industrial District (MI), Neighborhood Open Space District (OS-N), and General Commercial District (C-1). Zoning tends to follow a traditional pattern in which key commercial corridors, including St. Claude Avenue, Fats Domino Avenue, portions of Claiborne Avenue, and Florida Ave, are zoned for higher-intensity commercial or mixed-use development that step back to lower-intensity residential zoning away from these corridors.

The LNW also includes several overlays and interim zoning districts, which as of the time of this report's writing include: Small Multi-Family Affordable Short Term Rental Interim Zoning District, Residential Short Term Rental Interim Zoning District, and the EC Enhancement Corridor Design Overlay District.

Future Land Use Map (FLUM)

As included in the City of New Orleans Land Use Plan and outlined in Figure 7, the LNW includes the following future land uses: Residential Low Density Pre-War (RLD-PRE), Mixed-Use Medium Density (MUM), Mixed-Use Low Density (MUL), Residential Low Density Pre-War (RLD-PRE), Residential Single Family Pre-War (RSF-PRE), Industrial (IND), Parkland and Open Space (P), and General Commercial (GC). FLUM patterns tend to mirror those of base zoning districts. The highest-intensity FLUM districts are reserved for parcels fronting on St. Claude Avenue, while other corridors along arterials have mixed-use future land use categories, and interior districts have residential FLUM designations.

Figure 6: Current Zoning for the Lower Ninth Ward



Figure 7: Current Land Use Map for the Lower Ninth Ward

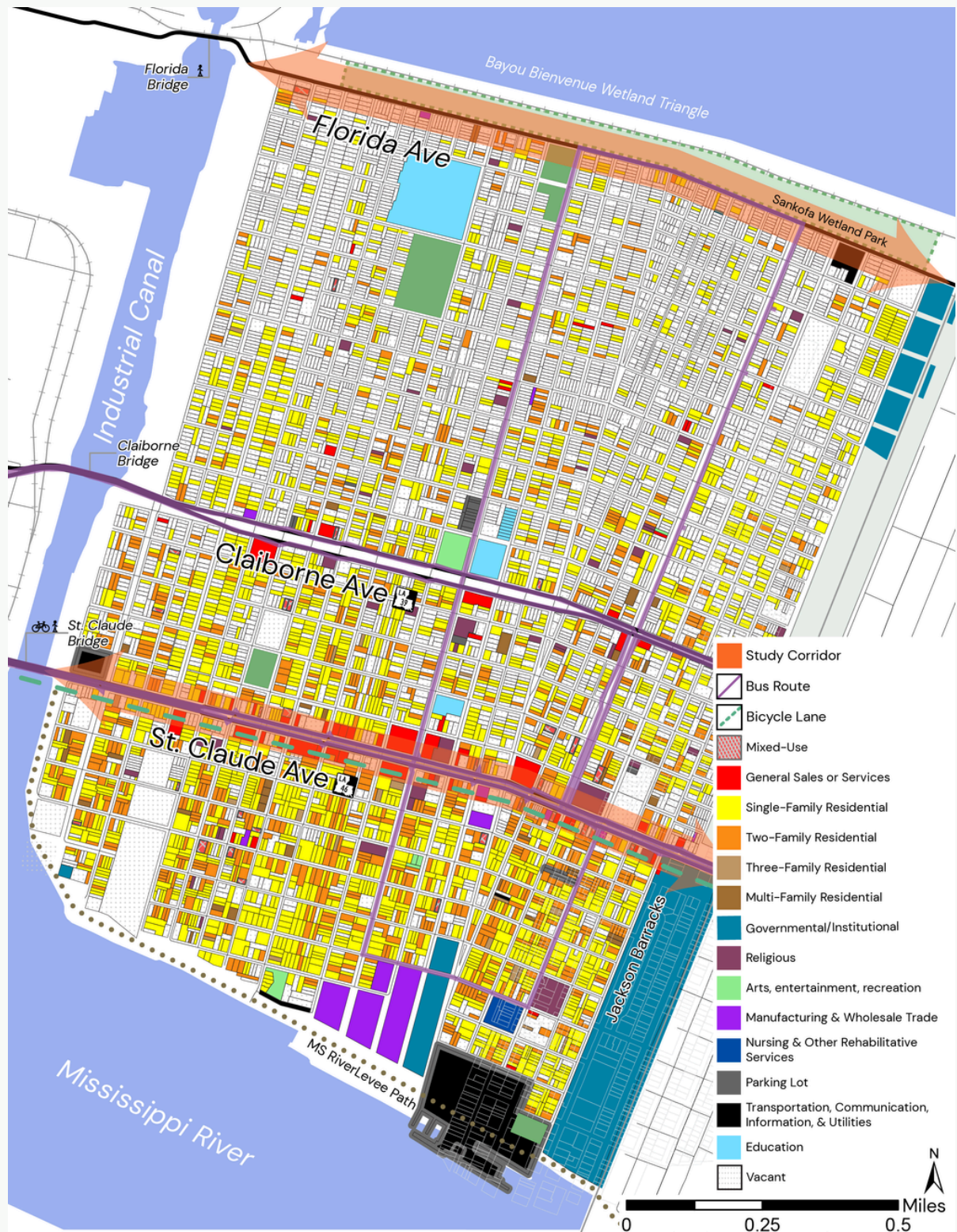
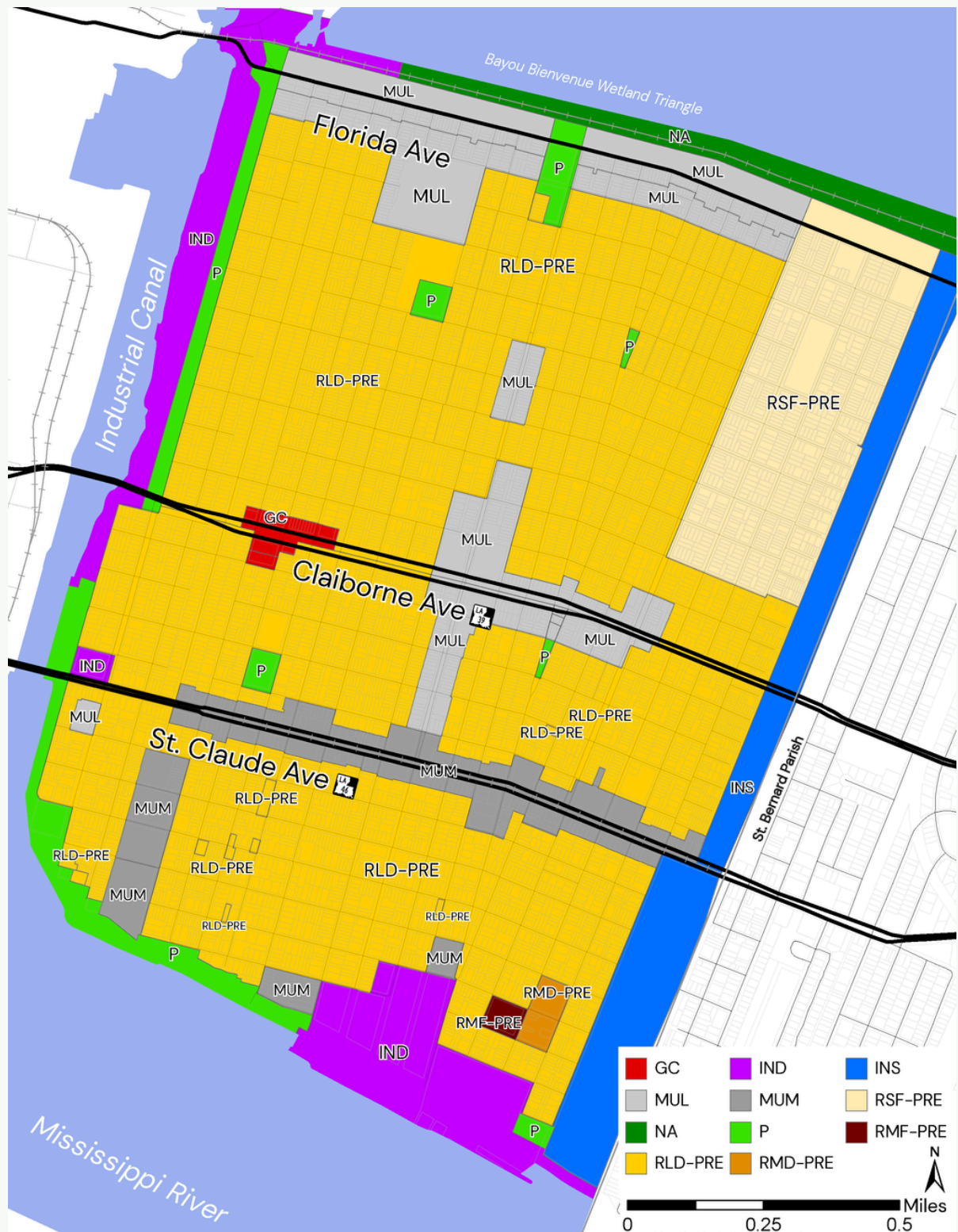
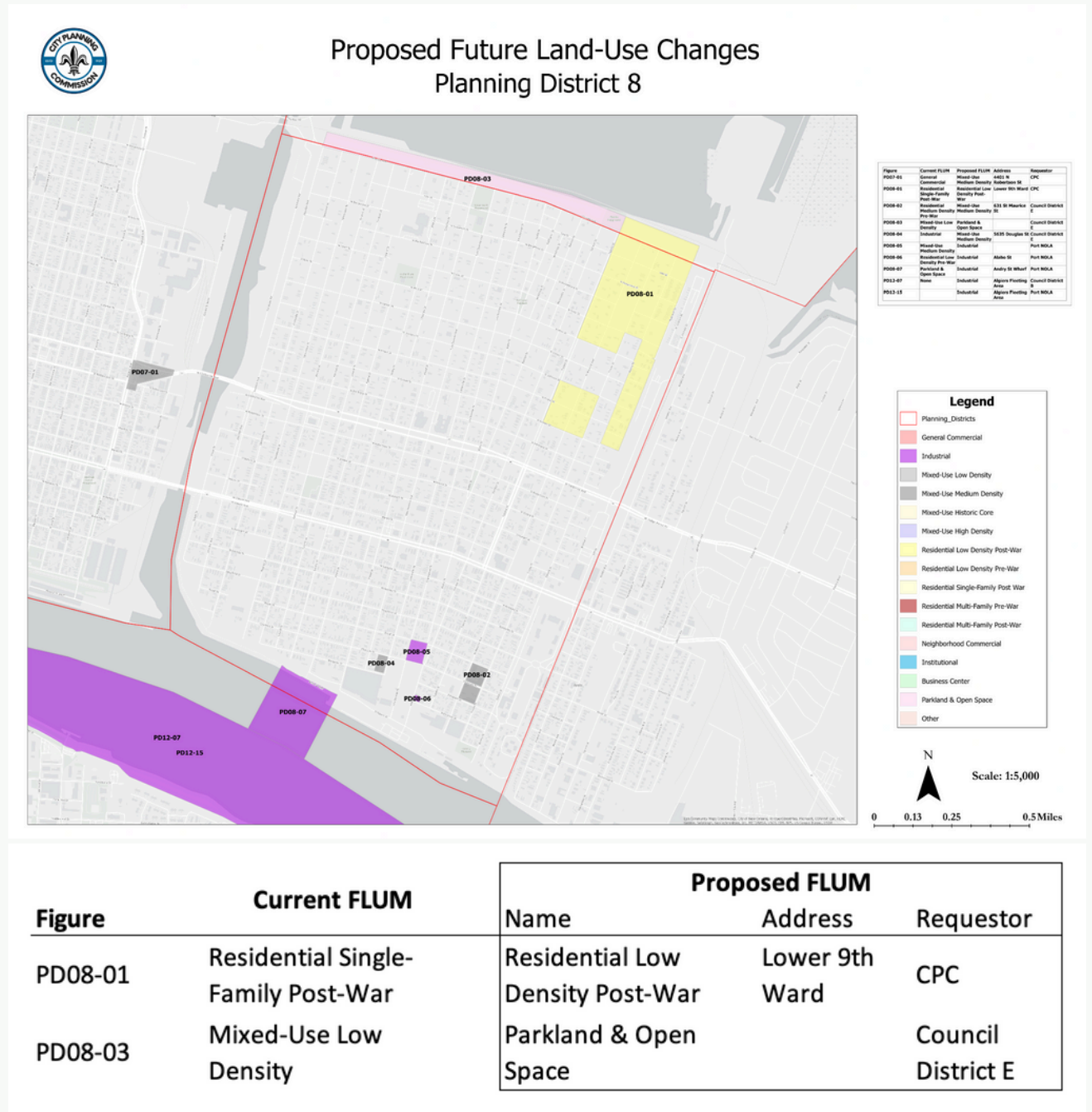


