When Did These Buildings Become Historic? Preservation Meets Public Housing in Post-Katrina New Orleans

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WHEN DID THESE BUILDINGS BECOME HISTORIC?

PRESERVATION MEETS PUBLIC HOUSING IN POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the impact of historic preservation on public housing revitalization efforts in post-Katrina New Orleans. Through this case study, I analyze the possibilities for a more expansive and social justice-oriented approach to historic preservation at complicated sites through broadening the concept of significance, which determines what we act to preserve in the urban landscape.

New Orleans' first public housing complexes were nationally recognized for their low-rise, courtyard designs when completed in the early 1940s. B. W. Cooper, C. J. Peete, Lafitte, and Saint Bernard were four of these early developments, and came to be called the "Big Four" because of their size and importance. Mismanaged for years by the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), the historic developments struggled with persistent violence and poverty.

When Hurricane Katrina struck in August of 2005, the developments were emptied as residents evacuated the flooded city. Most would never return to their former units: HANO and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced redevelopment plans in early 2006. The Big Four would be demolished and replaced with new mixed income communities financed by private-public partnerships. Before HUD and HANO could complete the planned demolitions, they were required to undertake a public consultation process called Section 106 to discuss negative effects on historic resources and to offer strategies to mitigate these effects. Pursuant to the Section 106 reviews, the developers at each site preserved several historic buildings and took other steps to document demolished historic resources.

Despite these outcomes, my research shows that the Section 106 public review process did not rise to a substantial level of consultation and impact. Historic preservation was not incorporated in the planning process for the sites, but included as an afterthought. The reviews were initiated too late and suffered from narrow participation. Most importantly, the Section 106 process did not educate or give space to New Orleanians for problem solving on a key contemporary issue for the city: how to encourage development practices that promote economic revitalization while also protecting communities and historic buildings. To help frame this issue for the preservation movement, I propose a parallel strain to historic preservation called community preservation, which advocates for the protection of social networks and cultural traditions alongside building preservation.
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NOTES

Because of the history and politics of public housing, the developments discussed in this paper may have several names associated with them. Within the text, I have tried to refer to the name of the development during the time period I am describing; the pre-redevelopment name is used for pre-redevelopment events, and the post-redevelopment name used thereafter, etc.

A map follows this section on page 10.

Magnolia Street Housing Project ("the Magnolia"): the original 17.7 acre site in Central City, completed 1941, and later listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This name also included the Magnolia Extension after it was built in 1954.

C. J. Peete: the extended 41.5 acre site, as it was known from the 1980s through its final stage of demolition in 2008. The development was renamed in the 1980s for a dedicated Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) employee.

Harmony Oaks: the new mixed-income development, which opened in 2010.

Calliope: the original 1941 development lakeside of Central City on Earheart Boulevard.

B. W. Cooper: The post-1981 name for Calliope, renamed in honor of a HANO employee. B. W. Cooper is partially demolished, but still houses a small number of residents.

Saint Bernard: the original 1941 development in the Seventh Ward, near City Park.

Columbia Parc: the new mixed-income development, whose first phase opened in 2010.

Lafitte: the original 1941 development in Treme.

Faubourg Lafitte: the new mixed-income development, whose first phase opened in 2011.

Saint Thomas: the original 1941 development in the Irish Channel.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACHP: Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

APE: Area of Potential Effect (part of the Section 106 regulations)

FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency

HANO: Housing Authority of New Orleans

HABS: Historic American Buildings Survey

HDLC: Historic Districts Landmark Commission of the City of New Orleans.

HUD: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

LIHTC: Low-Income Housing Tax Credit

MOA: Memoranda of Agreement or Memorandum of Agreement

National Register: National Register of Historic Places

National Trust: National Trust for Historic Preservation

NHPA: National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106: Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

SHPO: State Historic Preservation Office
PUBLIC HOUSING IN NEW ORLEANS, 2011

NEW ORLEANS

ALGIERS

Audubon Park

Saint Thomas / River Garden

Magnolia / C. J. Peete / Harmony Oaks

Gusite

Iberville

Lafitte / Faubourg Lafitte

Saint Bernard / Columbia Parc

Desire / Abundance and Florida

1 mile

City Park

Calliope / B. W. Cooper

Guste

Fischer

French Quarter
INTRODUCTION

In New Orleans' eclectic built landscape—small shotgun homes, mansions with wrought-iron balconies, and old Creole cottages—public housing has a distinct place. The city's earliest public housing complexes, among the first funded by the federal Housing Act of 1937, were lauded nationally as the best of contextual design for the "deserving poor." ¹ The low-rise, brick buildings were ornamented with ironwork and their roofs and tall windows made of high quality materials. Sites were laid out in courtyards in which residents could gather for recreation, socializing, or to hang their laundry to dry.

Four of the biggest developments in New Orleans, sometimes called the "Big Four," were built

¹ Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (The MIT Press, 1983), 229.
during the 1940s and 1950s: B. W. Cooper, C. J. Peete, Lafitte, and Saint Bernard. Thousands of units of housing comprised these developments, which forever changed the neighborhoods of Central City, the Seventh Ward, and Treme. The manifestation of New Deal housing advocates’ hopeful vision—well designed, high quality housing for the working classes—seemed complete.

The vision would not last. By the early 1990s, in a familiar story across American cities, New Orleans’ public housing was deemed to be failing: building maintenance had been severely neglected, crime plagued the developments, and residents struggled with unemployment and poverty that often endured for generations. With increased availability of federal funding for public housing revitalization starting in the 1990s, the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) began to make plans for redevelopment.

Today, five years after Hurricane Katrina devastated the city, New Orleans’ public housing has a new, highly-visible face. HANO and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have demolished the great majority of buildings at the Big Four and thousands of other units at other developments. Of the Four, C. J. Peete, Lafitte, and Saint Bernard have been rebuilt with brightly colored, architecturally varied buildings housing mixed-income communities. A few of the old brick structures still stand within this new landscape, the lingering compromise of a federal historic preservation process.

Demolition and site redesign, and the accompanying displacement of people, have always been integral to the American public housing program. At the program’s inception in 1937, clearance of slum units was required to be at equivalent levels to number of units built, to combat the spread of poverty and poor conditions in deteriorating areas. A wave of new funding in the 1950s led to more clearance and the creation of even larger, denser public housing sites. The
HOPE VI program (1992) has similarly focused on reshaping the built environment of public housing, providing grants to housing authorities who embark on near-total reconstruction of "severely distressed" housing developments in lower density forms. Now, the concern tends towards the opposite side of the equation: in politicized localities, redevelopment actors are often required to replace one-for-one the units of housing demolished, to mitigate displacement. Even in the context of years of large-scale changes at public housing sites in New Orleans, the post-Katrina demolitions were enormous: over 4,000 units of public housing have been torn down since 2005. A timeline of the important events of this period can be found in Appendix 2.

The demolitions at the Big Four were important to differing constituencies. The loss of public housing came during a severe housing crisis for poor New Orleanians, and in the context of frenetic post-disaster planning. The demolition of these thousands of public housing units represented a major loss of housing for the very poor, but the redevelopments were justified as important rebuilding efforts. The political will of HUD, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and other agencies to rebuild New Orleans has resulted in an influx of federal money at an enormous scale relative to the local population and local economy. Post-Katrina New Orleans clearly exposes the difficulties of planning a "just city"; economic growth and redevelopment in New Orleans was and is argued to be the method of helping the greatest number of residents, often to the detriment of marginalized neighborhoods.²

The demolitions also represented a city-wide preservation crisis that has come into sharp relief after the storm. Katrina, arriving on the heels of decades of inner-city disinvestment, left thousands of historic buildings throughout the city damaged and vulnerable to deterioration. The public housing structures of the Big Four were over fifty years old and eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. As a result, demolitions were subject to Section 106 of


the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), a federally-mandated public consultation process for federal agency undertakings that affect historic resources.

The Section 106 public reviews for the Big Four took place in the winter and spring of 2007. Developers for the C. J. Peete, Lafitte, B. W. Cooper, and Saint Bernard redevelopments agreed to rehabilitate several historic public housing structures at each of the sites, funded an oral history project and exhibit at each new development, and conducted historic documentation of the demolished architectural and archaeological resources. For preservation advocates and residents alike, these efforts at mitigation are small. The large majority of historic buildings were destroyed, the overall number of housing units for the very low-income has been diminished, and communities of people remain dispersed, never to return home. Whether one is measuring by historic preservation or “community preservation” standards, the outcomes were subpar.

At the Big Four, building preservation was linked in a complicated way to what I’ll call community preservation, the protection of social networks and cultural traditions that existed in the old de-
developments. The right of residents to return to their public housing units was compromised and delayed by the redevelopment schemes. It took almost five years for the new Harmony Oaks to open its doors to former C. J. Peete residents—and even now, only a fraction of the original households have returned. Though historic preservation groups aligned (in desired outcome, if not reason) with coalitions interested in social justice and the right of public housing communities to return, neither group leveraged this connection.

