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Making Groceries
Food, Neighborhood Markets, and Neighborhood Recovery in Post-Katrina New Orleans
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Abstract
In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, several neighborhoods in New Orleans created neighborhood markets. Given the fact that only one such market existed prior to the storm, this was surprising. This thesis hypothesizes that neighborhood markets are responding in part to the changing and uneven development of the food geography of New Orleans before the storm, and the lack of access to fresh food in many of the most deeply impacted communities after Katrina flooded the city.

In order to understand why these neighborhood markets were established, this thesis places neighborhood markets in the larger context of the changing history of the food system in the US, as well as within the broader patterns of urban development and urban vulnerability, resilience, and risk. New Orleans’ neighborhood markets are further contextualized by looking at the particular history of urban development in New Orleans and the unique food system that the city enjoyed—particularly the robustness of the public market system in that city—until much later into the twentieth century than any other US city.

Interviews with market shoppers, vendors and market organizations for each of the eight extant neighborhood markets are used to explore claims about the roles of neighborhood markets in neighborhoods after the storm. Further interviews with city planners and recovery officials, as well as with non-profit and other community stakeholders, suggest three broad lessons from the experience of the neighborhood markets: one, that disaster has recapitulated and deepened the uneven geography of food access after the storm; two, that the continuing inability of markets to meet food access needs speaks to the fragile and tenuous nature of recovery; and three, that the city government has failed to effectively respond to the storm. The thesis concludes with general recommendations about the importance of the food system and neighborhood resilience for planners and policymakers, as well specific proposals for the New Orleans food system.

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On 30 August 2005, yahoo.com published two photographs showing people wading through Katrina’s floodwaters, dragging groceries in-tow. Superficially, nothing differs between the two images, save that one depicts a young black man, while the other portrays two young white adults. Yet, in what became one of the more well-known minor storylines of the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the characterization of the storm victims' activities in the images' captions were markedly different. With no context provided in either the photograph or the caption, the African American man is said to have ‘looted’ from a grocery, while the white male and female merely ‘found’ their bread and soda in the same store.

The captioning caused a furor amongst many observers who found these images to be an example of institutionalized bias and racism. While many commentators dismissed the divergent captions as the differences between two associated press agencies’ policies (one image and caption came from the AP, while the other was from France’s AFP), I find the disparities between the photographs and the public response to them provocative for what they say about who is entitled to even basic necessities of life in a post-disaster context. The race of the pictured victims and the potential institutionalized biases of large media organizations stoked the controversy, but that obscured what struck me as an even more basic and obvious affront. In the wake of Katrina, these individuals were forced to scavenge for that which is otherwise such a mundane consideration as to be almost invisible in daily life in cities: food.

As a New Orleanian looking at the images, knowing the precise location of the photographs and the history of that place, the differences in the captioning assume a much more nuanced significance. When I look at these images...
now, the many interrelated histories of the images suggestively connect to one another as if in montage. The grocery store referred to in the caption is Circle Food Store, which is a venerable grocery store located in the heart of the storied neighborhood of Tremé, the first free neighborhood of color in this country. The store is situated at the intersection of North Claiborne and St. Bernard Avenues, which was once the epicenter of what used to be one of the wealthiest African-American commercial corridors in the country. Circle Food Store was once the St. Bernard market, a significant public market owned by the City of New Orleans as a part of what used to be the most extensive public market system in America. The interstate overpass from which the photographs were safely taken is an urban renewal project of the 1960s that resulted in the devastation of most of the black-owned businesses on Claiborne Avenue. Almost three years after the storm, Circle Foods has yet to reopen. Looking back at Katrina through these two images evokes deep-seated questions about the ways in which political, social, and economic decisions of actors contribute to the ways in which disaster is not only experienced, but also produced.

What does it mean that the Circle Food store was once a public market in New Orleans, and that the city had therefore once possessed a public interest in the food access of the Tremé? What does it also mean that, through the course of the twentieth century, that same store had been
privatized and then placed in the shadow of the Interstate-10 overpass that was bulldozed through a formerly vibrant African-American commercial corridor? That it was from this platform floating above Claiborne Avenue where photojournalists could take a picture in 2005 in America of three citizens struggling to provide for their sustenance? What is the effect on a community when a grocery store does not reopen two and a half years after a disaster? What is the significance of food access in a community, before and after a disaster?

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Making Groceries
This thesis is an attempt to understand why a surprising number of neighborhood markets were created in New Orleans as a response to Hurricane Katrina, the extent to which market-creation is an effort to compensate for a lack of fresh food access, and the political, social, and economic significance of these markets at various narrative scales. Five farmers markets were extant before the storm, only one of which was run by a neighborhood organization. Yet after Katrina, despite that fact that only three of the pre-storm markets have been able to reopen, at least eight neighborhood markets have been created by neighborhood organizations. In a city as notoriously politically apathetic at the grassroots level as New Orleans and largely without a recent history of neighborhood markets, the creation of these markets is notable.

MARKETS DEFINED
While markets defy easy categorization, the neighborhood markets studied in this thesis are those created or re-initiated after Hurricane Katrina that are operated by a neighborhood-level organization and confined exclusively to the geographic

Claiborne Avenue at St. Bernard Avenue, which used to be the center of a vibrant commercial district, but which is now buried beneath the I-10 overpass. Note that the circle and trees have been removed, as well as a large number of homes. Circle Food Store is to the bottom right of the frame. nutrias.org and Google Earth.
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borders of the neighborhood. This excludes the two Crescent City Farmers Markets, which is a managed by the MarketUmbrella organization. Because this thesis is in part an inquiry into the importance of food access through the lens of neighborhood markets, it also excludes the myriad other markets—neighborhood and otherwise—that are a celebrated part of the culture of southern Louisiana.

New Orleans’ neighborhood markets are not all farmers markets. Markets can be classified according to the kind and amount of products available at the markets, the ownership structure of the market, and the sellers at the market, and can thus be categorized into terminal markets, public markets, or farmers markets (Brown 670). Prior to the twentieth century, public markets were almost always run by municipalities; therefore, while the neighborhood markets studied in this thesis are not run by cities, they should be understood as falling in a direct lineage with the public municipal markets that generally persisted in this country until the turn of the twentieth century. The ‘neighborhood markets’ explored in this thesis fall somewhere between public and farmers markets—each offers some combination of fresh food access sold directly by a farmer as well as a variety of retailing or reselling activities of fresh food, prepared food, and sometimes crafts.

The organizations managing the neighborhood markets I studied are by no means identical across markets. Some markets are operated by neighborhood community development corporations (CDCs), others by non-profit neighborhood organizations, and still others by collaborations between neighborhood improvement associations. The variation amongst neighborhood market operators presents an opportunity to explore the reasons why ostensibly disparate neighborhoods and neighborhood organizations have found cause to pursue a seemingly common undertaking.

### THE MEANING OF NEIGHBORHOOD MARKETS

This thesis makes the general argument that neighborhoods have created farmers markets not only to meet some of the food accessibility needs of their residents, but also as tools
The neighborhood markets studied in this thesis are featured in orange, set against a backdrop of flood-depth (darker areas experienced deeper flooding). City of NO; LSUGIS.
for neighborhood validation and self-determination, political identification, and an integral part of both a neighborhood’s vulnerability and resiliency prior to and in the wake of disaster. In this context, ‘resilience’ is typically defined as the ability of a system—such as a neighborhood or a city—to recover after a catastrophe or to cope with threats and hazards, and ‘vulnerability’ is the related exposure to risk and an inability to avoid potential harm (Pelling, 5). In placing markets in the context of food geography and resilience, I hope to make the case for expanding the concept of post-disaster neighborhood resiliency to incorporate food accessibility. Most generally, this paper explores the relationship between neighborhood markets and uneven patterns of food access in the city: the food system—especially food access—plays a critical role in neighborhood vulnerability and resiliency before, during, and after a disaster. More specifically, I expect to find that the differences and similarities between neighborhood markets reflect not only the disparities of the post-Katrina period, but also the uneven development of New Orleans’ food geography that unfolded over the twentieth century.

In writing this thesis, I am looking to explore the differences amongst neighborhoods through the lens of the markets that neighborhoods created after the storm. The varying experiences of neighborhood food access plays a significant role in determining the fate of the neighborhoods after disaster, part of which can be understood by examining a neighborhood’s particular market. In that sense, the different experiences of neighborhoods and the differences in the markets reflect the cleavages that existed in New Orleans’ neighborhoods on the eve of the storm, the extent to which those differences were the result of uneven development of the food system, and the ways that these disparities can potentially be ameliorated.

This thesis is an attempt to go beyond the purely economic functions of markets to understand the social, political, and symbolic roles with which neighborhood residents endow them. This entails exploring how markets do or do not fit into narratives of recovery on three scales: the individual, the neighborhood or organizational, and the city. Even before people even had to evacuate, food access affected how people would be able to respond not only to catastrophic disaster, physical well-being, psychological health, and ability to reach out to neighbors. For individuals, markets are a potential source of reconnection and newfound rootedness after disaster. Moreover, the way neighborhood organizations chose to respond to the storm reflects in part the food needs of the neighborhood, but markets are also tools for recovery for communities that need visual, impactful interventions. For a city reeling from the storm, markets are low-cost, high-visibility projects that are both practical as well as symbolic. Simply put, markets mean differently and are used differently by different actors.
Though urban planners and policymakers have historically neglected the it, the food system is critical for understanding the different trajectories of American communities, particularly urban ones. Disaster only accentuates these disparities. The changing geography and politics of food must be understood as a part of the larger panorama of decentralization, suburbanization, Euclidean zoning, and privatization that has unfolded over the past century. Communities have been differentially affected by the changing landscape of food; for this reason, this thesis partly an argument that neighborhood markets should be placed in the emerging literature on urban resilience and vulnerability.

One of my overarching goals in this thesis is to understand how resiliency and vulnerability play out 'on the ground.' As a relatively new literature in the domain of planning, resiliency is most often applied to the disaster context in a macro-level scale; very little has been done—especially in the Global North—to understand how resiliency and its counterpart vulnerability is produced in neighborhoods and local communities. Part of the work of this thesis will be to problematize these facile definitions, in order to understand how they interrelate, and how resilience is a characteristic that is manifest not just after a disaster, but also before. This thesis is therefore an attempt to understand how changes in food access and the sociopolitical and economic relationships tied to food access might affect a community’s resiliency; I hypothesize that that neighborhood markets can be a tool for enhancing a neighborhood’s ability to cope with and move beyond disaster.

### Aim and Plan of the Thesis

**Chapter One** of this thesis will contextualize the neighborhood markets by placing them in three broad literatures. In particular, markets are first understood within the history and geography of food access in the US. I make the case that markets should be seen as a part of larger patterns of urban development, uneven investment, and change in the urban food system. I then tie food access into concepts of resiliency, vulnerability, and urban risk, hypothesizing that neighborhood markets can also be seen as a means to address some of the chronic issues facing their respective communities. Lastly, I address the historic neglect of the food system in planning as a profession, and argue that in order to better understand and address the plights of communities, planners need to account for the food system.

**Chapter Two** brings the lessons from Chapter One to bear on New Orleans, and explores some of the unique facets of the food geography of New Orleans. In particular, I illustrate the changing landscape of food and food access in the city.
over the course of the twentieth century, which I believe explains in part the particular trajectories of neighborhoods after the storm. I assert that neighborhood markets are addressing their respective neighborhood’s history of food access. I also survey the initial public, private, and NGO efforts at addressing some of the food access needs in New Orleans after Katrina.

Chapter Three explores and analyzes the role of neighborhood markets in food access, economic investment, and politics in post-Katrina New Orleans. I summarize and begin to evaluate the interviews I conducted with shoppers and vendors at each of the neighborhood markets. In particular, I look at whether markets are fulfilling food access and other social, political, and economic needs in their respective neighborhoods. I also attempt to make connections between these markets and neighborhood resiliency and vulnerability, as well as the markets’ potential relationship to the food geography of New Orleans.

Chapter Four evaluates the role of neighborhood markets in neighborhood recovery in New Orleans after Katrina. This chapter seeks to incorporate the extensive interviewing I did with city planners, recovery officials, and third party and non-profit organizations with the analysis done in the previous chapter in order to make more general claims about the value of neighborhood markets. I specifically look at the ways in which the neighborhood markets are (or are not) meeting food access, socioeconomic, and political needs in neighborhoods. I also note the practical, narrative, and symbolic aspects of the neighborhood markets that are of potential future use to planners.

Chapter Five concludes the thesis by arguing for a greater role for the city of New Orleans in the food system, contending that the city should reinstate the Department of Public Markets and perhaps finance a system of hybrid city-neighborhood markets. I draw on the ways in which the experience of neighborhood markets in New Orleans neighborhoods after Katrina can be further generalized, and their applicability to planners and policymakers are contemplated. Markets are argued to be useful not only in times of disaster but, perhaps more importantly, to those cities and places whose disasters have unfolded over decades instead of days.
We can best understand the role of neighborhood markets in New Orleans after Katrina by placing these markets within at least three diverse literatures. Because the current significance of neighborhood markets is in many ways tied to the history of urban food access, I first give an overview of American urban food access. Because I wish to support the further claim that the food system is an integral component of producing vulnerability and resiliency in neighborhoods, I then summarize the relevant literature on urban vulnerability, resiliency, and risk. Finally, I address the fact that the urban food system has been conspicuously absent from urban planning until only the last decade. Neighborhood markets are responding to the particular inadequacies in the food system in their respective neighborhoods, so before moving on to the New Orleans context in the next chapter, I briefly revisit neighborhood markets to survey their effects in a variety of capacities.

A Brief History of Public Markets and Food Access in the US

The challenge of urban food access in America is a constant one, and the various systems cities have devised over the past two centuries for meeting their food access needs reflect particular economic, social, and technological moments. Food access in American cities was almost an exclusively public undertaking until the middle of the nineteenth century, but beginning with the independent grocer and culminating in the contemporary supermarket, urban food access is now an entirely private enterprise. These changes in the food system attended transformations in residential land use, transportation, agriculture, and technology, and one of
the fundamental features of this pattern of development is that it is increasingly uneven: neighborhoods experienced the changes in the food system differently. The history of American urban food access not only explains the differences in neighborhood food access—it also suggests potential solutions for mitigating those disparities.

Public Markets
The American public market began before this country began. Not only were public markets one of the most important of a town or city’s public institutions, they were the only way for urban denizens to procure food into the mid-nineteenth century. All of the early public markets were open-air street markets, occupying important symbolic space in the middle of important thoroughfares. The first American public market was the Great Street market, established by Governor Winthrop in Boston in 1634 on what was to become State Street (Mayo 2). Open-air markets quickly gave way to long and narrow, enclosed market structures at the end of the eighteenth century, and remained one of the primary means of food access in cities in America until the beginning of the twentieth century. The markets represented the large role that the city government played in food access, which both benefited citizens and the city:

“By building market houses, city officials provided not only
improved health standards but also the means to profit from this public responsibility from the seventeenth century onward.” Neither the public nor the vendors saw this as anything other than a matter of course (Mayo 4).

Until their demise in the early twentieth century, public markets were a financial boon for municipalities. Market revenue, which was generated by renting stalls and other facilities to the vendors at markets, was poured directly into the municipal general fund. Moreover, rent revenues from vendors and farmers fully financed the operation and construction of markets, and it was not uncommon for the municipally operated markets to return 9% annually (Mayo 23). Markets were always publicly financed, although there are several examples where wealthy citizens paid for public markets after times of disaster—such as High Street Market in Philadelphia after the British retreated in 1778, and Ellis Square Market in Savannah after a fire in 1820 (Tangires 31).

The success of public markets was predicated on the fact that they enjoyed a public monopoly on food distribution within the city. Different cities had different regulatory structures; many prohibited private grocers within a certain distance of a public market, but others opted for temporal monopolies, rather than spatial ones, by prohibiting the sale of groceries during the hours of public market operation (Tangires 31; Mayo 23).

The public monopoly afforded to municipal markets effectively rendered food access a public utility. This comprised a profoundly different food system than the one of today, in which private grocers dictate the geography of food access as if it were simply another form of retail. At least until the middle of the nineteenth century, cities’ only consideration was one of meeting demand through construction of new markets; with no competition, municipalities were generally able to provide equality in food access, without respect to a neighborhood’s wealth or stature (Mayo 22, 25; Tangires 205).

Markets occupied a central role in the civic and political life of American cities. As the commercial core of the city, many other retailers depended on the market for their traffic, and the stalls and stores that surrounded the markets appeared, according to a nineteenth century observer of a New York City market, “to form a continuation of the market itself” (Tangires 47; quoted in Mayo 18). That same observer noted that “[t]he amount of business conducted within them [the markets] is enormous, …but even this is surpassed by the aggregate transactions of the street stands and retail stores in the immediate vicinity”. The civic and social composition of public markets was, as Mayo keenly writes, “colorful, active, and a political reflection of American’s economic life” (17). The marketplace was typically the setting for fairs, festivals, and carnivals, where “groups found an opportunity and a place for collective public expression”
Urban communities that should provoke questions about the received wisdom of our contemporary food system. What changes when public markets decline, and what is lost?

Boston’s experience in this transformation is instructive. Quincy Market was built in Boston in 1826 during the tenure of Mayor Josiah Quincy III, and it was by far the largest and most ornate market in America. Unprecedented in size, scope, and cost, Quincy Market was the archetypal public market of the first half of the nineteenth century (Tangires 41). In 1870, Josiah Quincy III’s grandson—Josiah Quincy, Jr.—was Mayor of Boston during an inquisition into the privatization of Quincy Market. While no longer a retail market, Quincy had become a wholesaling center for Boston as well as the surrounding region, and therefore represented the maintenance of a public institution at the center of food distribution and access in the city. The ‘Committee on Free Markets’ rebuffed the calls for liberalization of the market system, finding that: “laissez-faire was inappropriate for the supply and distribution of meat and vegetables, where government has no greater duty to regulate,” thereby retaining public possession of Quincy Market, and reaffirming a public role in food access (Tangires 162). Six years later, at the semicentennial celebration of Quincy Market, Josiah Quincy, Jr. stated that

The lesson of this anniversary is confidence. Judicious expenditures for facilitating exchanges are never wasted. The cost of land for public purposes is never to be measured by its
cost for purposes of individual monopoly. Whatever adds to the
attraction of a city and to the convenience of its citizens must
be remunerative in the end. (Tangires 165)

Even at the end of the nineteenth century, Boston’s city
fathers still found a large role for the public to play in food
access. Yet a century after this semicentennial, Quincy
Market fell into disrepair, only to be rehabilitated as Faneuil
Hall Festival Marketplace, the Rouse Company’s first “Festival
Marketplace” in the 1970s. The market no longer serves
a local or regional constituency’s food access needs, but
those of a tourist and consumer economy. This transition is
emblematic of the movement from a public to private food
system, and its consequences can be read in neighborhood
food access in almost every city in the US during the 20th
century. As Tangires opines, “The public market is a key piece
in understanding the profoundly important shift from an
agrarian to an industrial food system” (xvi).

Before the independent grocer and the chain store
ultimately eclipsed them, cities reaffirmed their commitment
to public markets at various point during the last quarter
of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the
twentieth. The changing importance of markets physically
manifested itself in the changing design of markets. As
cities began expanding (especially along streetcar routes),
market structures were moved out of streets and squares
and integrated into blocks. Requirements for market space
were increasing as a result of increasing use by vendors and
shoppers, and the formerly long, narrow structures were
both more expensive than square, on-the-block structures
and less efficient with space (Mayo 13). Some cities also
flirted with privatization and decentralization of food access
in the mid-nineteenth century: Philadelphia demolished
its central High Street Market in 1859 and created of
thirteen private market house companies, plus scattered an
additional 35 or 40 public markets in neighborhoods around
the city (Tangires 98; Pyle179). In the 1840s, New York City
faced similar *laissez-faire* pressures to privatize butcher shops
and meat markets, and did so only to find that it was able
to return to a publicly administered system only with great
effort (Tangires 83-87). These initial attempts at privatization
largely ended in failure largely because public markets
remained a large source of municipal revenue and because of
concerns over the cost and public health of private markets
(Tangires 151). However, because of changing technological
and management pressures, cities found that “the market for
food retailing coincided less with the public market,” and that
they “were increasingly unable to dictate the larger world of
food retailing” (Mayo 25).

Despite no longer possessing a monopoly on food
retailing, public investment in food access persisted by
attempting to meet these changing food access needs. In
the 1870s and 1880s, cities as different as Savannah, GA;
Denver, CO; Cleveland, OH; and Washington, DC constructed public markets that sought to create economies of scale in its vendors and wholesalers, and also incorporating new food system innovations such as incorporating both retailing and wholesaling under one roof, and providing cold storage on site. Washington, DC’s Center Market, in particular, was built from 1871 and 1877, with the aspiration of creating a market in the American capital that was on par with central markets in other European capitals (Tangires 175). It is noteworthy that Center Market as well as Eastern and Western Markets were partially justified by slum-clearance and public health language that affirmed a public role in food access, but which also is echoed in the rationales used in the Urban Renewal projects of the 1950s and 1960s. Later, markets such as Newark’s massive Centre Market—which was built in 1924—strived to compete with private markets by including refrigeration and automobile access in their design (Mayo 27). Ultimately, these public markets represent the swan song for public markets in an increasingly privatized American urban food system.

**Decline of the American Public Market System**

Thus, despite a flourish of new public market construction in some cities in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and into the first decades of the twentieth, by the 1920s,
By the end of the nineteenth century, around half of American cities no longer had a public market, due to heightened competition from private sources of food access, as well as the fact that without a partial monopoly, public markets were “no longer financially self-sufficient” (Pyle 176; Mayo 33). Some prominent central markets—such as Seattle’s Pike Place market, Baltimore’s Lexington Market, and Indianapolis’ City Market, Washington’s Eastern Market, Boston’s Haymarket, and New Orleans’ French Market—continued to provide food access, and many cities, including Seattle and Indianapolis, had protracted battles over the continued existence of the public markets, but none of them ever regained a dominant position in the food system of their respective city. Observing the pace and visibility of the decline, Mayo observes that our contemporary “lack of recognition for public markets stems from an ironic combination of their importance and their expedient destruction” (2). Some attention was given to the public market system in the interwar period (Donofrio 33-35), but by WWII, the food system was in the hands of the private market, in both senses of the word: literally, food access was to be found only through private establishments, and, perhaps more profoundly, questions of food access were dictated exclusively by private decision makers. While it continued to ensure public health through regulation and incentivization, government was no longer directly responsible “for guaranteeing an abundant supply of wholesome and affordable food” (Tangires 205).

Rise of Private Grocers

Private, independent grocers were a source of food access by the mid-nineteenth century, but they existed largely in the niches in the food system not filled by public markets. “Grocery stores and public markets often complemented one
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was antithetical to [the chain store’s] designed purpose [as a consumption factory]” (Mayo 106). Chain grocers such as A&P and Piggly Wiggly—which revolutionized grocery shopping at its first store in Memphis in 1916 by introducing self-service shopping rather than doing so with the assistance of clerks and grocers—were driving Fordist and Taylorist changes in urban food access. Neither public markets nor independent grocers could keep pace with the meteoric rise of chains predicated on lower unit costs, higher volumes, and planned efficiencies from store to store (Mayo 78-79, 89). Mayo is again authoritative on the subject:

The grocery store was transformed from a shopkeeper’s domain that was a community social institution to a factory of consumption designed by economic reasoning… By the 1930s, an overwhelming majority of grocery stores in the nation belonged to either a corporate chain or an affiliated independent, and this movement brought an end to the shopkeeper’s age. Grocers were no longer self-reliant or specifically organized to meet the needs of a local community or neighborhood… (Mayo 115, 128).

The dramatically different form of American urbanization in the mid-twentieth century entailed a commensurate change in urban food access. As Pothukuchi succinctly summarizes: “the history of supermarkets is largely inseparable from the development of suburbs themselves” (233). The word ‘supermarket’ was first used in a trade name by Albers Super Market in Los Angeles in 1933, and but the model was

and other”; because public markets were typically held two or three times per week, grocers could serve daily needs of citizens, and because the market vendors sold fresh meat, fruits, and vegetables, the “nearby grocery stores on the block sold non-perishable goods” (Mayo 48). However, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, private grocers and especially chain stores underwent unprecedented growth as a result of changing patterns of urban growth and new economies of scale in food production, distribution, and consumption: “[t]he suburbanization of the American city laid the foundation upon which the chain store built its future in the grocery trade” (Mayo 83).

The mushrooming growth of chain stores had significant and wide-ranging impacts on the communities they entered. Chain stores like A&P (which began as The Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company) grew exponentially from one storefront on the New York City waterfront in 1859 to 15,737 stores nationwide in 1930 (Mayo 98). As with public markets—whose rise and fall, Mayo notes, reflects “the transition of the American economy from local mercantilism to national corporatism” (40-41)—local grocers dwindled in the face of national grocery chains, and that decline had repercussions in the neighborhoods they served. The grocery store had traditionally “been a social institution, a meeting place for the community. But the logic of the chain store was contradictory to community habits…loitering
pioneered by the King Kullen and Big Bear supermarket chains in the northeastern US. While these stores were only 6,000 square feet—about one-sixth to one-tenth the size of a contemporary American suburban supermarket—they were ten times the size and had up to a hundred times the sales volume of the typical A&P chain store of the time. Gradually, the new grocery stores became infeasible in older patterns of urban development; not only was the size difficult to accommodate in existing development, the dictates of the automobile—cheap parking lots required cheap land, not the former 30 foot wide storefront—made urban supermarkets increasingly less viable (Mayo 138-141).

Retail grocery became largely a race to the suburbs that favored cheap land and automobility. The post-war growth in supermarkets was tremendous: in 1946, 3% of stores were supermarkets, and they accounted for 28% of grocery sales; by 1954, still only 5.1% of stores were supermarkets, but they accounted for 48% of sales volume of groceries in the US. The effect on older, independent grocers was equally dramatic: “in the first three years of WWII, 81,000 grocery stores closed, the majority of them family owned…World War II created not only a new labor pool, but also helped to quicken the destruction of the traditional family-operated grocery store” (Mayo 158, 162). After the Second World War, the story of food access is one of progressively greater suburbanization and rapidly increasing scale, with few wrinkles to reach today’s ‘hyper-markets.’ In the 1990s, one supermarket chain paraphrased the previous four decades of the food system by remarking that “[supermarkets] forgot about the inner city” (FMI, “Supermarket Initiatives”). Urban food access was further compromised by convenience store, which began in Texas and then expanded to the rest of the country (Mayo 207).
Dissatisfaction with the changes in the food system began in the 1960s and 1970s, when some consumers and advocates recognized what they perceived to be inadequacies in conventional grocery stores. During this time, farmers markets blossomed (Brown 667).² Health food stores like Whole Foods (which began as SaferWay in 1978 in Austin) emerged during this time, and alternative forms of food access, such as co-ops, also appeared (Mayo 208). Public markets even played symbolic if not practical roles during this time. Seattle’s Pike Place, which was built in 1907, fended off an Urban Renewal redevelopment attempt in 1964. One of its advocates characterized the fight in this light:

Here the issue finally came down to one of social thought, not architecture. It was urban souls who believed in diversity and felt that the have must face up to their brothers, the have-nots: that whatever was wrong with downtown Seattle, it was not the public market and its denizens, but rather the grim vision and lives of the more affluent who neither lived in nor liked the city (Mayo 211, quoting Laurie Olin).