Figure 8: New Orleans Master Plan – Future Land Use for the Lower Ninth Ward



Two proposed changes to the FLUM categories within the study area are being considered per Figure 8. The first, PD08-03, categorizes the area now home to the Sankofa Wetland Park and Nature Trail as “Parkland and Open Space.” The second, PD08-01, categorizes a multi-block area bounded to the west by Tupelo Street and to the east by Dubreuil Street as “Residential Low Density Post War.”

Figure 9: Proposed FLUM Changes within Current Master Plan Amendment Process



Other Relevant Plans

The 2005 Hurricane Katrina disaster attracted a significant amount of community planning to the LNW. A 2018 neighborhood plan by American Institute of Architects identifies 17 plans conducted in the area post-Hurricane Katrina and notes “many...were never implemented, or were implemented in ways that were not readily apparent to area residents. Although residents want influence in the decision making, ironically, the lack of results from numerous community engaged processes has made them wary of engagement efforts moving forward.”

Table 2: Key Community Planning Efforts Post-Katrina

Name of Plan, Year Published, and Author	Description
Lower Ninth Ward Planning District Rebuilding Plan, 2006 (City of New Orleans)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies infrastructural improvements and neighborhood visioning priorities as population returns to the neighborhood Envisions the Lower Ninth Ward as a "neighborhood of choice" that welcomes back former residents and invites new ones with improved transit connections, housing, and schools
The People's Plan for Overcoming the Hurricane Katrina Blues, 2007 (Cornell University, et. al.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocates the rebuilding and transformation of the Lower Ninth Ward based on conversations with residents Discusses barriers to return; land use; housing; economic development; parks and playgrounds; education; infrastructure; and arts, culture, and history
Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan, 2013 (Waggoner & Ball)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details streetscape improvements along St. Claude Avenue to improve stormwater retention Identifies vacant lots near Florida Ave. to slow, store, and filter water; construct wetlands in the northern part of the area
Commercial Corridors Revitalization Program, 2015 (New Orleans Redevelopment Authority)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides supplemental ("gap") funding for catalytic commercial development projects to revitalize underinvested commercial corridors, including St. Claude Avenue
Lower Ninth Ward Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT), 2018 (American Institute of Architects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses a community-based visioning process to develop a vision and series of goals encompassing culture, economic development, and housing Identifies target investments in a "core" area from St. Claude Ave. to Claiborne Ave. to establish a strong central district and reduce divisions between Holy Cross and the Lower Ninth Ward
Public Housing Agency (PHA) Plan, 2022 (Housing Authority of New Orleans, HANO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritizes public investments in transit, quality schools, housing, parks and other amenities in underserved communities Sets a goal to develop five or more on-site homeownership units in the Lower Ninth Ward in vacant scattered sites

Polymaker Structure and Partnerships

New Orleans

The 2023 ULI-TAP study area is located in the City of New Orleans, a consolidated city/parish whose government is established in Section 1-102 of the Home Rule Charter of the City of New Orleans as a Mayor-Council form of government.[1] Executive and administrative functions of the City are vested in the executive branch, which is comprised of the Office of the Mayor, led by Mayor LaToya Cantrell, and the Administrative Office, led by Gilbert Montano, who in the performance of his job duties is responsible to the Mayor (Sec. 4-102; Sec. 1-102).

The City is governed legislatively by the New Orleans City Council. The Council performs functions including levying taxes and liens, approving City budgets, passing and amending City ordinances, and providing neighborhood liaison services. The Council is comprised of seven members – five from geographic districts and two “at-Large” Councilmembers (Sec. 3-101(2)). The study area is entirely contained within New Orleans Council District E. Its local legislative representatives are Oliver Thomas (Councilmember, District E), Helena Moreno (Councilmember-at-Large) and Jean Paul “JP” Morrell (Councilmember-at-Large).

Sankofa CDC has strong relationships with both executive and legislative branches of the City administration. Some of the City departments that Sankofa CDC engages in planning and/or communication with include:

- District E Councilman Oliver Thomas: Supports numerous Sankofa CDC initiatives.
- City Office of Economic Development: Supports Sankofa CDC’s work on the LNW Main Street as a direct partner, as well as advising on additional economic development goals.
- City Department of Public Works: Involved in design review processes for the Sankofa Wetland Park efforts, as well as other green infrastructure and transportation improvement priorities. Sankofa CDC maintains conversations with the department about assisting with remediation of large-scale illegal dumping.
- City Department of Parks and Parkways: Involved in design review processes for Sankofa CDC’s efforts to restore landscaping on the St. Claude Avenue thoroughfare entrance area for the Lower Ninth Ward Main Street project.
- City Health Department: Supports Sankofa CDC’s public health initiatives community health programming.
- Sewerage and Water Board: Involved in design review processes for the Sankofa Wetland Park efforts, as well as other green infrastructure and water drainage system priorities. (In New Orleans, the Sewerage and Water Board is responsible for water provision as well as drainage infrastructure over a certain size of pipe. The Department of Public Works is responsible for drainage infrastructure below that size of pipe.)