Stakeholders in the preservation interventions at each redevelopment—residents, preservation advocates, officials, and private housing developers—are working in new territory. In few cities have historic preservation and public housing met so frequently and so uneasily. New Orleans is known for its strong preservation ethic (the Vieux Carre local historic district in the French Quarter was first established in 1936) and has a special wealth of historic architecture that spans the city’s racial and economic divides. Of the Big Four, Lafitte and C. J. Peete were adjacent to National Register Historic Districts, and all of the developments had historic resources in the immediate surroundings. It was a dramatic circumstance that led to all four developments going through the Section 106 process at once.

It’s also important to recognize that historic preservation practitioners and theorists have only recently begun to advocate consistently for places inhabited by the poor and people of color. Blessed with a diversity of cultural expressions arguably unmatched in this country, New Orleans is also plagued by racial and socioeconomic segregation. To preserve buildings at the Big Four was to preserve buildings with a problematic history: the construction of public housing in the 1930s disproportionately displaced black New Orleanians; the housing authority segregated its residents by race until the late 1960s; and the developments were characterized in recent decades by systemic poverty and poor conditions. Nearly all of the residents displaced by the

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most recent site transformations were low-income African Americans, and the redevelopment processes were plagued by allegations of racism and Fair Housing Act violations. Notably, and discouragingly, the inclusion of residents in the framework of the Section 106 historic preservation process was minimal: few participated.

It is complicated to find solutions to pressing human problems like substandard affordable housing, and to concurrently honor history in the built environment through preservation interventions. For those of us who care both about history as part of the wealth of our human experience, and about social justice, the outcomes of the Big Four Section 106 review processes in New Orleans are illustrative of the complexities of combining the two.

Despite serving some important purposes, the reviews failed to achieve true public consultation. Stakeholders allege that HUD did not seriously consider alternatives to demolition, as required by statute. The agency scheduled public meetings at times and in places that were inconvenient for public housing residents (many of whom had not returned to New Orleans after the storm), and there was a general lack of information available about the factors governing the decision-making process. Due to limited availability of funding, planning for the public housing redevelopments was both hurried and shaped by the constraints of Low Income Housing Tax Credits.

More broadly, and this is a flaw in most formal historic preservation processes, the Section 106 reviews failed to engage residents—those for whom the public housing was undoubtedly most important—in examining how to meaningfully preserve buildings that speak to troubled or ambivalent histories. At the Big Four, stories about violence and concentrated poverty often dominated the public discourse; but there were also positive histories at the sites: public housing’s origins in a progressive New Deal housing act, a recent history of nurturing prominent rap and

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4 Anderson v. Jackson (U. S. Court of Appeals, 5th Cir. 2009).
bounce artists, and, since many families had called these structures “home” for generations, a strong sense of community. Unfortunately, the Section 106 consultation process did not offer much chance for stakeholders to consider the implication of these stories for preservation decisions at the sites. Formal preservation processes should themselves help disparate members of the public discuss, understand and come to terms with the stories of our past, while coming to a decision about the future of a historic resource.

The Section 106 regulations were originally created as a response to urban renewal and large-scale threats to historic resources as a result of federal actions. The purpose was, then, simply to require agencies to accommodate historic preservation concerns alongside their own interests. The 106 process is one of consultation, and is not charged with any decision-making authority. In the more general context of how HUD has negotiated the redevelopment of public housing, and in the struggling city of New Orleans, the Section 106 process can seem in hindsight as a tiny step in the march towards inevitable demolition of the Big Four. But even when the cards are stacked against building preservation, I argue that we should ask more of our historic preservation processes: not only dialogue, but some contribution to equitable development.

Development practices that advance economic revitalization while protecting communities and historic building fabric are especially important in New Orleans. The city faces a severely weakened economy and housing market, and a staggering number of historic resources at risk of demolition by neglect, blight, or speculative real estate investment. Additionally critical is the continuing poverty faced by city residents who lost their homes and livelihoods during the storm.

This thesis asks what impact historic preservation had on public housing revitalization efforts in post-Katrina New Orleans and analyzes the possibilities for a more expansive and socially-oriented approach to historic preservation at difficult-to-preserve urban sites. Chapter 2 provides
a context for the discussion by introducing the Section 106 process and providing a brief history of public housing in New Orleans. Chapter 3 discusses the preservation movement’s concept of “significance,” how it has evolved, and what future directions may entail. Chapter 4 relates the trajectory and key interests and positions of the consulting parties as expressed during the consultation process for the Big Four, but specifically at C. J. Peete and Lafitte. Chapter 5 describes and analyzes the mitigation efforts at Harmony Oaks (the new C. J. Peete) through the lens of significance. I provide some recommendations in Chapter 6.

My research draws on publicly available documentation of the 106 processes, as well as on notes and meeting transcripts provided by HUD and correspondence provided by the National Trust for Historic Preservation (“National Trust”) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). I also conducted interviews with many of the consulting parties, including members of the development teams for Harmony Oaks and Faubourg Lafitte (the new Lafitte), members of preservation advocacy groups, officials from Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office, HUD, and the ACHP. A full list of my interviewees can be found in the Bibliography.
Hurricane Katrina was a catalyst for large-scale action on public housing in the city of New Orleans. First, the hasty evacuation of residents during the hurricane provided the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) and the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) a head start on one of the most difficult steps in public housing redevelopment: resident relocation. At B. W. Cooper, C. J. Peete, Lafitte, and Saint Bernard, HUD and HANO denied residents the ability to return to their apartments after the storm, citing poor building conditions and structural damage. Those residents (at least those whom the housing authority located) were given housing vouchers and told to find housing in the private market until further notice.

Secondly, the damage to buildings throughout the city made large-scale redevelopment efforts
both necessary and politically feasible. In this climate, HUD could argue that the plan to demolish over 4,000 units of public housing at the Big Four, while dramatic, was certainly consistent with the scale of the city’s problems. Moreover, comprehensive demolition was necessary to facilitate the construction of mixed-income communities that are now standard practice on redeveloped public housing sites. The mixed-income redevelopment approach is typically billed as a market-based strategy that can both reduce poverty and spur inner-city revitalization. There are mixed opinions in the literature about how it has accomplished either, but new public housing programs continue to be designed in favor of this approach.5

The decision to demolish the Big Four was predictably fraught with politics and anger, and came at a time when city residents were facing dramatic uncertainty about the future of New Orleans. Planners and disaster recovery professionals working in post-Katrina New Orleans were making significant use of public meetings, charrettes, and other participatory planning tools to engage residents in visioning and planning exercises. Public housing was not central to these discussions; local master planning efforts such as the United New Orleans Plan (UNOP) addressed, but had little jurisdiction over HUD’s redevelopment plans for the public housing sites.

Perhaps surprisingly, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, a federal historic preservation law, mandated public participation in the redevelopment planning of the Big Four.6 Structures at each public housing development were eligible for the National Register of Historic Places because of their age (over fifty years old) and their association with significant New Deal housing policies. (The original Magnolia Street Housing Project, part of the larger development


6 HOPE VI guidelines on public participation exist and resident input in the process is one criterion on which applicants are judged; but compliance is not regulated.
renamed C. J. Peete in the 1980s, was already listed on the National Register at the time of Katrina.) The required spectrum of public Section 106 meetings served as yet another potential venue for conversations, not only about the value of demolishing or preserving public housing as it existed in New Orleans, but about a range of questions about rebuilding city neighborhoods.

NEW ORLEANS’ HISTORIC PUBLIC HOUSING

Public housing in New Orleans reflects the city’s complex race relations, urban planning and design, and economic histories. This brief history of public housing in New Orleans is included to illustrate the periodic, dramatic changes that city residents have faced to their homes and neighborhoods as a result of federal public housing policies. As one illustration, Appendix 3 shows changes to the built site of the Magnolia Street Housing Project over its sixty year history. This section also exposes a recent record of poor treatment and neglect of HANO tenants by the housing authority and city officials. These strains of history provide a troubling backdrop to the most recent redevelopment process and exposes the problematic aspects of advocating for the preservation of the Big Four as they existed before Katrina.

Federal housing policy helped shape the siting and histories of each housing development. The first federal act authorizing a permanent public housing program was passed in 1937. New Orleans moved quickly to establish its local housing authority, and was able to obtain funding for five projects almost immediately. These projects were Magnolia (C. J. Peete), Calliope (B. W. Cooper), Lafitte, Iberville, and Saint Thomas. The first three of these were for black residents, and the last two reserved for whites; all opened in 1941. Saint Bernard was completed slightly afterwards, in 1943. The Florida development was built as temporary housing for war workers in
1944, but shortly after converted to a permanent “low-rent” project.\textsuperscript{7}

The Housing Act of 1937’s “equivalent elimination clause,” which required demolition of one slum unit for every new unit constructed, meant that all of the projects were built following large-scale demolition in New Orleans’s working class neighborhoods. The Housing Act of 1937 was silent on the issue of racial segregation in public housing, but there was little question of how the policy would be implemented in southern cities like New Orleans, where black and white residents moved in almost completely separate spheres.\textsuperscript{8} Non-statutory, but strictly followed, was the Public Works Administration’s “neighborhood composition rule,” which dictated that “occupants of completed projects should reflect the prevailing composition of the surrounding neighborhood.”\textsuperscript{9} As a result, racially mixed neighborhoods where public housing was built became less integrated, as the housing developments were populated to reflect the surrounding racial majority. Developments were racially segregated throughout their lifespan—first by mandate, then because of economic trends that consistently disadvantaged black New Orleanians.