Haymarket in Boston faced similar pressures, and while it was pared down to a single block from what used to be 24 blocks, it remains a part of Boston’s geography of food access; Faneuil was not so lucky (Mayo 209). Indianapolis’ City Market, too, was at the center of a legal battle that rose to the US Supreme Court that was ultimately decided in favor of those defending the market (Pyle 185). However, the role of public markets then (as now) remained largely symbolic: “[t]he public market was a partial economic solution for cities that valued them, but the effect of such markets was negligible compared to the public’s demand for supermarkets” (Mayo 211).

Today, farmers markets are far more common today than the public markets from which they derive. Private groceries and supermarkets remain the predominant source of food access in the US, but farmers markets did undergo something of a renaissance in the 1990s. Most of these markets are seasonal, only offering food access during the warmer months. While not the largest increase in farmers markets in the twentieth century, the number of such markets increased over 170% from 1994 to 2002, when there were 3,137 farmers markets in this country (USDA; Bartlett 117).

The neighborhood markets created in New Orleans after Katrina can only be fully understood once they are placed in the larger sweep of America’s changing food geography.

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Resiliency and Vulnerability

When does disaster begin?

In the last twenty years, there has been an emerging literature on how urban disasters are produced, rather
than how they are merely weathered. That is, scholars have increasingly recognized that human decisions about development contribute to the effect of disasters as much as do the precipitate meteorological or seismic events. The more we consider the many effects of the storm, and the more we come to understand the ways in which the problems in communities preceding disasters affect their experiences after the disaster event takes place, the more the answer to the question posed at the beginning of this section is not so obvious. A meteorologist might look at the weeks prior to Katrina to when the storm began over the Sahara or off the western coast of Africa, or she might look at the possibility of anthropogenic global warming over the last century. A sociologist might look to the problems with public schools, racial politics, and the provincial culture of New Orleans in attempting to understand how Katrina differentially affected New Orleans neighborhoods. Environmental planners and policymakers might look to the poor land use controls that have been in place in southeast Louisiana since hydrologic engineering made it possible for people to move off of naturally high ground. Depending on the questions we ask and the effects we are trying to understand, scholars of resiliency and vulnerability would urge us to look beyond just the physical events—the hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and fires—and see that the effects of these events are wholly permeated by the social, cultural, political, and economic decisions that communities afflicted by disaster have made in the centuries, decades, years, months, weeks, days, minutes, and seconds leading up to the moment a disaster ostensibly happens. And this is of course to say nothing of the decisions and priorities made after the disaster has occurred.

Planners, policymakers, and urban designers need to account for the above history of the changing geography of food in order to have a fuller understanding of resiliency and vulnerability in communities struck by disaster, and the ways in which they choose to respond to such catastrophes. The aftermath of Katrina is colored, in part, by the fact that New Orleans’ food geography shifted from a food system comprised of public market and local, independent grocers to a system of national, corporate chain supermarkets. And the differing responses of neighborhoods to the storm is partially a product of its particular experiences with New Orleans’ changing history of food access—whether a neighborhood creates a neighborhood market that emphasizes food access or social connectivity, or if they even create a neighborhood market at all, is not just a response to the storm, but a response to a community’s particular experience of the food system prior to the storm. If disasters are produced in part by human decisions, then so too is recovery.
Resiliency Defined

Resiliency and vulnerability are two sides of the same coin. Neither, of course, has a universally accepted definition, and each has been used in a variety of capacities. Resiliency was first coined by ecologists in the 1930s and 1940s, but C. S. Holling first applied it to human systems in 1973 (Holling 1). The term has come to find a welcome audience among psychologists seeking to explain the ability for individuals to mentally cope with various traumas. More recently, urban planners and policymakers have come to use resiliency as a term to describe cities and their ability to cope with economic, political, and other shocks, whether induced by disaster, political change, or terrorism. The meaning of resiliency—at least in the urban planning context—typically implies the ability of an individual or community to cope with hazard—“to adjust to threats and mitigate or avoid them.” Vulnerability, conversely, “denotes exposure to risk and an inability to avoid potential harm” (Pelling, Vulnerability 5). Of course, both resiliency and vulnerability are terms laden with value: “[t]he idea of resiliency suggests a proactive stance towards risk” (Pelling 7).

Denaturalizing Disaster

Postdiluvian New Orleanians would make very good urban geographers. After the storm, New Orleanians understood
implicitly that the disaster was caused by a combination of human and natural factors. However, while the failure of the federal flood protection system is commonly acknowledged as the most proximal cause of the flooding in New Orleans (at least much if not more so than the actual storm surge of Hurricane Katrina), this is not the same as understanding the subtle ways in which disaster, risk, vulnerability, and resiliency have played out in the aftermath of Katrina. This is a process that Pelling calls “denaturalizing disaster,” where he argues that we cannot neglect “the contributions of human factors in disaster origins and outcomes” (Pelling 170).

At a fundamental level, the development of New Orleans over the 20th century is illustrative. Following David Harvey’s contention that “all ecological projects are simultaneously political-economic projects, and vice-versa,” urban geographers and resiliency scholars have come to characterize what they call the “coevolution of urbanization and risk,” whereby “environmental risks are incurred as a part of the development process” (Pelling, Vulnerability 6). Urban risk evolves hand-in-hand with urban development: as New Orleans expanded off of the natural high-ground after A. Baldwin Wood invented his famous screw pumps, neighborhoods necessarily were being created in areas that exposed their new residents to greater risk. This movement is precisely what Oliver Houck means when he says that after Katrina, southern Louisiana needs to move from a mindset of “flood control’ to ‘water management’…[to] the only logical step: ‘people management’” (Houck 49). A map run by New Orleans’ newspaper The Times-Picayune on 3 November 2005 shows how, even while awash in the immediate wake of the storm, New Orleanians were thinking about how past decisions had created contemporary vulnerability to Katrina’s flooding. This is the sort of topic that makes front-page news in New Orleans these days.

Yet the ways in which human decisions contribute to vulnerability and resiliency is more nuanced than the acknowledgment that Katrina was in part caused by a failure in federal flood protection. While no community could have been fully immune to the rising floodwaters of Katrina, race, poverty, and disinvestment (for example) matter in determining how a given neighborhood responded to the effects of the storm. Sociologists studying Hurricane Andrew found both that “[a] major natural disaster, in the sociological sense, can be thought of as a failure of the social systems constituting a community to adapt to an environmental event,” and that “economic and political conditions predisposed certain segments of the community to be disproportionately impacted and placed them at a disadvantage during the…recovery period” (Peacock 17, 24). This thesis argues that food is just such a system, and the history of New Orleans’ food geography affected how neighborhoods experienced and responded to Katrina.
Disaster and recovery thus reveal the many socioeconomic cleavages that persist in a city.

To better understand disaster and recovery, resiliency and vulnerability need to be historicized. That is, we should endeavor to explain disaster and disaster response at least as much by the socioeconomic history of a community as by the disaster events themselves. Pelling is convincing when he argues that “[t]he socioeconomic and political consequences of disaster are shaped to a great degree by the pre-disaster characteristics of the urban economy and polity” (Vulnerability 45). Katrina differentially affected communities not only because of topographic differences, but also because of the varying histories of socioeconomic and political marginalization before the storm, and the “[d]ifferential ability to access basic resources and services from the state, civil society, and private sector” after the storm (Pelling 16). The worst disasters are therefore those in which a catastrophic natural event is compounded by trenchant, chronic problems in communities, which Pelling rightfully calls ‘chronic disasters’ (“Natural Disasters” 174). It is telling that both a Brown University study as well as a Congressional Research Service study found that the poor and minorities in New Orleans bore up to 80% of the brunt of the storm (Logan 9; Gabe et al. 13-16). Campanella writes of Katrina: “many of the hardest hit communities were also the poorest… Those already struggling to survive will find it difficult to bounce back from such a devastating blow” (144). This thesis argues that the historical inadequacies in many American urban food systems constitute such chronic disasters.

Recent works have complicated notions of resiliency and vulnerability, rather than normalizing or creating apologies for the status quo that existed prior to the storm. These works ask the provocative question: what does it mean to recover (Vale, Resilient City 12)? Like many of the other scholars on disaster, Davis argues that strictly physicalist accounts of disaster are inadequate—that “reconstruction is not necessarily recovery”, but she also insists on the further caveat that “resilience is not necessarily a good thing”. In studying the aftermath of the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, Davis found that the most resilient facets of many communities were also the most corrupt and inequitable (“Reverberations” 258, 261). Davis insists that we ask not only how a city recovers, but also: “what does it recover?” (258)

Ultimately, questions of resiliency and vulnerability imply that cities are more than their buildings. As Campanella insists, familial, social, religious networks need to be reconnected as a part of recovery: “[a] city is only as resilient as its citizens” (Campanella 142-143). Other resiliency scholars draw similar conclusions about the desirability of community and citizen involvement in navigating recovery: “[t]here is a growing consensus that grassroots actors should be involved in programs to
reduce vulnerability to environmental hazard”, and “that community-level action to enhance coping needs to be supported by wider engagement with the political…structures of the city…” (Pelling, Vulnerability 84; “Natural Disaster” 165). If Pelling is right; if the “[u]nderlying states of human marginalization are…the principal cause of disaster” (“Natural Disaster” 179), then by looking at New Orleans’ geography of food access and the neighborhood markets created or reinitiated after Katrina, I am in part looking into how vulnerability and resiliency are playing out ‘on the ground’ in New Orleans.

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Planning and Food Systems
Planning has only belatedly come to appreciate the importance of the food system in cities. While the homogenization, industrialization, and commodification of food production and distribution have been extensively documented by a literature extending back several decades, the attendant changes in the ways people access food in cities—as a part of what I am calling the geography of urban food access, or the food system—have received comparatively little attention. In the American Planning Association (APA)’s own words, “[t]he planning profession, however, has been slow to become a player in food system issues that affect the lives of citizens who live in the communities we work for” (APA Food Policy Guide). Wayne Roberts, who heads Toronto’s Food Policy Council, asserts that the neglect of food within planning is even more curious considering that “the choices we make around food affect the shape, style, pulse, smell, look, feel, health, economy, street life, and infrastructure of the city” (Roberts 4). Again, the changing geography of food access is in many ways driven by the same forces that have created suburbanization, sprawl, and decentralization; this thesis is an argument that in order to more fully understand the fates of urban communities, we must understand that changes to the food system.

Planning and Forgetting Food
Planning has not always ignored food system-related issues. As articulated in the above history of food access in cities, American municipal planners considered food access as an essential government service, and dealt with it as a matter of course into the early decades of the twentieth century. Ebenezer Howard’s famous planning treatise on Garden Cities prominently featured food (and, in particular, public markets) as a part of his comprehensive if somewhat quaint vision for addressing the issues facing the industrializing city (Howard 55, 67, 96). Lewis Mumford in his inimitable way
chronicles the various functions and significances of markets in cities, even anticipating some of the consequences of the imminent changes in urban food systems: “Not indeed until the automatism and the impersonality of the supermarket were introduced in the United States in the mid-twentieth century were the functions of the market as a center of personal transactions and social entertainment entirely lost” (149). Some of planning’s earliest concerns centered around food; the City Beautiful movement honed in on food as a part of its larger concern with a city that was healthier, cleaner, and more efficient. To Beaux-Artes planners at the turn of the century, the squalor of municipal markets was antithetical to the city as—in the words of Charles Mumford Robinson—a “work of art,” and markets were therefore sites of reform (Donofrio 30-32).

While planning got its start under skies that were not necessarily friendly to municipal markets, the food system was at least a prominent consideration in the profession. Food remained one of the primary concerns of urban planners in the early decades of the twentieth century largely because its high cost was one of the major urban problems of the time. An exhaustive report by the Mayor’s Market Commission of New York in 1912 on that city’s food system retained the conviction that the food system was a public concern: government’s function was to “correct…the conditions that breed misery” (quoted in Donofrio 33).

Even as public markets went into decline in the 1920s (or perhaps because of that decline), the regional planning movement—headed by Lewis Mumford and Clarence Stein—viewed cities as part of a larger region, and the food system was an integral part of that vision of regional culture and agriculture (Donofrio 36-38). In 1929, Walter P. Hedden, the chief of the Bureau of Commerce of the Port of New York City Authority, wrote “How Cities Are Fed,” in which he coined the term ‘foodshed’ to describe ways to address the future issues facing New York’s food system (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, “Placing Food” 215). Yet just as food seemed to be cemented as a central concern of planning as late as the 1930s, it fell off the profession’s plate.

Recognizing the Food System
There are a variety of reasons why planning as a profession has in recent decades remained virtually mum on food issues. Just as planners were beginning to understand local and regional sustainability, “American agriculture was moving away from diversified, locally supported farming toward monocrop cultivation” (Donofrio 38). The consolidated, centralized, and in many ways global food system that evolved over the twentieth century made food “as invisible to planners as it is to other consumers” (Clancy 436; Roberts 35). The rapid spatial and technologic pace
in which cities developed—especially in the US context—created the conditions whereby the transformation from an agrarian to an industrial food system went largely unnoticed by those who live in cities (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, “Placing Food” 214). Furthermore, the urban food system is largely taken for granted by many urban dwellers, and is often not considered problematic in the same sense as other “urban” issues, such as housing, crime, and poverty. As American cities rapidly expanded, “grocery store executives brazenly resisted efforts to guide the location of supermarket development” (Donofrio 38). And US public and urban policy is constructed in such a way as to reify the urban-rural dichotomy: at the federal level, HUD deals with urban issues related to housing and community development, and remains relatively ignorant of food systems issues, while the USDA remains largely focused on rural and agricultural issues—and ne’er the two shall meet (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, “Placing Food” 214). As the American Planning Association (APA) summarizes:

Several reasons explain why planners have paid less attention to food issues when compared with long-standing planning topics such as economic development, transportation, the environment, and housing. Among these reasons are:

1. a view that the food system—representing the flow of products from production, through processing, distribution, consumption, and the management of wastes, and associated processes—only indirectly touches on the built environment, a principal focus of planning’s interest;
2. a sense that the food system isn’t broken, so why fix it; and,
3. a perception that the food system meets neither of two important conditions under which planners act—i.e., dealing with public goods like air and water; and planning for services and facilities in which the private sector is unwilling to invest, such as public transit, sewers, highways, and parks. (APA Food Policy Guide)


In the same survey, the authors interviewed senior-level planners from 22 cities, and found a variety of rationales for the partial or total ignorance of food access issues. The reasons Pothukuchi and Kaufman identified were, in their paraphrasing: “it’s not our turf,” “it’s not an urban issue; it’s a rural one,” “the food system is driven by the private market,” “planners don’t do food system planning,” and “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, “Food System” 116-118). All of these reasons are problematic in that they explicitly or tacitly place the food system and its pervasive connections to urban quality of life outside of planning’s realm of consideration and action, and leaves the political, social, ecological, and environmental effects of the food as a relatively unanalyzed component of planning problems.

Planning’s recent acknowledgment of the food system should not be conflated with the somewhat longer-standing recognition on behalf of planners, policymakers,
and developers of supermarkets as an economic development tool. Since the early 1990s, there has been a relatively substantial literature on the unmet retail demand in inner cities, which includes food access. As with many other forms of retail, uneven development has resulted in a gap in central-city grocery store demand, where the poorest zip codes in larger cities have almost half of the square footage of the wealthiest ones. Unmet food demand in inner cities falls particularly hard on the poorest residents, both because they must to travel to suburban grocery stores despite having fewer transportation options and lower automobile ownership rates, and because they pay a significantly higher proportion of their household incomes for food (Pothukuchi 233). Michael Porter, founder and professor at the Institute for a Competitive Inner City at the Harvard Business School, has emphasized the sometimes-surprising purchasing power of inner city neighborhoods, a tact that a variety of actors and stakeholders have echoed, from Philadelphia's The Food Trust to the Food Marketing Institute (Porter; Food Trust, “Philadelphia's New Markets”; Food Marketing Institute, “Supermarket Initiatives”). The Food Marketing Institute (FMI), whose member stores represent more than half of all grocery sales in the US, drafted a report in 1993 called “Supermarket Initiatives in Underserved Communities” that highlighted the large number of programs that supermarkets in which supermarkets had engaged in inner cities, stating that “supermarkets, by their very nature, are part of the communities they serve” (“Supermarket Initiatives”).

However, while the benefits of supermarkets to inner city neighborhoods have been recognized for almost two decades, the literature views supermarkets more as another form of retail than as occupying a special place in the daily lives of community members. The literature on supermarkets in urban areas makes it apparent that municipally-led supermarket initiatives are rare amongst large American cities; even in the face of increasing recognition of the problem of urban food access, proactive efforts to increase the number of supermarkets are almost nonexistent at the city level (Pothukuchi 241).

There are even a few instances where planners, developers, and policymakers have recognized the importance of food systems in the wake of disaster. Perhaps not coincidentally, both involve Los Angeles after the Rodney King riots in the summer of 1992. The first and more widely known is the Peter Ueberroth-led Rebuild LA, a public-private partnership organization that was formed in the immediate aftermath of the riots with the avowed purpose of, among other goals, building thirty new grocery stores in South Central and other affected neighborhoods. In the thirty years prior to the riots, inner city LA had lost half of its chain markets, and an extensive survey of needed goods and services of riot-affected inner city residents performed
by Rebuild LA found that quality grocery stores and markets topped the list (UEPI, “Promises”). “In the aftermath of the unrest, more effort had been put into reviving basic retail… than into any other revitalization endeavor” (Fulton 307). The FMI touted the program and praised the supermarket chains that collaborated with Rebuild LA, but ten years after the riots, there was one fewer chain supermarket and only three new independent grocery stores (“Supermarket Initiative”; Fulton 307). Moreover, the new markets that were created were those not anticipated by Rebuild LA; instead of the initial supermarket partners (Vons, Ralph’s, Smart & Final and Food 4 Less), the Mexican chain Gigante emerged as the supermarket most successful at building in riot-torn communities:

When LA’s leaders envisioned rebuilding devastated neighborhoods after the 1992 unrest, they probably were not thinking about a Mexican supermarket chain working with a historically African-American CDC… Yet, more than a decade after the devastating civil unrest, this is what resilience has turned out to mean in LA. (Fulton 308)

While Rebuild LA’s supermarket efforts mostly failed, the Rodney King riots were successful galvanizing Robert Gottlieb and his students at UCLA to conduct one of the first and still one of the most extensive community food assessments (Gottlieb, “Seeds of Change”). According to Jerome L. Kaufman, a professor emeritus of planning at UW-Madison who made one of the initial calls for the rehabilitation and inclusion of food systems issues in the practice of planning during the 2003 APA conference in Denver, Gottlieb’s report and the aftermath of the LA riots was important in reintroducing food to the planning agenda (personal interview, 22 April 2008).

So while the economic development perspective on supermarkets has a longer track record and some traction in public policy circles, this is very different than fully recognizing the many ways that the food system permeates quality of life in cities. As Pothukuchi and Kaufman write, “a lack of food system analysis leads planners to fold grocery store analysis into a broader category of commercial retail development without considering the higher priority that food merits among household needs” (“Food System” 114). Perhaps unsurprisingly, past arguments for creating supermarkets simply as forms of retail investment in chronically disinvested communities have failed. According to John Weidman, the deputy director of The Food Trust in Philadelphia, purely economic justice arguments fall short, whereas food access arguments that address both economic development as well as community development and public health are far more persuasive to local and state governments (personal interview, 4 April 2008).

**Addressing Food Access**

There have been no comprehensive attempts to address
the inadequacies within urban food systems. However, with heightened awareness of the failures in the food system over the past decade, communities and cities have begun to formulate interventions in order to address their food access needs. As with the Rebuild LA effort, many cities have attempted to attract private supermarkets or to incentivize existing markets to better meet their needs. Philadelphia's The Food Trust administers one of the most successful of such programs. Started in 1992, The Food Trust partners with The Reinvestment Fund in order to incentivize improvements in food access; to date, the public-private partnership has invested in over 50 grocery stores statewide, and The Food Trust operates 25 farmers markets in the greater Philadelphia area. Interestingly, The Food Trust supermarket program—the Fresh Food Financing Initiative, begun in 2001—grew out of their farmers market initiative in order to meet the daily and year-round needs of the neighborhoods where The Food Trust works (Weidman personal interview 4 April 2008). Many cities, including Philadelphia, Boston, and New Orleans, have recently created healthy corner store programs, which work with store owners to stock and promote fruits, vegetables, and fresh foods (Boston Public Health Commission; STEPS Louisiana). The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) has successfully helped CDCs partner with supermarkets in inner city communities, and Pothukuchi also emphasizes the importance of CDCs in the development of supermarkets (LISC, “Food, Markets, Healthy Communities” 4; Pothukuchi 239). Aside from incentivizing investment from private grocery stores of various sizes, there have been few other tacks for tackling the shortcomings of urban food systems.

As planning moves towards greater acknowledgment of the food system and the impact of the urban food system on quality of life, there seems to be a simultaneous recognition of the larger role that the public must play—as it once did—in that system. Some cities are already playing modest roles in food policy by creating Food Policy Councils (FPCs) to advise city agencies on pertinent food system issues, but these are only ever advisory in nature (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, “Placing Food” 219). As Dr. Tom Farley succinctly contends: “in poor neighborhoods there is limited access to healthy foods, …and market forces alone are not going to solve that problem” (personal interview 9 April 2008). Addressing the food needs of urban communities—especially after disaster—suggests that neighborhoods need literal markets as much as they need economic ones. This dovetails with Larry Vale’s suggestions that planning action in post-Katrina New Orleans should not be circumscribed by laissez-faire markets on one hand or monolithic planning on the other:

In short, the challenges of reviving the urban economy of New Orleans are significantly greater [than those of Chicago and San Francisco after their respective disasters] and would
seem to require a more interventionist approach that could direct and coordinate neighborhood-based recovery efforts in a highly visible manner… [New Orleans’] revival will need not just the cumulative opportunism of markets but also the carefully considered contributions of neighborhood planners. (164, 167)

This thesis is in part an inquiry as to whether neighborhood markets are just this sort of intervention.

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**Neighborhood Markets, Redux**

While there is little in the academic literature that has studied the many roles that neighborhood markets play in neighborhoods, there is a great deal of evidence that these markets are fulfilling a variety of needs in, and confer a number of benefits to, their respective communities. From food and food access to changing perceptions about a transitioning community, neighborhood markets are fulfilling not only food access needs but also social, political, and economic roles left vacant by other institutions.

There is bountiful evidence that neighborhood markets are becoming increasingly vital institutions in their communities. One of the few scholarly papers on neighborhood markets was done on the Maxwell Street Market in Chicago’s Near West Side after that market was demolished in 1994. The Maxwell Street Market, which was created after the Chicago Fire of 1871 by Jewish peddlers, was an important part of the neighborhood’s informal economy, and its closure had rather stark social and economic impacts on the surrounding Maxwell Street neighborhood (Morales et al. 311-313). In many large cities around the country, the evidence of the roles that neighborhood markets are playing in communities indicates that they are addressing long-standing needs. Also in Chicago, the organizers for three new neighborhood market organizers established in 2008 expressed the hope that markets will “create a sense of normalcy.” One of the organizers continues: “I think people feel abandoned or disconnected when you don’t have resources in the community, whether it is food, books, music, or restaurants” (Eng). In New York City in 2006, ten new markets were created in part as a way to reduce hunger and increase awareness about nutrition, especially in poorer areas (Chan). And in Philadelphia, markets have been credited with reinvigorating entire neighborhoods, with impacts on long-term land use (Hyland). John Weidman, the deputy director of Philadelphia’s The Food Trust, notes that markets can be catalysts for change in neighborhoods: markets are a great first step in revitalizing a neighborhood… A market becomes a community center; when you have people out and about, that foot traffic is the kind of thing that draws new businesses… Often the best markets are those that are in neighborhoods that are right on the edge… in neighborhoods that are transitioning, getting a little more investment… it’s a great way to get shoppers from different neighborhoods to mingle… (personal interview)
While the problems facing New Orleans neighborhoods are only present in part and to a lesser degree in other cities, the experience of neighborhoods and their markets around the country points to the varied roles that such markets are playing in New Orleans.

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Summary: Food, Planning, and Disaster
Cities, typically through a department of public markets or public health, once played a much larger and more direct role in provisioning food access for its citizens. Through a combination of municipal markets and small grocers, food access was treated as a public good, which deserved direct public planning attention. Even into the first quarter of the twentieth century, food access was a diverse hybrid enterprise that, while no longer dominated by public markets, continued to meet the needs of a much wider diversity of urban neighborhoods. However, after WWII, the technologic and other changes that gave rise to the suburbs created a pattern of both consolidation and uneven development that was manifest in the system of urban food access in American cities. Furthermore, these changes should also be considered to have diminished the literal and socioeconomic health of many urban communities. This impoverished geography of food directly contributes to the vulnerability and resiliency of communities. Finally, in tying together these three relatively diverse literatures, we have placed neighborhood markets: they are neighborhood-level institutions that address the particular social, political, and economic needs of their communities.

Notes
1 This is attested-to by the many meanings of the word market: free, or super? (Oxford English Dictionary)
2 Recall that farmers markets are functionally equivalent to small public markets, but instead of being publicly-owned or run, they are managed by non-profit or neighborhood organizations.
3 I am hesitant to use the word 'natural' to describe hurricanes, earthquakes, and other disasters given the fact that such concepts are largely social constructions, and that one of the major goals of this thesis is to denaturalize disaster. I point the interested reader to William Cronon’s essay “The Trouble with Wilderness” or the book Social Nature for thoroughgoing explications on the subject. I use the word ‘natural’ for the sake of convenience and brevity in the rest of this paper, but acknowledge the complications and liabilities associated with its use.
4 http://www.planning.org/divisions/initiatives/foodsystem.htm
5 Roberts has identified the roots of neglect of food systems of planning in such writers as diverse as Richard Sennett, Jane Jacobs, and David Harvey. While there are certainly practical and professional reasons why planning as a discipline has historically ignored food issues vis-à-vis other considerations, there are other reasons deserving consideration that there is not room to here discuss.
“New Orleans’ conservatism, its provincialism, and its politics stem from this [Latin Creole] cultural makeup. The public market system in New Orleans exemplifies the manner in which these characteristics have combined to create the impression of historic unprogressiveness. Yet one has mixed feelings about wishing it otherwise for it is essentially this resistance to change which has enabled the city to retain much of its charm and that valuable element of variety in a country tending toward monotony and sameness. The surviving market structures of New Orleans represent cultural artifacts today, but they were centers of vibrant activity in the city’s older neighborhoods long after public markets had faded from the urban scene elsewhere.”


“In what ways will the new New Orleans resemble its former self?”