[1] https://library.municode.com/la/new_orleans/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PAI_HORUCH_ARTIINFOGO_S1-102FOGO

Louisiana

At the state level, the study area is within Louisiana House District 99, currently represented by Representative Candace Newell, and Louisiana Senate District 3, represented by Senator Joseph Bouie. State-level areas of communication and joint planning include:

- State Legislature: Receipt of state Capital Outlay funding to support Sankofa Wetland Park and Trail design and development.
- State of Louisiana Office of Historic Preservation and Louisiana Main Street: Designation and ongoing technical support for the Lower Ninth Ward Main Street on St. Claude Avenue.
- State of Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism: Designation of the Lower 9th Ward Cultural District.

National Representatives

Nationally, the study area is part of U.S. Congress District 2, represented by Representative Troy Carter, and the state of Louisiana, which is represented by Senator Bill Cassidy and Senator John Kennedy.

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND SANKOFA CDC PARTNERS

Sankofa's model for change is rooted in partnerships. This section discusses other organizations in the Lower Ninth Ward, as well as Sankofa partners from outside the study area who are contributing their capacity and expertise.

The LNW includes a number of civic, community, and non-profit organizations working to support the residents of the area. These include:

- *Health Centers*: Two operating health clinics located at 4960 St. Claude Avenue and 1616 Fats Domino Avenue in the LNW.
- *Neighborhood Organizations*: Three neighborhood organizations that serve as distributors of information on social services and community issues to LNW residents.
- *Homeowners' Associations*: Two homeowners' associations that offer housing information and services to community residents.
- *Faith-Based Community*: Faith-based leaders and congregation members participate in Sankofa CDC's programs and lead various community-based initiatives.
- *Senior Centers*: Senior living and activity spaces where community elders gather, live, and engage with one another.

Sankofa CDC also engages many partner organizations to assist with support and expansion of its community development and health programs. Table 3 provides a non-comprehensive list of Sankofa CDC partners to give panelists a sense of the organization's ability to grow and sustain partnerships that impact systemic change and development in the LNW.

Table 3: Selected Sankofa Partner Organizations

Name of Partner	Nature of Partnership
Delgado Community College	Administers the Clean Water Certification job training program, which uses the Sankofa Wetland Park as its locale for training and classes.
Jericho Road Episcopal Housing Initiative	Non-profit affordable housing developer; potential future development partner for affordable homes in the Lower Ninth Ward.
LSU Coastal Sustainability Studio, Comite Resources, Mastodonte	Design and construction of the Sankofa Wetland Park and Nature Trail.
Urban League of Louisiana	Delivers entrepreneurship training for Lower Ninth Ward residents and business owners.
Second Harvest Food Bank	Partner to assist with operations of Sankofa's Food Pantry.
Southern University of New Orleans	Administering the utility box painting program to provide culturally relevant beautification along the Lower Ninth Ward Main Street.
Xavier University Health and Wellness Center	Will administer the Fresh Stop Market's Teaching Kitchen once the Market opens in 2023.

STUDY AREA

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population

As of 2020, the population of the LNW was 8,475. In the years following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, the LNW experienced significant population loss: more than 70% of residents were unable to return, or moved away entirely, between 2005 and 2010 (see Table 4). For comparison, the population of New Orleans declined 20.1% over the same time period. Between 2010 and 2020, both New Orleans and the LNW experienced significant population recovery according to the U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census. The population rebound in the LNW outpaced that of the city as a whole, increasing by 52.5%. However, the 2020 population of the neighborhood was only 43.4% of 2000 levels.

Table 4: Population Change in New Orleans and Lower Ninth Ward, 2000 – 2020

	Population 2000	Population 2010	Percent Change	Population 2020	Percent Change
Lower Ninth Ward	19,515	5,556	-71.5%	8,475	+52.5%
New Orleans	484,674	343,829	-20.1%	383,997	+11.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Decennial Census, 2000 – 2020.

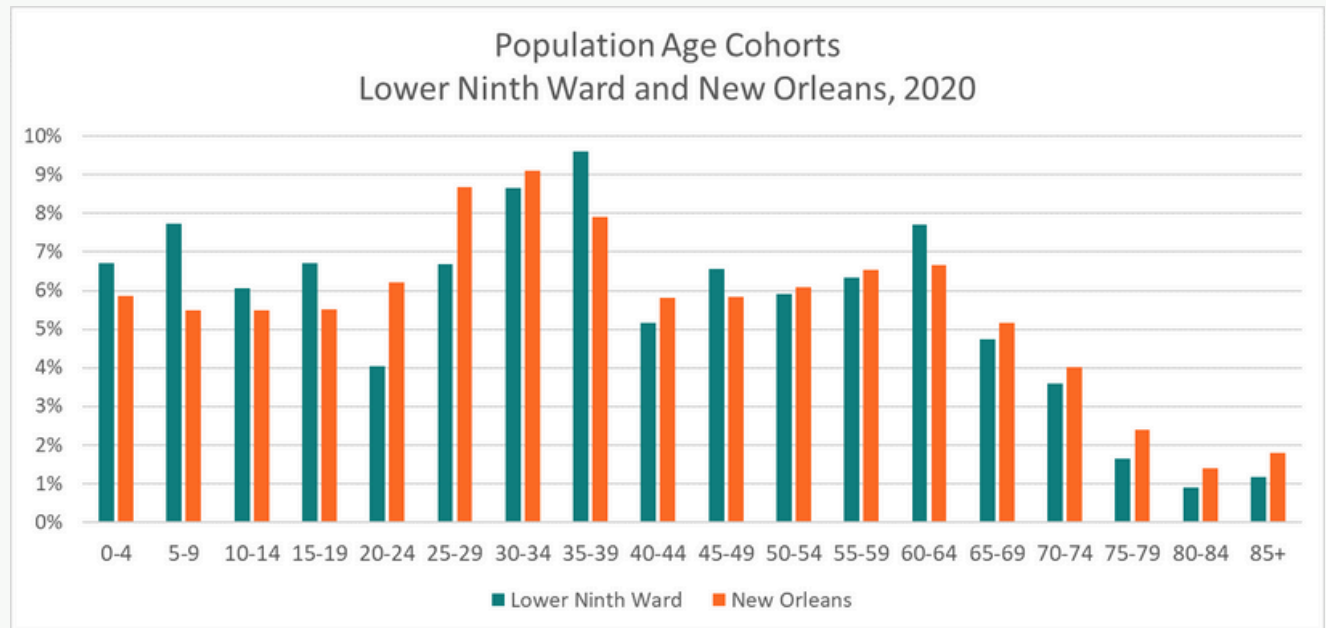
Esri, one of the world's leading demographic data companies, forecasts that the LNW's population growth will flatten between 2022 and 2027, with an average growth of 0.14% across Lower Ninth Ward census block groups [1].

The age distribution in the LNW is generally younger than that of New Orleans, with a higher percentage of residents under the age of 20 (see Figure 9). This may indicate that the area is retaining and/or attracting families with young children, which could be a positive sign for the future of the area. In contrast, New Orleans has higher percentages of residents in the 20–24, 25–29, and 30–34 age cohorts.

[1] Esri. (2022). 2022 – 2027 Population Growth. Available at: https://demographics5.arcgis.com/arcgis/rest/services/USA_Demographics_and_Boundaries_2022/MapServer

Looking at the older age cohorts, the LNW has a lower percentage of residents aged 65 and over compared to New Orleans. However, the LNW has a slightly higher percentage of residents in the 60–64 age cohort. Differences in age distribution across age cohorts could have implications for community needs regarding education, housing, social services, and healthcare as the current population ages.

Figure 10: Population Age Cohorts in Lower Ninth Ward and New Orleans, 2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey. Table S0101: Age and Sex, 2020.

Income

According to U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey estimates, LNW households earn 23.7% less than households across the city as a whole (see Table 5). Income disparity between family incomes in the city as a whole and in the LNW are stark: Median family income in the neighborhood is only 52.4% of what families earn citywide. As will be explored later, median family income serves as a basis for calculating housing affordability.

Table 5: Median Income in New Orleans and the Lower Ninth Ward, 2020

	Lower Ninth Ward	New Orleans	Lower Ninth Ward as % of Orleans Income
Median Household Income	\$33,008	\$43,258	76.3%
Median Family Income	\$34,012*	\$64,873	52.4%
Median Non-Family Income	\$22,347**	\$28,770	77.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2020.