Two of the black projects, Magnolia and Calliope, were built in the swampy “back of town” area lakeside of Saint Charles Avenue. Magnolia was sited in a black, poor neighborhood behind the Flint Goodridge Hospital, at the time the only hospital serving New Orleans’ black community. The neighborhood, called Belmont, had been a target of philanthropy in the early part of the 1900s because of its extremely low incomes, overcrowding, and generally poor conditions. The Tulane School of Social Work surveyed Belmont in that period and found infrastructure far inferior to other neighborhoods in New Orleans. “Deep ruts made some streets completely impassable. To fill these ruts, the city agency in charge of street maintenance periodically dumped trash in the

\textsuperscript{7} Housing Authority of New Orleans, \textit{Public Housing in New Orleans: Low-rent, War and Veterans’ Projects} (New Orleans, LA, July 1, 1947), 1.


streets, to a depth of three to four feet ... unburned garbage and dead animals often lay about uncovered.” 10 The 1940 Housing Census for the blocks surrounding Magnolia categorized high percentages of units in the neighborhood as “needing repair or having no private bath,” a category within the “dwelling units by state of repair and plumbing equipment” section. Over 63 percent, or 882 out of the nearly 1,400 non-public housing dwelling units, fit this description within Magnolia’s census tract at the time of its construction.11 The other black development, Calliope, was built lakeside of Claiborne Avenue, in an area east of Magnolia and similarly characterized by slum conditions.

Census data from 1940 shows that blocks in the Belmont neighborhood were extremely segregated, with percentages of non-white occupants rarely dipping below 95 percent, or on the rare block remaining at 0 percent.12 However, Saint Thomas, Magnolia’s white counterpart, was sited in the more racially- and ethnically-mixed Irish Channel, an area between the wealthy (and white) Garden District and the Mississippi River. Lafitte and Iberville sat almost adjacent to each other, just lakeside of the French Quarter. Iberville, a white project, was built after slum clearance of the famous Storyville “vice district,” which had been shut down by city ordinance twenty years prior and become defined by blight and poverty.13 These three developments were located in central areas that would become important to economic development initiatives later in the twentieth century.

The 1940s developments were built to last. Magnolia cost $4,212,999 to build, with a total development cost of $3,658 per dwelling unit not including land and nonresidential facilities. Saint

11 See Appendix 1: Compiled data from the United States Housing Census at the block level, 1940, 1950, and 1960.
12 See Appendix 1.
The 970 houses in this St. Thomas Street development replace the colony of shabby shams (bottom) formerly occupying the site. The 3-story homes are characteristic of housing design in Louisiana.

**Slum clearance celebrated at Saint Thomas. Source: Annual Report of the United States Housing Authority, 1941.**

Thomas cost a very comparable $3,961 per dwelling unit with land prices, community facilities costs, and other soft costs approximately equal to Magnolia’s. It is interesting to note the parity with which the local housing authority developed (and later expanded) its racially segregated projects in New Orleans. Both developments spent lavishly on demolition: Magnolia’s slum clearance costs totaled $681,673, and displaced 706 families—all but five of which were black.14

The early years of the Housing Authority of New Orleans were by local accounts a great success. A 1947 informational booklet put out by HANO boasted that, since the opening of Magnolia and Saint Thomas, there had been no vacancies in any project and that the agency was managing a waiting list of 35,000 households for their developments—quite an impressive

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FAMILIES, BUSINESSES AND CHURCHES RELOCATED FROM THE AREAS OF LA. 1-9, LA. 1-10, LA. 1-12, LA. 1-13, AND LA. 1-14*

The Total Relocation Program Began March 27, 1951 and Ended April 26, 1954

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<th>PURCHASED HOMES</th>
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* SAINT THOMAS EXTENSION (1-9) MAGNOLIA EXTENSION (1-10), B. W. COOPER EXTENSION (1-12), SAINT BERNARD EXTENSION (1-13), AND DESIRE (1-14)

Chart showing resident displacement by HANO actions in the early 1950s. Source: Annual Report of the United States Housing Authority, 1954.

Given that the population of New Orleans was 570,445 in 1950.15

Given HANO's ability to build and maintain an initial seven projects under the 1937 Housing Act, it is no surprise that the housing authority aggressively sought funding for more public housing after the passage of the Housing Act of 1949. The authority received funding to enlarge five of the existing projects in what the authority dubbed "Extensions," as well as capital to build one new project. Three white project extensions—Saint Thomas, Florida, and Saint Bernard—were completed first, followed by Magnolia, Calliope, and a new project for blacks called Desire. The above chart, from a 1954 HANO report, shows the scale of demolition that was undertaken for these projects, and the terribly disproportionate toll taken on black neighborhoods and dwellings.16

Though racial questions surfaced in the legislative debates over the 1949 Housing Act, the


federal authority ultimately kept its silence on the topic. Desegregation of Housing Authority of New Orleans projects was not undertaken until 1965. When the first black family moved into the still-desirable Saint Thomas, a brick and Molotov cocktail was hurled through the family’s apartment window on the very first day. Despite this violent start, HANO’s desegregation went relatively smoothly by contemporary accounts; but ironically, the overall effect was to further segregate the city as blacks took the place of whites in public housing at an accelerated pace. The gradual racial shift within public housing (and the increasing blackness of the inner city in general) is attributable not only to the superior quality and affordability of housing available to white New Orleanians, but also their greater access to employment. While manufacturing and industrial jobs were moving outside the city beyond the reach of public transportation networks, many white-collar and municipal jobs within the downtown area remained inaccessible to blacks.

Martha Mahoney’s analysis of racial change within HANO developments found that all the initially white projects had black resident majorities by 1970, mirroring changes in the surrounding neighborhoods. “Although some areas of New Orleans retained old ‘mixed block’ racial patterns, suburban growth and its demographic shifts had sharply increased neighborhood segregation … That large section of the city which included Calliope, Magnolia, and Guste was now entirely black.”

Despite its auspicious early years, mismanagement at the Housing Authority of New Orleans has become almost legendary; the housing authority was first designated as “troubled” by HUD in 1979, and has since gone through a series of federal rebukes and oversight agreements. HANO’s current iteration of administrative receivership began in 2002. Cuts in public housing funding at the federal level and further economic losses for the city also took their toll, and public housing in New Orleans fell into disrepair in the 1980s and 1990s. Some argue that HANO’s neglect over so many years served the explicit desires of the city’s mayors of the period to redevelop certain of the city’s public housing sites, namely those advantageously located near the French Quarter and downtown. In 1986, the infamous “Rochon Report” was commissioned by Mayor Barthelemy and completed by the mayor’s campaign manager at a cost to taxpayers of $100,000. The report asserted that there were enough vacant units in the city to absorb the occupants of up to one half of all the city’s public housing units and recommended “reduction of density” at the city’s public housing sites to accommodate real estate development interests.

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The federal government was eager to assist: between 1998 and 2003, HUD granted HANO over $25 million dollars to demolish 4,460 units of public housing through the HOPE VI demolition grant program. Almost every public housing development in New Orleans was given some form of demolition funding.

Also in the late 1990s, the Desire and Saint Thomas projects were redeveloped through the HOPE VI program, which granted federal funds to demolish “severely distressed” public housing and to construct new developments of decreased density. What transpired at Saint Thomas, especially, laid the groundwork for post-Katrina mixed-income public housing redevelopment. The Irish Channel neighborhood surrounding Saint Thomas was, at that point, “a crucial missing link needed to complete an unbroken chain of economically valuable city neighborhoods.” After a development process marked by resistance from the preservation community as well as residents, the development ultimately underwent drastic reduction in density and affordable units in its new mixed-income iteration. Controversially for preservation advocates, the development is also anchored by a Walmart. Though throughout the public discussions on redevelopment the “dominant discourse ... emphasized the interests of the residents themselves,” observed one scholar, it “also served to justify resident displacement” by advocating a development strategy aimed at breaking up concentrated poverty, promoting income integration and density reduction, and ultimately creating greater neighborhood diversity. This development strategy was to be echoed at the Big Four.

C. J. Peete had been prepared for redevelopment, if not complete demolition, for years prior

25 Ibid., 184-5.
to Katrina. Of the development’s 1,403 total public housing units, 680 had been vacated and
demolished in 1998, and only 144 of the original Magnolia apartments were still occupied at
the time of the storm.⁵⁶ Ironically, HANO had actually submitted the project’s nomination to the
National Register of Historic Places prior to any demolition; lest anyone wonder at the agency’s
motives for recognizing the project’s fascinating history, the nomination materials themselves
explained that “Register status is necessary to obtain the 20% [historic] tax credit.”²⁷ The historic
tax credit deal failed, according to the consultant who wrote the nomination report, because the
proposed redevelopment was too destructive of the historic structures to conform to Secretary
of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.⁵⁸ Although this particular redevelopment deal fell
through, the housing authority persisted in emptying the project through continued unit neglect
and placement policies.