It is perhaps unsurprising that New Orleans, with all of its other idiosyncrasies, also had a unique public market system and a food access history that differs from those experienced by other American cities. For longer than almost any other American city, food access in New Orleans was provided by public, municipally owned markets and complemented by a network of independent grocers. Because of this, New Orleans’ food system was characterized by pervasive equal access to food in every neighborhood in the city well into the twentieth century. However, as the city suburbanized, the geography of food access became increasingly uneven. This history partly explains the differences in how neighborhoods experienced disaster and recovery after Hurricane Katrina.

**New Orleans’ Public Market System**

New Orleans’ system of public markets was notable for its system of ownership and operation of the markets, the relationship of public markets to neighborhoods, and the persistence and extensiveness of the system long after most...
The public market system in New Orleans was the most extensive in the country, and existed long after the public market systems in other cities declined. In all, between 1781, when the French Market was built, and 1911, when the final markets were completed, the city of New Orleans operated 34 public markets. The above figure shows how the market system grew with the city; the darker circles are markets that developed before 1860, whereas the lighter ones developed between that time and 1911.
other municipal public market systems had failed. Before it became an American city, New Orleans established what later came to be called the French Market in 1781 (though it was not called that at the time). By law, food access in the city was centralized at the French Market in order to protect consumers from high prices and poor quality food by eliminating middlemen and regulating the handling and selling of perishables (Sauder 283). The Cabildo (the Spanish colonial administration) expressed in the legislation that founded the French Market the hope that the new market “would result in untold goods to the public” (Tangires 25). The Cabildo might also have mentioned that while the open-air market was amenable to market vendors, it proved to be a financial windfall to the colonial and the later city government. Under the pretense of protecting public health and sanitation, New Orleans’ Spanish and then municipal government had also found a lucrative source of revenue for its general fund. While low cost, public health, and food quality and access were important factors in establishing markets, city market revenues were a dominant consideration in every subsequent decision to open a public market in New Orleans (Reeves 26-27).

Rather than run markets directly, New Orleans operated a public-private system of ownership and management that was unique in this country. The municipality built and owned markets, but the New Orleans markets were managed following the European system of “farmer-of-the-market,” in which “bidders competed at auction in order to become ‘farmer’ or prime contractor”. These farmers were then responsible for subleasing the entire facility to butchers, fishmongers, and fruit and vegetable dealers, “furnishing a surety, and paying the city on a monthly basis”. The markets were heavily regulated: the city controlled everything from the times that the markets could be open (the meat market closed at 10AM in the summer), the location of sales, the use of open flame (none, except for making coffee), no liquor, and no oysters (which were the strict purview of the oystermen on the Mississippi levee). Revenues from the markets grew from over $20,000 a year in 1815 to over $200,000 annually in the 1880s (Reeves 29-30). When New York City was facing pressures for *laissez-faire* reform of its butcher shops and meat markets in 1854, that city’s Comptroller advocated unsuccessfully for a New Orleans system of market management, which he estimated would have brought in $500,000 a year for a city the size of New York (Tangires 88).

Until refrigeration and other changes at the end of the nineteenth century made it untenable for New Orleans to maintain a monopoly on the sale of perishables in the name of public health, meat, fish fruit, and vegetables could only be sold in public markets. Private grocers were limited to selling dried, barreled, or canned goods—so-called *groceries*.
not available at the public markets (Reeves 29). It was an uneasy relationship, but grocers eventually thrived—at first in close proximity to markets, and then after markets went into decline. As with most other American cities in the middle of the nineteenth century, private grocers began growing slowly in New Orleans after a municipal ordinance enabled private grocers to sell—subject to general sanitary requirements—fruits, vegetables, meats, and fish in 1866. The city also experimented with turning over some public markets entirely to private control in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and sweetened the deal by granting a food access monopoly within six blocks of these markets, but this was short-lived; the markets were back under municipal control by 1900, and no private grocer could sell any perishable (except potatoes and onions) within nine blocks of a public market (Sauder 286-287). Despite the legislation that enabled private markets to compete to an extant with public markets, George Washington Cable in 1880 observed that “much of the larger proportion of the retail supply of meats, poultry, fish, and vegetables is from the public markets, sales from the private stores and stands being comparatively unimportant” (quoted in Sauder 286). Thus, through the end of the nineteenth century and into the first two decades of the twentieth, public markets played a vital role in the daily livelihoods of New Orleanians even as they began to wane in importance elsewhere, and represented a significant institution in the Crescent City landscape.

Public markets in New Orleans prospered until the second decade of the twentieth century. The 1918 Census of Markets counted New Orleans with the most public markets of any city, with 28 (19 public, 9 quasi-public); the next closest city—Baltimore—had only 11 (Sauder 288; Tangires 201). However, the market system was in almost total disrepair by the end of the 1920s, reflecting both internal disorganization within the city and increasing competition from private and chain grocers (Department of Public Markets Report; Sauder 289). As was common in experience of most American cities, the food geography of New Orleans was changing in favor of cheaper canned goods found in independent and especially chain grocers (Mayo 134). Before succumbing, the public market system in New Orleans underwent one last round of investment in the 1930s. WPA funding was used to rebuild nine of the remaining markets and renovate eleven others from 1931 to the end of the 1930s, but the city largely ignored the recommendations of the local real estate board that

if you put buildings on all present market sites, many having become obsolete because of the movement of population, you will soon find that they are absolutely unable to produce income for their maintenance, no matter who operates them. (quoted in Sauder 290)

Even before all of the renovations were completed, New Orleans began declassifying the public markets and selling
New Orleans’s Department of Public Markets made one last attempt to salvage the declining public market system in New Orleans through a 1930s WPA program. All of the 28 (19 public and 9 quasi-public) markets open at the time were in varying states of disrepair. These seven markets were the only ones to be rehabilitated, but by 1946, the markets were sold to private operators at auction. WPA; nutrias.org.

New Orleans’s Department of Public Markets was liquidated by 1946, when the last of the public markets was auctioned off, marking the end of New Orleans’ Public Market system. Today, eighteen of the public market structures are still standing, but only the French Market remains in operation (Sauder 290).

**The Public Life of Public Markets and Corner Stores**

Public markets in New Orleans were central to the cultural, economic, and political life of the city’s neighborhoods. As the city grew, “the public market system simply grew with the city” (Sauder 287). This was unlike other American cities.

From 1784 until 1911, when the last public market was built, New Orleans had a total of 34 markets; other cities typically had a few central markets, or up to ten markets in the largest American cities (Philadelphia briefly had 35 or 40 markets in the middle of the nineteenth century, but that number quickly dwindled). Markets were located in newly created neighborhoods, and the periods of market expansion thus reflect the periods of growth in the city. As New Orleans burgeoned from 1830 to 1860, public markets were built almost exclusively in the American Sector downriver of Canal Street; the first market constructed outside the French Quarter was the St. Mary Market, which was built in 1836 and
named after the American Sector’s original name, Faubourg St. Marie. Later, as development encroached on the city’s backswamps at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, the city was still actively constructing markets. Indeed, the greatest period of expansion of public markets in New Orleans occurred from 1880 to 1911 as New Orleans was colonizing newly-drained lands, when most other cities were closing their markets (Sauder 284-285). For practical, political, cultural, and financial reasons, the city guaranteed that markets were physically located at the center of neighborhoods.

Markets were one of the most important institutions in the daily lives of New Orleans neighborhoods. Reeves calls the public markets “well-dispersed centers of food and society”, noting the many roles that they filled in their respective communities:

Market employment served as a professional stepping stone for young people, immigrants, and free people of color. The market was also a bastion of preservation for languages, culinary traditions, social occasions, and the drinking of coffee. City ordinances made no distinctions in class, gender, or race among vendors or shoppers…Citizens flocked to the markets on Sunday mornings to shop for the week’s most important meal while enjoying the social occasion. (Reeves 29)

Many of the culinary and social traditions for which New Orleans is famous are intricately intertwined with the public market system. New Orleans’ passion for coffee and cafés in part evolved with the public market system, to which Café Du Monde remains a testament—recall that brewing coffee was one of the only permissible uses for cooking flames in the public markets. Many of the city’s famous French-creole restaurants, such as Antoine’s, Tujagues, Begue’s and Maylie’s, had family members or close relations that worked in butcher shops; when the meat markets closed daily, some of the best cuts of meat were taken to the restaurant (Reeves 32). Even into the 1920s, when the French Quarter had lost some of its former luster, the Sicilian community in New Orleans was centered at the French Market, and the invention of the Muffuletta sandwich at Central Grocery Company—at 923 Decatur Street, across from the French Market—can be traced to this period. Central Grocery is still there, serving up Muffulettas daily; the manner in which the French Market was central to the socioeconomic identity of “Little Italy” is suggestive for the questions this thesis is posing (Campanella 315-317). As the above Sauder quote attests, it was the culture (or, more accurately, the many different neighborhood cultures) of New Orleans that had sustained the public market system.

When the public market system faded in New Orleans after 1930, many of New Orleans’ corner stores continued to anchor aspects of the social and economic lives of the communities surrounding them. First, and most importantly, the corner stores and other private (and usually independent) grocers had some of the highest quality food
available in the city. Chain stores typically offered canned and less fresh food (Mayo 40). But these independent grocers also had a variety of socioeconomic functions in their communities. While A&P eliminated credit in their stores in 1910, many of the smaller grocers at the time still maintained credit lines for some of their customers (Mayo 86). This had a beneficial income-smoothing effect for the community, and while stores don’t run credit lines any longer, the few remaining corner groceries, such as Matassa’s Market in the French Quarter and the Brown Derby on Freret Street, look out for their customers by allowing them to buy groceries when times are hard (Mulrine; Simmons).

Moreover, independent markets and corner groceries were social spaces. As anecdotal evidence, I have an acquaintance whose grandmother started a corner market during the 1930s. He described how the store acted as a meeting place for neighbors, and he attributes its closing in the 1950s not only to competition from larger chain stores, but also to the fact that the air conditioning systems installed in homes obviated the need and desire of neighbors to congregate outside of their own homes. A more well-known example of the importance of corner groceries in the fabric of the city is the aforementioned Matassa’s Market, located at 1001 Dauphine Street in the French Quarter. Cosimo Matassa, whose father (a Sicilian immigrant) bought the grocery in 1924, started what was to eventually become the Matassa’s Market in the French Quarter is a storied independent corner grocer that has been in the Matassa family since the 1920s. Surprisingly, Matassa’s is one of the only markets in the French Quarter that offers fresh food access. Matassa’s is famous not only for its customer service and quality of food, but also because it was a hot bed of musical fomentation when Cosimo Matassa started a music studio, first in the back of the grocery, and then later down the street. Max Sparber (via flickr.com)

J&M Recording Studio in the back of the store. The renovated grocery store the family bought two blocks away on North Rampart street in 1944 witnessed the recording of the first rock and roll song (Fats Domino’s “The Fat Man”), as well as seminal sessions by Little Richard, Professor Longhair, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Ray Charles (Simmons). Matassa no longer
produces music and independent corner grocers have largely faded from New Orleans’ neighborhoods; a few stores like Matassa’s retain a level of quality foods and social and economic relevance for their communities, but they are the rare exceptions that prove the rule.

Postwar Changes
As with most other American cities, the urban morphology of New Orleans changed dramatically after WWII, and this had sweeping implications for the geography of food access. Development occurred along two axes: consolidation and unevenness. New Orleans was previously confined to the high ground along the natural high ground created by the Mississippi River and its distributaries. After A. Baldwin Wood turned on his screw pumps for the Sewerage and Water Board in 1911 and drained the backswamps, the city began to expand northward towards Lake Pontchartrain. This was a fundamentally different form of settlement. As can be seen in the maps, the city rapidly moved northward and eastward; in 1960, only 9% of the city’s population lived east of the Industrial Canal, but by 2000, a quarter of New Orleanians lived in an area that had been developed entirely after 1960 (Campanella 6). As was the case with every American city, urban design of neighborhoods built after the Second World War were predicated on automobility, and “[t]he distribution of grocery stores increasingly tended to be spatially decentralized as cities expanded” (Mayo 49). What today is North of Interstate-10, east of the Industrial Canal, and west of the 17th Street Canal are auto-oriented development from after WWII. This entailed an entirely different food geography in these new neighborhoods that persisted to the eve of Katrina. New Orleans rapidly transitioned from what can be called a pervasive public market-corner grocery system that relied on walking or taking the ubiquitous streetcar system, to a consolidated supermarket system that was almost entirely dependent on the automobile for access. Mayo quotes about declining social importance, grocers become employees, not entrepreneurs (116). All areas of the city have diminished food access.

Food access has dwindled by almost any measure over the twentieth century. There were 34 public markets in 1911, 28 in 1928, and none by 1946. Four farmers markets opened beginning in 1995, operated by the Crescent City Farmers Market. Food access has declined from a high of over 2200 food access points in 1932 to just under 400 on the eve of Katrina in July 2005. Even more tellingly, the number of markets actually selling nutritious food that were comparable to the grocers of the interwar period was less than 50 in 2005. In strictly numerical terms, New Orleans lost 80% of food access points in the city, which represents extraordinary consolidation, and points towards the
suburbanization of the city and fundamental changes in food access. Movement away from smaller, neighborhood-based stores to supermarkets. Instead of a system of independent grocers permeating every neighborhood in the city, New Orleans had

The changing square footages dedicated to food access illustrate the consolidation of the food system into large, spatially-dispersed, auto-dependent markets. The following estimates are admittedly rough, but worth exploring. According to Mayo (140), a typical chain store on the cusp of automobility of the period was about 500 sq ft. Using this as the average for the approximately 2200 food access points in 1932, that gives us 1.1M square feet of food retail space for 458,762 people. In 2005, there were 36 grocery stores, each averaging approximately 30,000 square feet, which totals 1.08M square feet of food retail space. Because New Orleans had almost the exact same number of people in 2005 (437,186) as it did in 1932, the square footage of food retail per capita was virtually unchanged from that of a century before. While this speaks little to the volume of goods, we can safely say that the quality of food is comparable, and therefore that there has been a massive physical realignment of food access, which has profound implications for neighborhoods and citizens. However, over that same period of time, the structure of food access and its pattern of development have altered dramatically—predicated on the auto, and inaccessible to large portions of the population within ½ mile of where they live. Often not in communities at all. Each store is vastly more efficient, and the costs per customer presumably have declined with the efficiencies of scale, but what was lost in this restructuring of the food system? These admittedly rough numbers are provocative: what are the consequences before, during, and after a disaster in communities without access to fresh foods?

More importantly, consolidation did not occur evenly. As the number of stores in the city dwindled, some areas retained a relatively high level of access to fresh food, while others suffered from an increasingly poor level of food accessibility. To reiterate a previous point, this cannot be fully understood except as part and parcel of the process of American suburbanization. Consolidation of food access not only meant that food system was increasingly predicated on the automobile and therefore inaccessible via walking or by those with little means, but it also meant that areas that had previously never suffered from any shortage of access to fresh foods now did so. Many of the neighborhoods that became famous during Katrina for their plights during and after the storm were often those that suffered the steepest decline in access to fresh food: on the eve of Katrina in 2005, food access in the Upper and Lower Ninth Ward, Broadmoor, Central City, Mid-City, Gentilly, and New Orleans East was drastically-diminished from its peak in the 1930s, while food...
This sequence of images shows the evolution of the geography of food in New Orleans through the twentieth century and into the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The top row shows the evolving footprint of the city: in 1900, before A. Baldwin Wood installed his system of screw pumps around the city, New Orleans still largely clung to the arching high ground along the Mississippi River, an urban form that gave the city its moniker the ‘Crescent City.’

However, after the city began draining its backswamp, the city rapidly developed northwards, sprawling out towards Lake Pontchartrain to the north. Previously low-lying areas—many of which now comprise the neighborhoods that have created markets—were developed.
This pattern of development had dramatic implications for the food system in New Orleans, which is depicted in the middle and bottom rows. Whereas the city had previously developed along the streetcar lines that paralleled the river, the newly-drained urban areas were largely auto-dependent. This had a devastating effect on the network of public markets and private corner that had long characterized New Orleans’ food system.

Instead, the pattern of development that occurred over the twentieth century can here be seen as one of extraordinary consolidation of the food system. Moreover, this pattern of development is highly uneven; note how some areas have never wanted for food access, whereas others have long to make do without.
Making Groceries

The changing idea of the food system. This system, which touches so many facets of quality of life in New Orleans as in all cities, moved from one characterized by public consideration and creation of food access to driven by private motivations of profit. These maps show the manner in which the conceptualization of food access transitioned from one of public utility, to one akin to a category of retail. The implications of this pattern of development of food access, especially in times of disaster, are the subject matter of this thesis; it’s not enough to simply note the That a map of markets with fresh food is largely absent from poorer, minority communities such as the Lower Ninth Ward, Central City, and is perhaps unsurprising in the context of retail map of New Orleans (Vale Map from NYTimes in Birch), but it is astonishing how quickly food access changed. This thesis is in part an attempt to see this anew, to look on food system with fresh eyes, to question the received wisdom about food and food access’ role in a community.

The Eve of Katrina

On the eve of Katrina in August 2005, New Orleans had a dramatically different geography of food access than it did when its food system was dominated by public markets and independent grocers before WWII. From 1900 to the eve of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the consolidation and uneven

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Access Points</th>
<th>Number of Food Access Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1,351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>2,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>1,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>392 (with only about 40 supermarkets or grocery stores)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>148 (only 18 of which are supermarkets)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While it is difficult to compare grocery stores over time, the number of markets and groceries that offer a comparable level of access to fresh food has dramatically declined over the past century.

access had remained relatively robust in areas of Uptown, the Esplanade ridge, and Lakeview. This disparity is even more striking when overlaid with maps depicting the racial, income, and automobility: the areas with the largest decreases in food access are also the areas which have a higher proportion of minorities, lower wealth, and less access to an automobile. Food access locations were decided by potential profit, not food access need: “[t]he desire for profits shaped every spatial decision, not any sense of the public good” (Mayo 71).

These maps of New Orleans’ food access changes from 1900 to 2005 illustrate not only the changing spatial-economic geography of food access, they are also chart
development of the food geography of New Orleans left the city with thirty-six grocery stores and the four Crescent City Farmers Markets. As a result of this pattern of food access, vast swaths of city could be considered a ‘food desert,’ where there was no or distant access to fresh foods. Many of those areas, such as the Lower Ninth Ward, significant portions of New Orleans East, and Central City were predominately African-American, although the pattern also extends to Lakeview, which was almost entirely white.

A Post-Katrina Geography of Food
As with so many of the other effects of the storm, the pre-storm trends in food access have continued after Katrina. Thirty months after the storm, most neighborhoods in New Orleans are still desperate for food access, and many of these areas are coincident with those that had been hardest hit by the previous trends of consolidation and unevenness. New Orleans was underserved by the 36 supermarkets that were open before Katrina, but only eighteen of those have reopened two and a half years after the storm. As the maps indicate, most of the large groceries that have reopened are located in the ‘sliver by the River’—the historic high ground that remained relatively unscathed. And emulating the larger patterns of the impacts of disaster, the map of open and closed supermarkets is highly correlated with race and

Corner stores, which used to comprise such an important part of the fabric of a neighborhood in New Orleans, are victims of post-storm rebuilding (adopted from Karen Apricot, via flickr.com)
poverty. An NPR story from March 2007 identifies how the disparities in the food geography after the storm affect the daily lives of citizens: “about a quarter of New Orleanians do not have cars, and with public transportation still spotty, a trip to that ‘sliver by the River’ can take all day” (Troeh, “Food-shopping a Challenge”).

The post-Katrina geography of food access in New Orleans is a highly uneven landscape. The national average for the number of people per grocery store is 8,800; prior to Katrina, there were 12,000 New Orleanians per grocery store, and after, there are now approximately 18,000 (FPAC). Food banks such as Second Harvest are stretched thin by the consistently high volume of demand: Second Harvest still receives as many as thirty calls an hour, and are seeking state support in the upcoming legislative session in order to meet that demand (WWL, “Demand Skyrockets”). A post-Katrina survey of low-income residents done by Tulane’s School of Public Health in 2007 explored poor access to healthy foods amongst low-income New Orleanians, and the results reflected the combination of poor neighborhood design and lack of fresh food access: low-income residents shopped at convenience stores almost three times a week and only a fifth of them eat the recommended five fruits and vegetables a day, while only a third of neighborhood stores sell fruits or vegetables and a mere six percent of residents said that they live within walking distance to a supermarket (Tulane SPH, “Prevention in Action” 1-3). Food access has almost completely disappeared from many of the hardest-hit neighborhoods.

The experience of the Mardi Gras Zone in the Faubourg Marigny is emblematic of the haphazard manner in which neighborhoods attempt to meet their food access needs after Katrina. The store began five years before the storm as a trinkets emporium that sold Mardi Gras beads and costumes, but when it managed to reopen immediately after Katrina, the owner—Benny Naghi, and Iranian immigrant and New Orleans resident for 26 years—found that neighborhood wanted groceries. He expanded the store ten-fold, from 600 square feet to 6,000, in order to meet the Bywater neighborhood’s demand for food (Troeh, “Food Shopping a Challenge”). The Mardi Gras Zone even garnered a New York Times article, which described the growth of the Mardi Gras Zone:

Gradually, the Zone has evolved into one of those ‘only in New Orleans’ joints, where customers can buy squeeze-bottle margarine, a hookah, frozen kreplach, even a seven-pound can of vanilla pudding. There is a piano for use by anyone musically inclined, and one recent evening the cashier was William Madary, who under the name Miss Billie performs the music of Peggy Lee and Patti Page at local clubs. (“Raising the Ante”)

Some neighbors admire the store as a symbol of the ‘can-do,’ grassroots attitude that has helped the city rebuild, but others find that the store-owner is abusing the lack of close
oversight of development after the storm as a way to skirt zoning and land use issues. Mr. Naghi recently applied for a liquor license, which is testing the neighbors' devotion to the grocery store:

Many neighbors were delighted by the Zone, and still are. “Benny was a lifesaver,” said Howard Allen, who made a point of saying how much he liked the place, which has become a local hangout. If it were to close, Mr. Allen continued, he would have to drive miles to go to a supermarket in the suburbs…

But the prospect of a 24-hour liquor store in their midst has infuriated some residents. “The neighborhood really does need a grocery, so we figure we would put up with it,” said Marie K. Erickson, a law librarian whose two-story house fronts Royal Street. “It’s the 24/7 liquor license which has got us all cranked up.” (“Raising the Ante”)

The Zone is a salient example of the food access issues facing almost every New Orleans neighborhood after Katrina.

Food Access Initiatives
There have been several attempts by the city, non-profits, and other organizations to address the food access needs of New Orleans neighborhoods. From planning to public health, the city has had a relatively concerted if not wholly coherent policy of supporting food access initiatives. While some of the initiatives are relatively large in scope and in resources, to date there has been no comprehensive attempt to address the deficiencies in New Orleans’ food system.

Non-profit and NGO efforts to address shortcomings in the food system have been a hodge-podge of smaller undertakings that have attempted to fill niches available, but none has appreciably affected the landscape of food access. Several neighborhoods have restarted or created community gardens, including a few that grow foods that are sold at neighborhood markets. The Crescent City Farmers Market has created a new position called a ‘forager’ whose sole responsibility is to find and foster new farmers in the New Orleans area (Price, “The Go-Between”). Seedco, a technical assistance provider that worked with small businesses in Lower Manhattan after the September 11th terrorist attacks, decided to begin their work in New Orleans after Katrina by offering financing and assistance to restaurants along St. Claude Avenue. Their Restaurant Recovery Initiative has worked with fifteen predominately African-American restaurants to date (Seedco). The Green Charter School started an edible schoolyard, modeled after the schoolyard Alice Waters began at Martin Luther King, Jr. middle school in Berkeley, CA. The schoolyard will not only preserve local foodways and traditions, but will also be used in every facet of the school’s curriculum—from math to natural sciences to literature (Price, “Edible Schoolyards”). These vibrant and varied grassroots efforts highlight the deficiencies and opportunities in New Orleans’ food system, and embody the creativity of private citizens and non-profit organizations working to meet and exceed their food access needs. But these initiatives also raise in sharp relief the ways in which
food access is not being comprehensively addressed. To their credit, the city and its partners have undertaken a number of public initiatives to address food access needs since the storm. On 3 May 2007, New Orleans’ City Council paid heed to the food access issues afflicting New Orleans after the storm, adopting resolution R-07-203, with the following:

Whereas, it is the belief of the Council of the City of New Orleans that everyone deserves equal access to healthy and nutritious foods and this could serve as an economic catalyst for recovering neighborhoods; now, therefore be it resolved that the Council of the City of New Orleans strongly supports the creation of a Food Policy Advisory Panel and… that a final report with recommendations for programs and policies to alleviate the problem be delivered to the Special Projects and Economic Development Committee by January 31, 2008. (CC R-07-203)

The Food Policy Advisory Committee (FPAC) was led by Tulane’s School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and Philadelphia’s The Food Trust, and released its report to the public in March 2008. Amongst the FPAC’s broadest recommendations: the city should reduce regulatory barriers and incentivize the sale of fresh foods; encourage fresh food access in economic development and transportation-related considerations, especially in underserved areas; promote locally-grown and produced foodstuffs; and establish a financing program for developing supermarkets (FPAC 3). While the FPAC’s policies take good account of the many food access issues and the financial incentives and regulatory hurdles that need to be surmounted in order to deliver food to neighborhoods, it deliberately constrained its focus to food retail and eschewed the larger social and political roles of markets, dealing with them only implicitly. The FPAC report is by far the most comprehensive public effort to deal with food access issues undertaken by the city before or after the storm, but it is also only focused on a narrow band of the spectrum of functions that markets play within a community.

Though I do not know if it was the FPAC authors’ intent, the FPAC report has even more resonance because it was announced to the public at the Circle Food Store. The press conference featured the owner of the store and a resident of the Tremé neighborhood in addition to the public health officials that drafted the report. Eric Baumgartner of the Louisiana Public Health Institute (LPHI), which is an NGO partner in many of the city’s public health initiatives, spoke on behalf of the LPAC on the connection between public health, food access, and the built environment:

Louisiana has rates of being overweight, and diseases and conditions related to being overweight, that are among the highest in the nation…Health research shows that by changing the environment—the neighborhood—to one that has more access to fresh, nutritious foods, that in fact it will improve diets. (WWL, “Healthy Food”)

Community resident Ed Buckner asks the critical question: “The world keeps telling me as a black man to eat healthier and I’ll live longer. Well, where am I going to get the fresh vegetables and fruit to eat healthier so that I can live longer
and help my community be a healthier community?” Lastly, the owner of the Circle Food Store, Dwayne Boudreaux, spoke of the post-storm impediments to reopening the store:

“In an attempt to reopen, we have that the costs of operating a grocery store post-Katrina is higher than it was before. It is difficult to find affordable financing, and insurance issues are very tough. I was concerned about security before, and now security is a major objective.” (WWL, “Healthy Food”)

Given not only the post-Katrina experience of Circle Foods but also its deep history in New Orleans’ food access geography as a still-shuttered grocery store in an historic black neighborhood that was negatively impacted by decades of uneven development, a more fitting site could not have been chosen.