*Data not available for census Tract 9.02

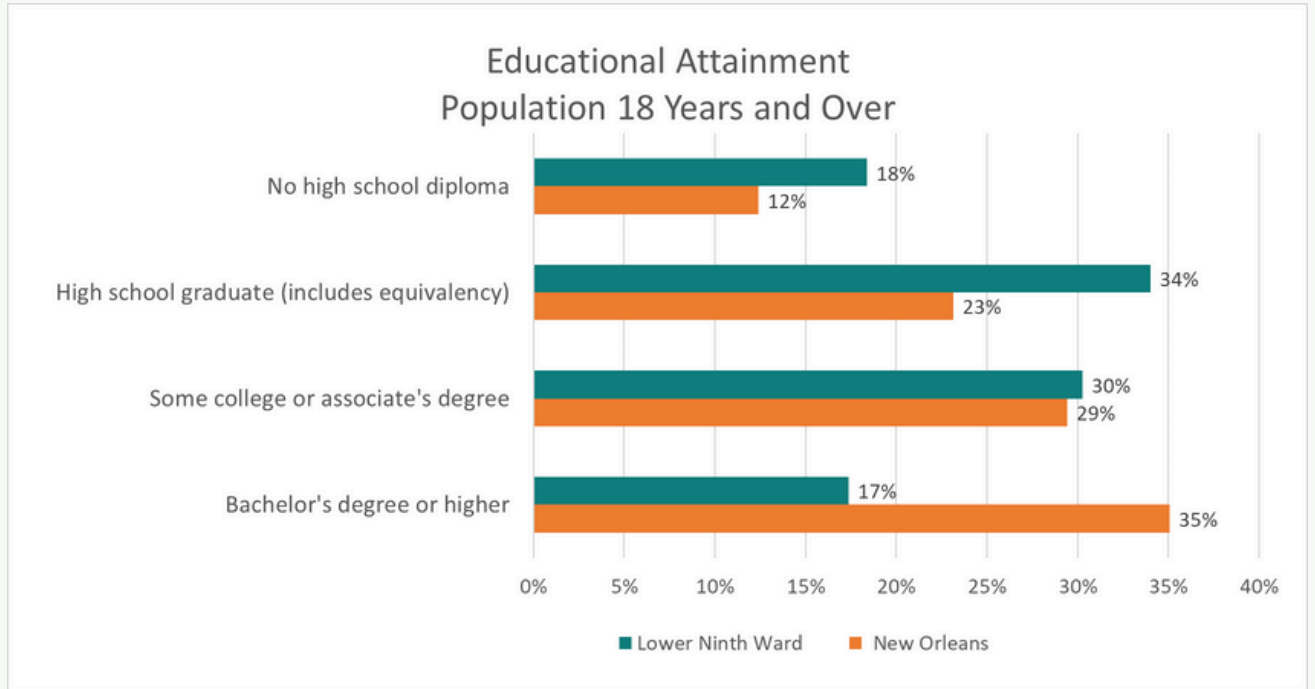
**Data not available for census Tracts 7.01, 8, and 9.01.

Education

Data from the 2020 Decennial Census show that most residents of the LNW are high school graduates (see Figure 11). Around one-third of residents (34%) hold only a high school diploma, which provides them with a foundation for further education or entry-level employment opportunities. A slightly smaller share of the population (30%) has some college education or an associate's degree. This level of educational attainment can open up opportunities for better-paying jobs and career advancement.

Only 17% of the population in the LNW has earned a bachelor's degree, compared to 35% in New Orleans. The data also reveal that 18% of residents in the LNW do not have a high school diploma, which is higher than the percentage in New Orleans at 12%. These numbers suggest that a sizable share of the population in the LNW faces barriers to education.

Figure 11: Educational Attainment in the Lower Ninth Ward and New Orleans



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Decennial Census, Table S5101: Age by Educational Attainment, 2020

STUDY AREA HOUSING

Housing Characteristics of the Lower Ninth Ward

Historically, the LNW boasted some of the highest homeownership rates in the city. In 1990 and 2000, the Decennial Census showed that 59% of LNW residents owned their homes while only 47% of New Orleans residents were homeowners [1]. In the year 2000, 42.6% of LNW homeowners had moved into their residence in 1969 or earlier, compared to 19.2% of New Orleans homeowners [2]. According to the 2000 Decennial Census, 90% of LNW residents were Black, and the area of the neighborhood north of St. Claude Avenue had the highest Black ownership rate in the city [3]. Homeownership and long-term residency rates point to a powerful sense of community cohesion.

Homeownership rates have decreased in the LNW since Hurricane Katrina, and rates are now 2.1% higher citywide than in the neighborhood (see Table 6). However, American Community Survey estimates from 2020 show that long-term residents of the LNW continue to represent a substantial percentage of the neighborhood. In 2020, 22.2% of all LNW households had moved into their units more than 20 years ago, the same percentage as in the city as a whole.

Physically, the LNW is primarily composed of low-density residential blocks, and housing units are predominantly single-family units (see Table 6). Single-family detached or attached units constitute 81.4% of the neighborhood's housing stock, compared to 55.1% of citywide stock.

[1] Alexandra Giancarlo, *The Lower Ninth Ward: resistance, recovery, and renewal*, 2011.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Adelson, J. (2015, August 21). *Cosmetic improvements can't hide enduring problems in Lower 9th Ward*. *The Advocate*. Wayback machine link: <http://www.theneworleansadvocate.com/news/13240389-123/cosmetic-improvements-cant-hide-enduring>

Table 6: Housing Characteristics of the Lower Ninth Ward and New Orleans, 2020

	Lower Ninth Ward Units	Lower Ninth Ward %	New Orleans Units	New Orleans %
Total Housing Units	3,551	100%	192,012	100%
Occupied Units	2,710	76.3%	154,826	80.6%
Homeowner Occupied	1,292	47.7%	77,066	49.8%
Renter Occupied	1,418	52.3%	77,760	50.2%
Vacant Units	841	23.7%	37,186	19.4%
Single Family, Detached	2,065	58.2%	86,870	45.2%
Single Family, Attached	825	23.2%	19,103	9.9%
Two-Family	371	10.4%	31,463	16.4%
Multi-Family (3-10 Units)	130	3.7%	23,854	12.4%
Multi-Family (10+ Units)	82	2.3%	29,760	15.5%
Mobile Home	69	1.9%	872	0.5%
Boat, RV, Van, Etc.	9	0.3%	90	0.1%
Median Gross Rent	\$956		\$1,025	
Median Home Value (Owner-Occupied Units)	\$158,729		\$250,000	

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2020.

Housing in the LNW remains more affordable than elsewhere in New Orleans. As of 2020, the median gross rent is 6.7% less than rent citywide (see Table 6). Median home values are 36.5% lower than the median home value for the city as a whole. Median home values remain relatively low compared to other New Orleans neighborhoods.

A housing affordability index assesses the affordability of housing for people living in a particular area. To calculate this metric, the 2020 median home value is divided by the 2020 median household income and displayed as a multiple, or “index” (Table 7). The lower the index, the greater the affordability.

As shown in Table 2, American Community Survey data from 2020 suggests that purchasing a home at the median home value may be more affordable for a household earning the median household income in the LNW, while buying a home is more expensive for households across the city as a whole. As average home interest rates have increased since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and national inflation has surged, home purchasing costs have risen significantly across the United States. [1]

While building new housing stock may be an important step forward for the neighborhood, not all housing stock is created equal. Stakeholders should consider how rising building costs, increased interest rates, and an influx and/or expansion of neighborhood amenities in the LNW affect affordability and equity for existing residents.

Table 7: Housing Affordability Index

	Housing Affordability Index
Lower Ninth Ward	4.8
New Orleans	5.8

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2020.

[1] Business Insider. (February 2023). The average mortgage interest rate by state, credit score, year, and loan type. <https://www.businessinsider.com/personal-finance/average-mortgage-interest-rate>.

The Historic Value of the Lower Ninth Ward

As shown in Table 8, 2020 data from the American Community Survey show that 59% of LNW housing stock was built more than 60 years ago, compared to 53.7% of the city's housing stock, and more than a quarter of the neighborhood's housing stock was built more than 80 years ago. In a city known for its historic housing stock, the LNW retains abundant historical assets. At the same time, the neighborhood boasts considerably more new housing stock than elsewhere in the city: 23% of LNW housing was built in the last 20 years, compared to 10% citywide (see Table 8).