The 2005 storm displaced thousands of residents from the city’s public housing developments.
The housing authority and HUD boarded up buildings after the storm and refused to allow
people entrance to their old apartments, citing dangerous damage to the structures of the Big
Four. HUD’s claims about the extent of damage were challenged by residents and interested
professionals, including MIT professor John Fernández. Fernández inspected an initial 140 units
across the Big Four, and found that the masonry structures, concrete foundations, and roofing
were basically intact for the majority of buildings. Renovations would have been necessary, but
not dramatically expensive. Moreover, damage to unit interiors tended to have occurred post-
storm as a result of poor building security: at C. J. Peete, for example, metal scavengers had
destroyed bathroom after bathroom in pursuit of valuable piping, although storm damage was

²⁶ Roma Campanile, notes from the first meeting of C. J. Peete consulting parties, April 19, 2007;
Yusef Freeman, interview by author, telephone, January 25, 2011.
²⁷ National Register of Historic Places, Magnolia Street Housing Project, New Orleans, Orleans Parish,
Louisiana, National Register #99001038.
²⁸ Rob Mawson, personal communication with author, January 26, 2011.
minimal. These findings were used by the Advancement Project, a legal action organization, in a lawsuit asserting the viability of the buildings and demanding that the developments reopen, but months continued to go by with no change. As thousands of units in the city sat vacant and molding, one Louisiana member of the House of Representatives was famously heard saying, "We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did."

In the wake of increased media scrutiny, the visibility and scale of the city's poorly-kept public housing became a liability for the federal (and local) government. In this political climate, B. W. Cooper, C. J. Peete, Lafitte, and Saint Bernard all quickly found redevelopment funding. In 2007, in response to HANO's third application for the project, HUD granted C. J. Peete a $20 million HOPE VI revitalization grant. At C. J. Peete and the others, development rights were contracted out to public-private partnerships, where planning, financing, and management are being largely assumed by private entities and partnering non-profit community development corporations. In all cases, the sites were almost entirely cleared, and a mixed-income apartment and townhouse landscape will replace the historic brick buildings that housed New Orleans' poorest residents for decades. As of this writing, the first phase is being completed at Lafitte (Faubourg Lafitte); development has stalled at B. W. Cooper; and occupants have moved into the new C. J. Peete (Harmony Oaks) and Saint Bernard (Columbia Parc).


ACCOMODATING HISTORIC PRESERVATION: SECTION 106

Section 106 of Title I of the National Historic Preservation Act requires that a federal "undertaking" (any action funded, carried out, or permitted/licensed by a federal agency) must "take into account the effect of the undertaking on any district, site, building, structure, or object that is included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register [of Historic Places]." The National Register is an official national list of historic places that is managed by the National Parks Service in the Department of the Interior. Historic resources are deemed eligible once they are fifty years old and are chosen via certain criteria of significance which will be discussed in Chapter 3. The Section 106 process "seeks to accommodate historic preservation concerns with the needs of Federal undertakings through consultation among the agency official and other parties with an interest in the effects of the undertaking on historic properties, commencing at the early stages of project planning."33

The Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR Part 800) outlines several critical steps for federal agency compliance with Section 106:

1) define an "area of potential effect" (APE) and identify historic properties within that APE;

2) assess the adverse effects of the undertaking;

3) seek ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects on historic properties;

4) reach agreement on how adverse effects should be handled, producing a memoran-

dum of agreement (MOA) signed by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the
Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP), and the agency.\textsuperscript{34}

All of the above steps are to be done by the federal agency in consultation with the SHPO and
ACHP, and taking into account the comments of “consulting parties” (formally identified stake-
holders) and the public. The ACHP, an independent federal agency based in Washington, DC
reviews and comments on agency undertakings. The ACHP is envisioned as a check on the
integrity of Section 106 reviews and can be called on to help resolve complaints or grievances
about a public consultation process.

As the administrative receiver of HANO, HUD was the federal agency both funding and oversee-
ing the redevelopment plans and was thus responsible for complying with Section 106. Many
other rebuilding actions in New Orleans have also been subject to Section 106 regulations, no-
tably all of the activities of the Recovery School District, since Federal Emergency Management
Agency (FEMA) funding is being used to demolish and rebuild city schools. The Thomy Lafon
School, which is located in the center of the Harmony Oaks site, recently completed a hotly
debated 106 process, as did Phillis Wheatley Elementary, located a block from the Faubourg
Lafitte site.

The stakeholder landscape for the Big Four processes was unusually large and complex. HUD
and HANO staff participated as representatives of the sponsoring agency. As mandated by the
regulations, the SHPO and ACHP were involved in the redevelopment planning before, during,
and after the Section 106 reviews. One might understand SHPO and the ACHP as “institutional
preservationists,” whose involvement in this issue was compulsory and determined by the
National Historic Preservation Act. While ACHP acts as a formal advocate for the public whose

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, sec. 800.10.
mission is to maintain the highest possible integrity for the consultation process, SHPO focuses most on advocating for historic resources.

Other stakeholders, “advocacy preservationists,” chose to get involved because the issue was important to their mission and values. Advocacy preservation groups included the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a powerful national organization. The National Trust had established a special field office in New Orleans after Katrina to help advocate for damaged historic resources. Local preservation groups were also invited and attended the public consultation meetings. These included the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans (PRCNO) and the Louisiana Landmarks Society. As entities with a direct stake in the future of the developments, resident councils and neighborhood groups were identified and invited to participate in the Section 106 reviews. Though these groups were not necessarily expected to contribute expertise in historic preservation, they had an interest in securing residents’ right to return home and in understanding the future of the sites. Other members of the public attended the public meetings as well, including housing rights activists and local attorneys.

Because of the composition of stakeholders, most of the consulting parties were outsiders to the neighborhoods of the Big Four, geographically, culturally, or both. Residents, arguably the most important stakeholders to consult, had few representatives at the table for these formal discussions. (Low participation stemmed at least partially from geographic dispersal during the storm.) SHPO staff are located in Louisiana’s capital, Baton Rouge. Many of the HUD employees working with HANO on the redevelopment were staff from HUD’s headquarters in Washington, DC and likely shared flights to New Orleans with the DC-based ACHP representatives. The National Trust’s field office was locally staffed, but legal counsel and leadership from their headquarters (also in Washington, DC) frequently came to attend meetings. Finally, although the local preservation groups have been involved in advocacy in these neighborhoods, their membership is
generally whiter and more wealthy than the residents of Treme or Central City.

The outsider status and the white privilege of consulting parties affected their authority in advocating for preservation of the Big Four, especially given the extremely important housing and social justice considerations at play. It also shaped their approach to the significance of the sites and the reasons they gave for why preservation of public housing was important. The next chapter will examine the history and theory of historic preservation in order to give context to the rationales of these preservation actors in New Orleans.
For much of preservation's history, preservationists have thought it more worthwhile to save a historic mansion than a historic shotgun home or a historic public housing development. The movement's constituents are generalized to be privileged, and their advocacy perceived to be concentrated in wealthy neighborhoods. The outcomes of the Section 106 process at the Big Four demonstrate that preservation theory and practice do impact buildings in inner-city neighborhoods, and have implications for buildings built, cared for, and occupied by low income communities of color. For practitioners of community development and preservation alike, there are special issues attendant to preserving these buildings. One of the foremost problems is how to evolve the concept of "significance," which speaks to what communities feel is worthy of remembering and determines what places and narratives communities act to preserve.
WHO COUNTS IN THE PRESERVATION MOVEMENT?

To allege that the preservation movement is elitist is not an original critique: aesthetics and building preservation have always clashed to some extent with contemporary social goals of urban planners, housers, and activists. Over fifteen years ago, Dolores Hayden opened *The Power of Place* by describing a 1975 debate between Herbert Gans, sociologist, and Ada Louise Huxtable, architectural critic, over this very issue. Huxtable argued that architecturally superb buildings were “a primary and irreplaceable part of civilization,” while Gans argued that to ignore “everyday” buildings “allows popular architecture to disappear … and denigrates the past.” While that debate was intellectually heated, Hayden argued, it was relatively simple: those who are concerned today with principles of preservation in urban areas navigate “a much more contested terrain of race, gender, and class, set against long-term economic and environmental problems.”

The history of the preservation movement is being rewritten by some scholars, but there is a traditionally-accepted narrative about who preservationists are and for whom preservationists have acted in the past. Different phases of the movement can be understood as reflecting certain cultural and societal agendas during each time period.

The organized American preservation movement had its beginnings in organic, women-led, patriotic campaigns beginning with the conservation of Mount Vernon in the 1850s. In the early 1900s, groups such as the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities formed and focused on preserving buildings that represented American values and identity at a time when

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peak immigration was threatening old traditions. Rockefeller’s Colonial Williamsburg, constructed in the 1920s and organized very much as a corporate endeavor, marked a new level of professionalization (and financial backing) for restoration projects. These preservation ventures signified movements of well-educated, predominantly white actors from the social register and design professions.