In addition to the FPAC, the city has also undertaken two other larger projects to address food access needs since the storm. The first is an effort to bring fresh food access to neighborhood corner groceries. New Orleans’ Health Department was awarded a STEPS grant from the Centers for Disease Control in 2002 in order to address the city’s obesity rates and cardiopulmonary disease (FPAC report). After Katrina, the city and its STEPS grant partner LPHI organized a corner store initiative to put more fresh foods—and feature them more prominently—in thirteen stores and two produce trucks over a wide portion of the city. The same program has been successful in cities as disparate as Oakland and Boston, and the same seems to be holding true for the initiative in New Orleans, which began in September 2007 (UAS, “Food Security”).

The city’s second effort is the renovation of the French Market. After decades of selling Mardi Gras kitsch to tourists instead of fresh food, the French Market since the storm has undergone a $5M renovation that is expected to be finished during the spring of 2008. In planning for the rehabilitation of the French Market, the city officials in charge of the French Market Corporation decided that they wanted the market more to be more like it used to be, when they used to sell a lot of fresh food at the market, and prepare fresh dishes for people to eat… The most important change is in the farmer’s market… We will have fresh food in the market again, fresh produce, meat, seafood, dairy, dry foods, spices, coffee. (International Herald Tribune (IHT), “French Market Makeover”)

It is significant that in addressing current needs, the French Market sought out past solutions and the reintroduction of fresh food. And it is also noteworthy that some of the French Market vendors are cognizant of the importance of food to the Market and the larger community; one of the French Markets sellers deemed that

[e]verything is indigenous to here… Pralines came right into market by slaves. These are old products. It’s just like the red beans and rice and gumbo, it makes New Orleans what it is. We can’t forget it. (IHT, “French Market Makeover”)
A Place for Neighborhood Markets

Neighborhood markets have a large role to play in New Orleans after Katrina. In looking for both the reasons for their creation and their potential future relevance to the city, I have placed New Orleans’ post-Katrina neighborhood markets within the American and New Orleans food history, the literature on resiliency, the local geography of food access before and after Katrina. Almost every neighborhood in every planning process after Katrina requested neighborhood markets—according to the FPAC,

...throughout the [Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP)] planning process, residents consistently ranked access to healthy foods as critical to neighborhood recovery efforts. Nearly every neighborhood plan created as a part of UNOP’s Citywide Strategic Recovery and Rebuilding Plan has included the location of a supermarket or grocery store in the immediate area. (FPAC 6)

This is corroborated by the Danzey-Lambert Neighborhood Rebuilding Plan, which was the planning process that originated with the City Council and that focused exclusively on the 42 flooded neighborhoods. That plan’s executive summary summarizes:

As neighborhoods rebuild, providing services previously absent will become essential amenities to complement the quality of life for residents as they return. Residents will evaluate the availability of services as a barometer of neighborhoods’ growth and vitality... One of the economic development initiatives that many residents ranked higher than even the restoration of neighborhood schools or health care, was the return of the neighborhood supermarket and pharmacy. (Danzey-Lambert 12)

Indeed, fully 94% of the residents interviewed for the Danzey-Lambert planning process rated grocery stores as a ‘required essential services,’ the highest of any other essential service and more important than healthcare, assisted living care or day care, and restaurants. This speaks directly to the reasons and the potential for neighborhood markets—here, it is the fact that addressing-long-standing needs of neighborhoods become disamenities and potential amenities in neighborhoods—reactive and proactive.

Moreover, food access represents a source of potential entrepreneurialism and activism on the part of individuals and neighborhoods. Johanna Gilligan, the New Orleans Food and Farm Network (NOFFN)’s Community Organizer, elaborates on the possibilities: “there’s a lot of money to be made in food in the city right now because every neighborhood we travel to people talk to us that they don’t have the food access that they need, so it can really be profitable” (Troeh, “Food Shopping a Challenge”).

In a personal interview, Dr. Blakely supported this vision of neighborhood markets, expressing his hope that markets become centers for grassroots entrepreneurialism (26 March 2008). In addition to the reactive functions of markets that are addressing immediate needs,

Neighborhood markets also present an opportunity for recovery officials and city planners. The ‘Target Areas’ that the Office of Recovery Management (ORM)—later renamed the Office of Recovery and Development Administration (ORDA)—has selected as the initial areas of the city to receive concentrated public investment incorporate food access as one of the primary...
This map shows the former public markets in blue (darker blue were the oldest of the public markets), and the orange markets are the current neighborhood markets. They are both superimposed on a map of the ORDA's Target Areas. The correlation between neighborhoods and the city's designated areas of investment is intentional; the fact that Target Areas and the neighborhood markets are also aligning with the former system of public markets is highly suggestive.
interventions. The FPAC notes that “supermarkets and green grocers are featured as part of the redevelopment efforts in most of [the Target Areas]” (FPAC 6), and At-Large City Councilman Arnie Fielkow points to the connection between neighborhood recovery and fresh food access which was on the mind of public officials in attempting to meet some of the food access needs, saying explicitly: “the more grocery stores that exist, the more residents will be willing to move in” (Moises, “Orleans Parish”).

Not coincidentally, a map overlaying the ORDA’s Target Areas with the former locations of public markets is suggestive. Fully nine of the Target Areas—more than half of the 17—contain former public market sites. This is not necessarily surprising for the Target Areas in which the former markets are a part of the city or neighborhood plans (such as is the case for the St. Roch Market). However, most of the Target Areas were selected for past and prospective viability; that many of these areas prioritized for public investment once had public markets suggests that the urban design and socioeconomic structures of neighborhoods still reflect some of their past orientation towards public markets. This thesis argues that this is not a coincidence. Public markets are sites of former vibrancy, and returning to these centers of neighborhood activity as areas of public investment carries with it not just practical economic implications, but also cultural and political resonance. This is especially true considering the fact that in seven of the nine Target Areas that contain erstwhile public market sites the market structures are still standing, and in total eighteen of the thirty-four public market structures are extant (Sauder 283). Former public markets and more recently-created neighborhood markets could have renewed relevance in a post-Katrina world.

The socioeconomic and political functions of neighborhood markets within their respective neighborhoods are visibly and symbolically addressing many of the issues facing communities arising from the ways that neighborhoods experienced the uneven development of food access and the aftermath of Katrina. In understanding this role, Vale’s concept of the Neighborhood Resource Centers (NRCs) seems germane: As the citizens of New Orleans struggle to repopulate decimated neighborhoods, the neighborhoods require a re dedication to small-scale institutions that can provide both identity and resources to support the viability of hundreds of sub-neighborhood districts that have services as well as residences. (Vale, “Restoring Urban Viability” 159)

When Vale wrote of NRCs, he could not have anticipated the extent to which New Orleans’ neighborhood markets seem to be fulfilling just these functions (and more) within the post-Katrina landscape.

The answer to the question Walker posed at the beginning of this section—“in what ways will the new New Orleans represent its former self?”—seems to at least in part consist of a system of neighborhood markets and local food access.
In order to understand the roles neighborhood markets are playing in New Orleans after Katrina, during the spring of 2008 I interviewed vendors, shoppers, and the neighborhood organizations that operate and manage the markets. In addition, I also interviewed city officials and non-profits and other institutions involved with community economic development and food access. In each of the markets, I was looking to understand both the extent to which the markets are addressing food access issues, and to understand the socioeconomic and political roles that the markets play in a post-disaster context.

In conducting these surveys, I was particularly interested in unraveling how the many functions of markets were run-through with the respective neighborhood histories and food geographies. In doing so, I was also attempting to understand the most basic question: ‘why neighborhood markets?’ Given the realm of possible actions that neighborhoods and their residents could have undertaken and sustained, why did neighborhood markets emerge as a salient feature on the topography of recovery? What differentiates markets from other interventions, and do these differences have varying significance for individuals vis-à-vis neighborhood organizations, non-profits, and the city at large?

Methodology
All of the data for comparison derives from surveys of the neighborhood markets that I conducted during spring 2008. I chose the neighborhood markets because they were manageable in number, spread out over a wide variety of neighborhoods distinguished by their socioeconomic status, demographics, impact by the storm. As explained in the
introduction, I limited my case studies to neighborhood markets, all of which were in some capacity selling food, but not all of which could be considered farmers markets. Admittedly, I was not seeking a tightly-controlled experimental structure, but rather a way to look at the different ways that neighborhood markets mean to different neighborhoods and their residents. The differences between markets seemed to be much more enlightening when taken together than when trying to understand just one or two facets of the markets, or only looking at the differences between a limited number of markets. I wanted to try to gain an understanding of the many facets of the markets—social, economic, political, or otherwise—and how they interacted. I wanted to get a snapshot of markets, and these surveys are just that: an image of neighborhood markets about thirty months after disaster.

Of the eight neighborhood markets created or reinstated after Katrina, only five were actually operating when I was interviewing. Two of the eight neighborhood markets—the Lower Ninth Ward market and the Broadmoor Market—were on a hiatus due to management or other difficulties that are intriguing and instructive for how they illustrate the challenge of creating and sustaining a market. One other market—the Broad Street Community Market—has yet to begin, which is also enlightening in its own right and in comparison with the other markets. Each of these markets plans to open or reopen, and in these three neighborhoods, I interviewed the market organizers only. I expected the lessons from these markets—both the prospective market as well as those that are not currently operating—to be instructive about the various potential roles that markets were fulfilling in their neighborhoods.

I spent between two and three hours at each market. I made initial observations of the site before anyone arrived, either the same day as the market or during the days preceding a market day. I had originally planned on conducting verbal interviews with each market and shopper I surveyed, but I found that to be unwieldy and inconsistent. Instead I created shopper and vendor survey forms for each market, which I handed out to the vendors and shoppers. I typically printed twenty-five copies of each of the vendor and shopper surveys. For a variety of reasons—from promises to mail the completed survey form me to accepting a survey and then refusing to fill it out—I was unable to get all of the surveys back; I received as few as 4 completed of each of the vendor and survey forms from a market (as was the case with the Upper Ninth Ward Market), and as many as twenty-five. Oftentimes, I was able to speak with vendors and shoppers as they were filling out surveys in order to get additional information, which I either recorded on a notepad or a digital voice recorder. In almost every instance I interviewed vendors first because they were oftentimes too
busy or would not want to be bothered during markets; I had to get to the markets typically half an hour before they began in order to provide myself with enough time to pass the surveys out to vendors, which I would then collect later during the market. Shoppers, on the other hand, were far easier to approach during market time, and most of them enthusiastically filled out surveys. Almost every shopper was eager to express his or her personal opinions about the market, the neighborhood, and the general thrust of recovery. Vendors were sometimes more circumspect, for a variety of reasons.

As with historic public markets, the market days varied. This posed some problems for timing the interviews, but I was able to successfully coordinate on Saturday, which was by far the busiest day. This was in part due to the fact that the markets were very cognizant of the hours of operation of the other markets, and timed their markets so as to complement or not conflict with that of other markets, especially those that were seeking to draw from a larger geography outside the neighborhood.

The frequency of the markets varied, which also made getting to each of the markets something of a puzzle. Only the Freret Street market and the Lakeview market are held once a month. The rest of the markets are held once a week.

Notes
I attempted to visit markets as close to the peak shopper period as possible, but there were necessarily problems with the overlapping times of markets; I was able to be at each of the markets within the first hour of operation.

For each of the neighborhoods, I look at the pre- and post-Katrina food access. This is based on the analysis that I performed for Chapter 3, as well as the research into the history of the neighborhood. The data used in generating the Chapter 3 maps were collected from city telephone directories; in an uneventful period, the telephone directory already has several limitations, but after Katrina, the accuracy and comprehensiveness certainly are less-than-perfect. Nonetheless, I am confident that the overall snapshots of a neighborhood’s food access both before and after Katrina are accurate, especially relative to one another.

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Through my interviews with neighborhood shoppers and vendors, I was looking for the ways in which neighborhood residents and visitors to a community perceived that community and the ways it may or may not have been impacted by the presence of the market. I was particularly attuned to the ways in which the markets were responding to the particular neighborhood histories, their differing
patterns of food access, and their different post-Katrina experiences. This entailed inquiring into both the functional and the symbolic aspects of markets: the degree to which the markets were meeting fresh food access needs, the social functions of markets, as well as the political, symbolic, and cultural elements. As a basis for comparison between the various neighborhood markets in post-Katrina New Orleans, I look at the following for each of the neighborhoods:

• neighborhood histories, socioeconomic composition, and food geography;
• the differing neighborhood experiences in Katrina and her aftermath; and,
• the respective neighborhood markets’ socioeconomic, political, and symbolic functions according to both market organizers, shoppers, and vendors.

These histories, observations, and responses are recorded in this chapter.

In order to understand how neighborhood markets function on levels other than that of the individual, I also conducted twenty-three personal interviews of market organizers, city officials, and non-profit and other stakeholders. I interviewed each of the market organizers (which sometimes included several people from each neighborhood), non-profits and third-party entities involved with markets, and city officials in the Office of Recovery and Development Administration (ORDA). The responses from the market organizations are included in the surveys summarized in this chapter, while the responses from the non-profits and the city are incorporated into the analysis and implications of the markets in the following, concluding two chapters.

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A SURVEY OF NEIGHBORHOOD MARKETS

All of the neighborhood markets have far more in common than not. While the markets vary significantly in their focus and emphasis in order to address the different needs of their respective communities, at a basic level they all offer some combination of food access and social engagement through which shoppers, vendors, and market organizations are meeting a variety of community needs. These similarities range over the extent to which neighborhood markets are compensating for a lack of fresh food, as well as the socioeconomic, political, and symbolic aspects of the markets.

Food Access

First and foremost, I was somewhat surprised to find that none of the market-goers were meeting all of their food access needs at any of the markets. While several of the markets were focused exclusively on selling fresh food
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<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>cultural identity and economic development</td>
<td>15-20 / 50-100</td>
<td>August 2006</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>9 / 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freret Street</td>
<td>Freret</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>community economic development</td>
<td>50-160 / 1500-3000</td>
<td>September 2007</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>15 / 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harrison Avenue Marketplace</td>
<td>Lakeview</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>community economic development</td>
<td>60-70 / 1500-3500</td>
<td>August 2007</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>16 / 15</td>
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<td>Gretna Farmers Market</td>
<td>Old Gretna</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>food access and social space</td>
<td>15-30 / 75-250</td>
<td>October 2005</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>9 / 11</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Upper Ninth Ward</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>food access, public health, social space, community economic development</td>
<td>5-10 / 25-75</td>
<td>December 2006</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>4 / 5</td>
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<td>Lower Ninth Ward</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>food access, public health, social space, community economic development</td>
<td>5-10 / 15-50</td>
<td>November 2006</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
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<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>food access and social space</td>
<td>10-20 / 50-150</td>
<td>October 2007</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
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<td>Broad</td>
<td>Treme, Mid-City, Faubourg St. John</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>community economic development and social space</td>
<td>30-40 / 200 (anticipated)</td>
<td>Summer 2008</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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Side-by-side comparison of key market aspects.
and were held on a weekly basis, they were at best able to meet only some of the grocery-shopping requirements of shoppers. Far more often, food at the markets was either present in the form of prepared food or hot dishes, or with fresh food vendors who fulfilled more of a secondary position at the market. However, about two-thirds of the total shoppers interviewed claim that the markets have played a role in changing grocery-shopping habits, and that they eat more fresh fruits and vegetables as a result. Shoppers and vendors alike expressed the desire for markets to increase their capacity in order to play a larger role in meeting neighborhood food access needs. However, the fact remains that neighborhood markets—even those that could be classified as farmers markets—remain but a blip on the food access radar.

Socioeconomic, Political, and Symbolic Aspects of Neighborhood Markets
Nor could access to groceries or the neighborhood markets be fairly characterized as primary considerations in shoppers or vendors’ decisions to return. However, once New Orleanians returned to the city, markets became a weightier factor in neighborhood quality of life. Many of the market-goers described markets as features on the larger landscape of New Orleans that taken alone are not overly-important, but are of far more consequence when considered in the context of neighborhood revitalization and community economic development. On these lines, shoppers and vendors alike generally appreciate the significance of the markets to their neighborhoods.

Nearly all of the neighborhood markets are visited by shoppers both from the surrounding community as well as from afar, and more often than not the vendors travel even further distances to market. Interestingly, markets are praised for bringing new faces to communities; shoppers and vendors alike indicated that they might never otherwise visit a neighborhood were it not for a market. Vendors and shoppers typically recognized the economic and community development implications for the increased traffic. Some even noted that markets would help to diminish barriers between neighborhoods.

More often than not, both shoppers and vendors praise markets as a positive development in the process of recovery and revitalization. Yet even if they are not sanguine on the process of recovery, almost every interviewee readily acknowledges the ability of markets to create a sense of community and public space. This is especially salient from an urban design perspective, where each of these markets is located on parking lots or otherwise empty lots, and typically in a neighborhood commercial district that is in need of rehabilitation.

The vast majority of the individuals I surveyed are in
favor of public support for neighborhood markets. Either in the form of technical or financial assistance, shoppers and vendors approve of the proposition that the city invest in neighborhood markets. Moreover, they rationalize their support not only through economic development justifications, but also through public and community development arguments.

While the commonalities between markets are important, the differences are also instructive. In the following sections, I highlight the salient, distinguishing features of the respective neighborhood markets, especially as they pertain to the particular neighborhood histories, food geographies, and post-Katrina experiences.

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**Village L’est: Vietnamese Market**

**Neighborhood History**

Village L’Est is a neighborhood unlike any other in New Orleans. Also known as Versailles, the community in the farthest reaches of New Orleans East is the largest concentration of Vietnamese immigrants in the United States, many of whom arrived in America after the fall of Saigon in 1975. The refugees were attracted by the Catholic Church in New Orleans as well as the similar ecology of New Orleans East (warm, humid wetlands) to that of their home in Vietnam. There are over 12,000 Vietnamese in NO, and over half of them lived in Village L’Est, and the neighborhood had the highest proportion of Asians reported in any neighborhood in the 2000 census at over 37%. Versailles is every part an ethnic, suburban enclave.

Village L’Est is in an area of New Orleans known as New Orleans East, which was only developed in 1961 by Wynne-Murchison Interests of Dallas, TX. The 32,000 acres of New Orleans East—which is essentially New Orleans east of the Industrial Canal—is still the largest single-tract within the corporate limits of any US urban area (GNOCDC, “Village L’Est”). The East, as it is known, is almost wholly auto-dependent, although there is one bus route, and the housing is relatively low-density post-WWII ranch houses. Because
the neighborhood is drained swampland, the East is the lowest land in the city of New Orleans.

Katrina History
Village L’Est was decimated by Hurricane Katrina, but the extremity of the destruction was almost matched by the pace and fervor with which the neighborhood rebuilt under the guidance of Father Nguyen and the Mary Queen of Vietnam Church and its Community Development Corporation (MQVNCDC). According to Father Nguyen,

[When we first returned] it really didn't matter the fact that we didn't have [municipal] services up. And remember now, my people migrated from North to South Vietnam in 1954 and then out to here in 1975. And they are from where there are no running water and electricity. …Anyone who's over 30 or 35, the evacuation and the cleanup afterwards is a minor inconvenience. Because we've been [through it] you know, we got damaged several times in our lives. And, therefore, we were not concerned that much… (quoted in Chamlee 8)

The neighborhood since the storm has assumed a higher profile than it did previously, in part because of the zeal and efficiency with which the MQVNCDC conducted the recovery, but also because of a controversy over the siting Alcee Fortier Boulevard, looking south. Alcee Fortier Boulevard is the commercial heart of the Village L’Est neighborhood. Most of the businesses serve the Vietnamese community; the Vietnamese Market is located in the parking at the leftmost edge of the frame, and there is constant intermingling between market-goers and the businesses. In the background is an industrial facility on the Intercoastal Waterway.
of a municipal landfill intended to handle Katrina waste and debris adjacent to the neighborhood. The community was able to successfully convince the city to close the landfill, but concerns remain over the lingering effect.

**Food Access**
There were several small groceries in the neighborhood before the storm, as well as a Winn-Dixie supermarket fifteen minutes away by car on Chef Menteur Highway. However, only one of the independent grocers provided substantial fresh food access—Ly’s Grocery. Ly’s Grocery opened quickly after the storm, while the Winn-Dixie did not reopen for 13 months after Katrina. The Vietnamese Market was open before the storm, with dozens of vendors every Saturday morning—it was the only neighborhood market open before the storm.

**Market Description**
The Vietnamese Market was established in mid-1980s, when the produce of the many Village L’Est gardeners outstripped the capacity of their apartment courtyards. The market was reinitiated about a year after Katrina (around August of 2006). The market has always been a weekly Saturday morning market, and only after Katrina did the market have any formal management—the MQVNCDC has provided some oversight and guidance of the Vietnamese Market since

The Vietnamese Market can be a world apart.
helping the market restart in late 2006, though the market continues to be largely self-operating. The market has been celebrated by the Project for Public Spaces (PPS), who called it one of America’s ‘Great Public Spaces.’ An article on the Vietnamese Market in the American Geographic Review from 1994 details the multiple functions of the market in helping the Vietnamese community adapt to the traumatic upheaval and immigration to the US, especially amongst the elderly of the community. The authors identify the social, cultural, and economic functions of the market as a means to help the elderly gardeners cope with living in a new country, and they could just have easily been describing an ideal skillset for coping with the aftermath of Katrina (Airiess and Clawson 19-20).

The market used to have upwards of 80 vendors, but that number has dwindled after the storm, and is currently around 15 to 20. This is due to both the fact that many members of the community have yet to return, as well as the fact that most of the vendors are very elderly, and it takes time and hard work to get the gardens to again produce at pre-storm levels. As before Katrina, the market is located in the parking lot of one of the two large strip malls along Alcee Fortier Avenue, which is the main commercial corridor of Village L’Est. The strip mall contains Kim’s Market, the aforementioned small grocery store. Sitting in the shadow of a large refinery on the Mississippi River, the market sellers offer a combination of fresh and prepared foods, with one or two vendors selling various other goods. I visited the market on 8 March 2008.

**Shoppers**

I was able to interview both shoppers and vendors only with the assistance of Peter Nguyen, who manages the market for the MQVCDC. He not only interpreted, he also supplied me with his own observations of the workings of the market.

Reflecting the enclave nature of the Village L’Est neighborhood, the market shoppers at the Vietnamese Market were distinct from the other neighborhood markets in this study. Many of the shoppers were also vendors, and the market shoppers were almost entirely from the neighborhood.

The market was a central social institution for the shoppers. One market-goer told me “the market is the one place beside the church where we meet people and enjoy each others’ company.” The market is “well known, and friends come out to see it.” Indeed, many of those at the market did not seem to be shopping at all, merely socializing. Another shopper affirmed the deep social ties of the market; she “meets friends she used to live with in Vietnam.”

As with the other neighborhood markets, shoppers could not meet all of their fresh food needs at the market. However, many of the herbs, vegetables, and other items
were unique to the market, and two shoppers explained to me that several of the items were not only impossible to find elsewhere in the city, but they were essential ingredients in Vietnamese cuisine. One of the shoppers carried the distinctiveness of the market to the exceptional speed with which Village L’Est rebuilt relative to the surrounding New Orleans East neighborhoods: “the market helps to forget Katrina, even when the rest of the [New Orleans] East is empty.” This echoes the sentiments expressed in the Father Nguyen quote cited above.

**Vendors**

The vendors are all elderly Vietnamese immigrants over the age of 55, and they are all residents of the neighborhood (according to Peter, and corroborated by the American Geographical Review article). While produce, especially vegetables and herbs, seafood, and some prepared food comprised the extent of the market’s offerings, and the market should be classified as a farmers market, food access was hardly the primary consideration of the Vietnamese Market. Rather, the goods being sold were a means to preserve and reinforce the cultural identity of the neighborhood to a greater extent than in any other market. One vendor continually reminded me throughout the survey that her seeds came from Vietnam, holding out a green clump of water spinach as an earthy-smelling example.
Peter Nguyen, the MQVCDC market coordinator, supported the contention that the market was preserving some of the Vietnamese culture, claiming that “all of our food relies on our herbs. Food doesn’t taste the same without it—it has to have it. It preserves the culture. Food is our culture… [The gardeners] are growing herbs and vegetation that you cannot buy in an American market. Some of the seeds you can only get from Vietnam” (personal interview).

Though no vendor said so explicitly in the survey, the market seemed to be a source of distinction and pride, and the vendors were keenly aware that they were a community apart in many ways; several vendors referred to me or to the rest of New Orleanians as ‘Americans,’ and the vendors expressed their desire to have us come out to see the market as visitors would. The market was a relatively important consideration in returning to New Orleans to rebuild after Katrina. Some of the vendors are related by blood, which added to the sociability and informality of the market. All of this served to preserve the enclave feel of the market, and, unlike every other neighborhood market, the Vietnamese Market was an overtly inward-facing institution.

Despite overtures from many of the markets around the city, no vendors from the Vietnamese Market sell outside their neighborhood. This reluctance stems in part from the fact that all of the vendors are gardeners and hobbyists who sell at the market more as a social activity than as one motivated by economic profit. Also, when asked whether they sell their produce and herbs at other markets, many of the vendors expressed the fear that their food would be perceived as dirty, or that they would be fined for not meeting city health code.

The market was a consideration in only some of the vendors’ decision to return, and more often than not it was for the social connectivity rather than for financial or other reasons. Several vendors mourned the fact that several of their friends were not yet back, or were not selling at the market. Another thought that other New Orleans residents did not want to make the trip out to Village L’Est: “Before the storm, the place [the market] was packed! Now people are afraid to come out.” The vendors’ desire to return was typically “[n]ot for the market, but the community; I have a simpler life in this area” and “everyone is respectful here.” According to Peter Nguyen, after the storm, some gardeners “would come and not sell anything because they were there for a different reason—not for profit, but for companionship. The market proved to be a connection point for the elders—they connect with their friends” (personal interview).

Many of the vendors were skeptical of the market’s role in recovery. One stated directly that the “market does not help the city after the storm” and reasserted that this was a “small hobby life.” Most vendors were understandably not keen on public or municipal support for neighborhood
markets, but one hoped for the “market to be bigger” and to “organize in order to be the best market in the USA!” Most were content to affirm the market’s role in returning to ‘normalcy’ in the neighborhood: “People are coming back to the norm, returning to what has been here before”; they enjoy the “psychological benefits to the market.”

**Market Organization**

Mary Queen of Vietnam CDC’s recent and increasing involvement with the Village L’Est Market is tied to the heightened profile of the entire Vietnamese community after Katrina. The Mary Queen of Vietnam Church and its CDC played a central role in bringing the neighborhood and its citizens back quickly, and in so doing it has also become in many ways the “public face of the community” for a variety of relatively high-profile efforts (Peter Nguyen, personal interview). The Vietnamese Market figures prominently in two of these campaigns—one to build a new market structure, and the other to close a municipal landfill opened after Katrina to dispose of Katrina debris.

