Historic Faubourg Tremé Association Property Mapping & Analysis

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HISTORIC FAUBOURG TREMÉ ASSOCIATION

PROPERTY MAPPING & ANALYSIS

Produced by the UNO DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & URBAN STUDIES

Spring 2014
Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Dabne Whitemore from the Historic Faubourg Tremé Association (HFTA) who was instrumental in developing the HFTA—WhoData Property Condition Survey. The vision for developing the spring 2014 map gallery was inspired by the community vision and goals for recovery and reinvestment. Dabne went ‘above and beyond’ for the MURP 4081/5081 class by pre-organizing the dataset, providing a neighborhood tour and providing a lively and informative presentation on the Tremé history.

A special thank you to Brittany N. Arceneaux, Associate Project Director of WhoData, who led the initial property condition survey and project development since Spring 2013. Brittany has been a resource and provided a special lab for the MURP 4081/5081 class.

Our gratitude to the volunteers of Project Homecoming, Historic Faubourg Tremé Association (HFTA), volunteers and residents who worked together to gather data for the HFTA Land Use Committee.

A continued appreciation to Lynn Dupont from the Regional Planning Commission for her support and resources that enable community organizations to better visualize the survey results.

UNO PLUS Project Team

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Tremé is one of the oldest African-American communities in America. In 2012, we celebrated our 200th anniversary as a community of diverse residents that originated as a community for free people of color. Therefore, to protect our history, culture, architecture, and community immediately following Hurricane Katrina, the Historic Faubourg Tremé Association (HFTA) formed in 2006. Since this time, a constant theme within the work we do for Tremé is protecting the fabric of our community.

Tremé has suffered over the past 100 years from major land use decisions, while initially felt to be the best for our community, ended up degrading our neighborhood. Major projects, such as the Municipal Auditorium, Armstrong Park, and Interstate 10, caused wide-spread demolition within our community. Now, our community is faced with a new challenge—demolition by neglect and the removal of Interstate 10. Many of our historic buildings are neglected and the City’s response is demolition, many buildings sit vacant and empty often leading to fires caused by squatters, yet some sectors of Tremé have the highest property values in the city.

In 2012, HFTA realized we needed better data to tell the story of our community from a land use perspective. We needed a fair and equitable way to address the best and the worst of our community. The Tremé Property Mapping & Analysis Report gives HFTA and the community a document to advocate for better land use decisions and policies. We can use this data to help make our community a better place for residents and property owners, from improving building conditions to reducing vacant lots, and increasing and diversifying business opportunities in our community. On behalf of the Historic Faubourg Tremé Association, we thank Dr. Michelle Thompson, University of New Orleans Masters in Urban and Regional Planning and WhoData.org for their support in making this project a reality.

Sincerely,

Jessica D. Knox
President
In 2012, immediately after Tremé celebrated our 200th Anniversary as a community and neighborhood, the Historic Faubourg Tremé Association (HFTA) took an inventory of the good and the bad in our community. As we drive, walk, or bike around or neighborhood, we realize that there is much to be proud of as a community, but there were areas that sadly need significant reinvestment. Many houses have been renovated, trees have been planted and entire blocks turned around. In other sections of the neighborhood, changes are underway with new renovations and infill properties being built on formerly vacant lots. But, in other sections, entire blocks have been demolished with only one or two buildings left standing, streets are flooding during rain storms, vacant lots have been around for more than 40 years, and commercial buildings sit empty.

Before we can even begin to address the challenges of blight and celebrate the positive developments that showcase our 200-year old history, we needed data to show characteristics and trends for all parcels in the neighborhood. We developed a two-phase project that would first record the characteristics of all the neighborhood parcels and secondly develop programs and services to address the needs identified by the data. This report culminates the work of Phase I.

Phase I of this project began in January 2013 when Dr. Michelle Thompson, UNO professor and director at WhoData.org, responded to HFTA’s request for interns to help survey the parcels in our neighborhood. The mission of WhoData.org is to provide an online mapping tool based on a survey and data collection platform that is consistent across all neighborhoods for the city of New Orleans. This platform provided a mechanism to map and analyze the information collected on properties in Tremé. WhoData.org provided all the survey forms, survey maps by address and geopin number, data entry spreads, and volunteer training. Project Homecoming, a volunteer-based housing and rebuilding nonprofit, provided over 45 volunteers to complete the inventory process. The volunteers filled out survey forms and took photos of every property. The result is 875 survey forms and over 2,000 photos documenting properties in Tremé.