Early preservation efforts culminated in the victory of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, which some attribute to (failed) grassroots organizing against the demolition of McKim, Mead, and White’s Pennsylvania Station in Manhattan. Since then, historic preservation regulations have become extremely sophisticated in cities like New York, incorporating financial incentives such as tax credits and air rights in an effort to work alongside, instead of against, market forces. Federal preservation regulations, however, have evolved little and are generally understood to be less powerful than local regulations.

The “diversity deficit” in the buildings, districts, and resources we preserve has been partially explained as a function of who has historically participated in the preservation movement. People tend to want to preserve what is meaningful to them personally and what matters to their community. The audience for preservation efforts matters as much as the composition of practitioners; as the percentage of racial and ethnic minorities in the country increases, members of these groups will increasingly be recognized as the constituency and support base for heritage efforts.

40 Ibid., 121.
Besides the challenge of constituencies, there can be significant financial barriers to historic preservation efforts in poor communities: in attracting capital to impoverished neighborhoods for building rehabilitation and upkeep; in adapting modest building typologies for modern uses; and, importantly, in applying preservation or public history techniques to buildings that have been neglected or demolished due to economic forces.

WHAT COUNTS?

But the preservation diversity gap is more abstract than simply logistical. It stems from the difficulty of tackling criteria for significance, the formal rationales given for preserving a certain historic resource. Significance, according to one scholar, is the concept in which “preservationists pack all their theory, ideology, and politics” and the answer to the question, “why preserve?”

Whereas aesthetics are clearly important and drive much of the marketability of historic structures, in fact there are a range of significance factors that preservation regulations codify. It’s important to understand that there is no universal understanding about significance across local preservation regulations; in fact, these vary widely. This section will focus on federal criteria, since these were at stake during the Section 106 process.

As already discussed, the Magnolia Street Housing Project, the original buildings of the development later renamed C. J. Peete, was listed on the federal National Register of Historic Places. Buildings must be fifty years old or older to be considered for this national list of historic places, which includes over 80,000 places, with representation from almost every county nationwide.

The National Register attributes significance according to the following criteria:

A. [Places] that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

B. [Places] that are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past

C. [Places] that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction

D. [Places] that have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory

The Magnolia Street Housing Project was listed under Criterion A for its association with the designs and policies of early federal low-income housing programs. Preservationist Anthony Tung asserts that preserving "subsidized housing" in cities like New York and Vienna is a way to affirm the "virtue of rectifying social inequalities." It could just as easily be argued that Magnolia and other public housing developments of the era affirmed the 1937 "virtue" of segregating blacks from whites. Magnolia's long history is more complicated, and its history has more nuanced meaning, than simply what fits in the neat categories of the National Register Criteria. Ned Kaufman argues in one essay on the "Diversity Deficit" for more categories of significance that address minorities and underrepresented groups, including "places of suffering and strug-

44 National Register of Historic Places, Magnolia Street Housing Project, National Register # 99001038.
gle" and "places of racial or ethnic interaction."\footnote{Ned Kaufman, "Eliminating the Diversity Deficit" in \textit{Place, Race, and Story: Essays on the Past and Future of Historic Preservation}, 105-108.}

Buildings represent as well as are simply associated with a certain history or event. Several of those whom I interviewed during my research explicitly stated that they did not support the "warehousing" of the poor that Magnolia and other public housing developments came to symbolize, regardless of preservation outcomes. Una Anderson, the executive director of New Orleans Neighborhood Development Collaborative, the community-based developer at Harmony Oaks, was especially emphatic:

Preservation of buildings was not at the top of my list; partly because the buildings had represented a norm in that public housing community that was destructive ... to families, to human life, to kids. And where buildings represent things, I think they very much represented the dysfunctional culture that had grown up in the old Magnolia.\footnote{Una Anderson, interview by author, New Orleans, LA, January 20, 2011.}

To Anderson, and many others, to demolish and rebuild this community new was to demonstrate a different paradigm and a better quality of life for public housing residents.

To others, the historic buildings represented strength and safety. The strong construction of the 1940s housing developments was well known among New Orleanians, and likely had special significance during the post-Katrina period in light of what the storm had done to many of the stakeholders' lives. This came out in the oral histories done by Shantrelle Lewis, the director of C. J. Peete's oral history project, as well as in arguments made in Section 106 meetings by former residents, who explained that people in the neighborhood would historically take refuge in the Magnolia during hurricanes.\footnote{Roma Campanile, notes from the second meeting of Lafitte consulting parties, May 3, 2007.} Lewis observed that "a lot of people like the look, aestheti-
cally, of the new development of Harmony Oaks, but I think they [are] really concerned about how [the buildings] would stand up to any powerful storm.” A few days before Lewis and I spoke, she had listened to a resident describe the discomfiting clattering of her shutters during a recent night thunderstorm. As a survivor of Katrina, this resident worried about what would happen to her home during an even stronger wind. These differing representations underscore the variety of ways that stakeholders explain the significance of a historic resource.

The Section 106 process for the Thomy Lafon School in the center of the Magnolia site, though not the subject of this thesis, also brought to light the difficulties of preserving a site that hosts different or alternative meanings for different people. The school, built for African Americans in the nineteenth century, had been burned by an angry white mob during a spate of racialized violence in 1900; over a hundred years later, this was enough justification for some to advocate for its demolition. However, rebuilt several times, and in its current iteration as a modernist school, the institution also reflected the efforts of school board officials to incorporate music, state-of-the-art classrooms, and recreational facilities in a neighborhood lacking those until the mid 1930s. Moreover, its association with Thomy Lafon, a prominent black philanthropist, was a source of pride for both teachers and former students.

Interviewees involved in the development of Harmony Oaks were admittedly frustrated by time spent debating the fate of this derelict school sitting in the middle of their new buildings and asserted that the conversations were non-productive. Nonetheless, these conversations exposed

49 Shantrelle Lewis, interview by author, telephone, March 11, 2011.
50 Anderson, interview.
53 Anderson, interview; Yusef Freeman, interview by author, telephone, January 24, 2011.
its history in a dramatic way, and the school's history is more widely known among site residents despite its imminent demolition.

THE PURPOSE OF ASKING WHY

History, Kaufman found among respondents to a survey of minority heritage activists, is dramatic, "a relentless struggle to discover, uncover, rediscover, and recover facts about the national past that have been swept from public consciousness." Lewis cited this uncovering as well: "[Magnolia is] not just a place that's crime-ridden and drug-ridden; there were a lot of beautiful people and a lot of beautiful characters, and also a lot of powerful experiences that came out of this housing project."55

The field of public history has made strides to bring more uncovering of history into the practice

55 Lewis, interview.
of planning and everyday urban life. Hayden describes how the Power of Place (a Los Angeles non-profit bearing the same title as her book) focused on “social and political issues, rather than physical ones, as the center of urban landscape history.” For her, public art is one way to interpret complex social histories at a given site. As examples, the book describes a long wall that details the life and achievements of a 19th century midwife whose homestead is now occupied by skyscrapers, and a sidewalk in Little Tokyo lined with sculptures and inlays about the block’s history that create a perpetual walking tour. At Harmony Oaks, a Mardi Gras Indian “Walk of Fame” and other art installations on site have been designed to commemorate the cultural history of the Magnolia Street Housing Project.

Hayden is convinced that public history contributes to stronger political and community organizing for diverse communities and advances the rights of women of color. Andrew Hurley and others focus on preservation’s abilities to enhance economic development in inner-city neighborhoods through this same community building. But the overall impact of preservation efforts can seem small. Ned Kaufman documented African American advocacy efforts in New York City at Harlem’s Audubon Ballroom and the African Burial Grounds in lower Manhattan. In comparing the preservation outcomes of the two struggles, Kaufman reflects sadly that “heritage victories, unless accompanied by significant gains in economic justice or political power, are likely to remain essentially symbolic.”

It is this feeling that preservation is beside the point that permeated my discussions with the actors working on the development of Harmony Oaks. The difficulty of responding to Katrina, and the depth of work needed in Central City, occupies Una Anderson’s thoughts much more than a

56 Hayden, The Power of Place, 235.
57 Hurley, Beyond Preservation.
theoretical conversation about what is significant or how to preserve buildings:

Deep conversations about income and race would be needed to bridge the gulf between preservationists, residents in low-income communities, and affordable housing advocates. I guess most of us feel like the urgency of the need for high-quality affordable housing does not leave us with the luxury of having the extensive conversations required to create that bridge. And finally all of that has to be measured against the benefit created for residents and the community by such a bridge. Given the tradeoffs, I prefer to put my head down, do the work and produce the needed units.59

In this thesis, I will argue that the preservation movement must open its doors to embrace community preservation, a model advocating the protection of social networks and cultural traditions. Community preservation practice would acknowledge and seek out person-centered preservation interventions in parallel to bricks-centered preservation interventions. As a harbinger of this model, the National Trust launched a project in 2009 called “This Place Matters.” Their campaign is centered on a website where users can upload photos and points on a map of those places that are important to them.60 The idea of “letting people share what places matter (instead of telling them)” is an enormous departure from the old model of preservation, where official designation was the holy grail for advocates. It expands the targets for preservation advocacy by reframing the notion of significance beyond traditionally-valued building forms and histories. Additionally, it calls historic preservationists to advocate for a wider range of places. Both facets are a critical step towards developing the movement’s relevance in low-income communities.