Most of the Mary Queen of Vietnam CDC’s relationship with the market centers on planning for the market’s future. The market is the centerpiece of the MQVNCDC’s plans to build an urban farm and a permanent market structure on twenty acres of city-owned property adjacent to the neighborhood. The “ambitious, but doable” project involves centralizing many of the garden plots, which will enable the MQVNCDC and the gardeners to retail and wholesale to restaurants and groceries. The MQVNCDC has partnered with LSU, Tulane, and other universities in order to study the economic and ecologic feasibility of the project, and to plan for its design and development. John Besh, one of New Orleans’ most well-known chefs and restaurateurs, has expressed a strong interest in using produce grown in Village L’Est gardens, which is a point that the MQVNCDC trumpets, and the organization is in the process of surveying other restaurants in order to gauge demand (Peter Nguyen, personal interview).

Because the market is a central institution in the community and one of the most visible to visitors, the MQVNCDC plans for a new farm and market structure can be seen as a means to address both internal and external needs in the community. Within Village L’Est, the new farm and market is seen as economic development that will attract a new generation of young market vendors who otherwise do not attend the market. As Peter Nguyen told me, “We do this as an organized type of farming so that we can show this to younger generations—you can make a profit, and make a living. What the elders are doing for fun, younger generations” can do for a living” (personal interview). In addition to the economic development aspects, the MQVNCDC plan is seen as an intergenerational
renewal of the market. Even the hours will be adjusted in order to accommodate the younger adults who do not rise before dawn to get to the market. As Peter puts it, the “storm destroyed so many gardens, and a lot of the gardens aren’t coming back because elders don’t have the strength. We’re trying to rebuild that, but in an area not just for a few, but for the whole community” (personal interview). Food remains central to that conception of the neighborhood.

The market plans are also designed to attract more people from outside Village L’Est, in an effort that Peter calls “reaching out to the city.” The market is thus also a part of a process of changing the image of the neighborhood to the rest of the city. In looking to attract more shoppers and bring more development to the neighborhood, MQVNCDC recognized the need to change the perception of the market, which, according to Peter, was seen by shoppers from outside the neighborhood as dirty. The new market is in part designed to address these concerns: the Vietnamese Market is also a facet of the larger political and symbolic efforts of the MQVNCDC after the storm.

One of New Orleans’ largest post-Katrina controversies was the location of a municipal landfill on a site adjacent to Village L’Est. For many communities, this might have raised environmental justice concerns, or been a relatively straightforward case of ‘NIMBYism.’ But in a neighborhood that grows some of its own food—and whose food is a vital component of its community life—with water from a lagoon abutting the site of the landfill, the landfill directly
compromised the health and identity of the neighborhood. Peter describes the landfill as “Not a food access issue, but a healthy food access issue; [it’s about] clean food” (personal interview).

MQVNCDC led the effort that ultimately resulted in the closing of the landfill. As Peter frames this newfound political voice, he places the market within the neighborhood’s larger attempt to construct a narrative of coping, overcoming, and even capitalizing on the effects of Katrina:

“...Katrina is nothing. Just another hill to climb over. We’re still waiting…” (personal interview)

He also emphasized how Village L’Est, like several hard-hit neighborhoods during the Bring New Orleans Back Commission planning process, was labeled as a ‘green dot,’ which meant that green space was planned for the area. While the BNOBC plans had no intention of turning whole neighborhoods into green space, many neighborhoods interpreted the BNOBC dots as a direct affront to their viability and future as a neighborhood. Insofar as the BNOBC and city plans were instances of ‘top-down’ planning, the Vietnamese Market was a central component of a grassroots response to the many challenges posed by Katrina. Peter summarizes the MQVNCDC’s recognition of what he calls its voice in the process of responding to both the ‘green dots’ and the landfill, and highlights the fact that Village L’Est, like many neighborhoods, is still waiting for the city to make good on its many promises after the storm:

“Before the storm, this area [Village L’Est] was ‘off the map’ and then the green dot, the landfill, and now people know. The press after storm, especially with respect to the landfill, got people [in the neighborhood] to gather together and give themselves a voice… Shutting the landfill down was hard, but remediating [sic] is harder. It’s a waiting game. We’re still waiting…” (personal interview)

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Freret: The Freret Street Market Neighborhood History

In many ways, Freret Street has always been a liminal space. Demographically, it historically demarcated the black ‘back of town’ from the whiter uptown, and topographically Freret Street delineated the lower swamplands from the high ground closer to the natural levees of the Mississippi River. Freret Street used to be a vibrant commercial corridor, home to a diversity of Jewish, Italian, and black merchants, shoppers, and residents, but in recent decades that vibrancy and diversity has diminished. Freret before the storm had suffered from decades of disinvestment, though some...
beloved commercial establishments—such as Eve’s Market, Wagner’s Meat, and Dunbar’s Restaurant—were located on the street. A US News and World Report article soon after the storm accurately described Freret as “embrac[ing] virtually the full panoply of the strange, the ennobling, and the desperate that made New Orleans America’s most unique and outlandish city” (Mulrine, “Long Road Back”). Some attempts at community and economic development had taken place before the storm; in 2001, Freret was designated a Main Street in an effort to bring back commercial and residential development to the corridor.

**Katrina History**
For much of the Freret neighborhood, Freret Street was the approximate floodline delineating the area of substantial flooding on the lakeside of the corridor from the minimal damage to the structures on the riverside of the street. The northern side of the neighborhood witnessed anywhere from no flooding to over four feet of water, whereas the south side of the neighborhood—from Freret down to LaSalle Street—suffered little to no damage. Many of the business owners on Freret Street were also residents of the neighborhood, and the inability to rebuild a home often entailed a storefront that would remain closed on Freret. Even celebrated institutions like Dunbar’s Creole Cooking could not get a small-business loan after the storm, and Celestine Dunbar had to cater and operate out of space at Loyola University; she finally reopened on Freret in the spring of 2008. Thus, while the neighborhood escaped the worst of flooding (unlike, for example, Broadmoor to its north), many of its residents and businesses have struggled to return.

**Food Access**
The Freret Street neighborhood enjoyed a moderate level of food access before the storm, and, while diminished, still has some access to fresh food. Prior to Katrina, Freret Street was home to several groceries, including Wagner’s Meat and Eve’s Market, which was a small grocery specializing in natural foods. Neither of these outlets reopened after the storm. Almost every food access point—including every grocery—
in the neighborhood closed after Katrina, but because of the large number of groceries and supermarkets open in the adjacent Uptown neighborhood (across St. Charles Avenue on the river-side of Freret), Freret residents have some access to fresh food. However, this post-storm geography of food access in the Freret neighborhood is recapitulating many of the disparities that existed before Katrina: the nearest access to fresh food is not within walking distance, and those residents with automobiles have greater access to fresh food than those that do not.

Market Description

The Freret Street Market is a monthly market held on Saturday afternoons from noon to 5PM, and first took place on 8 September 2007. Along with Lakeview’s Harrison Avenue Marketplace, it is one of the largest markets in the city, with over a fifteen hundred visitors on a typical market day. The most recent market in April 2008 had over 160 vendors. The market is run by the Freret Business and Property Owners Association (FBPOA), and takes place in a city-owned parking lot at the corner of Freret Street and Napoleon Avenue. The Freret Street Market also has the distinction of being one of the first projects in the city to have received public support from the Office of Recovery Management (ORM, now known as the Office of Recovery and Development Authority, or ORDA). The Freret Street Market received a $10,000 loan/grant from that office in September 2007 as one of the first ‘trigger projects’ for the city. At the ceremony at the inaugural market, Dr. Blakely (the head of the city’s recovery office) said “cities start with neighborhoods. Strong neighborhoods make great cities. So, this is my crane, a strong neighborhood. And every time we do one of these, we are making a bigger and better and stronger city”; however, to this day, the Freret Street market remains one of the only neighborhood developments projects to have received any public funding since Hurricane Katrina (Bohrer, “City Dedicates”). I visited the market on 1 March 2008.
Shoppers
Freret Market shoppers were distinct for a variety of reasons. A high percentage of market-goers were from outside the neighborhood and from all over New Orleans. Secondly, the shoppers were keenly aware of the connection between the festival nature of the market and the commercial and economic revitalization of the Freret Street corridor.

A large number of Freret market-goers were from outside of the neighborhood or were first-time market shoppers, which reflected the market organizers’ aim of bringing people to Freret in order to foster economic development on the corridor. While most shoppers felt that the market itself was an overwhelmingly positive experience, the majority of shoppers insisted that the effect was fleeting. “I do feel the Freret Street Market is a positive thing for the neighborhood because it brought me to the neighborhood that I would [otherwise] be unlikely to come to.” Another reiterated a similarly conflicted response: “this is the only time I would ever consider coming through. The city must be doing something right.” And another market-goer connected his inaugural visit to recovery of the surrounding neighborhood: “I have never been in this area before. I am intrigued. If there were more neighborhood shops at the market I would be encouraged to return after sampling at the market. It seems very positive with a diverse group of
attendees.” Visitors also noted the manner in which the ephemeral nature of the market was activating an urban space—a parking lot—that was typically dormant: “it’s good to see people out and active in an otherwise empty parking lot.”

Freret shoppers were keen on addressing the economic and community development aspects of the market, and several expressed the hope that the market would have a positive development impact on the neighborhood. One shopper remarked that they were “glad to see the activity on this street. An uptown business district!” Another market-goer made the connection between the market and community economic development just as explicit: “[I am] mainly interested in the effect this could have in stimulating neighborhood revitalization. I believe that if the market is coupled with strong neighborhood support and participation, there will be a very positive effect.” And again, expressing the hope that the businesses on the street itself would blossom as a result of the increased traffic brought to the neighborhood: “I wish Freret Street would develop nice shopping. This street needs to be developed, it maybe could be the next Magazine Street!” The notion that Freret could become another Magazine Street—a mixed-use commercial corridor in the city that has undergone a renaissance over the last decade—was echoed by the FBPOA in its hopes for the transformative effects of the market. This both reflects the realities of commerce on Freret Street, but it also reveals the FBPOA’s presumptions about the direction that community and economic development should move.

While this is certainly an audience already predisposed to have an affinity for such markets and to recognize their benefits to a neighborhood, the breadth and depth of connections that shoppers made between markets and their communities was surprising. The notion of local economics was widely understood amongst those I interviewed at the Freret Market. “It helps local entrepreneurs” or “it helps locals make some money locally” were common refrains about the market. Additionally, ‘community’ was a buzzword in the Freret shopper survey responses. “These are important centers for community and help with grassroots economic development.” And of course, no survey would be complete without: “Yes, I support city government giving money to neighborhoods and the people rather than officials putting it in their pockets. It’s NOLA, baby…”

However, while the shoppers were keyed into the connections between the market and the larger process of community and economic development, they were not sanguine about the pace of recovery and the degree to which the market represented substantial change in the neighborhood. One shopper went so far as to question the
extent that the market was even for all of the neighborhood residents, calling into question the relationship between the market and the neighborhood: “Hopefully the neighborhood is coming back at the level of this activity today. I question if the ‘neighborhood’ is here though. This is a large percentage of white folks and this neighborhood is much more mixed.” Several market-goers noted the slow pace of the recovery and the relatively small impact of neighborhood markets, replying: “I think it’s a step—but has to do more in developing the retail stores to bring back people everyday, not only on Saturdays.” One shopper succinctly summarized the tone of skepticism and guarded optimism that seemed to underlie most of the responses: “Yes [the market has an effect on neighborhood recovery], but in a very small way. If this is all we can do 2½ years after Katrina, then leadership is seriously lacking. We need much more and sooner.”

**Vendors**

Most of the vendors at the market are from outside of the neighborhood but still from New Orleans, and only one of the vendors that I interviewed identified himself as a farmer. In accordance with its size and festival nature, the range of goods sold at the Freret Street Market is the widest of any market in this study: from organic Louisiana citrus, homemade kumquat preserves, and fresh roasted coffee from a local importer, to photography, jewelry, silk screened clothing, and “ceramic New Orleans musical tributes/local religious iconography”. A high percentage of the vendors sold prepared foods. The Freret Street Market is clearly meeting a wide range of needs within the neighborhood that extend beyond food access. Just as the shoppers come from far and wide, so too do the Freret vendors have large catchment areas: many sell at other markets, including Gretna, Broadmoor, Harrison Avenue, the Crescent City Farmers Market, the Bywater Art Market, and the French Market.

The vendors’ opinions about the market and its
connection to neighborhood recovery were similar to those of the shoppers. While they were bullish on the recovery of the neighborhood and they recognize the social benefits of such a large community gathering, the vendors’ comments were almost always tempered by a dose of the reality of recovery. For all of the positive assessments, such as “any place or event that brings people together in a relaxed, shared atmosphere is a positive,” or “it’s made a joyous place out of a former ghost town. Totally positive!” there were always comments like “it has not made me come to this area other than for this market. I do think that this is a very positive thing for the neighborhood.” Or, “it hasn’t really changed how I feel about [the neighborhood’s recovery], but I do believe it’s good to bring more people into the area. It brings in people who may otherwise feel unsafe or ignorant of the area.” Some framed their comments with personal histories or recognized the history of former vibrancy in the district as a way to express optimism about the continued difficulties and small gains made since Katrina: one vendor recounted, “I lived in this neighborhood when the market began, and I still like the neighborhood as much as when I had to move. There has clearly been an increase in investment and development in Freret Street itself since the market’s inception.” Another opined that “the Freret Street market is a very positive asset for the neighborhood. I have been hoping for the area to be ‘revitalized,’ as it appears to have fallen into decay over the years. The Freret Market is just the way to bring this neighborhood back to its former glory.”

Because of its size, the Freret Street Market has obvious economic and commercial value to the vendors. One vendor, who makes handmade jewelry, sees his positive experience as an example of the multiplier effects of markets, where even a modest public investment in the market resulted in an artist opening their own studio:

This market and others like it have given me an outlet to sell my artwork when I could afford a physical storefront. Since October 2007, I have done this as a full-time job. I will be purchasing a retail space soon with earnings from these neighborhood markets.

Another vendor seconded the commercial importance of markets, saying that they have become “a necessary part of a small, independent businesses’ income.” Others noted other features of the market that were important to the future of commerce on the corridor after Katrina. “It’s great to talk to people face to face. I owned a store prior to the hurricane that was looted and closed, and now sell only online and the market.” One vendor characterized the market as an occasion for business-to-business networking: “it’s an opportunity to build relationships with other area businesses.” Some vendors highlighted how important the markets were to their business, which in turn has a beneficial effect on the communities around them: “I definitely support city grants
to neighborhoods to start farmers markets. Cities are a collection of communities and the city is right to support them.” Some vendors even noted the opportunity for entrepreneurialism at the Freret Market: “the markets have given local entrepreneurs an outlet for their goods. I had a friend share one of my tables. She is test-marketing her spicy sweet pickles and wine sauce. Her items have been very well received by the public.”

Ultimately, just as the vendors shared many of the shoppers’ opinions about the positive aspects of the market, they also had similar verdicts about the larger effects of a once-a-month market. One of the artists eloquently asserted the important social aspects of the neighborhood markets:

All of the markets focus attention on the needs of each microcommunity and have brought interest and traffic to the local businesses. This, of course, affects New Orleans’ recovery in a tremendously positive way. Interaction, catharsis, and community develop and play out in real time at these markets.

Yet the reprieve of community gatherings always brushes up against the larger realities of an arduous recovery: “I see slow growth, but growth nonetheless. Gathering and sharing [at the Freret Market] lets folks know they aren’t alone.”

**Market Organization**

Above all other aims, the Freret Street Market organizers intend for the market to be about the socioeconomic revitalization of the Freret Street corridor. The market is seen as a way to draw attention, investment, and residents to the corridor with the hope that people will decide to live and invest in the neighborhood. While the market initially had aims to play a larger role in the community’s food access, the difficulties of doing so and the other purposes of the market relegated food to a supporting role at the market.

The Freret Street Market was founded by Peter Gardner, a resident of the Freret Street neighborhood who bought and renovated a commercial property on Freret Street after Katrina. After the initial market, he was joined by Michelle Ingram and Greg Ensslen, two other small business owners and officers of the Freret Business and Property Owners Association (FBPOA). The market reflects the influence and energy of new business-owners on the corridor, which represents a larger inflection point in the history of the neighborhood. Peter describes himself and his colleagues at the FBPOA as “new blood, looking to make some positive changes. Freret is in the middle of everything, and it doesn’t make sense why it’s so run-down.” Peter deliberately juxtaposed the work of the FBPOA with the previous ten years of what he saw as equivocation by the neighborhood over the matter of revitalizing the street and starting a market: “[Freret business owners] were tired of inaction, and tired of just being the same old way, and [they were trying to] bring a new, positive energy of street.” He continues:
which the market is a key component. She noted that the corridor has been officially designated as an arts and cultural overlay zoning district by the City Planning Commission, which facilitates the development of the arts and studios along the corridor, such as some of the vendors at the market. That designation took almost a year, often “fighting over the definition of a go-cup” (Michelle Ingram, personal interview).

The founders of the Freret Street Market had originally intended for food access to play a larger role in food access, but found the impediments to fresh food access to be difficult to overcome. Michelle “went out to every produce guy and begged him; I said ‘I am going to pay you to come out,’” but to little avail. “It’s hard to get produce vendors, still. I don’t think it’s Katrina-related so much as the demand exceeds the supply. The farmers and produce vendors are hesitant to change” (personal interview). As with the other neighborhood markets, the Freret organizers found that art market and flea market vendors are much easier to identify than food vendors, and the art and flea markets are easier to run because there are fewer permits and other requirements. As Peter puts it, “we wanted to have food, but we knew that would be our biggest struggle, so we didn’t focus on that, and focused on the other [social] stuff” (personal interview). So even though the Freret Street Market is not predominantly a farmers market, the market managers still

Everybody wants a market, but the question is are you going to do what it takes to get there. We didn’t get our first check till a week before the market. You have to be prepared to find a way to get paid. It’s a lot of work. That’s the thing that’s been unfortunate part of New Orleans—way too much talking, not enough doing. People need to put time and money where their mouth is. That’s what the Freret market is all about. You can’t talk about something for 15 years. (personal interview)

Because the neighborhood was not as impacted physically by the storm as was Broadmoor or the Lower Ninth Ward and was therefore able to potentially capitalize on the fervor of rebuilding and new development, the market was seen—at least by its founders—as “a way jumpstart investment, to say ‘hey, we’re here,’ and get more people on street, then, more properties getting bought, and more businesses open. The goal was for people and business to invest” (Peter Gardner, personal interview).

The market was an effort by the FPBOA to change the larger pattern of investment in the neighborhood, rather than as an end in itself. The FPBOA wanted, according to Peter, “a more family-oriented, a place to walk with families—to see an art show or go to a restaurant… We’re not same Freret that was before. At times it was dicey” (personal interview). As with the Vietnamese market, the Freret Street Market managers have plans to build a more permanent market structure on the Michelle Ingram, one of the other market organizers, emphasized the great lengths that the LBPOA is taking to institutionalize some of these changes, of
Making Groceries

ensure that fresh food is available at the market because the multiple post-Katrina planning processes identified a farmers market as a priority for neighborhood residents. Michelle notes that “a good amount of produce comes in, and they sell out every time.” She also admits that the mix of vendors and the feel of the market sets the Freret Street Market apart:

We are a rogue market—not your typical market by any stretch. We get a little resentment from other markets. We are more of a festival, we have bands, and flea vendors—we’re an everyman’s market. We have a little bit of everything we have high priced art to old kitchen gadgets and everything in between. And that’s basically what Freret is: we have $3M homes on Napoleon, and 3 blocks back, we have blighted shotguns falling down. The market reflects us, and the neighborhood. (personal interview)

Lakeview: Beacon of Hope Harrison Avenue Marketplace

Neighborhood History

Lakeview only began to be developed as a residential neighborhood after the first decade of the twentieth century. Enabled by A. Baldwin Wood’s screw pumps, the backswamp was drained, and Lakeview was plotted, with City Park to its east and the 17th Street canal to its west. The first residences were along the New Basin Canal, which in the 1950s was filled in to become West End and Pontchartrain Boulevards, as well as I-10. As New Orleans rapidly suburbanized after WWII, Lakeview became increasingly oriented towards the needs of automobility, and filled with ranch-style post-WWII homes. The neighborhood was predominantly white, and had one of the highest average incomes of any in New Orleans prior to Katrina.

Katrina History

Hurricane Katrina decimated Lakeview, leaving almost no corner of the neighborhood untouched by at least four feet of water. For many houses, the floodwaters reached the eaves of the house. Three years later, approximately a third of the residents have returned.
Food Access
Lakeview food access, while largely predicated on automobile ownership, was relatively high before Katrina. A large Robert’s site on the northern edge of the neighborhood provided a large amount of food access, as did Lakeview Fine Foods on Harrison Avenue, and the small, independent Meme’s Market on Canal Street. However, post-Katrina, no groceries reopened until over two years after the storm, when the Robert’s Grocery store location reopened in the Robert E. Lee shopping center at the intersection of West End and Robert E. Lee Blvd. in November of 2007. Lakeview Fine Foods, whose parking lot doubles as the site of the Harrison Avenue Marketplace, will not reopen, nor will Meme’s Market. Food access, even with Robert’s now open, often includes trips by car to Dorignacs on Veterans Boulevard in Metairie, as well as the Sav-A-Center (now Rouse’s) on Carrollton Avenue Mid-City.
Market Description
The Harrison Avenue Marketplace is one of the two largest neighborhood markets in New Orleans, along with the Freret Street Market. The first market was held in August 2007. Like the Freret Market, the Harrison Avenue Marketplace is held monthly, but on Wednesday evenings from 5PM to 8PM. It is located in the parking lot of the former Lakeview Fine Foods grocery store, which has no plans to reopen after Katrina. The market provides almost no fresh food access, but has the largest assortment of prepared foods served by any market. The range of prepared food vendors extends from Galatoire’s, which is one of the nicest and most renowned Creole restaurants in the city, to meals cooked by students from UNO’s school of hospitality. Similarly, the arts and crafts vendors were of an especially wide variety, from jewelry to picture frames to house portraits. I visited on 12 March 2008.

Shoppers
Shoppers at the Harrison Avenue Marketplace were predominately from Lakeview, although some shoppers come from nearby neighborhoods, such as Gentilly and communities in Jefferson Parish. As with the Freret Market, the Lakeview market-goers attended the market primarily for the social and community aspects of the market. However, unlike the Freret Market, the market-goers seemed to find that the market was a validation of their decision to return to and rebuild in the neighborhood.

The market changed very few grocery-shopping habits. One shopper alluded to the fact that their mobility made the presence of a store in their neighborhood almost irrelevant: “I was not particular about which stores were open, as long as I had access to one.” Instead, socializing seemed to be the primary reason for shoppers to visit the market. “It might not be the reason to move back but it definitely makes you feel good about your decision to be here.” Another continued: “yes, I don’t feel like we’re as alone in coming back.” More than at any other market, several of the patrons raised the notion of public safety, and felt that the market contributed to their sense of safety in coming back to a neighborhood that is missing most of its population. “I feel safer, and I know more people” one patron insisted after attending the market.

As at other markets, shoppers at the Harrison Avenue market supported the idea of public support for markets. One respondent, who has taken his economics classes, found justification for government intervention by noting that “small scale enterprises, like community markets, act as vehicles for exchange and information sharing. In this capacity, it promotes collective action. For this reason, if financial concerns hinder this cooperation, the state should be an actor that further enhances this interaction.” Curiously,
at a neighborhood market with virtually no farmers, some shoppers thought there should be public support of markets in order to provide assistance to farmers.

**Vendors**

About a third of vendors are actually from Lakeview, which is somewhat high relative to the other neighborhood markets. This reflects the largely arts and crafts nature of the market, as well as the intentions of the Beacon of Hope to assist neighborhood vendors and businesses before any other. The vendors expressed many of the same sympathies as the other neighborhood markets, saying that they enjoyed the interaction with shoppers and other vendors, and noted the economic importance of the market. However, reflecting the large number of vendors who are from the neighborhood, the vendors were notable for how many personal ties they seemed to have at the market. Only one of the vendors considered himself to be a farmer, which confirmed the relative lack of emphasis on fresh foods.

Because so many of the vendors were from Lakeview, the market seemed to be more socially important to vendors at the Harrison Avenue Marketplace than at other markets. One vendor, who is moving back to the neighborhood this year, claims that “the market helped confirm the strength of our community.” Many of the vendors remarked that it was a good excuse to see friends in the neighborhood, and to see people that they have not seen in a long time: “a great place to meet up with friends that you don’t get to see regularly.” Another remarked that he enjoyed seeing “people gathering in the neighborhood—like old times. It gives people who have moved back reassurance that they’ve made the right decision. [That’s] comforting.” A significant proportion of the vendors had a retail storefront, which reflected the high

The Lakeview market bustles with shoppers. The Lakeview Fine Foods grocery will not reopen, and provides a symbolic backdrop for the evening market. The balloons in the image are a part of Beacon of Hope’s efforts to help spur recovery; on the day I visited, BoH invited realtors to the market to provide information to homeowners, as well as a group of volunteers, who brought ballons with them.
number of prepared food vendors, but only one of those businesses was in the neighborhood, which was also located on Harrison Avenue. The vendors generally made only a small portion of their income at the market.

Some of the vendors identified the market as a source of identity, distinction, and pride. One vendor saw the market as helping provide an identity for a hard-hit neighborhood: “it’s very Lakeview—fun and funky and laid back and completely suited to the neighborhood.” Others emphasized the pride they associated with the neighborhood for hosting such a large market: “it only makes me wish that other communities would rally like Lakeview. It truly shows how some neighborhoods care about their recovery. I wish it would catch on everywhere else.” Another vendor insisted that the Harrison Avenue Marketplace “makes me appreciate how far as a community we’ve come after Katrina and makes me proud to say I’m from New Orleans.” And finally, “[the market] made me believe Lakeview was definitely coming back. Lakeview has done most of its recovery on its own without too much help form government—this marketplace is an example!”

Market Organization
The Harrison Avenue Marketplace is operated by an organization called Beacon of Hope (BoH). BoH was founded by husband and wife Denise and Doug Thornton in their Lakewood South neighborhood, which is just on the river-side of Lakeview. It is a relatively unique model for neighborhood organization that, from the outset, was meant to be replicated from neighborhood to neighborhood as a form of spreading institutional knowledge and organizational capacity. The aims of BoH in starting the Harrison Avenue Marketplace were similar to those of the FBPOA: a largely social market focused on the revitalization of Harrison Avenue as a commercial corridor. BoH, like all of the other market organizations, had a great deal of difficulty in getting any fresh food vendors to its market. However, the Lakeview Market is distinctive for the role that the market plays as a part of a package of community development tools that BoH looks to export to the other neighborhoods in which it operates. BoH’s aims for the market are largely confined to information-sharing, social connectivity, and community economic development.