HFTA then entered all the hard copy survey forms into a spreadsheet by address and geopin location code for GIS mapping. In January 2014, the Applied GIS graduate course utilized our data for information technology training in the planning profession. The class was able to analyze the data, including the following:

1) Provide numerical tabulation and graphic representation overall, and as needed by neighborhood sector and/or sub-sector;
2) Provide a “Tremé Map Gallery” showing graphic representations of the survey data;
3) Identify trends and provide a list of ten priorities regarding land use in Tremé.

This report showcases the data according to the survey data. We will be able to use this report to begin implementation of Phase II by addressing the needs identified by this report and follow-through to make Tremé an even better place. A place that is better because the community has made it better.

Dabne Whitemore, HFTA Boardmember & Project Director
July 2014
The Faubourg Tremé is located in the Mid-City neighborhood of New Orleans. The “Tremé” is challenged to maintain the bricks and mortar but continues to keep the spirit of the free people of color alive in their culture and traditions. One of the challenges that this historic community faces is the numerous ways that organizations and people define the neighborhood boundaries. While this will remain a debate, full agreement on the significance and contribution that this neighborhood continues to make in New Orleans history and culture. It is well known that there were socio-economic challenges that plagued the Tremé for many years. However, it is a neighborhood that continues to evolve and significantly grow after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

In order to support the work that the Historic Faubourg Tremé Association (HFTA) is doing to improve the quality of life of all existing and future residents, WhoData.org provided training and the University of New Orleans – Department of Planning & Urban Studies (UNO PLUS) committed geographic information systems (GIS) services to aid in this revitalization effort. This model for collaboration is grounded in public participation geographic information systems (PPGIS). The HFTA PPGIS project is an example of how the Community, the University and Municipal organizations can work together to monitor, evaluate and influence neighborhood change from the bottom up and from the top down to create a ‘middle through’ solution.

The focus of this spring 2014 project was to evaluate the property condition and quality of life data collected in the spring of 2013. The team of Project Homecoming and WhoData, led by Intern Brittany Arceneaux, conducted a survey of the properties within the HFTA neighborhood boundaries. There still remain data gaps due to (1) the lack of all municipal data being made available and in a format that is spatially compatible, (2) property condition survey data that did not include all existing uses (e.g. historic houses in Armstrong park), (3) the neighborhood boundaries are not consistent with the City Planning Commission changes in demographics, crime, and housing values for example, may not be comparable. The goal of WhoData.org is to fill in the gap but, given the resources available for mapping services, there are limitations to providing a city-wide service. By engaging UNO PLUS, students are able to participate in providing applied GIS services and learn how to work cooperatively with community-based non-profit organizations. This map gallery is the start to document and helps residents use data to re-imagine one of the most valued and significant neighborhoods in the City of New Orleans.

In service,

Michelle M. Thompson, PhD
About UNO/PLUS

The University of New Orleans (UNO), the urban research University of the State of Louisiana, provides essential support for the educational, economic, cultural, and social well-being of the New Orleans metropolitan area. Located in an international city, the University serves as an important link between Louisiana, the nation and the world. The university strategically serves the needs of the region through its undergraduate and graduate programs. It also provides the area with mutually beneficial collaborations between public and private organizations, whose missions and goals are consistent with and supportive of UNO’s teaching, scholarly, and community service objectives.

As the only accredited urban planning program within the states of Louisiana, the Department of Planning and Urban Studies (PLUS) has been an important regional institution. For over 40 years PLUS has helped train leaders who develop solutions to a wide range of urban issues. With a range of programs, from bachelor to master and the PHD programs, PLUS provides comprehensive training to prepare students for careers in urban studies.