59 Anderson, interview.
Una Anderson and others may want to produce affordable units in isolation from the tangled practices of preservation and commemorating significance; but since federal funding was involved, these issues were inextricable at the Big Four. As discussed in Chapter 2, the stakeholder landscape for the C. J. Peete, Lafitte, Saint Bernard, and B. W. Cooper Section 106 processes was large and complex. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP), the “institutional preservationists,” sent staff to each meeting of the 106 reviews, and both agencies have ongoing roles in the process: SHPO is overseeing mandatory design reviews on the on-site and off-site buildings that have been constructed as part of the redevelopments, and both agencies are participating in quarterly review meetings to check developers’ compliance with the produced Memoranda of Understanding.
The “advocacy preservationists” had various levels of involvement from start to end, ranging from a very vocal and legally-informed contingent from the National Trust for Historic Preservation (“National Trust”), to some local representatives who came to meetings but did not continue to be involved in (nor, in some cases, to even keep track of) what happened on the four sites.

This chapter draws on my interviews as well as on documentation of the Section 106 consultation meetings derived from several sources. Official documentation of the first public meetings (which occurred on January 30, 2007) is included in each development’s respective Section 106 reports, some of which are still available on HANO’s website archive.61 Roma Campanile of HUD generously provided her notes from the consultation meetings of March, April, and June of 2007. These notes are not official transcripts, but provide a contemporary account of what was discussed by the attending parties at the meetings for each of the Big Four developments. Transcript-style documents (formatted to show the comment-by-comment flow of discussion, each attributed to a specific participant) were written up for the first and second consulting party meetings that took place on April 17 and 19 and on May 3. For the third consulting party meetings, which took place on May 16, 2007, there are only lists of action items that came out of the discussions. There are transcript-style notes as well for two meetings in June (one was a conference call) initiated by the ACHP, in response to general concerns from consulting parties about the Memoranda of Understanding.

Through examining these documents, I was able to corroborate the broad themes articulated in 2010 and 2011 by my interviewees, many of whom were in the meetings in question and whose 2007 comments are part of the public record. The documents also helped to establish a timeline for the Section 106 processes and the development of plans for the Big Four, which was difficult

at first for an outsider to understand.\textsuperscript{62} I must reiterate that my access to documentation is unfortunately limited, and that I was not present at any of these events. The reader should accept my analysis of the 106 reviews as a sketch rather than a portrait of the complexities and contradictions inherent in the discussions.

I was fortunate to have been sent correspondence between the National Trust, the ACHP, and HUD, as well as the signed Memoranda of Agreements (MOA) for each project by Walter Gal- las of the National Trust. The correspondence provides an understanding of the legal process concerns voiced by the National Trust throughout the process, as well as the later formal recommendations by the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation. The work of these two organizations to synthesize the issues while advocating for a fairer process contributed enormously to the second half of this chapter.

I had access to internal development materials for Harmony Oaks, including developer RFQs, architectural drawings for building rehabilitations, and HOPE VI grant documents, thanks to Shawn Escoffery at the New Orleans Neighborhood Development Collaborative (NONDC).\textsuperscript{63} Finally, I received Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) photographs and site plans for Lafitte from Matthew Morrin at Enterprise Homes. I will focus in this section on the C. J. Peete and, secondarily, on the Lafitte 106 reviews because of my superior access to information and to practitioners involved in these two projects.

The themes of debate and discussion can be seen in two categories: “content” concerns and “process” concerns. Content concerns, the substantive discussions about alternatives and mitigation planning at these historic sites, would ideally have composed most of the public debates.

\textsuperscript{62} See Appendix 2 for a timeline of the important events of this period.

\textsuperscript{63} Escoffery, then Deputy Director at NONDC, was my sponsor during a MIT Community Innovators Lab fellowship in 2010.
Process concerns centered on HUD’s compliance with the Section 106 regulations. Unfortunately, contention over the way that the 106 processes were handled hurt the productiveness of the stakeholder meetings and colors how many of the preservation advocates reflect on the outcomes of the preservation interventions.

CONTENT CONCERNS

Because issues of historic preservation were intertwined with issues of public housing policy, the economics of affordable housing development, residents’ right to return, and anxieties about community rebuilding, many of the Section 106 meetings hosted discussions so large that facilitation was challenging. The stakeholders were put in the position of representing multiple agendas: HUD, for example, began each meeting by presenting the agency’s substantive case for demolition and mixed-income redevelopment, while also trying to answer questions about process and timelines from advocacy preservationists. As a result, meeting transcripts are difficult to follow, and discussions of secondary or minimal importance sometimes seem to have taken time and energy away from the most important question at the C. J. Peete and Lafitte meetings: how to best incorporate historic preservation at the redeveloped sites.

To compartmentalize 106 processes is also difficult. The meetings for each of the four projects were scheduled either at once or consecutively one after the other, and included large overlap between stakeholder participants. Some interesting discussions about history and preservation, therefore, took place in the Saint Bernard and B. W. Cooper meetings but never came up elsewhere.

I have tried to select the most important “content concerns” from the discussions, whether from meeting transcripts, notes, or interviewees’ recollections. In all of the reviews, it can be general-
ized that practical concerns over the development process outweighed interest in discussing principles or theories of preservation. This is understandable; the four redevelopments constituted a difficult, complicated, and risky attempt by HUD to forge multiple private-public partnerships at enormous financial scale while the city was still suffering from the effects of a disaster that was destructive to political, social, and physical infrastructures. Additionally, most of the consulting parties at the table, apart from HUD and HANO representatives, were not themselves practitioners of affordable housing development, so they were looking for explanation of the factors governing the agency’s decisions.

**UPDATE PUBLIC HOUSING**

The most compelling rationale given by HUD and HANO in favor of demolition was the need to update the city’s public housing, both in terms of the public housing’s building stock and its overall concept. HUD, from the beginning, made the assumption that the redevelopments would deploy the mixed-income model of public housing redevelopment, utilizing public-private partnerships between the housing authority, private developers and community partners. This not only reflects HUD’s standard policies of the time, but also reflects a likely desire to distribute development control further away from the troubled local housing authority, given its lengthy receivership.

Among policymakers today, arguments for mixed-income redevelopment as best practice are loud, although the profession is not in unison on this point. As described, planned mixed-income developments are argued to work both for poverty reduction and neighborhood revitalization. The poverty reduction argument posits that improved social networks and role modeling for low-income residents of mixed-income developments will lead to greater access to resources for these residents. Secondly, greater social control factors and the neighborhood’s increased
political and economic status post-investment may improve residents’ quality of life at home. Unfortunately, the arguments on access to resources have not yet been proven accurate, and the possibility of a better quality of life is somewhat tempered by the small number of low-income households who actually gain access to units in these mixed-income developments.  

Some of the housing rights activists who testified in early meetings, and who participated in protests and civil disobedience against the demolitions, were adamant that HANO and HUD should retain public housing for low-income households in light of severe affordable housing shortages. Advocating for building preservation at the Big Four was, for many, associated with the right to return and general housing insecurity of low-income black residents, an extremely important civil rights issue in post-Katrina New Orleans. Yusef Freeman of McCormack Baron Salazar, the developer of Harmony Oaks, explained, “as long as buildings are still up, [residents] know that there are units there. And they’ve seen … that if buildings are demolished, they may not be able to come back because buildings may not be rebuilt.” However, the political right to return agenda was relatively marginal to the Section 106 process, especially as later meetings were composed almost exclusively of advocacy preservationists and government staff.

MONEY

To make the mixed-income model financially feasible, HUD and HANO had submitted Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) applications to the state of Louisiana’s Housing Finance Agency, which grants developers tax credits to “sell” to investors, adding significant amounts of equity into the project. These tax credits also contribute to mixed-income resident composition,

65 A small collection of blog posts from this coalition can still be found at http://neworleans.indymedia.org/news/?comments=yes&medium=&keyword=peete (accessed May 12, 2011).
66 Freeman, interview.
since the maximum income limits associated with tax credit units are significantly above the normal incomes of public housing residents.

Financing concerns drove the 106 process timeline and the decision of HUD and HANO to demolish the large majority of buildings at each site. In any affordable housing development project, subsidy is critical to "close the gap" between the cost of developing the project and the limited amount of financing a rent-restricted property can attract. In large-scale, privately financed redevelopment sites like the Big Four, financial feasibility also becomes dependent on attracting private investors and market-rate tenants, who have choices about where to live. Decisions about historic preservation interventions and the design of the Big Four developments were therefore made within the framework of serious financial limitations.