More than any other market organization, BoH is a very visible presence at its market. Several ‘resource booths’ with information for Lakeview residents are stationed towards the center of the market space. On the day I attended, the Beacon of Hope had booths for themselves as well as for the Lakeview Civic Improvement Association (LCIA). Additionally, neighborhood realtors were invited to the market in order to provide information regarding the Road Home program, which is the state’s homeowner
has started to work, is already in the offing. This toolkit, what the BoH calls its ‘package,’ consists of volunteers (Beacon of Hope hosted over 5,000 volunteers last year), equipment (such as lawnmowers), and market organizing expertise, and it reveals the community economic development—rather than food access—framework from which BoH views its market.

**Old Gretna: Gretna Farmers Market Neighborhood History**

Old Gretna is a neighborhood in the City of Gretna on the westbank of the Mississippi River, and it is the only neighborhood in this study not in Orleans Parish. The neighborhood is located on historically high ground on the banks of the river, and first began as a town inhabited by employees for some of the many railroads that run through New Orleans. The city is the Parish seat for Jefferson Parish, and is relatively well-known locally for its small historic core, containing Gretna City Hall, the Old Rail Depot (where the Gretna Farmers Market is held), and small shops and businesses lining this small civic center. In many ways, it strives to maintain the identity of an old river town. Gretna is relatively diverse—about fifty-five percent white and a third black—and has remained small—the entire city only has 17,000 people. In the immediate aftermath of Katrina, the city became somewhat infamous when Gretna and Jefferson...
Gretna is on the westbank of the Mississippi, and outside of Orleans Parish; it did not flood in the wake of Katrina.

Parish police were rumored to have prevented—and even shot at—Orleans Parish residents trying to cross over to the unflooded westbank on the Crescent City Connection bridge.

**Katrina History**
Gretna was virtually unscathed by Katrina, and thus the closest thing to a control neighborhood for those areas that did experience the storm. Some of the area suffered had wind damage, but little to no flood damage.

**Food Access**
Though Gretna was not flooded by Hurricane Katrina, the neighborhood had relatively poor access to fresh food before the storm that was exacerbated by the needs of neighborhood residents in a post-Katrina landscape. Almost all of the groceries are located off of the Westbank Expressway, which is to the south of Gretna, and many of those are ‘big box’ grocers—such as Wal-Mart—that were not open in the immediate aftermath of Katrina, and which are only accessible by automobile. The neighborhood has one locally-owned supermarket, Casey Jones, that was unaffected by Katrina, and there are also a few small convenience stores.

**Market Description**
The Gretna Market is a weekly market with up to 30 vendors held on Saturdays from 8:30AM to 12:30PM. I visited on 29 March 2008, when about fifteen vendors were present. The Gretna Market is unique for having begun at the end of October 2005, only two months after Katrina. It was supposed to have started in spring 2006, but the high demand for food access after the storm wiped out most of the groceries in New Orleans, and the inaugural market was pushed forward. The Gretna Markets is one of two neighborhood markets (along with the Upper Ninth Ward Market) that could be classified as a farmers market. Held in the Old Train Depot in Gretna’s civic center—behind a post office and near the old courthouse and Gretna’s iconic City Hall. The structure itself is fascinating for the manner it which its peaked roof and long, narrow shape evokes the old public market structures. It is in the center of the street, which on
both sides is bordered by a number of small businesses and pedestrian traffic. Even on the rainy Saturday that I visited, a constant stream of market-goers attended the market. As a farmers market, the vendors had the widest array of food items of any neighborhood market I studied, and vendors were selling everything from seafood, meats, dairy, and breads, to greens, coffee, and even fruit wines. Also at other markets, there was a musician playing for most of the market hours. Because Old Gretna was largely unaffected by Katrina, I am using the market largely as a control, where I am able in part to look at how the market is addressing residents’ food access and social needs separately from their recovery needs. This permits me to tease out some of the issues related to disaster, vulnerability, and resiliency from those related to
Almost all of the shoppers at the market were from Gretna, though a few came over from New Orleans. Many simply walked in from the surrounding blocks, and it seemed to have one of the higher rates of shoppers walking to market, rather than driving. Gretna Farmers Market shoppers are distinguished by the fact that they were the only market-goers whose food access needs could substantially be met by shopping at the Gretna market, and for the manner in which the market seemed to fit the shoppers’ notion of a neighborhood identity as an older ‘town square.’

Because the Gretna Farmers Market was open so soon after the storm, it had the opportunity to become a part of the market-goers’ grocery-shopping habits. One Gretna resident noted the salience of the market in the immediate aftermath of the storm: “There was no place in New Orleans to walk and see produce, except in Gretna.” Others emphasized that while the market was not immediately open after the storm, Food was a factor “but not much was available for months” after the storm. “When we returned, the market was not in place. But in the early months after the storm it was great to have the market. We have been coming since!” The market was important for another in coming back because of its “freshness and convenience.” Almost all of the shoppers found that they were eating healthier as a result of the Gretna Farmers Market, with many asserting that they “buy more fresh and local food, vegetables, and seafood” or “I buy most of my vegetables, flowers, and sausage at the market.” Some noted how they have changed their grocery-shopping habits: “we wait for Saturdays to buy vegetables, coffee, bread, and milk. These are fresh! The stores have old items that are not vine ripened.” And again, the “produce is a lot

The Gretna market is genuinely a farmers market: all of the vendors shown here are selling some variety of fresh food. The market is also covered, which is amenity appreciated by the vendors. It is the only neighborhood market with a permanent structure.
fresher than in supermarkets. I eat more fruit now because of the freshness."

The Gretna Farmers Market was clearly a source of pride and differentiation from the rest of New Orleans. Unlike in Lakeview, where the market was emblematic of Lakeview’s relatively robust recovery when compared to many of the other hard-hit neighborhoods in New Orleans, Gretna residents held up Gretna’s market as a symbol of a return to small-city life. Almost none of the shoppers with whom I spoke shopped at any of the other farmers markets, which reinforced the notion that the residents were shopping at a market which they identified with their neighborhood’s distinctiveness. One shopper remarked that the market “brings back the ‘old school’ feel of Gretna” and another opined that the market “feels more familial and hometown-like.” This neighborliness extended to the information sharing aspects of neighborhoods, where one shopper noted that “in coming to the market we have talked to other people repairing and upgrading their homes! We have exchanged contractors, paints, ideas, houses for sale, etc.” Yet another market-goer, a merchant marine, tied the market scene to a larger New Orleans identity: “farmers markets, the eclectic and thriving arts and culture on both the west and east banks [of the Mississippi River] are why I live in New Orleans.” And lastly: “I am not sure about New Orleans, but it has helped bring people to Gretna to see our great quality of life; Gretna is [one of the] best kept secrets [in New Orleans]!” As an exclamation point on the ties between the market and the neighborhood, many of the patrons of the market also stopped at the local stores lining the Old Train Depot, especially a café called Common Grounds Café, as well as some small retail shops and restaurants.

Vendors
Reflecting the farmers market nature of the Gretna Farmers Market, none of the vendors are from Gretna or New Orleans, and none grow or make their products in Gretna or New Orleans. They come from as far away as Independence, Folsom, and Belle Chasse, LA to Plaquemines and St. Helen Parishes. Sell berries and fruit, seafood, meats, vegetables, dairy, plants, Italian breads and cookies, amongst others. Gretna has the highest proportion of farmers of any of the neighborhood markets. Most of the vendors have retail outlets in their respective hometowns, including the commercial fisherman, the fruit-wine maker, and one of the bakers. Several only sell at the market, for a mix of market-only vendors. The orchid grower at the market considers himself to be a “hobbyist with too many plants,” indicating both a level of entrepreneurialism as well as a desire for the social or hobby activity that the market provides. Almost all of the vendors only began to work at markets after Katrina when the opportunity presented itself, and a few of the
sellers considered the market a direct factor in returning after the storm “because they offered us a spot here about a month after the hurricane.”

The vendors at the Gretna Market seemed to rely on markets for their livelihoods to a greater extent than the vendors in some of the other neighborhood markets. Some of the vendors sold at other markets, including Destrehan, Baton Rouge, Bywater, Destrehan, and the Freret markets. Others noted that they used to sell at the CCFM before the storm, but have since only sold at the Gretna Market. Also, vendors at the Gretna market had some of the highest proportions of their incomes of any markets, where several vendors indicated that they made between 11% and 25% of their income at the Gretna market, and one vendor said she made between 26% and 50% of her income at the Gretna market. This could have been because of the more established and larger nature of the Gretna Market.

Almost every vendor noted that the Gretna Market had increased his or her business sales. “The Gretna market introduced us into a neighborhood we had not sold in previously.” Some of the vendors note that other opportunities arise from getting to know customers at the market: “customers will order from us, and we get landscaping jobs [too].” Along the same lines, another noted that his income has “slight[ly] increase[d]; some market customers are fairly regular. Plus, some visit my greenhouse and buy there.” The coffee roaster relied exclusively on markets for his retail business; he wholesaled to companies and other businesses in the region: “I only sell at markets so my business is wholly dependent on the market.” Others emphasized the importance of face-to-face retailing: “more people are willing to try a free sample than to just buy an unknown product,” and the fruit wine seller though that the “promotion of [my] product,” and not just sales, was an important component of the market. However, the robust sales at the market might not be long-lived, as one vendor noted that “in the 14-15 months that I have been involved with the Gretna Market, I have noticed a definite decline in the number of customers and the amount of money spent per customer.” This vendor hypothesized that this was due to the decreasing amount of recovery dollars floating around the New Orleans economy, but it also seems that Gretna residents might also be returning to their old habits of shopping at grocery stores.

**Market Organization**

The Gretna Farmers Market is run by Gary and Marcia Madere, a husband and wife duo. As many of the shoppers recognized, the market aims to bring the neighborhood together, and to increase access to fresh food. Gary and Marcia intended for the market to be for Gretna residents, and to foster connections amongst neighbors.
Upper Ninth Ward: The Renaissance Project ‘Holy Angels’ Market

Neighborhood History

The Upper Ninth Ward/Holy Angels Market is located on St. Claude Avenue, which has a storied history as a commercial corridor. St. Claude, like many of the streets on which neighborhood markets are located, is the border between neighborhoods: the Marigny and the Bywater on the river side, and the Seventh Ward, St. Roch, and St. Claude to the lake side.

The Holy Angels Market is between the St. Claude and Bywater neighborhoods. Both are famous neighborhoods; the Bywater is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city, and is a local historic district whose many creole cottages and private courtyards are virtually indistinguishable from the French Quarter. The Bywater has a vibrant history stretching back to the late eighteenth century; today it is a mixed-use neighborhood that is home to both the famous New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts (NOCCA) high school, the Naval Support Activity, and the eastern border of the Industrial Canal, as well as several famous bars and restaurants. The St. Claude neighborhood is a more recent neighborhood that, like Lakeview, parts of Freret and the Lower Ninth Ward, and Broadmoor, was enabled by the draining of the backswamps that began in earnest at the end of the nineteenth century. St. Claude was home to the Desire streetcar line, which was made famous by Tennessee Williams’ eponymous play. Like Freret Street in the Freret neighborhood, St. Claude Avenue was a dividing line between a predominantly African-American and poorer neighborhood to the lake-side of the street and a wealthier, whiter neighborhood to the river-side. And like Freret Street, St. Claude Avenue was formerly a vibrant commercial district that is undergoing something of a comeback, in part with the assistance of its National Register of Historic Places Main Street organization.

St. Claude Avenue has a number of small businesses
operating. Also, the St. Claude Merchants Association is still a relatively vibrant organization that was supporting over 150 businesses previous to Katrina.

Katrina History
The Upper Ninth Ward did not suffer anywhere near the damage of the Lower Ninth Ward. However, while the areas of the Upper Ninth Ward closest to the Mississippi River were relatively unscathed by the storm, the areas to the north of St. Claude Avenue were increasingly impacted as the neighborhood creeps towards the lake. In that regard, the neighborhood surrounding the market represents that of Freret, Broadmoor, and other neighborhoods that have created neighborhood markets since the storm.

Food Access
The Upper Ninth Ward had poor access to fresh food before Katrina, and that was only exacerbated afterwards. Prior to the storm there were a few corner stores on St. Claude, and the Robert’s Fresh Market at the corner of Elysian Fields and St. Claude Avenue was the only supermarket. The Robert’s will not reopen, and most of the few food stores that have returned after the storm are of the convenience store variety. Some good news for food access in the neighborhood is the STEPS to a Healthier LA program mentioned in Chapter 3. The city and its partner LPHI are working with several corner stores on and around St. Claude Avenue in order to bring fresh food to the neighborhoods. These markets include Dora’s Supermarket, Jimmy’s Grocery, and Nikki’s Food Store. Also, the aforementioned Mardi Gras Zone, which is located in the Bywater neighborhood, is also serving some fresh foods. Despite the recent dearth of fresh food access, the surrounding neighborhoods have a robust history with public markets; the famous St. Roch Market, which was still serving seafood before the storm, is located only a few blocks upriver from the Holy Angels site, and several other public markets were open in the neighborhoods—many more than in any of the other neighborhoods I studied.

Market Description
The Upper Ninth Ward market is a weekly market, held on Saturday afternoons from 1PM to 4PM. The inaugural market was in December 2006, and I visited on 29 March 2008. The market is located in the parking lot of the Holy Angels Convent, which sits on the Bywater side of St. Claude Avenue at the intersection with Gallier Street. The site is only a few blocks downriver on St. Claude from the St. Roch Market, which was a former public market and which operated as a seafood market until Katrina. The Holy Angels market is the smallest of the neighborhood markets I attended, but it is also the most committed to fresh food access and the most cognizant of the relationship between neighborhood
markets, public health, and neighborhood resiliency. Along with the Gretna market, the Holy Angels market is one of two neighborhood markets that can be considered farmers markets. **Shoppers**

Shoppers at the Upper Ninth Ward Market were largely from the surrounding neighborhoods, and while none of them was meeting even the majority of their fresh food access needs, the shoppers distinguished themselves by their recognition of the problems associated with poor food access. About half of the shoppers interviewed lived in the Upper Ninth Ward, while one came from as far away as Davis, CA. All of the shoppers interviewed from New Orleans came back earlier than the start of the market, and thus the market did not play a decision in their return. However, many indicated that they used the market as a complement to their grocery shopping at larger stores, and expressed a desire to
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and local products, especially on St. Claude because this street is full of corporate fast food joints and greasy food. Still, I don’t see your typical St. Claude resident here.” Most Holy angels shoppers did not patronize local businesses, although the few locations at which they did shop attests to the lack of fresh food access. One noted that she got groceries at the Mardi Gras Zone. Another had to get food from Walgreens when she was unable to shop at the Holy Angels Market. Some were happy with the prices at the market, stating that “I can’t afford this food unless it can compete with the big boxes,” but ultimately, most shoppers shared the sentiment that the market “looks too small to really be meaningful.”

Vendors

The Upper Ninth Ward/Holy Angels Market is genuinely a farmers market. All of the vendors sell food, produce, or bread, except for one who sells plants and herbs, and none of the vendors is from the neighborhood, coming from as far away as Destrehan and Norco. One of the vendors considered themselves to be a farmer, while all of the others either grew in their backyard or cooked and baked at home or at a retail establishment where they lived. By and large, the vendors had similar concerns and opinions as those at the other markets: they enjoyed the companionship of the other vendors and the social interaction with customers, and

be able to purchase more of their groceries at the market. As one shopper told me: “I go to the grocery store in the middle of the week and go to the farmer’s market on Saturday.” This is a striking parallel to the former system of public markets and private grocers in the US, in which groceries and markets complemented one another.

Several shoppers saw the Holy Angels Market moving the surrounding neighborhoods in the right direction. Several market-goers alluded to the lack of fresh food in the rest of the neighborhood: “it’s good to see healthy produce

While it is small, the Upper Ninth Ward market offers a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, herbs, baked goods, and dairy products, and is one of only two neighborhood markets that could be considered a farmers market.
felt that the market was a positive asset for the surrounding neighborhoods. The ample parking was also a plus for the vendors. For two of the vendors, sales represented a significant (11-25%) portion of their income.

**Market Organization**

The Upper Ninth Ward/Holy Angels Market is the only market in New Orleans that attempts to address the full spectrum of food access and community economic development needs of its surrounding neighborhood. The market was created and is managed by the Renaissance Project, which was founded by Greta Gladney (who was born in the Lower Ninth Ward) in 2001 to address some of the outstanding needs of the Upper and Lower Ninth Ward neighborhoods. The Renaissance Project began working towards a farmers market prior to the storm, when Upper and Lower Ninth Ward residents became aware that they were entitled to mitigation funds as a result of the proposed expansion of the infamously narrow locks on the Industrial Canal. Because of Katrina, that funding evaporated, but the Renaissance Project—which is really just Greta Gladney—continued to push for a market.

Greta got the idea for starting markets in the Upper and Lower Ninth Ward when she was in New York City, living in Park Slope and attending the market at Prospect Park. She liked the “multiethnic, intergenerational” qualities of the market, and saw that it was not only about food access, but also public health and community economic development. The Renaissance Project thus has four main programmatic areas—food access, economic development, education, and arts and culture—and Greta is very deliberate in how she addresses each of them. She says:

Folks [in other neighborhoods] think they want to start farmers markets, but that’s not what they want, because it’s hard to get farmers to the market. I ask them ‘Why do you want to do this market?’

For us [at the Upper Ninth Ward Market], it’s around health and nutrition and food access. In New Orleans, particularly among African-Americans, there are a variety of diet-related diseases, such as obesity and diabetes. Our interest was in improving health and quality of life. But when it’s more around social engagement—[such as what we do at] ‘Fridays on Roch,’ [where we have] performance and crafts vendors, and some prepared foods. It’s more of a festival.

People don’t realize how hard it is to get farmers to the market, because they have to drive so far. That’s one of the reasons why we’re working on urban agriculture [in the Upper and Lower Ninth Ward]. [With agriculture in the neighborhood,] it’s only twenty minutes from farm to market, rather than 60-90 miles. (personal interview)

The Renaissance Project addresses their different social and food access aims separately by splitting those functions up temporally and spatially amongst two of the markets that it currently runs. The ‘Fridays at the Roch‘ is a social gathering behind the former St. Roch public market structure in the neutral ground of St. Roch Avenue; on the night that I visited a ‘Friday at the Roch‘ on 21 March 2008, on a night when a Cornell dance group performed a show choreographed by a
Making Groceries

The Renaissance Project also hosts a festival-style arts market on Friday nights behind the former St. Roch public market building. On the particular evening I visited, a dance troupe from Cornell University was performing a show that was choreographed by a displaced New Orleanian.

The Renaissance Project vision for the Holy Angels Market is to create a nexus that connects food access with public health, economic development, and urban design. This is unique amongst the neighborhood markets in the city. As Greta puts it,

Before storm, funders associated markets only with economic development, not with preventative healthcare. The Crescent City Farmers Market (CCFM) had a monopoly on funding, and funders would ask ‘what is your relationship with CCFM.’ They [the CCFM] had four markets before the storm, and they weren’t interested in starting a new one, and in particular they saw challenges in working in poor neighborhoods. (personal interview)

Largely through Greta’s efforts (“I don’t know how many proposals I wrote about health disparities that no one read”), the Renaissance Project was able to piece together funding for the Upper and Lower Ninth Ward markets. After the storm, “because of images poor black folks, suddenly, people are paying attention” (personal interview).

Greta and the Renaissance Project are deliberate in connecting the food access and public health components of their agenda to larger issues about urban design and recovery. When I visited the market, Greta had two Xavier students working on a plan to establish another market at Congo Square, which is upriver along St. Claude, where the Avenue turns into Rampart Street and delineates the French Quarter from the Tremé neighborhood. Interestingly Congo Square is located in Louis Armstrong Park, which is on the site of the former Tremé public market. The Renaissance Project envisions markets along the entire St. Claude corridor that can galvanize the recovery of the neighborhood:

I’m excited about it [the Congo Square Market] because it will be a fourth market on this corridor. Part of the point [of the markets] aside from food access, and multigenerational and multiethnic activity and gathering space, is economic development along whole St. Claude corridor. The Lower Ninth Ward Market will be on Sunday morning, the Upper Ninth Ward Market will be held on Saturday afternoons, Fridays on the Roch are on Friday evenings, and Congo
Greta’s vision is for the markets to foster connectivity across the many dimensions of the neighborhoods through which St. Claude runs: multiethnic, because the demographics of the neighborhoods dramatically shift upriver and downriver, and lake-side and river-side, along the corridor; and multigenerational, because the Holy Angels Market site is adjacent to two senior- and assisted-living centers. Moreover, the Renaissance Project is also working to address blight in the Ninth Ward by helping to convert vacant properties into sites for urban agriculture in tandem with a growers association. These growers could, in the future, sell at the market. Greta is inspired when she speaks about how her vision will “reconnect the Ninth Ward to the city,” and recapture what she sees as the former functions of the public markets in the city.

This urban design perspective renders neighborhood markets as centerpieces of food access and neighborhood resiliency issues after the storm. The Renaissance Project has worked on the Food Policy Advisory Committee (FPAC) and the Food Policy Task Force (FPTF) chartered by the City Council after the storm. Greta sees these as vindicating her efforts to get city agencies involved in food access again, and she takes at least some credit for the vision of having markets in each of the city’s recovery Target Areas. Lastly, the Renaissance Project is working with the French Market Corporation (FMC) in order to rehabilitate the former St. Roch public market structure. The FMC is a public corporation that currently manages the French Market, but could also run other public markets in the city.

Greta is explicit in connecting the Renaissance Project markets to the former public market system, and she is cognizant of the practical, symbolic, and political values of that connection. She makes this tie symbolically, by hosting the Upper Ninth Ward and Friday on the Roch markets so proximal to the St. Roch market, but Greta and the Renaissance Project are also hopeful that the Upper Ninth Ward Market could one day be housed in the St. Roch market building. Even as the reality of the Renaissance Project’s markets still fall far short of Greta’s ambitions, the vision is captivating nonetheless:

once upon a time, the municipal government took responsibility for food access. The city managed the system to ensure that there was food access across neighborhoods. [This is so] exciting because I think we are returning to that now post storm, partially because of work from neighborhood markets. (personal interview)

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Lower Ninth Ward: The Renaissance Project St. David Market

Neighborhood History

The Lower Ninth Ward is a predominately African-American neighborhood downriver from the French Quarter. The
neighborhood has a long history of immigrants and free blacks who settled downriver of the French Quarter. The Lower Ninth Ward is technically two neighborhoods—on the river-side of St. Claude Avenue, the Holy Cross neighborhood is an historic neighborhood that is home to the famous Doullut Steamboat houses (built in the early twentieth century by a steamboat captain). The neighborhood is named after Holy Cross School, which, after sustaining damage and losing much of its enrollment, made a controversial move to the Gentilly neighborhood. Both the Lower Ninth Ward and the Holy Cross neighborhoods are predominantly African-American, and have a history of being home to many of the city’s famous jazz, blues, and rock and roll musicians, including Fats Domino, whose house and recording studio (both of which were decimated in the floodwaters) on Caffin Avenue off St. Claude Avenue are local landmarks. While the Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood was one of the poorest in the city, contrary to its public image after Katrina, the community had one of the highest rates of homeownership in New Orleans.

Katrina History
There is probably no neighborhood more affected by Katrina than the Lower Ninth Ward. While Holy Cross sustained substantial damage, it was partially spared because of its location on higher ground on the banks of the Mississippi River. The Lower Ninth Ward, on the other hand, was one of the lowest-lying areas of the city, and also had the incredible misfortune of being the location of one of the largest floodwall breaches in the city. In stark contrast to most of the rest of the flooding in the city, which was generally characterized by a level rising of floodwaters that did not typically wipe houses off of their foundations, all that remains of most of the houses of the Lower Ninth Ward are foundations and porch steps. This was due to both the large volume of water that poured through the Industrial Canal, as well as the fact that a barge from the Industrial Canal pushed through the opening and leveled entire blocks.
of the neighborhood, producing some of the most surreal of the post-Katrina images. Since the storm, there has been substantial non-profit interest in rebuilding the Lower Ninth Ward since Katrina, including a project by Global Green USA and Brad Pitt’s Make It Right, both of which are constructing a number of environmentally-friendly homes for Lower Ninth Ward residents. Many of the Holy Cross residents have returned, but only about a tenth of the 14,000 residents that lived in the Lower Ninth Ward before the storm have been able to come home.

**Food Access**
The Lower Ninth Ward had some of the poorest access to fresh food of any neighborhood in the city. Prior to Katrina, there had not been a grocery store that offered fresh food access in the Lower Ninth Ward in almost thirty years. This reflected larger patterns of disinvestment in the city since the middle of the twentieth century, and left the Lower Ninth Ward with only a few corner stores and a number of fast food outlets, neither of which provided appreciable access to fresh food. The neighborhood enjoyed the presence of a number of private grocers offering fresh food access until the 1980s, and before WWII the Lower Ninth Ward was home to two public markets.

**Market Description**
The Renaissance Project began its market in the Lower Ninth Ward in November of 2006 as a weekly Sunday market, but found that because of the lack of people back in the neighborhood, the market needed to go on an extended hiatus. As with the Upper Ninth Ward Market, Greta’s aims in starting the Lower Ninth Ward Market was, in part, to address the fact that “there hasn’t been a grocery store in the Lower Ninth Ward in almost thirty years, and the corner grocery stores are not selling produce” (personal interview; DocNO, “Lower Ninth Ward Market”). The market was located in the parking lot of St. David’s Church, at the intersection of Caffin and St. Claude Avenues, a stone’s throw from Fats Domino’s
Even though it was a small market, the Lower Ninth Ward/St. David Market still offered a wide array of fresh foods, including seafood, eggs, preserves, greens, yams, and bell peppers, and was the only other neighborhood market in New Orleans apart from the Upper Ninth Ward Market that could be considered a farmers market. At the second market, which took place the weekend before Thanksgiving in 2006, Second Harvesters food bank donated several boxes of food to be given away to Lower Ninth Ward Residents.

While I was not able to interview residents because the market closed before I began this study, a documentary video taken at the market before the market went on hiatus depicts several residents attesting to the food access and other needs that the market was fulfilling in the community. One resident of the Lower Ninth Ward featured in that documentary, Mable Howard, is a lifelong resident of the community, and she emphatically spoke to the manner in which the Lower Ninth Ward Market was meeting the needs of the community, especially after Katrina: “it’s what the neighborhood needs! We don’t even have a place in this area to get a sandwich! They should keep adding vendors until the whole parking lot is full—that’s what is very well needed. All I can say is that it is very good for the neighborhood” (DocNO, “Lower Ninth Ward Market”).

### Market Organization

The Renaissance Project’s goals for the Lower Ninth Ward Market are the same as those for the Upper Ninth Ward market, but the stakes were slightly higher because the Lower Ninth Ward was an even more socioeconomically and politically marginalized community. The St. David Market was on Sundays in order to take advantage of church crowds, which is in the New Orleans tradition of “making groceries” on Sundays, and to provide another fresh food access point on a different day as the Holy Angels Market. The Lower Ninth Ward market was also attempting to tie into several community gardening efforts: one in the Holy Cross neighborhood, another spearheaded by the city near Oliver Bush park, and the third by the Renaissance Project itself, which is still ongoing. That project is a part of Greta’s hope to turn blighted and vacant properties into community gardens; the first of such ‘ethnobotanical’ gardens, as she calls, them, will be located on her father’s vacant property in the Lower Ninth Ward.