The UNO/PLUS MURP 4081/5081 course on Information Technology for the Planning Profession offers enrolled students the opportunity to implement applied research in cooperation with non-profit partners. This course combines an introduction to geographic information systems, with service learning, to provide students with a client focused, applied community-based project. This type of ‘on the ground’ experience furthers our institutional commitment to fostering social development within the larger community. For information on UNO PLUS go to: http://www.uno.edu/cola/planning-and-urban-studies/index.aspx.

About WhoData

WhoData empowers organizations throughout New Orleans by providing them a platform to map and analyze the information they collect on properties in their area. The WhoData.org online mapping tool allows residents to assess their own neighborhoods, highlight properties that display indicators of blight, create their own maps and property lists, and share this information with the public. Since 2009, WhoData has been a pilot project that was created to integrate community developed data that can be integrated and evaluated with public information. This public participation geographic information system (PPGIS) program was created to develop an environment for integrating data ‘from the ground up’. In a post Hurricane Katrina environment, there were few opportunities for the public to have access to the information needed to monitor neighborhood change. Equally vacant was a municipal data information system that would enable the community to have a holistic understanding of critical data and be able to use this in a shared environment. By creating standard methods of data collection, dissemination, analysis and sharing, WhoData increased availability to this crowd-sourced data and created an online community data information system (CDIS). The results of the community and public data integration are compiled in the CDIS and in maps on www.whodata.net.
Tremé Lot Status

The Lot Status map was created by joining the Historic Faubourg Tremé Association (HFTA) property condition survey data to shapefiles from the City of New Orleans’s GIS resource data.nola.gov using ESRI ArcMap software, displays what the lot status of each parcel is within the HFTA’s boundaries. The Lot Status field differentiates between buildings, empty lots and parking lots and can help to determine where specific uses are clustered, particularly when compared with other maps.

Of the 876 total parcels surveyed within the Tremé, 671 (76%) had buildings on the lot, 153 (17%) were empty lots, and 35 (4%) were parking lots. Seventeen of the properties were unmatched due to a discrepancy in GEOPIN (unique city parcel identifier number) between 2013, when the survey was collected and 2014, when the most recent parcel layer was released by data.nola.gov. Matching the GEOPIN to the parcel layer is an area where further research and correction would help to improve the data. However, being that a vast majority of the parcels are represented correctly on the map, it still serves as a valuable resource to determine lot status within the area of interest. Subsequent chapters help to segment the information in the lot status map, for example by determining building type or differentiating between lots that are maintained or overgrown.

Of the 153 total empty lots, 31 of them (20%) are along the edge of the HFTA’s boundary for the Tremé, and some occur in concentrated areas. The map images below indicate two areas where empty lots occur in high concentration, the one on the left being located in the area’s southwestern corner and the one on the right in the northeast corner, bounded by Esplanade and Marais. Both occur in border areas and represent 49 of the 153 empty lots, or 32% of the total.
Tremé Parcel Use

This work provides basic information about the distribution of Treme’s Parcel Use, which is dominated by residential use. The ESRI GIS software, ArcMap, was used to create maps with shapefiles from The City of New Orlean’s GIS resource, data.nola.gov, which were joined with survey data from the HFTA’s property analysis survey. There are a total of 876 parcels in Treme, of which 647 (77%) are used for Residential, 142 (16%) are used for Commercial*, 35 (4%) are used for mixed use, and 24 (3%) are in other uses. Most of the commercial parcels are close to the boundary of the HFTA study area. However, there are still several parcels that have not been included in the analysis because of the mismatch problem between the spreadsheet and the Shapefile. The Shapefile, taken from data.nola.gov, is for 2014 but the survey was taken in 2013. Some of the GEOPINs and addresses have since been changed. Therefore, some parcels could not be found in the 2014 parcel based on information of the spreadsheets. This mismatch demonstrates an opportunity for further study and data correction. However, the Parcel Use map of the HFTA is a valuable resource that displays where residential, commercial and mixed use properties are concentrated.

Overlaying this information with different map layers, such as the Overgrown Lot layer or the For Sale/For Rent layer, can help to reveal what types of properties need specific resources or types of care and can perhaps guide them to financial relief tailored to their needs.