Table 8: Age of Housing Stock, Lower Ninth Ward and New Orleans, 2020

	Lower Ninth Ward Units	Lower Ninth Ward %	New Orleans Units	New Orleans %
Total Housing Units	3,551	100%	192,012	100%
Built 2014 or Later	140	3.9%	3,185	1.7%
Built 2010 to 2013	239	6.7%	4,004	2.1%
Built 2000 to 2009	446	12.6%	12,668	6.6%
Built 1990 to 1999	82	2.3%	6,276	3.3%
Built 1980 to 1989	103	2.9%	14,074	7.3%
Built 1970 to 1979	204	5.7%	27,005	14.1%
Built 1960 to 1969	242	6.8%	21,659	11.3%
Built 1950 to 1959	843	23.7%	23,427	12.2%
Built 1940 to 1949	318	9.0%	14,170	7.4%
Built 1939 or Earlier	934	26.3%	65,544	34.1%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2020.

Housing Typologies

Lower Ninth Ward homes embody many of the typologies that make New Orleans architecturally unique in the United States.

Shotgun Homes

Shotgun homes are typically long, narrow, single-story, and made of wood. These homes often display Victorian embellishments, particularly along overhangs and porch columns located on the front facade providing shade for the front porch [1]. Some have a “camelback,” or a second story added to the back of the structure. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, New Orleans home lots were typically narrow (no more than 30 feet wide), and fire codes required additional space between wooden houses [2]. Free people of color, particularly from Saint-Domingue (Haiti), brought this architectural design from the Caribbean and used it to accommodate lot sizes and fire safety [3]. While shotgun homes initially grew in number in New Orleans after the 1830s, New Orleans experienced a growth spurt following the Reconstruction era, and shotgun homes proliferated between the 1870s and 1910s after the LNW was established as a neighborhood [4].



Shotgun house in Holy Cross neighborhood of the Lower Ninth Ward

[1] Ferguson, J. (2011). *The Shotgun House*. 64 Parishes. <https://64parishes.org/entry/shotgun-house>

[2] Cullen, E. (2021). *On Shotgun Houses*. Country Roads Magazine. *History of the Shotgun House - Country Roads Magazine*

[3] Ibid.

[4] *Mardi Gras Digest*. (2007). *New Orleans Districts and Wards* (archive.org)

Shotgun Double Homes

The most common variation on the traditional shotgun is the shotgun double, which is built with a center wall that divides a traditional shotgun structure lengthwise into two equally-sized units. Shotgun doubles are frequently a pivotal source of income for the homeowner, who commonly lives on one side and rents out the other [1].

In recent years, conversions of shotgun doubles into single-family homes have become popular for families seeking more space and privacy [2]. While converting shotgun doubles into single-family homes is an option for attracting new buyers, such conversions reduce density and the number of available units.



A double shotgun home in the Lower Ninth Ward

[1] Capps, K. (June 21, 2021). In New Orleans, the Shotgun House Goes a Long Way Back. Bloomberg City Lab. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-06-10/design-history-of-new-orleans-iconic-shotgun-home>.

[2] Allen, D. (2019, March 19). Smart renovations transform historic shotgun houses into modern family homes. Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans. <https://prcno.org/smart-renovations-transform-historic-shotgun-houses-modern-family-homes/>

Doullut Steamboat Houses

The Doullut Steamboat Houses are historic structures unique to the Lower Ninth Ward. The moniker references the resemblance to steamboats, created by wrap-around porches and Victorian ornamentation. The properties were built by a steamboat captain and his family in 1905 and 1912 [1].

The Doullut Steamboat Houses are more than architectural curiosities: Their unique construction makes them particularly resilient to flooding. The exteriors and interiors of the ground floors are coated entirely in ceramic, enabling owners to simply wash them out while sustaining little damage or mold [2].



Doullut Steamboat House,
Holy Cross Area,
Lower Ninth Ward

[1] French Quarter Phantoms. (2023). *The Doullut Steamboat Houses of the Lower Ninth Ward*.

<https://www.frenchquarterphantoms.com/blog/the-doullut-steamboat-houses-of-the-lower-9th-ward>.

[2] MacCash, D. (2010, August 28). Unusual flood-resistant 'steamboat house' helped keep neighborhood afloat. *Times-Picayune*.
https://www.nola.com/entertainment_life/home_garden/unusual-flood-resistant-steamboat-house-helped-keep-neighborhood-afloat/article_b7de9ed4-38ce-5b87-a4ed-7d86096a9e17.html

[3] *Ibid*.

Make it Right Homes

The Make It Right Foundation, founded by Brad Pitt, built energy-efficient homes designed by a variety of architects in an area along Tennessee Street. Currently, the Foundation is inactive and is not building additional homes.



Make it Right
Houses

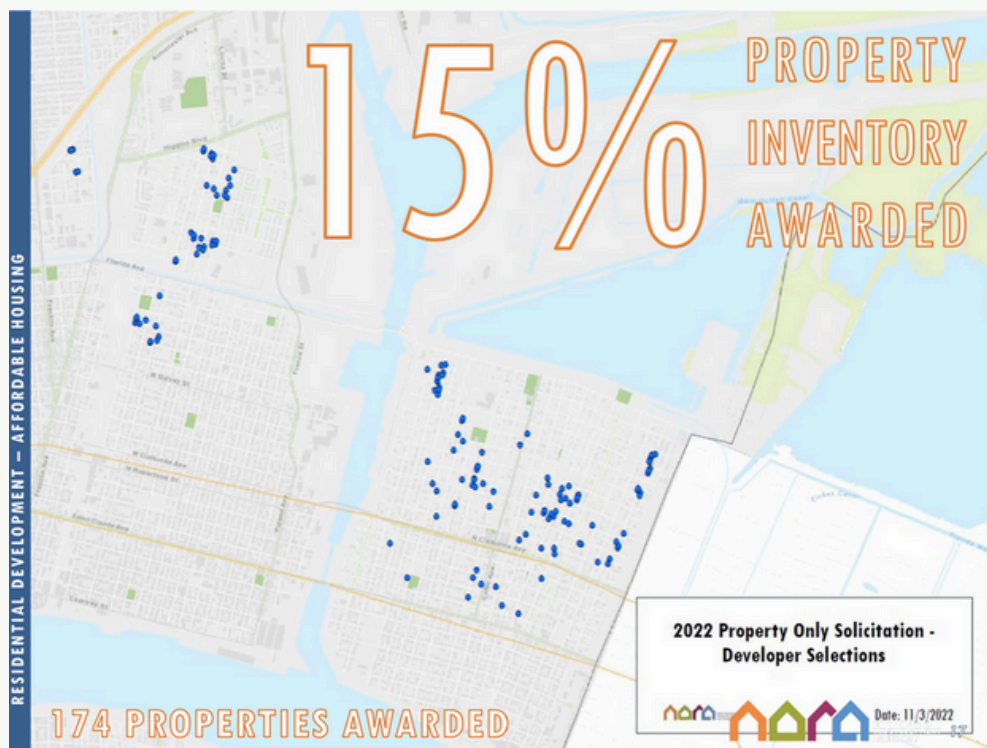
Source: MacCash, D. (2022, August 17). Brad Pitt's Make it Right Foundation to pay \$20.5M to owners of faulty Post-Katrina homes. *Times-Picayune*.

Current Redevelopment Initiatives

Some non-profits and public agencies have been engaged in housing redevelopment initiatives in the LNW after the Hurricane Katrina disaster.

In 2022, the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) awarded funds to developers to redevelop 15% of its total inventory across the city. Using funding from the Affordable Rental Gap Financing Program, developers working with NORA will construct 39 new units in the Lower Ninth Ward with construction beginning in 2023. Figure 12 is a map created by NORA that shows the remaining NORA inventory in the Lower Ninth Ward still in need of redevelopment.

Figure 12: NORA Properties Awarded for Redvelopment in 2022



Source: New Orleans Redevelopment Authority

[1] Lowernine.org. (2023). <https://lowernine.org/about/>.

[2] L9WHA. (2023). <https://www.l9wha.org/>.