The Lower Ninth Ward market was difficult for the Renaissance Project to stabilize for a variety of reasons. The most salient is the impact of Katrina and lack of residents in the area, which remains a problem almost three years out from the storm. The other reasons relate to the inherent difficulties of managing a neighborhood market: Greta had
problems staffing the Lower Ninth Ward market, and she also had a great deal of difficulty keeping the vendors limited to just a farmers market. As Greta puts it, “it’s difficult to get people aligned with the mission; the market keeps pulling towards crafts. Preventive healthcare and healthy food access is a difficult topic to keep on-task.” Thus, it was not only arduous to get a critical mass of shoppers to the market; it was also a challenge to get the right mix of vendors.

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**Broadmoor: The Broadmoor Heaven Sent Farmers Market**

**Neighborhood History**

Broadmoor was one of the few neighborhoods whose socioeconomic diversity fully reflected that of New Orleans. Broadmoor is located on generally low-lying land—that actually was a shallow lake in the early nineteenth century—in the geographic center of the city. Development began in earnest at the end of the nineteenth century, and was fully built-out during the early- to mid-twentieth century. Because of the timing of its development, the neighborhood is largely oriented towards automobility.

While the overall demographics of Broadmoor are diverse, the neighborhood has historically been divided itself into three demographic areas. On the upriver side of the neighborhood, west of Napoleon Avenue between Claiborne

Avenue and Fontainebleu Drive, the neighborhood is largely white and comparatively affluent. To the east of Napoleon Avenue, between Claiborne Avenue and B, the neighborhood is predominantly African-American and poorer. And in the remaining wedge of the neighborhood, on the lake-side of Fontainebleu Drive and Broad Street, the neighborhood is decidedly mixed. These divisions reflect the historic development of the neighborhood. Broadmoor has an extremely active and celebrated neighborhood organization, which is called the Broadmoor Improvement Association (BIA), and which established probably the most proactive neighborhood CDC in the city after Katrina, the Broadmoor Development Corporation (BDC). The commercial activity

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in the neighborhood is concentrated on the frontage along Claiborne Avenue, as well as a small node of activity where Broad Street intersects Washington Avenue.

Katrina History

Broadmoor was diversely impacted by the storm. While almost every structure received some flooding, the neighborhood followed the larger citywide pattern of vulnerability and exposure to the storm, where the poorer, largely African-American portions of Broadmoor bore the brunt of Katrina’s effects. Almost immediately after the storm, the BIA established the BDC, which quickly formed a number of partnerships with foundations, grant-making organizations, universities, and the various denominational churches within its borders. The BDC has undertaken a myriad of initiatives, including home-gutting, debris-removal, and beautification immediately after Katrina, to working to reopen the neighborhood school and library and redevelop a former automobile dealership into a multi-use building. Much of the fervor with which the BDC has worked in Broad has to do with the fact that Broadmoor, like Village L’Est, was labeled as a ‘green dot’ during the BNOBC planning process, and therefore felt the need to assert its viability as a neighborhood. Partly as a result of the BDC’s efforts, over 70% of the homes in the neighborhood have been or are currently being renovated. However, while most of the upriver section of the neighborhood is back, the downriver, poorer segment of the community continues to struggle to regain its footing after Katrina.

Food Access

Broadmoor had only a moderate level of food access prior to Katrina. A Winn-Dixie supermarket at the intersection of Claiborne and Louisiana Avenues provided most of the fresh food access for the neighborhood, along with a cluster of convenience stores at Washington Avenue and Broad Street on the neighborhood’s northern edge. However, Broadmoor also had disparities in food access before the storm that
were partly predicated on the lack of automobility in the poorer sections of the neighborhood, and those differences were accentuated after the storm permanently shuttered the Winn-Dixie. In addition to the closing of the only supermarket in the neighborhood, almost none of the corner stores have reopened after Katrina. A variety of fast food restaurants are open on the river-side of Claiborne Avenue, and the nearest groceries are either in Uptown or Mid-City.

Market Description
The Broadmoor market began in October 2007. It was a weekly fresh food market held Thursday afternoons from 3PM to 7PM, and was a combination farmers market and prepared foods market. The market was established jointly by the BDC and the Free Church of the Annunciation, with the explicit aim of addressing the food access needs of the neighborhood. A Times-Picayune headline on the opening of the market describes the market as “reacting to a lack of local grocery stores and restaurants in their neighborhood following Katrina, Broadmoor residents start their own farmers’ market.” (Boyd). The month before I was supposed to visit the Broadmoor Market, the organizers decided to put the market on hiatus due to difficulties operating and managing the market. The market had two locations during its first incarnation: the first was in the more affluent section of the neighborhood, at the corner of Claiborne Avenue and Octavia Street at the First Presbyterian Church, but it was later moved downriver along Claiborne to the Free Church of the Annunciation, at the corner of Claiborne Avenue and Jena Street.

Market Organization
The Broadmoor Heaven Sent Market is most instructive for the reasons that it currently is not operating. The market itself was fairly typical in its operation and mix of vendors: while its intentions were to provide food access, the market had difficulties in getting farmers to come to the market, and therefore relied on a number of prepared food vendors. While the Broadmoor Market could not be considered a farmers market, it was still a far cry from the lack of fresh food found at the Lakeview and Freret Markets; instead, the market hosted three farmers who grew within an hour of the city and who offered a small range of fresh food, from seafood to organic fruits and vegetables, in addition to the gelato from a local gelateria, Middle Eastern dips and plates from a local restaurant, cheeses from a local cheese company, smoothies, and hot plate meals. As with other markets, the Broadmoor market was generally a social gathering space for the neighborhood, where a large number of residents walked or cycled to the market, and where the BIA had a presence and could interface with its residents.

However, the Broadmoor market underwent dramatic
changes after a few months of steady operation that eventually resulted in its closure in February 2008. This was the result of both bad luck and management issues, but it was mostly the result of the difficulties that the market organizers had in meeting their self-imposed mandate to provide food access for the poorer residents of the neighborhood. The initial market manager, Rusty Berridge, left after several months at the helm of the market, and the Free Church of the Annunciation (FCA) moved the market from the First Presbyterian Church location to the FCA’s campus closer to Napoleon Avenue. After the first month at the new location, the weather turned bad for a number of weeks, which forced the market onto pavement (which is less attractive to linger), and the Broadmoor market lost its regular musician, ‘Magazine Dave.’ Moreover, Thursday is the day that the city does most of its health code inspections and enforcement, which resulted in the market discovering that several of its vendors were out of code and that the market itself had no food handling guidelines. There was also some confusion amongst neighborhood residents after the initial move as to the location of the new market.

Yet, the single most important factor in the difficulties experienced by the Broadmoor Market was moving the market from a more affluent part of the neighborhood to a less affluent one. According to Asia Wall, who became the manager of the market after Rusty Berridge left, the goal of the market is “to give food access to lower income people in neighborhood, who can’t just go to Whole Foods and get locally grown, nutritious food.” The Broadmoor market was initially so successful because, in Asia’s words, “people [from the wealthier portions of Broadmoor] were able to walk there [to the market] instead of driving to Whole Foods. We were not really creating access for people who don’t have access; [we were] just creating more access for people who already have it.” This had the perverse effect of giving the vendors an “inflated idea about what their profits were going to be, because [the market] was doing well.” Asia continues:

so when we moved it to the actual permanent location—which is a lower income area—yeah, now we have people who are able to walk there who don’t have [food] access otherwise—which is the mission—but then vendors say ‘well our profits just dropped in half.’ We had some conflicts. When we moved to the new space we lost half our vendors immediately.

Precisely by placing the market where it was most able to fulfill its mission, the Broadmoor market created difficulties it found impossible to overcome.

The experience of the Broadmoor market reveals the paradox of food access, especially after a disaster. The areas that most need the fresh food and community development that markets can provide are also those areas that are most problematic for managing a successful market. While there were inherent logistical difficulties associated with that move, Broadmoor’s example is instructive because it shows
in microcosm the difficult decisions to be made about food access in New Orleans after Katrina, and in disinvested-in communities more generally. It will always be easier to go into the more affluent neighborhoods, but there is just as much demand and arguably a greater need for fresh food access in just those areas that have the least.

The Broadmoor market’s aim remains the same. The market organizers have plans to bring the market back over the summer of 2008 as a monthly market, but they plan on eventually returning to a weekly or even a semi-weekly market. Asia summarizes that the market is tied to the BIA’s attempt to use the storm to make the neighborhood a better place than it was prior to the storm, and to construct a narrative about overcoming:

The mission is to help people of Broadmoor—especially the lower income residents—have access to the food they have not had access to, and to have that sense of solidarity, and to exchanging ideas about what is going on and what needs to keep going on. The market aims to give people a forum, and a place to do that.

[Broadmoor] is already better than it was before. The storm hit these areas that were not that well off established areas,... but it’s a sink or swim issue—the storm has been a catalyst for great change to come about. People realized that they don’t want to see this place [Broadmoor] destroyed. It’s definitely getting better than what was before. The status quo is gone—obliterated. This market is a part of everything. That’s why the BIA is so committed to it.

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Making Groceries

neighborhoods served by the St. Bernard Public Market and then the Circle Food Store, with which we began this inquiry. Mid-City and Lower Mid-City (formerly Tulane-Gravier neighborhood) makes up the western side of Broad Street on both the lake and the river sides of the street. Mid-City is an extremely diverse neighborhood. And on the eastern lakeside of Broad lies Faubourg St. John, a vibrant neighborhood of Creole architecture, large oaks, the.

Katrina History
The neighborhoods surrounding Broad were dramatically impacted by the hurricane. Faubourg St. John was spared much of the flooding because it was located on Esplanade Ridge, as was the Tremé, which is mostly on high ground, but all of Mid-City received several feet of water. Since Katrina, there has been significant development pressure, especially on Tulane Avenue.

Food Access
The neighborhoods abutting Broad Street enjoyed generally good food access in the years leading up to Katrina. One of the original Schwegmann’s Supermarket locations was at Broad and Bienville, which had become a Robert’s that operated until the storm. This served Lower Mid-City (Tulane-Gravier), parts of Mid-City not served by other groceries, and the Tremé. Tremé was also served by a Winn-Dixie at Orleans and Claiborne, and there was also another Robert’s serving Mid-City at Carrollton and Canal. Faubourg St. John had a Whole Foods and then other grocers at a site near Bayou St. John, as well as the long-standing Terranova Market. Only the Terranova and the grocer at the former Whole Foods site have reopened.

Market Description
The market will be a monthly market, held on Friday evenings from 4PM to 7PM. The market will have seafood, music, arts and crafts, and beer. It will be located in the former Robert’s Grocery parking lot at Broad and Bienville.
Streets in Lower Mid City. The founders of the market hope that the market will be a unifying force amongst the disparate neighborhoods. They also hope that the expected crowds will help to make the case for the viability of Broad Street as a location for a fresh food grocery.

**Market Organization**

As of spring 2008, the Broad Street Market is in the process of being established by a newly created non-profit called Broad Street Community Connections. The group is comprised of members from the four diverse neighborhoods that abut Broad Street: Tremé, Lower Mid City (formerly Tulane-Gravier), Mid City, and Faubourg St. John. According to the BSCC, the primary purpose of the Broad Street Market is a social one; the organizers are hoping to create a physical space where all of the people from the four diverse neighborhoods surrounding Broad Street can interact. In the words of Lisa Amoss, one of the market organizers, the aim of the market is “trying to fit the neighborhoods, where all of the people will feel comfortable at the same time, which is not that easy to design” (personal interview).

Unlike any of the others, this market is intended to bring together four relatively disparate neighborhoods rather than a single community. All of the initial advertising will be in the four neighborhoods. The market will be held weekly on Friday evenings from 4PM to 7PM in the parking lot of the

The Broad Street market plan; the market will be fairly large, with initial room for 36 vendors. source: Paul Ikemire
former Robert’s Grocery. The owner of the Robert’s property has recently made plans to convert the structure into a self-storage facility, but the BSCC negotiated an agreement with developer to permit the market to take place in the parking lot.

The market founders initially hoped that the Robert’s grocery store would reopen. Lisa Amoss recounts that the discussion between neighborhoods and the developer was “contentious. It took us a while to come together. We said ‘we don’t want self storage, we want Trader Joe’s!’ (personal interview). In what is the only instance of post-Katrina neighborhood market organizers having to negotiate with the owner of a market site, members of the BSCC were able to ensure the parking lot could be used for the market, and that agreement was written into the New Orleans City Council minutes.

The founders initially hoped to have fresh produce, but quickly realized how much more difficult it would be. The biggest constraining variable was that there are not any farmers, so while the BSCC will work with partners such as the New Orleans Food and Farm Network to cultivate fresh food growers—including trying to restart a community garden in the adjacent Lafitte Greenway—the Broad Street Market will begin by focusing less on the food access issue and more emphasis on the social aspects of the market.

Paul Ikemire (another of the market founders, as well as the head of PNOLA, which is the neighborhood organization of Lower Mid City) spoke of these difficulties, saying it is “really difficult to get farmers. It’s one of the big issues. It’s not as easy as doing a flea market—it takes a lot more help, more regulations and policies. There’s more marketing and catering to vendors. So we are focusing this first round on cultural and social elements.” Lisa Amoss concludes, “we will try to get produce, but that won’t be as big a part of it” at the outset (personal interview). The Broad Street Market successfully applied for a grant from the Greater New Orleans Foundation to provide start-up funding for the market, and in that application, the market organizers explicitly state that one of the main purposes of the market is to prove the viability of a green grocer on Broad Street.

The market will have a relatively unique mix of vendors. The BSCC will be able to get seafood vendors, so the markets will initially be a combination of seafood (which works well on Fridays in a Catholic city like New Orleans, Lisa Amoss notes), a few produce sellers, arts and crafts, music, beer, and wine. The founders have expressed the hope that the market will be a more permanent institution on the Broad Street landscape: “if we can create a place where people can gather, rubbing shoulders, tied to the Lafitte Greenway development and the development of Broad Street, then this market could be an anchor” (personal interview). The organizers even expressed an interest in eventually moving...
to a permanent structure, and identified the former public market structure that is still standing at the intersection of Bayou Road and Broad Street as a potential site.

The founders of the Broad Street Market aspire to create a market that repairs to a community that is better than what existed previous to Katrina. As Lisa Amoss put it, almost any connections between the neighborhoods would be an improvement: “these neighborhoods never interacted at all before Katrina” (personal interview). The Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF) found the vision for the market persuasive; in April 2008, the Broad Street Market was one of only nineteen grants awarded by the GNOF for neighborhood recovery projects (Finch). Paul Ikemire envisions the neighborhood market and events like it not supplementing more traditional forms of community organizing, but supplanting them:

The traditional method of community organizing is mundane and straightforward: meetings, agendas; it doesn’t really attract a lot of people. It’s not inspirational to come meet and socialize. I think a good element of community organizing is theater... just the way New Orleans is, you gotta have theater. I’m learning more about community theater and community art, where you can present ideas, and issues as visual, have a dialogue with the neighborhood.

With the greenway for instance, you can have a small skit or play to outline how it looks, feels, smells, expressions—you can see the greenway on stage and talk about it afterwards. Each meeting you take the issues and you act them out. Learning about this here. The community market itself, social development itself, you can have it on stage, act out on stage the issues in between bands.

Getting people to understand the impacts on them through meetings and handouts gives me a headache and you have people that can’t read well or don’t like to read or just don’t have time.

It can be any city, but in New Orleans it’s especially important to look, feel, smell, interact. Me alone, I know that no one yet has been inspirational enough to pull everyone together amongst the real long-term people in these neighborhoods. I can try, but you gotta have more to the neighborhood than just trying to have organized meetings where no one really cares. (personal interview)

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The neighborhoods that have started markets since the storm represent wide cross-sections of the city attempting to address similar post-storm challenges. The experience of neighborhood markets suggests several lessons and implications about both neighborhood food access and the larger process of recovery, which are addressed in the next chapter.

Notes

1 Not only does the re-creation of a garden landscape reminiscent of rural Vietnam represent a familiar past environment in the tangible present, but because the cultivation of plants requires daily attention, a sense of responsibility, commitment, and accomplishment, gardening also heightens self-esteem. The elderly are thus afforded an opportunity to create order in a new socioeconomic environment over which they otherwise have little control...

Intimately linked to the psychological adjustments of the elderly are parallel adjustments in dietary habits. For any immigrant group, traditional foods represent a connection to the past, function
to maintain ethnic identity, and assist in reducing the effects of acculturation...

[E]conomic satisfaction associated with the cultivation of crops is another important component of the psychological adjustment of the elderly... By providing an almost full complement of vegetables, herbs, and root crops that are basic to the traditional Vietnamese diet, the elderly substantially reduce household food expenditures. (Airiess and Clawson 19-20)
CHAPTER 4

Markets and Failures

Neighborhood markets seem to occupy a unique niche in New Orleans’ post-Katrina landscape, but how are these markets addressing the two interrelated questions that are at the core of this thesis: after Katrina, to what extent are neighborhood markets compensating for a lack of fresh food access, and what are the socioeconomic, symbolic, cultural, and political functions of the neighborhood markets?

This thesis has argued that food plays a larger role in cities than is typically appreciated, especially in times of emergency. Before people even had to evacuate, food access affected how people would be able to respond to catastrophic disaster by coloring citizens’ ability to reach out to neighbors, their physical well-being, and psychological health. During a disaster, access to food can be a life-and-death consideration, as the images that introduced this thesis attest. And food also plays a role after disaster, where those neighborhoods that have the practical and social amenities embodied in will be more likely to be able to attract existing and prospective residents and provide for their welfare. As we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, through the twentieth century the food system has changed alongside the broader the patterns of uneven urban development, and as a result urban communities have widely varying access to fresh food. These disparities are accentuated during disaster, and dramatically affect how neighborhoods experience a catastrophe. Thus, insofar as neighborhood markets are attempting to address the food access and socioeconomic needs of their respective neighborhoods, they are also providing glimpses into the ways in which vulnerability and resiliency are playing out ‘on the ground.’

This chapter synthesizes the responses and interviews from Chapter 4 in order to understand how neighborhood
markets are addressing the needs of their respective neighborhoods. From this analysis, I draw three broad conclusions:

1. Food Access: the continued and heightened disparities in fresh food access, and the inability of neighborhood markets to compensate for that lack of food access;
2. Resiliency: the fragility of recovery on social and economic grounds, and the limited ability of neighborhood markets to offset that fragility; and,
3. City Government: the failure of government to effectively respond to the storm.

These lessons show that while markets have attempted to meet the food access and resilience needs of their communities, they typically come up lacking in all respects. This is meant to be no indictment of the markets, their shoppers, vendors, or organizers. Instead, neighborhood markets are windows into the larger issues of recovery and resilience in New Orleans, and that process has obviously been problematic and lacking on many fronts. The ways that neighborhood markets have come up short are also glimpses into the shortcomings of recovery more generally.

### 1. Food Access

The geography of food access after Katrina has worsened after the storm, and neighborhood markets are unable to compensate for those shortcomings in the food system. The geography of food access after Katrina is mirroring pre-storm disparities, except they have deepened. As we saw in Chapter 3, food access after the storm has remained high in areas of affluence and in areas that were not heavily affected by Katrina, but has been decimated in those neighborhoods that were significantly flooded by the storm. The experience of neighborhood markets offers a glimpse into how neighborhoods are attempting to cope with those changes. Neighborhood markets are not meeting the heightened food access needs of their communities for a variety of reasons, including the infrequency of markets, the lack of farmers and vendors in the greater New Orleans area, and the limited number of residents who have been able to return in neighborhoods that have been wiped out by Katrina.

#### Infrequency of Markets

Because they are only held weekly or monthly, the neighborhood markets are by definition not regular sources of food access. While this does not necessarily entail that the neighborhood markets are not meeting the food access needs of their respective communities, it makes that
prospect highly unlikely. This does not surprise one of the recovery officials I interviewed in the Office of Recovery and Development Authority (ORDA). Speaking with hyperbole for effect, he says:

Markets are a tourist attraction! It’s not big enough or popular enough or frequent enough to serve as a satisfaction of people’s real, fundamental needs... And I don’t know what percentage of people’s fundamental food needs are being served [by these markets]. My guess is it’s fairly low. (personal interview)

Some markets, such as the Gretna Farmer’s Market and the Upper Ninth Ward Market, are able to supplement residents’ grocery shopping habits, but not one of the markets regularly supplies the majority of its community’s food access. The monthly markets do not even try.

Lack of Farmers
The neighborhood markets in New Orleans are also failing to satisfy food access needs because of a lack of farmers and growers. Every neighborhood market expressed that they would love to have as many farmers attend the market as they could get, but getting fresh food vendors was the largest challenge they faced. That was the case for the first markets started after the storm, and it remains the case for the Broad Street market, which is opening this year. As Richard McCarthy, the executive director of MarketUmbrella.org and the Crescent City Farmers Market, summarizes the situation: “we need a hundred new farmers. I think if we had the supply, we could parade them all over town [to different markets]. The demand is clearly there” (Walker, “Fruits & Veggies of Our Labor”). To that end, MarketUmbrella.org has created a ‘forager’ position on its staff whose sole responsibility is to find or help establish new farmers and connect them to markets in the city. However, the process of helping tie new farmers to the recently-created neighborhood markets takes time, and there is still a shortage of farmers and produce vendors across the city that hinders the amount of fresh food that neighborhood markets can provide.

Impact of Storm on Neighborhoods
The impact of the storm on neighborhoods has the obvious effect of limiting the number of residents who could potentially support a neighborhood market, but the neighborhoods that bore the brunt of the storm are also the ones with the greatest need for food access in the aftermath of Katrina. This was the case in the Lower Ninth Ward and Broadmoor, and the fact that neither was able to remain open as markets oriented towards food access is instructive.

Post-Katrina neighborhood markets can be generalized according to the impact of Katrina and the level of post-Katrina food access marginalization in a given
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neighborhood. While this neighborhood market matrix is meant to illustrate the relationship between food access, disaster, and neighborhood response, it also offers some predictive indications as to how neighborhoods in New Orleans or elsewhere might be expected to create a market based on its peculiar disaster and food access experiences.

By way of definition, food access marginalization is an inaccessibility to or difficulty accessing fresh food as a result of a variety of factors, including lack of an automobile or transit, lack of fresh or local food, or Katrina-induced grocery closure.

In those communities that were only mildly affected by disaster and that have only experienced a low level of food access marginalization, we should not expect many neighborhood markets of any stripe to be created. However, this should raise questions about the Crescent City Farmers Market (CCFM)’s priorities after the storm; the CCFM market are located in neighborhoods which were hardly touched by Katrina and which do not suffer from a lack of food access.

Certainly the CCFM is facing the same issues related to expanding into more marginalized neighborhoods as the various neighborhood markets. Those neighborhoods that were hit hard by the storm but that do not have a history of marginalized food access seem to create social markets, or what are more typically called festivals. The Broad Street Market organizers call it a flea market, and there are surely other names. This is the most common type of market in New Orleans, and includes the Freret, Lakeview, Broad, and Broadmoor markets.

Conversely, those neighborhoods that were relatively lightly touched by Katrina, but which suffered from a comparatively high level of food access marginalization, create food markets, or markets oriented to vendors selling almost exclusively to food, without any necessary connection to larger neighborhood issues related to the storm, and absent any chronic socioeconomic disinvestment in the neighborhood. Lastly, those neighborhoods which were hit hard and that had a history of marginalized food access would be expected to developed what I am calling ‘complete markets,’ which address both food needs as well as the socioeconomic and political needs of the neighborhood.
This simple GIS raster analysis illustrates the cumulative effects of storm impact and food access marginalization on a community. In the analysis, distance to nearest fresh food access is the proxy for food access marginalization, and depth of flooding is the variable used to measure the impact of Katrina. The areas that suffered the highest impacts of Katrina as well as have the worst access to fresh food after the storm are darkest. Markets in these areas typically attempt to meet both social as well as food access needs, whereas those neighborhoods in lighter areas on this map generally have markets that are more exclusively social or community economic development in nature.
This rubric predicts market location and type through the level of impact of a disaster and the history of food access marginalization. While many other factors are involved, the relationship between food and resiliency is a salient one, and one that this thesis is arguing deserves greater attention.

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2. Resilience
Markets have a number of valuable functions, and have become an important institution on the landscape of recovery in the city. Yet while markets have a number are meeting some of the social, economic, and community needs of neighborhoods, they are doing so on a sporadic basis. The experience of neighborhood markets after Katrina is largely a testament to the fragility and tenuousness of recovery in New Orleans. Especially in the communities most deeply impacted by Katrina, the markets show just how far the reality of recovery is from the aspirations of their neighborhoods and the rhetoric of recovery officials.

The Values of Markets
Unequivocally, neighborhood markets are meeting some of the social and economic development needs and goals of the neighborhoods, and are providing some social and psychological benefits for residents. Markets can be a tremendously affirmative experience for individuals. For many New Orleanians, the decision to rebuild was a difficult one, and seeing friends and new faces and the markets is often a validation of the decision to return or stay. The act of participating in the market in some ways helps transform vulnerability into resiliency; in some senses, neighborhood markets are sites for the production of resiliency. Far from being frivolous entertainment, many of the individuals I interviewed—vendors and shoppers alike—expressed how the socializing, food, and music were bound up with their aspirations for their neighborhood. As was the case with New Orleans’ historic food system, food access at the neighborhood markets is inextricably tied to larger neighborhood social networks. This is the power of food access. Going to markets the promotes not just physical but also psychological well-being.

One of the defining aspects of markets can be called the ‘benefits of respite.’ Perhaps because markets are only taking place on a weekly or monthly basis, individuals enjoy markets—and the food and other shopping that they offer—as a break from the incessant difficulties of rebuilding. A common refrain amongst market-goers and grocery shoppers in New Orleans after the storm was the “market is a nice break” or, as a Lakeview market shopper put it: “the market gives me the night off from cooking.” Even when the market was not providing fresh food access, the
prepared foods were often a convenience that shoppers greatly appreciated. A Gretna market shopper alludes to the psychological benefits of taking some time at the market: “without community you sit in your house all day by yourself and focus on the long list of things you have to do—that’s not New Orleans style.”