Of the 142 total commercial properties within the Tremé, 64 reside along the boundaries set by the HFTA, composing 45% of the total. This is a significant amount of properties and may have previously factored into how the HFTA selected its boundaries. However, the roads that comprise the boundaries, like Claiborne Avenue and Rampart Street, are all high-traffic corridors that may receive more business than areas within the residential area. It may also be due to zoning laws restricting specific uses to certain sections within the Tremé.

*For HFTA purposes, all businesses (whether for- or non-profit) were coded as commercial, including churches.
Tremé Building Condition

When the survey was collected by the HFTA volunteers, the WhoData.org property condition training on field data collection was provided. The surveys gather information in a consistent manner to rate the condition of each building on a three point scale: good, fair, or poor. A building rated ‘good’ is well maintained with no visible signs of deterioration. A building rated ‘fair’ has no visible signs of serious deterioration, but needs maintenance before it reaches the ‘good’ rating. A building rated ‘poor’ displays signs of decay, damage or loss of parts of the fabric of the building caused by exposure to the elements and is in need of repair and/or renovation. Buildings with a rating of ‘poor’ have likely already been added to the City of New Orleans’ Blight database and has received, or is in the process of receiving attention from appropriate authorities.

Of the total 670 buildings rated in the survey, 525 (78%) were rated ‘good’, 124 (19%) were rated ‘fair’ and 21 (3%) were rated ‘poor’. However, it is important to remember that this data is more subjective than many of the other fields and therefore more subject to interpretation. It also only expresses what the outside of the property looks like, while information about the interior might completely contradict the rating of the exterior. The data still expresses an overwhelmingly positive view of the building stock, with a significant majority of the structures on the parcels surveyed being rated ‘good’.

This map in particular displays where resources might be best allocated, as areas with clusters of ‘fair’ or ‘poor’ buildings could be targeted for projects or city investment. Further breaking down the ratings helps to reveal what types of property have the highest ratings. By comparing Building Condition with Occupancy, we see that only one property that is occupied is rated ‘poor’, and the remaining twenty (shown above) are all vacant properties, indicating a need for blight relief. Overlaying with the Parcel Use data can reveal what kind of uses need more resources. Of all of the houses rated poor, only two were commercial. The remaining 19 were residential properties.
The HFTA property conditions survey also determined how many units were on each parcel within the HFTA boundaries. In New Orleans neighborhoods, 2-unit houses (“doubles”) are nearly as common as single family homes, so this aspect of the data collection helped to clarify how many units reside on each parcel. The surveyors determined whether the house was a single unit, denoted by a “1” on the map, a double (“2”), or a multi-family unit (“3+”). The map revealed that 239 total units within the HFTA boundaries were single-unit, 235 were double-unit, and 148 were multiple-family occupancy. Seventeen of the properties are unmatched due to a discrepancy in the parcel’s geopin between 2013 and 2014, so these properties could have any number of units, or contain none at all. Corrections to the GEOPINs would help to give a better idea of the actual count for each number of units within the area.

In this case, the maps provide insight into the spread of property types on the parcels within the Historic Faubourg Tremé Association’s boundaries. As the area moves forward with property improvements and adjustments, these maps can serve as a valuable resource and help to pinpoint specific areas for growth and investment. They can also help to reveal what types of buildings are on the market, renovating and/ or being developed in the area. For example, overlaying Number of Units with For Sale reveals which types of properties may be changing hands in the near future. For example, of the 16 properties for sale, 5 are single unit, 5 are double units and 5 are multi-family, with one remaining property registering as null. This indicates a fairly even split in the market. Rental properties, however, suggests a different trend, with only one of the six properties being a double and the remaining 5 multi-family.
Tremé Meters

The property conditions survey collected by the Historic Faubourg Tremé Association recorded which of the surveyed properties had electrical meters and which did not. The meter is a device that records the energy consumption of a household, and as such is an indicator of occupancy in the building. The presence of a meter indicates that a resident is legal occupancy for the premises.

The map produced of the entire HFTA area revealed that 606 of the properties within the boundaries had meters and 65 properties did not have meters. However, seventeen of the properties didn’t match up do to a mismatched parcel identifier, or geopin, and therefore don’t contribute to the data count.