Source: New Orleans Redevelopment Authority

STUDY AREA ECONOMICS

Employers and Employment in the Study Area

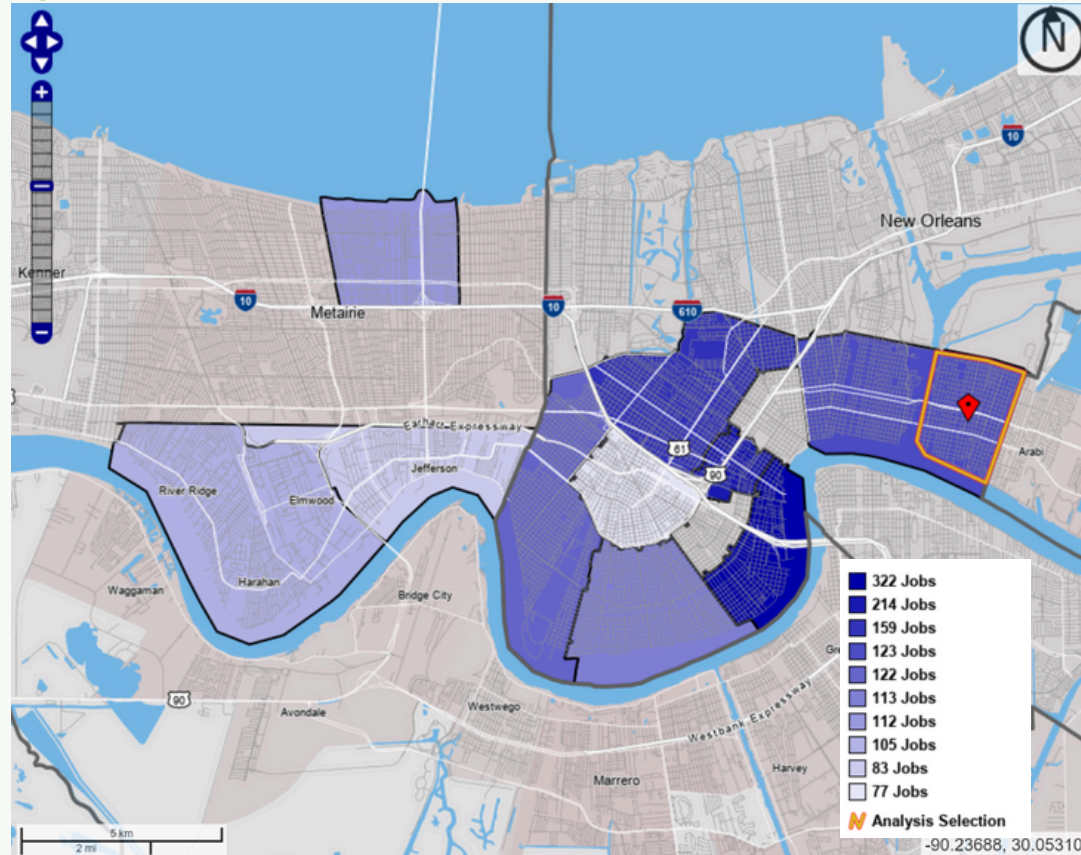
The U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer–Household Dynamics (LEHD) Survey estimates that there were 614 primary jobs located in the Lower Ninth Ward as of 2019. The largest employment sector was Educational Services (242 jobs). Some of the largest employers in the Lower Ninth Ward area include:

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School for Science and Technology
- Veolia: operates a wastewater treatment facility on land near the Sankofa Wetland Park, extending north of the Norfolk Southern Railroad line into the Bayou Bienvenue area.
- Gulf Stream Marine: operates the Alabo Street Wharf, located at 300 Alabo Street. This is a privately operated facility associated with the Port of New Orleans.

Workers in the Study Area: Employment Sectors and Commutes

LEHD data from 2019 show 2,790 total employed residents who live in the LNW. Their main sectors of employment include Accommodation and Food Services (21.7%); Health Care and Social Assistance (15.4%); and Retail Trade (13.2%). The zip codes that employ the largest numbers of Lower Ninth Ward residents include the French Quarter, Touro Hospital, LSU University Medical Center, Warehouse District, and Lower Garden District.

Figure 14: Zip Codes by Number of LNW Residents Employed



Source: U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer–Household Dynamics Survey, 2019

Distance to Important Community Assets and Businesses

- *Grocery Store:* The nearest grocery store to the study area is Canseco's, a boutique, locally-owned grocer located at 6735 St. Claude Ave. in Arabi, LA. This location is just across the St. Bernard Parish border, approximately 0.3 miles from the study area. There is also a Save-A-Lot on Franklin Avenue in New Orleans approximately 1.5 miles from the study area. Some small corner stores in the study area offer a small amount of fresh produce, including the Chicken Mart on St. Claude and Fats Domino Avenues. Sankofa CDC is presently developing its Fresh Stop Market facility on St. Claude Avenue to help address the dearth of fresh food options within the Lower Ninth Ward itself.
- *Pharmacy / Drug Store:* The nearest pharmacy is Absolute Health and Wellness Pharmacy, a local business in Arabi, LA in the same complex as the Canseco's grocery store. There are also a CVS Pharmacy and a Walmart Pharmacy further east in St. Bernard Parish.
- *Hospital:* The nearest hospital is St. Bernard Parish Hospital, which is operated by Ochsner Health. This hospital is located at 8000 W. Judge Perez Drive, Chalmette, LA, approximately 1.2 miles from the eastern edge of the study area.
- *Bank:* There is a cluster of banks in Chalmette, LA approximately 1.5 miles east of the eastern edge of the study area, which includes Capital One (8117 W. Judge Perez Dr.), UNO Federal Credit Union (8201 W. Judge Perez Dr.), and Regions Bank (8301 W. Judge Perez Dr.). Hancock Whitney Bank (2421 St. Claude Avenue, New Orleans, LA) is located 1.55 miles west of the study area. HOPE Credit Union (1635 Elysian Fields Ave) is approximately 2 miles west of the study area. .
- *Elementary/Middle/High Schools:* The study area contains one elementary school and one high school, which together cover grades Pre-K through 12. Both schools are operated by the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School for Science and Technology. The elementary school is located at 1617 Fats Domino Avenue, and the high school is located at the Lawless High campus at 5300 N. Rocheblave Street. The New Orleans public school system is charter-based and not neighborhood-based, so some students from the LNW attend schools outside the neighborhood.
- *Library:* The New Orleans Public Library operates the Martin Luther King Jr. Branch Library at 1611 Fats Domino Avenue.
- *Gas Station:* There are two gas stations within the LNW: LAXpress Gas Station at 5104 St. Claude Avenue, and Gas for Less at 5201 N. Claiborne Avenue.
- *Park/Green Space:* The New Orleans Recreation Department (NORD) maintains three park facilities within the LNW: Sam Bonart Playground (1209 Forstall St.), Oliver Bush Playground (2500 Fats Domino Ave.), and Lee Playground (5301 N. Miro St.). The Sankofa Wetland Park and Nature Trail is another signature public green space that is currently under development, as stated in this Briefing Book.
- *Community Resource Center:* The Andrew P. Sanchez and Copelin-Byrd Multi-Service Center, located at 1616 Fats Domino Avenue, offers programming for seniors and youth, dance performance studios, basketball courts, multi-purpose rooms for community use, local utility bill payment options, and more.

FLORIDA AVENUE CORRIDOR

The Corridor's Location

Florida Avenue is the northernmost road in the LNW. The corridor spans from the Industrial Canal on the west side to the Orleans Parish border on the east. To the north, the corridor is bordered by the Sankofa Wetland Park and Nature Trail, a forty-acre wetlands restoration project spearheaded by Sankofa CDC.

Figure 15 shows the results of a property condition survey conducted by Sankofa CDC in February 2023, including the prevalence of vacancy and the condition of existing buildings.



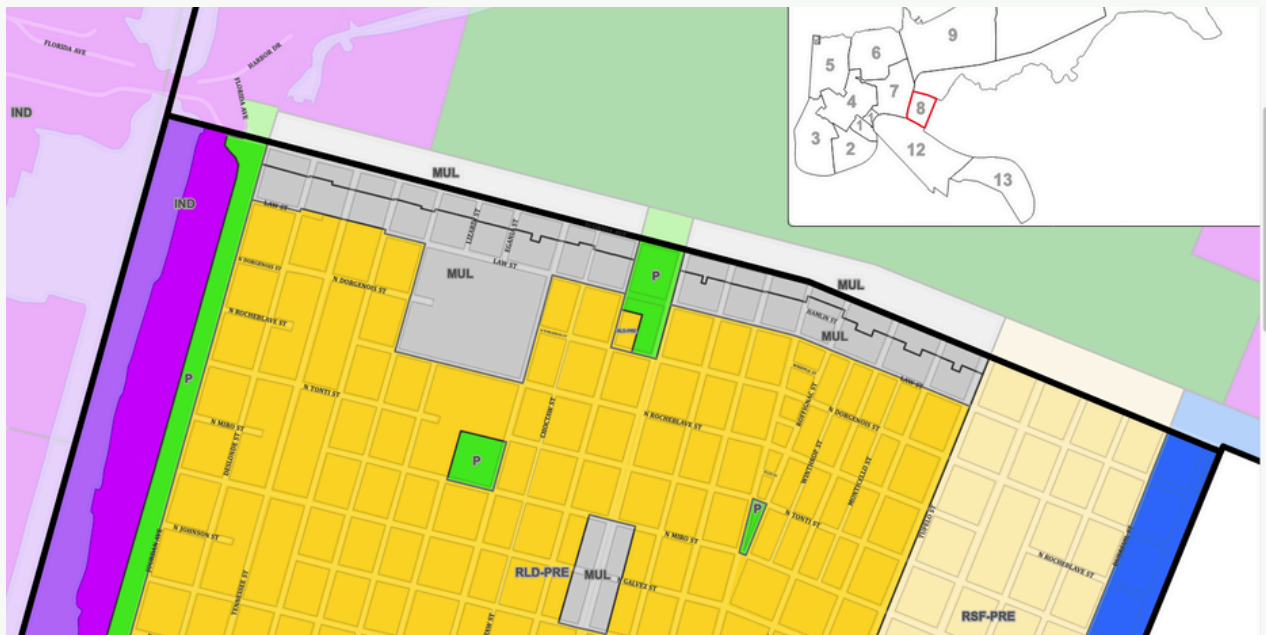
Figure 15: The Florida Avenue Corridor



Zoning and Future Land Use

Parcels fronting and within ~150 feet of Florida Avenue are zoned HU-MU Neighborhood Mixed-Use District. Other parcels in the Florida Avenue Corridor are primarily zoned HU-RD2 Two-Family Residential District. There are a few other zoning districts along the corridor, including S-RS Single Family Residential District and MU-1 Medium Intensity Mixed Use District to the east and parks are zoned OS-N Neighborhood Open Space.