HUD and HANO officials at consulting party meetings often reminded stakeholders that the consultation process was time sensitive. The schedule for 106 review was called "aggressive," and participants were told that the agency's development plans (which, as will be described, already called for 100 percent or near 100 percent demolition and a mixed-income resident composition at each site) could not be changed without jeopardizing the agencies' tax credit allocations. In order to retain the credits, some work had to be completed by early summer of 2007—and at C. J. Peete, HUD argued that to demolish structures was the easiest way to begin this work and meet the deadlines for partial completion. When describing these factors, HUD staff leading the meetings implied that prolonged preservation discussions, or the implementation of a more comprehensive preservation strategy at the sites, would be detrimental to affordable housing production in New Orleans. Preservation advocates, who were more likely to be familiar with historic tax credit programs than with LIHTC, then spent time trying to ask about alternative

67 See for example, Campanile, notes from the first meeting of C. J. Peete consulting parties, April 19, 2007; notes from the second meeting of B. W. Cooper consulting parties, May 3, 2007.
funding strategies that could change the picture. Given the difficulty of financing redevelopment, this was less than productive.

Proponents of demolition used development cost analysis to justify their position as well. The developers at Harmony Oaks and Faubourg Lafitte both suggested to me that rehabilitation of the buildings on these sites was, on a per-square-foot basis, more expensive than new construction because of the special constraints of historic public housing buildings. This was especially true given the requirements of HUD (who has specific standards for room sizes, materials, and egress for all its developments) and market-rate clients, who must be attracted with certain amenities. Yusef Freeman explained that

> these buildings weren’t designed at the efficiencies that are required today. Bedroom layouts weren’t big enough, there wasn’t closet space. There’s always remediation that needs to take place: ... there [was] lead-based paint on the columns and the stairs, and so those have to be encapsulated ... the columns and doors actually had to be taken off and stripped to remove hazardous materials.²⁹

Roma Campanile from HUD remembered,

> Even though the units were really very nice, they were very tiny family units ... Two- and three-bedroom units only had one bathroom. The kitchens were really tiny. So there was a lot of trepidation about doing any large-scale retrofit or rehabilitation of the older units because we knew it was going to be difficult to meet modern standards.⁷₀

The financial feasibility of rehabilitating the majority of buildings on site, and how that would

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²⁹ Freeman, interview.
⁷₀ Roma Campanile, interview by author, telephone, January 31, 2011.
have compared economically to demolishing and building new, is still disputed. John Fernández, the expert witness in the Advancement Project lawsuit, for example, found it impossible to reconcile HUD's cost estimates with his conservative independent assessment. Preservation advocates and residents found the argument for "modern standards" difficult to refute within the meeting space, since it was an architectural assessment done with information to which they had not been given access. During recent Section 106 reviews in New Orleans for threatened modernist schools, the activist preservation group DOCOMOMO Louisiana has attempted to organize charrette processes to controvert the architectural renovation studies done by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Recovery School District. However, technical design investigation into adaptive reuse possibilities by outside advocates did not occur for any of the four public housing projects.

Once the decision to demolish had been made, money continued to play a role in decisions on how each developer would comply with the applicable Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). How many buildings to renovate, which ones, and what uses were allowed for each structure, was unspecified by the MOA but left to post-106 negotiations by the developers with SHPO. At Saint Bernard, C. J. Peete, and Lafitte, these negotiations resulted in the minimum number allowable: three preserved buildings. Marketability was key to these discussions. Based on his experiences managing public housing redevelopment deals in other parts of the country, Freeman observed that, "we find down the road, after we have a successful revitalization, that the preserved buildings and the preserved units are the last to lease up." Una Anderson was also worried about the visibility of the preserved historic structures and how that would impact the overall perception of Harmony Oaks. "I would have chosen buildings that were a little more hidden," she said. At Harmony Oaks, despite these concerns, the developers had no issues leasing up the rehabili-

71 Fernandez, interview.
tated residential building. Freeman attributed this success to the general lack of quality housing options in New Orleans for both market-rate and affordable tenants, rather than to any special quality of the building.73

BUILDING QUALITY AND DESIGN

Residents and advocacy preservationists were united in the argument that the public housing structures at C. J. Peete, Lafitte, Saint Bernard, and B. W. Cooper were strong buildings. It is a narrative I heard in talking with former resident Jocquelyn Marshall, with a man on the street outside the new Harmony Oaks, with the director of the C. J. Peete oral history project, from architects involved in the decision-making process, and from people who helped demolish and reconfigure buildings at Harmony Oaks and other HANO developments. Discussions of strength were especially affecting coming from those who had survived Katrina. In the context of all that survivors had lost, the strength of the historic structures, and the safety from wind and water that they represented, was a critical argument for their preservation.

A corollary to this discussion is that the new buildings (at Desire, or at River Garden, the redeveloped Saint Thomas) were not sturdy. Former C. J. Peete and current Harmony Oaks resident Jocquelyn Marshall described her concerns in the January 30, 2007 public meeting:

The replacement buildings that are being built to replace the traditional public housing developments, the duration of those buildings, I can’t see them lasting no how in ten years. You know, basically we’re looking at pastel colors. But when you’re on the market looking for a home, you’re not looking for something that has beautiful colors. You’re

73 Freeman, interview; Anderson, interview.
That the advocacy preservationists, however, spoke more loudly about strength, rather than primarily about aesthetic or historical significance, is one of the most interesting findings of my research. It may have seemed easier, or more strategically viable, for non-residents and outsiders to advocate based on this practical narrative—that of wasteful demolition in a time of housing shortage—than to attempt to speak with authority about the significance of historic public housing. Said Walter Gallas from the National Trust:

"It was a complicated argument to make: I was not there saying, 'because of the architectural beauty of these buildings, we need to save them.' That wasn't my personal argument. These buildings, yes they are historic, yes they are important, but it's crazy to tear them down. It's crazy and wasteful and not sustainable."  


75 Walter Gallas, interview by author, telephone, January 12, 2011.
When I brought up the aesthetic value of the developments in my interview at the SHPO, it was quickly dismissed:

Michael Varnado: No, I wouldn’t say so. They’re kind of a really period, marginal, governmental colonial revival – I mean, that’s my term –

Nicole Hobson-Morris: Yes.

Varnado: We looked at anything of that era, you know late [19]30s, WPA-driven housing units as being eligible for the Register there in New Orleans. So that was our take.

So why preserve the buildings? I asked. There was a pause.

Varnado: Because of the history they represent.

Hobson-Morris: I think also their construction was also second to none. They – in trying to demolish some of them – they had a hard time. But also the history.76

In a consultation meeting for B. W. Cooper, Varnado asserted that “This is the beginning of the federal housing in the U.S. We are looking at the history of these buildings as part of a national movement.”77

However, as advocates found, Criterion A of the significance criteria has relative weakness and poor resonance in the context of a debate about the future of people’s homes. Association with a significant event or the broad patterns of history offers little judgment on the inherent built value of a historic resource like Magnolia. For this reason, it could be seen as weaker than

77 Campanile, notes from the second meeting of B. W. Cooper consulting parties.
Criterion C or D in arguing for preservation of the structure itself. It may even be weaker in this argument than Criterion B, because to experience a place that a significant person experienced is more evidently meaningful to the average member of the public than experiencing a place with a special link to housing policy history.

But even design is a subjective quality and may be a pitfall for preservation advocates. To laud the design of a public housing development—or any other state-constructed resource, especially—is immediately a political discussion. Where one person sees "barracks-style" buildings that housed the poor in an institutional setting, another sees high quality buildings that represent the hopefulness of New Deal public housing planners. The historic site design of Magnolia, for instance, was used as a rationale for drastically different viewpoints among my interviewees. Although there is something theoretically unsettling about arguing that hundreds of buildings that existed in the city for almost seventy years are "not contextual," there was a strong sense among the developers I spoke to that public housing needed a dramatic redesign to fit better into the built environment of New Orleans. Campanile of HUD and Freeman of McCormack Baron Salazar, both coming from an affordable housing context where defensible space principles are paramount, described the old courts as unsafe, unhealthy, and indicative of a separation between public housing and the rest of the neighborhood. Freeman explained,

> When we come in and do design, it's all about sightlines, it's all about the physical spaces, and historically public housing wasn't designed in that way, with courtyards that face internally away from the surrounding community, and really disconnecting public housing sites from the community.78

This narrative may make sense when describing public housing in other cities; but at C. J.

78 Freeman, interview.
Peete, the courtyards actually faced outwards to the surrounding neighborhood. Shantrelle Lewis described how the residents she interviewed remember the courts as gathering places:

> Whatever the old design was, I think the courtyards really served to unite different people, because people were drawn together around that courtyard, and there were a lot of activities that took place ... like games for kids and even the adults around the courtyard. I think the courtyard served to centralize different pockets and groups of people within the Magnolia.\(^7^9\)

None of the National Register criteria address the significance that the buildings of the Magnolia had for a community of people, especially after the diasporic effects of Katrina. Charlene Vaughn of the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation advocated in the Section 106 meetings for a more expansive understanding of preservation by consistently asking the question, "what does historic preservation mean to different people?"\(^8^0\) When a former resident of the Saint Bernard project mentioned a church that she thought could be in the APE, Vaughn supported her comment:

> Ms. Minor offers the perspective of residents, which may not be codified in books. The places she is mentioning may meet different criteria for historic, because they have merit within the community. For example, history, events, associations that are not necessarily already documented.\(^8^1\)

This strain of thought, though not fully formed by advocacy preservationists, foreshadows an interesting new avenue for the preservation movement in widening the definition of significance.