Despite this limitations in the data, the maps provide valuable information to those who seek to invest or improve property conditions within the Tremé. Knowing where unmetered properties are allows the community to pinpoint possible areas for trespassing and unwanted activity. With these areas identified, resources can be better directed to prevent these undesirable activities from taking place. This has become an area with many abandoned properties targeted by vagrants. This also could potentially draw crime to the area.

Overlaying the Meters map with the Lot Status map can help to reveal vacant or abandoned properties, eliminating meter-less structures like parking lots from the mix and double checking the surveyor’s accuracy. All of the sixty-five properties listed as having no meter also register as a ‘building’ on the lot status map, meaning none of them were incorrectly recorded.

There is a definite tendency for the unmetered properties to appear along the western edge of the HFTA boundary. The proximity to Claiborne Avenue is likely a factor involved in this, as the elevated expressway built in the 1960s devastated the area and drove our many of the existing businesses. Properties adjacent to this locally unwanted land use likely have lower property values and therefore are much less likely to receive equity loans or sell for decent amounts, making living there less attractive.
Tremé Occupancy

Tremé has a long and rich cultural history, but in recent decades blight, economic disinvestment and crime have characterized the neighborhood, and many of the properties have been left unoccupied. The HFTA hopes to use the maps and data to identify problem areas and encourage reinvestment and revitalization with cooperation from the City of New Orleans. This data was used to create the map using ESRI GIS software. The map provided examines the occupancy rates of the Tremé within HFTA’s defined boundaries. There are a total of 876 properties surveyed in the Tremé. Of this properties, 620 are occupied (71%) and 239 (27%) are vacant. There are a total of 17 properties that are not accounted for on the map because of the discrepancy between the HFTA dataset and the New Orleans parcel layer. However, the data that matched up still provides an insight into the occupancy.

The majority of properties in the Tremé are occupied, but there are still a significant number of vacant properties. These findings do not indicate blight, but give a good idea of the number of properties in the Tremé that do not have structures or could be used for neighborhood development. This map is also very valuable when layered with other maps, as overlaying occupancy with other fields like ‘Building Condition’, could display what the physical state of the properties are, whether they have a building present or they are empty. In order to see this information in more detail, review the ‘Building Condition’ summary.
Other Tremé Property Information

Not Secured

Another metric for determining whether a property is blighted* or not is if it is secure which is defined as having the windows and doors working properly and are in place to protect the building from the elements. Within the HFTA’s boundaries for the Tremé, only 20 properties are listed as buildings that are not secured. However, several of these, when compared with the other map layers, are found to be empty lots which may suggest that survey volunteers were probably confused about the prompt. While the ‘not secured’ field is a helpful measure, it would need to be corrected and explained to those taking the survey first. If done correctly, it would be one measure to detect blighted properties within the neighborhood.

*The City of New Orleans blight definition may vary from the HFTA blight designation.

Yard/Lot Overgrown

Overgrown yards/lots are a particular problem because they suggest neglect. This portion of the project maps and identifies trends among overgrown lots within the defined neighborhood. The goal of the HFTA 2014 “two-phase Land Use Blight Initiative” is overall to “decrease the number of vacant lots and blighted buildings and improve the architectural character of the neighborhood”, using these maps, charts and analysis to guide the process. The WhoData survey reviewed the status of lots and designated them as “Overgrown” using a measure of at least 12” or more.

Overall, there are just 38 overgrown lots or yards within Tremé. The data was analyzed by building use (Residential or Commercial) and Lot Status (Building or Empty). The majority of the overgrown yards (28) are on empty residential parcels. Residential use has greater numbers for both empty lots and lots with buildings than commercially designated parcels. Residential lots with buildings make up 7 of the total 38 overgrown parcels. Commercially designated spaces make up only 3 overgrown lots, of those only 2 are empty and the other parcel has a building on it. The data suggests that Residential lots are more commonly overgrown, and of those, empty lots are traditionally the type unkempt. With this information, neighbors can work together to create a plan to maintain empty lots.

The study also defined the status of any buildings on each parcel as in Good, Fair or Poor condition. Within the overgrown yards and/or lots, eight parcels had building structures on them. It was expected that these lots would correspond with buildings of poor structural status, however that was not the case. Upon review overgrown yards correlated most with fair structural status. The fair building status exceeds good and poor statuses by only one additional structure. Final conclusions should be
withheld until there is more supporting data and field verification.