Figure 16: Florida Avenue Future Land Use



The future land use of the corridor is largely Mixed-Use Low Density. It includes the overlays and interim zoning districts Small Multi-Family Affordable Short Term Rental Interim Zoning District and Residential Short Term Rental Interim Zoning District. Sankofa CDC has proposed the development of a Complete Streets plan to improve pedestrian and bike access to Florida Avenue and the greater corridor area.

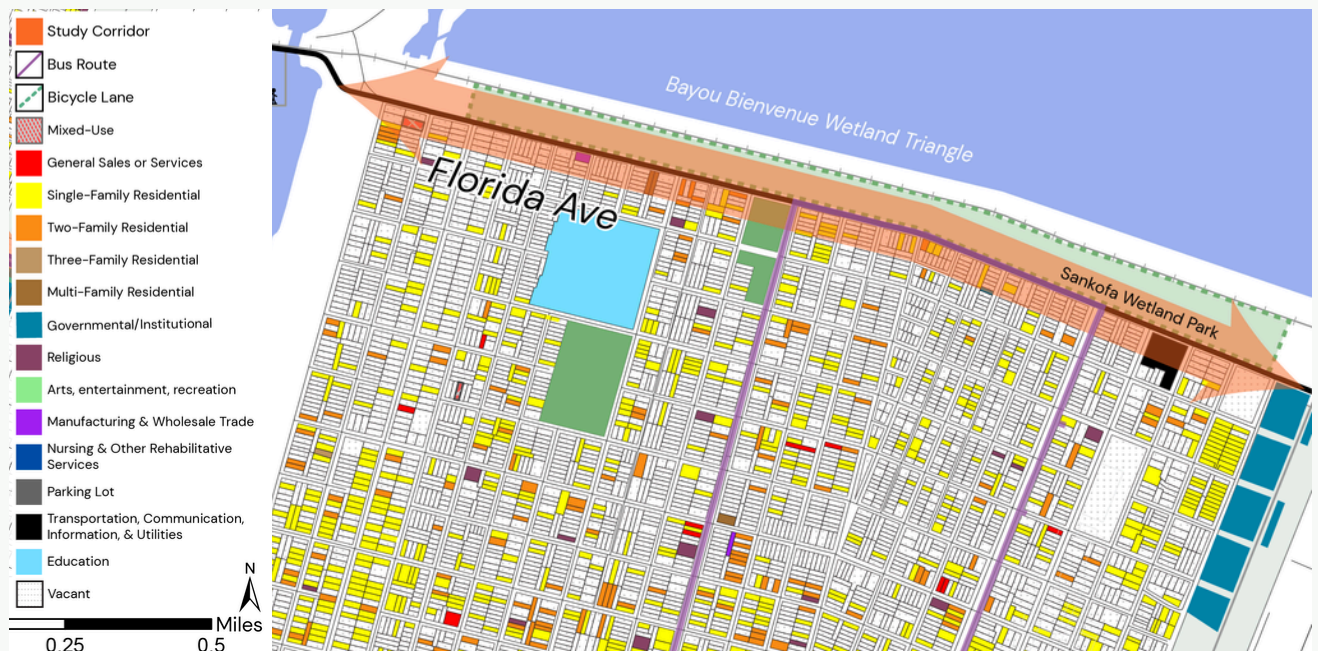
Land Use and Local Assets

Land use along Florida Avenue is characterized by low to medium-density residential development and associated education, recreational, and religious uses, interspersed within a high proportion of vacant property. Because of the Florida Avenue corridor's proximity to the levee breach during Hurricane Katrina, it suffered greater damage to its building stock than many other areas in the city, even within the LNW. The highest concentrations of development are along Fats Domino Avenue and include the Oliver Bush Playground, the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School, and the A. P. Sanchez Multi-Service Recreation Center.

The Sankofa Wetland Park serves as an anchor of the Florida Avenue Corridor. Through a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the City of New Orleans, Sankofa is developing forty acres of wetlands to decrease stormwater overflow through innovative green infrastructure methods and provide environmental education and recreation opportunities for LNW residents and visitors to the area. The Sankofa Wetland Park stands to catalyze complementary revitalization efforts along the corridor including the development of green jobs and commercial development on Florida Avenue.

New small businesses around the corridor area include a nursery, small food store, and barber shop.

Figure 17: Land Uses in the Florida Avenue Corridor





Sankofa Wetland Park



Vacancy

The Florida Avenue area has the highest rate of vacancy in the LNW. 81% of lots on Florida Avenue remain vacant. Less than one-third of the houses on Florida have received a “good” rating for their condition. Sankofa CDC has identified Florida Avenue as being a well-positioned area for commercial and green technology growth as the Wetland Park reaches completion.

Table 9: Land Use on Florida Avenue

Land Use (Florida Avenue)	#	%
Vacant Lot	63	81%
One-Family Hosue	8	10%
Occupied	6	8%
Unoccupied	2	3%
Multi-Family Residential	3	4%
Two-Family House	2	3%
Industrial	1	1%
Park and Recreation	1	1%
Total	78	100%

Source: Sankofa Florida Avenue Property Survey, 2023

Table 10: Building Conditions on Florida Avenue

Building Conditions (Florida Avenue)	#	%
Good	4	31%
Fair	5	38%
Poor	3	23%
Very Poor	1	8%
Total	13	100%

Source: Sankofa Florida Avenue Property Survey, 2023



Vacant land along Florida Ave.



ST. CLAUDE AVENUE CORRIDOR



St. Claude Avenue is a major thoroughfare linking the LNW to the rest of New Orleans via the Industrial Canal to the area's west, and to St. Bernard Parish to the area's east. In November of 2021, with Sankofa CDC as the driving force, St. Claude Avenue in the LNW was accepted into Louisiana's Main Street program. For the purposes of this report, the "St. Claude Avenue Corridor" will be defined as each complete city block facing St. Claude Avenue on at least one side (see Figure 18).

Vacant and blighted properties are prevalent along sections of St. Claude Avenue, which may create a perception of underinvestment and discourage potential growth. At the same time, with the right mix of incentives and public investment, the Lower Ninth Ward community can reimagine the corridor's future [1].

Zoning and Future Land Use

Most of the St. Claude Avenue corridor is zoned as Historic Urban Neighborhood Mixed-Use District (HU-MU), which encourages higher densities and a pedestrian-oriented environment. The zoning allows residential and commercial uses, such as grocery stores, medical and dental clinics, day care centers, and most types of restaurants (fast food is conditionally permitted).

[1] Sankofa, L9W LA Main Street Application.