Many of the shoppers and vendors characterize their experience at going to markets and groceries during the period of reconstruction as a time for centering themselves after the frenetic pace of recovery. That is to say, neighborhood markets—and food shopping more generally—provide not just the sustaining aspects of food, but also the spaces for socializing and individual reflection (Troeh, “Food-Shopping a Challenge”). Greta Gladney of the Renaissance Project notes that their Upper Ninth Ward Market is located within one block of both an assisted living home and a senior living center (indeed, the namesake of the market—Holy Angels—is a senior living center). Seniors that visit the market benefit from the contact and interaction, and the multigenerational character of the Renaissance Project markets is actually a priority for Greta (personal interview, LPHI). Richard McCarthy, the director of the Crescent City Farmers Market, observed that after the storm friends reconnected with one another at markets: “if government failure was one of the major stories of Katrina, civic engagement was the other” (quoted in Gilsinian). He keenly notes that

You have to consider the amount of stress people are under right now... They’re going to the market for a break from our house-gutting lives and to see a glimpse of the gentleness that can exist in our city. This is about more than shopping. It’s more than markets. It’s a public declaration of commitment and togetherness. It’s saying, ‘We’re here.’ There’s a local solidarity that develops from that and people get pretty emotional about it, too. People are engaging and connecting with each other and becoming aware of why they live here in a way that other cities would kill for. I think markets are places that help express that. (quoted in McNulty, “Market Makers”)

At bottom, much of recovery is a problem of collective action. For almost any challenge to rebuilding a city after disaster—from housing to schools to municipal services to food access—the challenge of whether demand by residents should precede supply of services, or whether services should precede demand, comprises an oftentimes paralyzing chicken-and-egg problem. On the neighborhood level, the solitary occupied house on an otherwise vacant block—the so-called “jack-o’-lantern” effect—often epitomizes this. In many ways, neighborhood markets represent a partial solution to these trenchant difficulties of rebuilding. At the Lakeview Market, for instance, the Beacon of Hope invites the Lakeview Civic Improvement Association as well as a group of realtors to sit in two tents at the market in order to provide information to residents about rebuilding. The realtors in particular have been providing information to homeowners about the little-advertised and even less-understood options
with the Road Home program.

Finally, markets are providing some community economic development benefits, though these are limited. While most of the smaller markets are almost negligible in their economic impact to the surrounding community, some of the larger markets—like Freret and Lakeview—are providing an economic stimulus to their neighborhoods that has the potential to carry over into the creation of new business. Recall that one of the vendors from the Freret Street Market was able to use the income he generated at the Freret and other markets to open a retail storefront this year. While these are just the sort of examples that the market organizations love to hold up as one of the positive economic impacts of the neighborhood markets, the instances of retail spinoffs are few and far between.

In addition to the many pragmatic purposes of neighborhood markets, markets are also highly symbolic spaces that are meant to signify the ongoing recovery and vitality of a community. In some neighborhoods—including Broadmoor and Village L’Est—several of the individuals and market managers specifically placed markets in a position of defiance to the Bring New Orleans Back Commission’s plans to turn their neighborhoods into green space. We can call this the ‘Green Dot’ effect, in which many markets are motivated by the desire for neighborhoods to symbolically make their own plans in defiance of the city plans being made for them. Perhaps most importantly, markets are held regularly, marking out the time of recovery and hopefully—as markets grow—symbolizing the increasing viability and vibrancy of a neighborhood.

One of the most interesting features of several of the post-Katrina neighborhood markets in New Orleans is that they are held in parking lots of shuttered grocery stores. The juxtaposition of holding a market with several thousand jubilant attendees in the vacant parking lot of a former supermarket—as is the case with both the Lakeview Market and the planned Broad Street Market—is both a comment on the specific food access issues still facing neighborhoods, as well as a more general indictment of the pace of recovery and a symbolic affirmation of a neighborhood’s renewal.

Other neighborhood markets are valuable for looking to join together several communities by providing the space for that to unfold. Markets often occupy liminal spaces at the intersection between neighborhoods, partly because major streets in New Orleans are often dividing lines, but also because neighborhoods often have separate segments. Markets are therefore helping to identifying community spaces. Indeed, many market managers have expressed an overt aim to bring neighborhoods together or ‘break down walls.’ To a certain extent this is present in every market, but the markets in Freret, Broadmoor, the Upper Ninth Ward, and on Broad Street make this goal most plain.
Food access adds another level of symbolism to some of the New Orleans neighborhood markets. Because of the city’s unique food system, many of the markets are using that tradition as a way to repair to neighborhoods that are better than existed before the storm. As quoted in Chapter 3, Greta Gladney notes the tremendous practical and symbolic resonance of a public market system:

> once upon a time, the municipal government took responsibility for food access. The city managed the system to ensure that there was food access across neighborhoods. (personal interview)

Gladney offers a complicated notion of resiliency—one that echoes Diane Davis’ account of Mexico City after the 1985 earthquake I touched on in Chapter 2. Most of the neighborhoods markets are symbolic of neighborhoods’ attempts to address what their residents perceived as inadequacies that arch back not just to the storm, but decades of disinvestment. As Gladney notes, “the Lower Nine hasn’t had a grocery in thirty years” (DocNO, “Ninth Ward Farmers Market”). For many, resiliency is not just reconstruction, but reclaiming what was lost or never there before.

In this way, neighborhood organizations are employing the political facets of neighborhood markets in order to attempt to sway urban reconstruction. Establishing a market in a sense is an attempt by a neighborhood to ensure that the story of recovery gets told in the setting of their particular neighborhood. Markets can thus be seen, in part, as attempts put specific neighborhoods on the agenda for urban development. For all the reasons above enumerated, neighborhood markets are valuable institutions on the landscape of recovery in New Orleans.

The Failures of Markets

For all of their merits, however, the manner in which markets are falling short of meeting the material needs of their communities is a commentary on the fragile status of rebuilding in the city. The values of neighborhood markets in New Orleans after the storm are largely limited to psychological and symbolic functions rather than economic development or improving food access. While this is not to denigrate the oftentimes heroic efforts of the various neighborhood markets, I am highlighting the distance between the aspirations of markets and the reality of recovery in neighborhoods.

These failures are a partial indictment of the culture of New Orleans, which for too long has settled on having ephemeral events rather fostering community economic development. It has simply been easier to have an event than to rebuild buildings and supermarkets. While I am the first to celebrate markets, festivals, and the spontaneous
 spirit of my city, the experience of the neighborhood markets shows that they cannot replace more regular avenues of food access. After the storm, it is patently obvious that while food access may not require building supermarkets, it does require markets that are at least on a weekly basis—rain or shine—and which have a plethora of fresh food options.

It is eminently telling that food, which is so central to many of New Orleanians’ conception of their city, remains utterly neglected as a topic of public policy. Markets, which are also a part of the city’s culture, are held only weekly or once a month. While many of the visions for neighborhood markets are grand, the on-the-ground reality shows how vulnerable these communities remain after over two and a half years. The experience of neighborhood markets shows how elusive recovery remains, especially in the most deeply impacted neighborhoods.

3. Failure of Government

While acknowledging some of the impossible difficulties facing city government after a disaster the magnitude of Katrina and the sometimes-laughably botched response at higher levels of government, the experience of neighborhood markets is in several respects a failure of local government to effectively respond to the storm. In particular, the neighborhood markets and the continuing needs and struggles that the markets represent are a regular reminder that something as fundamental to recovery and resilience as food access is going largely neglected.

The City Council as well as recovery officials recognize that many New Orleanians’ food access needs are not being satisfied by the current food system, but all that has happened over thirty months after the storm has been a study chartered by the City Council and performed by the Food Policy Advisory Committee (FPAC). The FPAC is a blue-ribbon commission comprised of local and national food retailers, the Tulane School of Public Health, Philadelphia’s Food Trust, and a variety of local food advocates and stakeholders, amongst others. The FPAC released a list of ten recommendations during the first quarter of 2008 that is largely focused on incentivizing food access and reducing regulatory and other barriers to food access, such as lack of transit. While the FPAC’s recommendations are certainly best practices, the fact remains that over thirty months from the storm, the city has recognized the deficiencies in New Orleans’ food system and done very little about it. As one Office of Recovery and Development Administration (ORDA) employee tautly acknowledges, “the FPAC didn’t come up with anything the City Council could do” (personal interview).

Moreover, the ORDA has recognized since its inception the potential value of neighborhood markets and the importance of food access, and yet remains unable
or unwilling to act effectively to address those community needs. Recovery officials claim that they recognize the potential for neighborhood markets in the recovery off the city. Dr. Blakely, the head of the ORDA, is rather eloquent in describing how neighborhood markets have factored into the planning for his recovery ‘target areas,’ which will receive the initial sums of public recovery investment:

You gotta start with the market. These markets, accidentally, are located along the spine of the city. When I was choosing the target areas, after I chose the second or third one, I said ‘wait a second—these were market centers.’ Just look at the spacing—it’s the same distance in the old days that people would walk. These are ideal places for anyone who was going to market something to sit… These are of course the locations where markets were before, and where we’re bringing them back.

David Cody, who works in the ORDA under Dr. Blakely, also notes his interest in how the markets might play a role in arriving at what he calls “sustainable, daily retail space” for food access. One of his ideas echoes that of Greta Gladney’s vision:

One of the things that the city might do instead of subsidizing individual private businesses, is set up the [public] markets again. We pay entire infrastructure cost, Build building, put roof on, give it water supply. We have a stall, you sign up, if you sell onions—if you do that, we have a place for you. It’s potentially viable.

We’re rebuilding the Target Areas with an awareness of where the traditional market areas were in the city. And I would guess that the locations where those used to be are fairly good locations now. (personal interview)

The city, for all of its recognition of the problem, has been incapable to act on its recognition of the problem of food access and the potential for neighborhood markets.

It is telling that the first projects undertaken through the city’s post-Katrina recovery plan were food-related. These so-called ‘trigger projects’ were meant to galvanize interest and investment in the areas the city’s Office of Recovery and Development Administration (ORDA) identified as salient. The first one at the Circle Food Store, where the city helped to sponsor a once-only market day in the parking lot of the still-shuttered store fully two years after the storm to test to see the market demand for reopening the grocery. This city-sponsored project took place at the precise location as the photos that began this thesis.

The second of such ‘trigger projects’ was the funding of the Freret Street Market. According to Peter Gardner and Michelle Ingram (the managers of the Freret market), the city provided little guidance as to the market, and when it came time for the city to cut a check for $9,010, the ORDA changed their award to the neighborhood from a grant to a loan with an indefinite payback period (personal interview). Peter and Michelle were still happy to have public support of the market, but were slightly underwhelmed at the city’s financial and technical support of the Freret market. Both Mayor Nagin and the recovery director Blakely were present at the opening of the Freret Street Market, where Dr. Blakely, who had been promising but failing to have ‘cranes in the sky’
as symbols of New Orleans’ rebuilding by September 2007, insisted that the Freret Street Market was a symbolic crane in the sky (CNO Press Release).

The city’s relationship with the neighborhood markets is an indictment of the city’s recovery policies and actions since the storm. On the practical side, the experience of the markets shows the folly of the ORDA’s focus on large-scale projects even as some of the few projects that have been able to quickly support have been associated with neighborhood-level markets. This is not to claim that the city does not need to rebuild infrastructure or promote private development; far from it. But it is suggest that the city is missing out on an opportunity. Geoff Coates, director of the Urban Conservancy, which is a local entity focusing on local economic development, characterizes the post-storm situation as one that is continuing bad pre-storm policies:

The city has been abandoning small businesses for decades… the city spends a lot of time, money, and effort going after large projects that more than often never materialize, and they don’t invest the small amounts that could really do something… One of the challenges of New Orleans, not just with recovery, but the recovery has exacerbated it, has been a lack of vision and leadership.

And yet he is still optimistic about neighborhood markets and what they represent:

what I think the [neighborhood] markets show is—I’ve seen more interesting, better projects in the last couple years than at any time since I moved down here… Before the storm, several neighborhoods asked the Crescent City Farmers Market to set up a market for them, and now, the Crescent City Farmers Market still won’t but neighborhoods did it anyway. (personal interview)

Certainly, neighborhoods and individual residents are responsible for being proactive communities and citizens, but the city has thus far failed to engage neighborhoods and failed to carry the propulsive post-storm momentum of civic engagement on any meaningful level, even when the neighborhood markets show that on issues as vital as food access, communities are more than willing to meet the city more than halfway.

The experience of neighborhood markets is also an indictment of the city’s (and especially the Mayor’s) larger laissez-faire approach to recovery. As the neighborhood markets have shown, many of the problems associated with rebuilding after a disaster are chicken-and-egg problems of coordinating expectations and managing collective action. Apart from designating areas for redevelopment, the city has been woefully inept at helping to guide the overall redevelopment of the city, and has been deliberately silent on policy issues related to guiding private development. It is emblematic of the larger process of recovery that despite recognizing the myriad problems related to the city’s urban food system and the potential of neighborhood markets to help address neighborhood food access and resilience concerns, New Orleans’ leaders have done almost nothing to support neighborhood markets.
In writing this thesis, I was hoping to tell a story of the ways in which neighborhood markets were meeting many of the needs of their communities, but through no fault of their own, and not for lack of trying, that promise is going largely unfulfilled. Markets have hardly made a dent in food access needs in most neighborhoods, and while they have certainly provided a social gathering space, that space is ephemeral and far too infrequent. To quote a shopper at the Freret Market again: “if this is all we can do two-and-a-half years after Katrina, then leadership is seriously lacking. We need much more and sooner.”
I conclude this thesis by looking at the general implications of the experience of neighborhood markets for planners and policymakers, and I make specific recommendations regarding the food system and neighborhood markets in post-Katrina New Orleans. The general implications are interrelated: the experience of neighborhood markets make the case for the importance of the food system to planners and policymakers, as well as the importance of expanding the notion of urban resilience to include chronic problems, not just catastrophic ones. The recommendations are specific to New Orleans, but could be readily adapted to any city in the US or post-disaster context.

1. The Food System

Above all else, the experience of neighborhood markets in New Orleans after Katrina demands that planners and policymakers take full account of the food system. This entails understanding how the planning and policy choices we make are intertwined with the health and resiliency of our communities. Only in the last few years has planning as a discipline begun to acknowledge the importance of food. The Board of Directors of the APA adopted its “Community and Regional Food Planning” policy guide in April and May of 2007. Its opening lines are worth quoting in full:

Food is a sustaining and enduring necessity. Yet among the basic essentials for life — air, water, shelter, and food — only food has been absent over the years as a focus of serious professional planning interest. This is a puzzling omission because, as a discipline, planning marks its distinctiveness by being comprehensive in scope and attentive to the temporal dimensions and spatial interconnections among important facets of community life.

A full litany of the areas that the APA identifies in its 2007 food policy guide is unnecessary here, but it is enough to say in summary that the guide appreciates the many “benefits
from stronger community and regional food systems” (APA
Food Policy Guide). Moreover, issues related to food access
touch on a variety of professional areas to which planners
are already attuned, such as neighborhood and community
economic development, environmental and economic
justice, and public health (APA Food Policy Guide; Pothukuchi
& Kaufman, “Food System” 118). Jerome L. Kaufman recently
commented that the APA policy guide helps offer planners
two overarching goals of helping to:

- build stronger, sustainable, and more self-reliant
  community and regional food systems, and to suggest
  ways the dominant industrial food system might interact
  with communities and regions to enhance benefits such as
  economic vitality, public health, ecological sustainability,
  social equity, and cultural diversity. (URPL Connections 7)

Neighborhood markets have the potential to fill many of
these niches in a community. In a personal interview, he
reiterated the possibilities for food planning in New Orleans,
and the prospective benefits of neighborhood markets in
fulfilling these same roles.

**Food and the City**

Food has a variety of effects on the communities in which
planners work. Planners and policymakers have begun to
consider the role of urban design and urban food access in
public health. A recent, extensive study of Chicago’s food
system sponsored by LaSalle bank explored the relationship
between the race, health, and food access. The researchers
found that vast swaths of Chicago could be characterized as
‘Food Deserts,’ where affordable, healthy food was difficult
or impossible to procure while fast food was omnipresent
(Food Deserts 5). The presence of food deserts is correlated
to mobility, poverty, and race, issues that planners typically
consider in earnest. It is no coincidence that Chicago’s food
deserts coincide almost exclusively with that city’s African-
American communities, or that Chicago’s black citizens have
to travel almost twice as far to a grocery store as they do to
a fast food or corner store (Food Deserts 7). Poorer urban
neighborhoods typically pay a larger proportion of income
for food, and are more likely to “have premature death and
chronic health conditions’ associated with chronic afflictions
such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease
(Pothukuchi & Kaufman “Food Policy” 214; Food Deserts
9). The Food Deserts report alludes to the sociopolitical
implications of food deserts on communities, noting that
‘desert’ is an act as much as it is a place: “the lack of access
to good food in some areas is not a natural, accidental
phenomenon but is instead the result of decisions made at
multiple levels by multiple actors” (5). This ties directly into
the resiliency literature, which seeks to understand how
disasters and vulnerability are produced, not merely how
they are experienced.

The food desert phenomenon is of course not
limited to Chicago. Food access and food quality are the primary factors driving the creation of food deserts, and their deficiencies are patterns of American suburbanization of the twentieth century. Dr. Tom Farley, department chair of Community Health Sciences at Tulane’s School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, puts it simply: “in poor neighborhoods, [there] is not a shortage of food; they have a glut of food. But what they have a glut of is unhealthy food. What we have is two problems that not really the same thing: limited access to healthy food, and an overabundance of unhealthy food” (Farley). Almost every large American city faces disparities in access to “healthy, affordable, wholesome food in a significant sector of the community” for cities such as Philadelphia, New York, Louisville, Madison, Detroit, and, indeed, New Orleans (“Cities”). California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) note that almost five million Californians were hungry or “food insecure… [d]espite California’s legendary agricultural abundance,” citing inadequate transportation and the absence of nearby supermarkets in compromising healthy diets and creating poor health outcomes (CFPA 1-2). In Oakland, only 52% of low-income residents live within a half-mile of a supermarket, and throughout California, middle- and upper-income neighborhoods have over twice as many supermarkets per capita as their low-income counterparts, where half of the latter have no supermarkets within walking distance of their homes (UEPI 2; TALC 40). Philadelphia’s poor and minorities eat more fast food, travel farther to the grocery, and are up to three times as likely as white Philadelphians to have fair or poor quality groceries in their neighborhoods (The Food Trust, “Food Geography” 3-4). The same uneven food geography can be found in almost every municipality in America.

2. Complicating Resiliency And Vulnerability
The experience of neighborhood markets in New Orleans after Katrina also entails stretching the concept of urban resilience to accommodate chronic disasters in addition to catastrophic ones. Living in areas that have suffered from chronic disinvestment—such as exists in many urban cores of this country’s larger cities—has a profound effect on the most affected communities in this country. The food system sensitizes us to this, shows us the ways that the disparities that so shook the country when they saw the images of Katrina—for example, those with which we began this inquiry—are not just with us only after disaster, but every day. Looking at how neighborhood markets are responding shows us not just the ways that we experience disaster, but the way that we produce it by our development decisions. Urban reconstruction is no different.
Many cities will never experience a headline-making calamity that New Orleans endured in Katrina. Yet a large number of cities have weathered years of economic decline, waning federal support for urban development, and population out-migration and tax-base decline from their inner cities; these structural changes and patterns of uneven development have created crises on par with any natural disaster. While these disasters unfold over decades rather than days, in most respects they are equally as harmful to urban communities. The concepts of resiliency and vulnerability do not stop at natural disasters.

3. Recommendations
Finally, the experience of neighborhood markets in New Orleans after Katrina suggests several planning and policy recommendations.

A. Neighborhood Markets as Community Economic Development Tools
Neighborhood markets should become a standard community development tool in planning and policymaking toolkits. The lessons from the neighborhood markets after Katrina suggest that few other interventions have the potential to quickly address as many economic, social, and political facets of community life. While the neighborhood markets in New Orleans were not addressing some needs adequately, they still conferred a number of benefits on their communities. The low-overhead costs and high visibility that make markets so attractive as interventions after disasters also make them attractive as a more standard community development tool. New Orleans’ experience with neighborhood markets is by no means the only salient examples of the importance of markets in community development. Recall from Chapter 1 the many successes of the Food Trust in Philadelphia, which is using food access, groceries, and neighborhood farmers markets to revitalize neighborhoods. While few cities have such an active champion of food system issues as Philadelphia, almost every city in the country has an ever-increasing number of markets being created in neighborhoods.

B. Cities Should Publicly Invest, Not Just Incentivize
When it comes to food access, cities need to take a more deliberate approach that dictates rather than merely suggests. New Orleans’ changing food geography over the twentieth century is a lesson in how the decisions of many actors does not necessarily add up to collective action. As a result, food access transitioned from public utility to private commodity, and that transformation was predicated
on disparity in the food system. The consolidation of food access in New Orleans over the course of the twentieth century suggests, and the experience of neighborhood markets after the storm confirms, that supermarkets and private grocers will almost always leave the very communities that need them the most.

The Food Policy Advisory Committee’s recommendations are big first steps in trying to address the problems with New Orleans’ food system, but the proposals fall short of addressing the immediate needs of communities. None of the ten recommendations made by the FPAC, makes explicit the need to provide fresh food access in communities where that is nonexistent. Public subsidy programs designed to galvanize food supply, distribution, and retail are needed now not only in New Orleans, but in every inner city community that has weather decades of disinvestment. Incentives that take no account of the spatial aspect of the disparities in the food system will necessarily fall short of creating access to fresh food in the communities that most need it.

C. Reestablish the Department of Public Markets
Public role for food access disappeared only during my grandparents’ generation. New Orleans only dissolved its Department of Public Markets in 1946. While not blindly
returning to an overly-romanticized past—surely there were disparities then as now, but advocating for treating food access more as a utility—and without running afoul of free-marketeers, there should be a greater role for the public. We should not need disasters to show us this.

Given the history of public markets in this country and especially in New Orleans, this suggests the possibility of moving beyond an ad hoc approach to using neighborhood markets, and towards creating a citywide system of publicly-supported, neighborhood managed markets. This system would be akin to many of the newer sub-local governance structures that have been adopted by cities and neighborhoods over the past thirty years, such as business improvement districts. David Cody, of the city’s ORDA, suggested that such an intervention would not be too far off of what the target areas are aiming to do, saying that “we’re rebuilding the Target Areas with an awareness of where the traditional market areas were in the city. And I would guess that the locations where those used to be are fairly good locations now” (personal interview). Geoff Coates, who runs a non-profit in New Orleans called ‘The Urban Conservancy’ dedicated to fostering local economies, views markets as a potentially important community economic development tool. He suggested that such a system of neighborhood markets could be analogous to Boston’s Main Street program, which has centralized public support but

localized, neighborhood-level management. Mr. Coates suggested that this would make for a fascinating array of neighborhood markets in the city that would have the capacity to not only address some of the substantial food access considerations, but also organically adapt to meet the changing socioeconomic needs of neighborhoods as well.

D. Create a ‘Hybrid’ Public-Private Neighborhood Market System

Begin by investing in the former public market structures. The FPAC recommendations are well-substantiated best practices, and they are based on the experience of the Food Trust’s successes in Philadelphia with their farmers markets and supermarket incentivization programs. However, coming up with a state fund for incentivizing supermarkets and convincing supermarkets to invest in communities located in the hardest-hit areas can be difficult, especially during the critically post-storm period when most are considering whether to return or leave permanently. This is borne out by the Rebuild LA example, where not even the direct efforts of Peter Ueberoth could convince supermarkets to take hold in central Los Angeles after the Rodney King riots in 1992.

Instead, a market system that is built by the public but at least in part privately operated can be quickly
restored after a disaster, and provide food access at a time when communities need it most—in the critical times after disaster when decisions about whether to stay or go are being made, and when overcoming disparity is crucial. Such public-private partnerships between the city and its neighborhoods will help sustain local economies, foster direct communication between neighborhoods and their city government, and help to sustain the civic engagement that was omnipresent in the immediate aftermath of Katrina. Communities will help set their own food access agendas.

New Orleans once had just this ‘hybrid’ system, and it was integral to the larger culture as well as the everyday life in the city. From the city’s celebrated parochialism to its love for coffee to the invention of creole cuisine, markets are social institutions as much as they are food markets. Public investment in supporting the vitality of neighborhoods is money well-spent. In the words of Mayor Quincy of Boston from Chapter 1, it is “always remunerative.”

E. Involve Larger Intermediaries

While working with neighborhoods and local farmers should be the first choice in creating policies to address shortcomings in an urban food system, in times of disaster or when other methods of food access are infeasible, using conventional distributors to provide food access is acceptable and even desirable. As the lessons from New Orleans’ markets show, the issue after a disaster is not just demand for food, but also the supply. This will be especially true if the city starts a public market department or a hybrid market system.

Moreover, this represents the chance to engage the Crescent City Farmers Market and MarketUmbrella.org on a wider public policy level. MarketUmbrella.org is one of the worldwide experts on matters related to food access, markets, local economies, and community economic development. Rebuilding New Orleans’ food system after Katrina is an opportunity for the city to institutionalize the best practices that are being grown in our back yard. The Crescent City Farmers Market has long celebrated the importance of local economies and New Orleans’ vibrant public market history, and it is time to begin remaking the city in that image. For a city that so readily self-identifies with food, it is also time that we recognize how profoundly food permeates quality of life, and ensure that everyone has access to that life.

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The title of my thesis, “Making Groceries,” is a distinctly New Orleans phrase for going grocery shopping. It derives from the French faire son marché, where faire means ‘to do’ or ‘to make,’ from a time when New Orleanians literally had to
assemble groceries in a city system of public markets and private corner groceries. These food access outlets were the vibrant centers of their neighborhoods, and food shopping was an activity intertwined with the life of a community. For this reason, I selected “Making Groceries” as the title to my thesis: it speaks to the manner in which neighborhoods after Katrina have tried to use procuring food at markets as a creative, social, and political act. It is a well-known fact that in New Orleans one cannot buy food without talking to someone; after Katrina, those connections with neighbors and strangers hold more weight than they did prior to the storm, which is one of the primary concerns of this thesis. While the reality of neighborhood markets does not always yet reach their aspirations, a city or a neighborhood could do worse than to remake itself in the image of a market. Planners and policymakers would do well to learn how to make groceries, too.

Notes

1 The policy guide goes on to identify a number of other considerations and issues that are pertinent to the post-Katrina New Orleans context, including:
   - Urban fringe land use issues and rural decline
   - Economic impacts of local purchasing
   - Hunger and food insecurity
   - Food stamps
   - Supermarkets in low-income neighborhoods
   - Urban agriculture and using vacant lots for community gardens and food production
   - Obesity and the built environment
   - Water issues
   - Ethnic cuisine and local foodways
I would like to thank Larry Vale, Karl Seidman, Mark Schuster, and Leo Marx for their guidance in this endeavor. The road from *Moby-Dick* to New Orleans is shorter than I ever would have thought, and I will not soon forget what I learned along the way.

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In my short time at DUSP, it has been my pleasure to have learned from and alongside some of the most talented, committed, and playful people I will ever meet. I write these acknowledgments with nostalgia already creeping in, but I am emboldened knowing that the awe and high esteem I have for this community will only be surpassed by their accomplishments to come. Oh, the places you’ll go.

Jeffrey Schwartz
Cambridge, MA (looking out the window, xmas lights on)
22 May 2008
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(Food Deserts, Unevenness, Urban Design & Public Health)


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## Farmers and Public Markets


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City of New Orleans


Non-Profits, NGOs, and other Stakeholders


Planning and the Food System


**Resiliency, Vulnerability, Urbanism, and Risk**