Finally, to understand trends regarding locations of overgrown lots, analysis was done to determine the locations of the vacant lots. There were four streets that share the majority of the overgrown lots: Columbus, Robertson, St. Bernard and Villere. Of these streets, Columbus has ten which is the greatest number of overgrown lots. Both Robertson and Villere have 6 overgrown lots and St. Barnard has 6. Streets with 2 overgrown lots include Claiborne, Kerlerec and Ursulines. There are six streets with just one overgrown lot.

The data by street is helpful for the community as it pinpoints locations of greatest need. The neighborhood groups can use this data to strategically implement maintenance schedules and designate tasks to volunteers or other participants.

**Under Construction**

The Under Construction map was created by joining the property condition survey data to the shapefiles depicting the HFTA boundaries. Survey volunteers were asked to identify any parcel where construction was in progress. Since this data was collected in 2013, an updated field survey of this information is required. However, the existing data displays where investment, and perhaps revitalization, is taking place. For example, there appears to be building activity in the northernmost tip of the HFTA on Claiborne and Villere Street between Ursulines and Governor Nichols. Particular areas where multiple projects are taking place should be observed further to see if more projects are undertaken and if property values and building conditions have been improved over time.

Overall, there were 53 (6%) parcels under construction out of a total of 876, including 17 unmatched properties. The unmatched properties, while significant, could be much larger considering the amount of vacant properties within the neighborhood’s bounds. However, it is possible that since the 17 properties were mismatched due to changes in Geopin. Therefore, more construction might have taken place and are not reflected on the map.

**For Sale/For Rent Sign**

The For Sale/For Rent Map is not an absolute indication of properties for sale or for rent within the neighborhood. The volunteers took notes of parcels with visible for sale/for rent signs as they surveyed the neighborhood. Each field still helps to clarify where properties may change ownership. In a neighborhood with as rich of a cultural history as Tremé, a large amount of property sales or transient tenants could threaten the heritage and integrity of the neighborhood overall. However, multiple property listings suggests a growing interest in the area and optimism in the eyes of property owners.

Within the HFTA neighborhood boundaries, 6 properties were listed as being for rent and sixteen properties were listed as being for sale, each an extremely small
percentage of the total buildings within the study area. It should also be kept in mind that this survey was taken in 2013, and subsequently properties have gone on and off the market since the time of this data collection. Property listings would be an interesting area for further study to observe if prior listed or adjacent properties are still on the market in 2014.
For the purposes of developing an instrument for the HFTA Land Use Committee to visualize and evaluate multiple quality of life conditions an integrated map was created. The map below contains data collected from primary (property condition survey) or the secondary (City of New Orleans) sources. This map allows the residents and organizations working in the Tremé a dynamic tool to monitor multiple neighborhood concerns and prioritize them.

The integrated map tool allows any of the given layers such as lot status, occupancy, etc. to be displayed at one time. Certain layers, which might all be symptoms or indicators of specific urban problems, can be shown together to reveal specific areas in need of attention. For example, this particular map shows factors associated with blight: vacant buildings, properties not secured, properties rated in poor condition, and overgrown lots. Properties under construction are also displayed to offer insight into where change and investment are taking place, and whether it is being used to help alleviate existing blight. When all of the factors are taken together, it is easy to see certain points of interest. Along Rampart street, for example, there is minimal evidence of blight of any kind. However, the edge along St. Bernard has a great deal of blight.
Citations

The data resources that were used are listed in the legend of individual maps. Outlined below are the key sources used for general background for the map description summaries.

City of New Orleans— Data
https://data.nola.gov/

The Data Center
http://www.datacenterresearch.org/
*Formerly known as the Greater New Orleans Data Center: www.gnocdc.org

WhoData.org
www.whodata.net

Cover and Map Image from 2011:
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www.crachiola.com

http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-zJ-3bLBmdMo/TfQ6OPWXsiI/AAAAAAAAB6s/YGe7KXIiBvc/s1600/Preservation+Hall-19.jpg