

Can the I-10 come down?



Photo by Bill Borah – from Congress For the New Urbanism website <http://www.cnu.org/highways/freewayswithoutfutures>.

As Lafitte residents know, the construction of I-10 (the Claiborne Expressway) had a horrendous impact on the Tremé community. Claiborne used to be a tree-lined boulevard lined with thriving businesses. When the expressway was built in the 1950s, the trees were cut down and local businesses were devastated. Lafitte residents have told us that the local community environment totally changed when the I-10 came in. A major barrier was created between communities on both sides of the freeway.

New Orleans is working on a Master Plan to guide the city's future. It's called New Orleans 2030 – A Master Plan for the 21st Century, and a working draft was released on March 20, 2009. The Master Plan says that New Orleans would benefit from tearing down the I-10 and re-establishing the boulevard as it once was.

Traffic would be redistributed and could bring economic development benefits

that can't be realized now because of the freeway. Taking the I-10 down would also help bring about revitalization and reinvestment in Tremé. New Orleans has a number of major projects competing for a limited pool of funds, and taking down the I-10 requires approvals from many different agencies. But it's encouraging to see the idea recommended in the Draft Master Plan. For more information on the Master Plan see www.nolamasterplan.org.

Programs at Sojourner Truth Community Center

Carol Carter and her team continue to provide a range of services out of the Sojourner Truth Community Center. The newest member of her team is a former resident of Lafitte – Rebekah Simon. Rebekah works the front desk, and is helping the team stay in touch with former Lafitte residents.

Details about the Community Center:

- Hours: Monday – Friday 8:30 am to 5:30 pm & Saturdays 10:00 am to 3:00 pm
- Phone: (504) 827-9734
- Email: rsimon@archdiocese-no.org



A range of programs are offered – call the main line to confirm dates and times. Programs include: health & wellness programs, GED prep, credit repair and financial management, seniors activities, and other monthly events. The team is also hoping to deliver events for youth – if you have any suggestions on programs, please call Sojourner Truth and let the team know!

Lessons learned from River Garden

The development teams working on redevelopment of the “Big 4” housing projects are working hard to learn from each other – and from past experiences. In March, developers met with representatives of NOLAC, the Fairhousing Action Center, HANO, and a number of residents to review lessons learned from the redevelopment of River Garden. Some of the key lessons included:

- Hold regular community-wide meetings to bring people together.
- Make sure former residents fully understand the housing choices available to them, and the consequences of those choices.
- Make sure former residents know that they are the priority occupants of the new units.
- Keep the application process as straightforward as possible, and try to limit the amount of paperwork required. Also make sure residents have enough time to receive the information they need.
- Be clear about rules around eligibility for the new housing – this is critical. The Providence/Enterprise development team has been seeking input from residents for the last two years and will continue to consult residents before final decisions are made.

It's also critical that developers are able to get information to residents. If you or someone you know has recently updated their phone or address information, please let us know! Call Rebekah Simon at the Sojourner Truth Community Center and give her your new information. Her phone number is (504) 827-9734.

Discussions are also being held on the role of Resident Councils in the newly developed mixed income communities. Members of the Lafitte Resident Council have also been actively participating in these discussions.

Lafitte Residents Survey 2008-2009

The staff at Providence and Enterprise, along with their partners at Catholic Charities, made hundreds of calls over the last few months to try and connect with former Lafitte residents. Over 300 surveys were completed, and here's a snapshot of the results (percentages are rounded):

Former Lafitte residents who are interested in moving back to the new homes:

- 81% Are interested
- 7% Are not interested
- 10% Are undecided
- 2% Did not answer

Former Lafitte residents who are also interested in homeownership:

- 61% Are interested
- 24% Are not interested
- 10% Are uncertain
- 5% Did not answer

Community Information & Announcements

<p>Monthly Meetings with Lafitte Residents take place on the second Wednesday of every month in New Orleans, 6:00 – 8:00 pm at Sojourner Truth Community Center. Meetings are facilitated by the Lafitte Resident Council, and include dinner and door prizes! Future meeting dates include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday, May 13, 2009 • Wednesday, June 10, 2009 • Wednesday, July 8, 2009 • Wednesday, August 12, 2009 	<p>Florida A&M Looking for Black Female Students Florida A & M University is providing an outstanding opportunity for Black women entering college in the fall of 2009. It is designed to address their absence in the field of computer technology. Scholarships from \$4000 to \$10,000 are available per year for female African American students. Pass this information along to high school or community college student, their parents, and to guidance counselors you may know. The full text of the scholarship can be found at http://www.cis.famu.edu/~aawcs/</p>
<p>Are you interested in what's happening with the Lafitte Resident Council? The Council meets monthly with Providence/Enterprise to discuss the Homebuilding Plan. Members include Emelda Paul (President), Valerie Johnson, Travis LeBlanc, Alvin Banks, Gale Sanders, Edwina Joseph. To get in touch with the Council contact Emelda Paul at paulemelda@bellsouth.net or (504) 367-4724.</p>	<p><i>Have a community announcement you want posted here in our next newsletter? Please contact Rebekah Simon at (504) 827-9734 or email at rsimon@archdiocese-no.org</i></p>

Telling the Lafitte Story

Lafitte has a rich history of amazing people and stories. Residents have been telling these stories since the redevelopment discussions started post-Katrina, and long before. Capturing the history of Lafitte is important for lots of reasons – there are incredible people who lived and thrived in the development. There were also significant difficulties faced.

Over the next several months we will begin working with the residents of Lafitte to capture these stories. We've heard these stories in bits and pieces since we began talking about the new development in the fall of 2006. People have talked about the early days when Lafitte was first built, and the many ways the development changed over the years. We will compile everything we receive, and the stories will not be edited. We are thinking about making them available in the Sojourner Truth Community Center for visitors. If you have other ideas on how to share these stories – let us know. Some of the stories could talk about things like:

- The people who have lived at Lafitte – musicians, artists, community and civic leaders, families, noted cooks and chefs, sports figures, children and youth
- The things people used to do at the Lafitte, and the places in the neighborhood where people used to hang out and spend time
- The artifacts that are available and could be considered for display – things like old pictures, records, bricks, doors, iron work, etc.