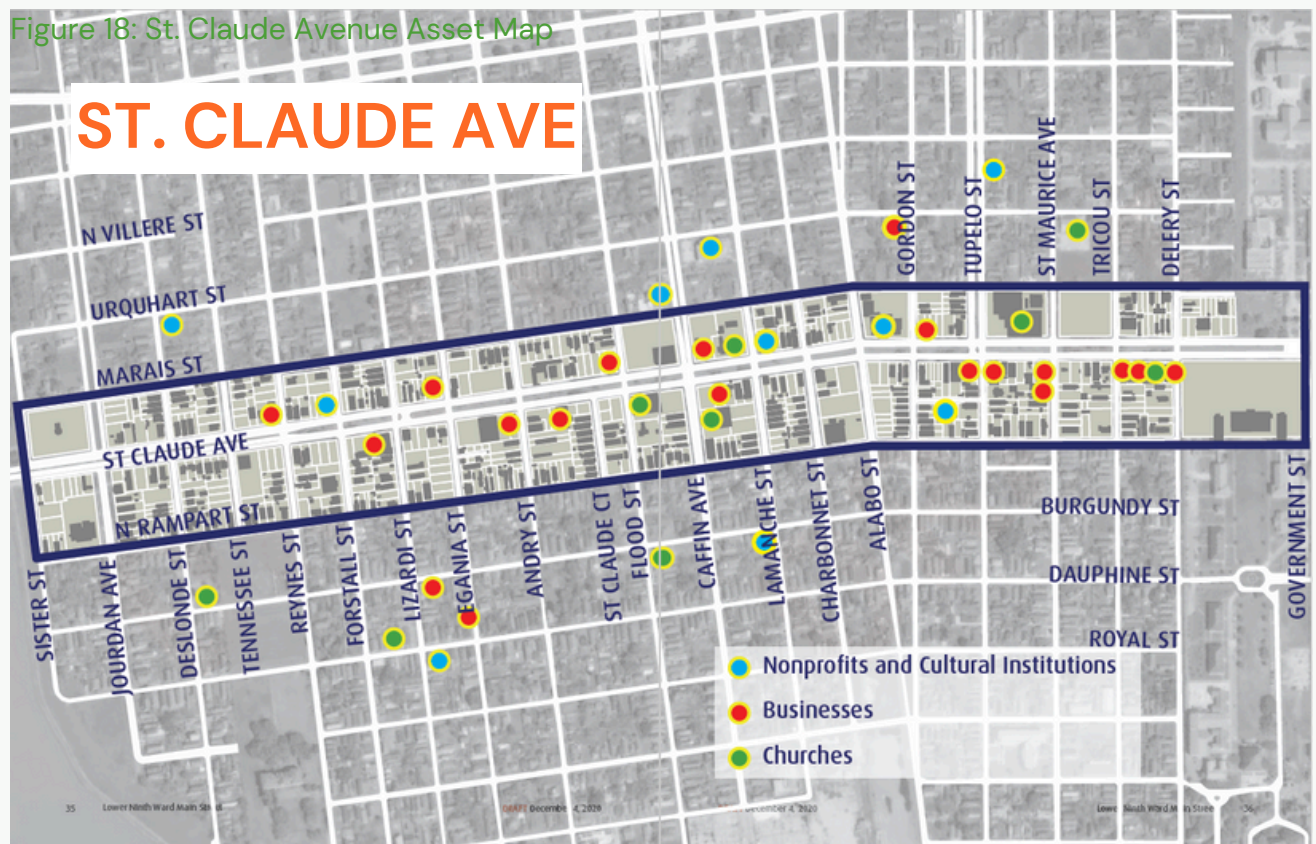
HU-MU creates a multitude of opportunities for revitalization that allows for growth of commercial and residential uses [2]. In addition to the HU-MU zoning district, the St. Claude Avenue corridor also has a historic corridor overlay. The Historic Urban Corridor Use Restriction Overlay District adds standards to the base district that restrict commercial uses that do not conform to the historical character of the corridor.

St Claude Avenue's future land use is designated as Mixed-Use Medium Density (MUM) by the New Orleans master plan [3]. The goal of the MUM classification is to create medium-density neighborhood centers to enhance walkability and serve as focal points within neighborhoods.

Assets

As shown in Figure 18, St. Claude Avenue is a hub of commercial, cultural, religious, and civic activity. At least 16 businesses are open on the corridor, as well as four nonprofits and five churches.

Figure 18: St. Claude Avenue Asset Map



[2] Ibid.

[3] City of New Orleans Plan for the 21st Century. (2016).

<https://nola.gov/next/city-planning/topics/master-plan-plan-for-the-21st-century/>

Highlighted Community Assets

Historic Home of Fats Domino – 1208 Fats Domino Avenue

Born in the Lower Ninth Ward in 1928, Fats Domino was a pioneer in the development of early rock’n’roll [1]. Domino was a resident of the Lower Ninth Ward for much of his life, and his historic home has been a landmark in the neighborhood since 1960 [2]. The property, located on Fats Domino Avenue and Marais Street, consists of a split-level pink and white mansion and a yellow and black shotgun home. Formerly Caffin Avenue, Fats Domino Avenue was renamed in 2022 to honor the musician [3].



Fats Domino House on Fats Domino Avenue

[1] Fat Man Brands, LLC. (2017). About Fats Domino. <https://www.fatsdominoofficial.com/about>.

[2] WWOZ. Fats Domino’s House. <https://acloserwalknola.com/places/fats-dominos-house/>.

[3] Associated Press. (2022, October 14). Renowned pianist Fats Domino has New Orleans street renamed in his honor. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/renowned-pianist-fats-domino-new-orleans-street-renamed-honor-rcna52224>.

St. David Catholic Church – 5617 St. Claude Avenue

One of the faith-based organizations along the St. Claude corridor, St. David Catholic Church is a part of the Archdiocese of New Orleans and serves the entire Lower Ninth Ward. The church offers CCD (Catholic educational services), bereavement and grieving ministry, prayer groups, and a gospel choir, among other ministries [1].



St. David Catholic Church

[1] St. David Catholic Church. (2022). <https://stdavidnola.com/ministries>.

Sankofa Fresh Stop Market – Under construction at 5029 St. Claude Avenue

The Sankofa Fresh Stop Market represents a comprehensive grassroots strategy for addressing food insecurity in low-income and low access communities in the neighborhood, by providing ongoing consistent access to locally sourced whole foods in an under-resourced area designated as a USDA Food Desert [1]. Health, nutrition, and food safety education will also be offered through Sankofa’s Healthy HeartBeats program. Fresh Stop Market will have a soft opening in April of 2023.



Sankofa Fresh Stop Market (under construction)

[1] For more information, see Sankofa’s website: <https://sankofanola.org/rfqqs/>.

Main Street Headquarters (future location)

Sankofa CDC is working to create a Main Street headquarters on the corner of St. Claude Avenue and Lizardi Street. The headquarters will promote economic health in the community and serve as an incubator and innovation hub for entrepreneurs, small business owners and residents interested in refining their workforce skills.



Future site of Sankofa Main Street Headquarters

The Tate, Etienne, and Prevost Center (TEP Center) – 5909 St. Claude Avenue

The TEP center is a historic, mixed-use facility housed in the historic McDonogh 19 Elementary School. Built in 1929, the school became the site at which three girls desegregated the first whites-only school in Louisiana [1]. The renovated space features education and exhibition space dedicated to anti-racism, restorative justice, and the history of desegregation in New Orleans Public Schools. The second and third floors of the historic building house 25 affordable residential units for seniors 55 and older.



TEP Center on St. Claude Avenue

[1] Leona Tate Foundation. (2018). The History & Future of the McDonogh #19 School Building. <https://www.leonatatefoundation.org/mcdonogh-19>.

Figure 19: St. Claude Avenue Businesses Map



While vacant and blighted properties are present on St. Claude Avenue, an assortment of businesses currently operate in the corridor including cafes, day cares, hair salons, and thrift stores (see Figure 19). Many of the corridor's businesses are locally owned and operated. The small business presence on the St. Claude Avenue corridor has the potential for growth.

Vacancies

Table 11 shows land use conditions of properties along St. Claude Avenue. Thirty-two percent of lots on the avenue are vacant. Twenty-three percent are occupied by commercial properties; however, only 23 of the 38 commercial structures are currently occupied. Thirty-two percent of lots on St. Claude Avenue are single-family and two-family residential structures. The majority of these homes are occupied, with only nine of 54 unoccupied or of uncertain occupancy status. Parking lots, institutional buildings, and a few mixed-use and multi-family residencies make up the remainder of lot uses on the avenue.

Table 11: Land Use on St. Claude Avenue

Land Use (St. Claude Avenue)	#	%
Vacant Lot	53	32%
Commercial Building	38	23%
Occupied	23	14%
Unoccupied	15	9%
One-Family House	32	19%
Occupied	24	14%
Unoccupied	6	4%
Unsure	2	1%
Two-Family House	22	13%
Occupied	21	13%
Unoccupied	1	1%
Parking Lot	10	6%
Institutional (e.g. Church)	6	4%
Occupied	5	3%
Unoccupied	1	1%
Multi-Family Building	3	2%
Mixed-Use Building	3	2%
Unoccupied	3	2%
Residential Building	1	1%
Total	168	100%

Note: All land uses considered "occupied" unless otherwise indicated. Source: Sankofa In-Person Survey, Nov. 2022

Table 12: Condition of Buildings on St. Claude Avenue

Building Condition (St. Claude Avenue)	#	%
Good	80	75%
Fair	14	13%
Poor	6	6%
Very Poor	7	7%
Total	107	100%

Figure 19 visualizes vacant lots along the corridor, along with building condition status. Three quarters (75%) of buildings on the corridor are considered to be in good condition. Thirteen percent are in fair condition, 6% percent are in poor condition, and 7% are in very poor condition.

Figure 20: St. Claude Avenue Vacant Lots and Building Conditions



St. Claude Avenue Streetscape