\(^7^9\) Lewis, interview.
\(^8^0\) Campanile, notes from the first meeting of C. J. Peete consulting parties.
\(^8^1\) Campanile, notes from the first meeting of Saint Bernard consulting parties, April 19, 2007.
The importance of acknowledging the human experiences of these developments was not altogether lost on advocacy preservationists, who confronted the difficult issues of community preservation and race during the debates with varying degrees of success.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION AND RACE

The Magnolia Street housing project was "officially" historic because it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This simple fact was in and of itself enough to call the institutional preservationists to the table to advocate for the buildings. As Varnado and Hobson-Morris's comments above show, it wasn't necessary to problematize or further explain their involvement.

However, to strengthen their position, advocacy preservationists sometimes discussed community preservation—the protection of neighborhood social bonds and traditions—despite none of them having personal ties to these communities themselves. A board member from the Louisiana Landmarks Society, John Schackai, explained that his organization had gotten involved because the housing developments were neighborhoods, and their mission is to protect neighborhoods.

To destroy the culture of the neighborhood is horrific. And that is the thing that most people couldn't see, was how important the culture of the neighborhood was. Even though those places were fraught with crime, that had to do with policing and enforcement. Didn't have anything to do with the quality of the buildings or the many nice people that live there. I mean, they were broken-hearted. Imagine if they imagined they wanted to take my neighborhood.

When I asked how he had met those people, he responded,
We just met them at the 106 meetings.82

The context for the community preservation argument was the prevalent fear that public housing redevelopment was part of a deliberate plan to rebuild New Orleans wealthier and whiter. This fear was based not only on conspiracy theories about levee bombing, but on true and widely publicized racialized events in the months and years after the storm. To cite just two, during the storm, mostly-black New Orleanian refugees were prevented by armed police from exiting the city on foot to safety in neighboring parishes; and in 2006, majority-white Saint Bernard Parish passed an ordinance that prohibited the owners of single-family homes from renting to anyone who was not a blood relative.83

As Charlene Vaughn of the ACHP explained, “the revitalization of the four public housing complexes was critical to stabilizing elements of New Orleans that would otherwise have been in danger, if not eliminated, of being abandoned.”84 Public housing, especially at the historically-black Magnolia and Lafitte projects, had special importance to the African American communities of Central City and Treme, and the black experience is one of the defining elements of the history of public housing in New Orleans. Yet despite the important racial context of redevelopment, race hardly entered into the explicit conversation in public meetings about why to preserve historic structures at Harmony Oaks or Faubourg Lafitte.

It was not easy for advocacy preservationists—who were mostly white outsiders—to grapple with the systemic racial issues at public housing sites, partially because they had not dealt with them before the storm. The racial tension that was inseparable from community preservation

84 Vaughn, interview.
rationales caused mistrust from various quarters about advocacy preservationists’ motives for being involved. Walter Gallas from the National Trust remembered a confrontation at a press conference in 2008, after the redevelopments had started, with several church and community leaders.

Their issue was the social justice issue, which I personally very much felt [was] important too, and not totally part of the National Trust’s mission, but aligned with it ... There was a woman who was an African American minister, who at the end of the announcements said to me, “Where were you before? Where was your organization before?” And she was absolutely right.

We, whether the National Trust or the preservation community ... before Katrina, nobody that I’m familiar with had [ever] made much of a fuss about “these four housing developments are important architecturally, and we better make sure they’re preserved” ... As is so typical in preservation battles, it wasn’t until they were threatened that people go, “Oops, wait a minute, we ought to take a look at this.”

My answer was, “You’re right; we weren’t here before, but we’re here now.” That was the honest answer, and I chose not to get all defensive about it, but I said, “We weren’t here before, and we’re here now.”

Elliot Perkins, the current director of the New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission, has significant experience in navigating preservation disputes in the city. One current challenge he is facing is mediating a discussion over the fate of the modernist Phillis Wheatley School, which is located a block from the Lafitte site. His view is that attempting to narrate even a posi-

85 Gallas, interview.
tive history for people of color at a historic site can backfire. "[Race] brings a really passionate and unpredictable element into all of these negotiations," he said. When I asked if he thought one was better off speaking about architecture, he said yes. "I think I'm more comfortable … Our architectural fabric is really consistent across race and income, so it's something that we can generally use that would work on all levels."86

But to isolate the merits of architectural preservation from the discussion about preserving community is to take a large section of possible allies and stakeholders out of the formal preservation discussion. Especially at the Big Four, a whole body of people protesting against the loss of public housing units (whether residents or housing advocates) were removed from formal historic preservation discussions. It may have been possible for advocacy preservationists to recruit them to the cause by using a community preservation framework.

**PROCESS CONCERNS**

If the true content of the concerns of stakeholders had been more cohesively addressed by HUD, HANO, and decision-makers, the process concerns may have been less vigorously contested. Both advocacy and institutional preservationists found strong arguments in a principle they could all agree on: the need to follow the rules of Section 106. An MIT master's thesis analyzing the coalitions against demolition of the public housing identified adherence to codes and protocol as a critical part of both the objectives and framework of the preservation coalition.87

The strength of advocates’ focus on procedural issues was impressive; almost a year after the

86 Elliot Perkins, interview by author, telephone, February 21, 2011.
signing of the Memoranda of Agreements (MOA) for the Big Four, the National Trust for Historic Preservation was still engaged, sending letters to HUD protesting the execution of the MOA with regards to the Master Plans and Semi-Annual Reports that were presented in January 2008.88 In late 2007, then again in spring of 2008, the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation sent HUD official memos identifying “serious issues” in the Section 106 reviews and giving advice on how to better handle such situations in the future.89 HUD responded at these times with extensive clarifications and also made some changes to protocol—including the scheduling of quarterly instead of semi-annual meetings with the development teams and SHPO to ensure MOA compliance.90

However, these efforts at transparency occurred long past the point of major decision making. Advocacy and institutional preservationists alike wanted historic preservation to be a factor in comprehensive planning of the redeveloped public housing sites, and desired that input provided during the Section 106 reviews be taken into consideration when deciding unit mix, financing strategies, and design at the new developments. It is hard for any outsider to make determinations about what factors governed HUD’s decision to demolish most of the buildings of the Big Four, but there is little evidence that large-scale preservation of the developments was given consideration during any but the most initial planning processes.


LATE INITIATION

Most of my interviewees agreed that the Section 106 processes had been initiated late, and that constraints of funding and development processes, already well underway by the time Section 106 was initiated, hindered the ability of consulting parties to effectively inform the redevelopment plans. The requests for qualifications (RFQs) for private developers to partner on the redevelopment of C. J. Peete, Saint Bernard, and B. W. Cooper were released on November 1, 2006.91 It was not until later that month (November 15) that SHPO was brought into the planning process.92 The RFQs were due to HANO on January 5, 2007, before any public meetings were held. As a result, there were concerns that the RFQs did not specify a “fully developed preservation component” and that potential partners were not judged on preservation expertise or given preference for having staff familiar with Section 106.93

An addendum to the RFQ document provides this question and answer:

The RFQ calls for Developers to submit responses that are ‘sensitive to preservation issues,’ but also states that a minimum program requirement is to ‘demolish and/or dispose of the existing units of public housing.’ Will HANO/HUD welcome proposals that envision rehabilitating several well situated existing buildings combined with new construction?

The program requires demo and/or disposition of existing buildings … The Development Partner is asked to submit a plan that includes these requirements.

92 United States Risk Management LLC, Section 106 Review and Documentation for C. J. Peete Housing Development, 119-123.
93 Vaughn, interview.

64
The RFQ also asked developers to submit only examples of new construction, not rehabilita-
tion of historic structures, and estimated that demolition of all units at C. J. Peete (and the other
developments) could begin as early as March 2007.94

It should be acknowledged that, like all New Orleanians, HANO staff members were uprooted
and disoriented by Hurricane Katrina. The housing authority even worked out of Houston for
several months because their New Orleans office was uninhabitable.95 The damage to the hous-
ing authority’s communication and staff infrastructures made the timely initiation of Section 106
reviews all the more difficult.

LACK OF CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

The greatest loss in having Section 106 review initiated late was that HUD foreclosed opportuni-
ties to consider alternatives to demolition during the public process. “Consideration of alterna-
tives” is mandated by Section 106 for federal agencies when an undertaking is determined to
negatively affect historic resources. HUD and HANO had already received state Low-Income
Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) for the redevelopment of these sites, and reminded consulting
parties throughout the process that any “material” changes to the development plans (which
had centered on a mixed-income, lower density approach that precluded renovation; at Lafitte,
Saint Bernard, and C. J. Peete, it was said that the application called for 100 percent demolition)
would jeopardize the placed-in-service and substantial-completion deadlines that are critical to
retaining awarded LIHTC funding.96

94 Housing Authority of New Orleans, “Addendum Number One: Development Partner for the C. J.
Peete Housing Development RFQ # 06-120-10-16”, http://www.hano.org/Documents/RFQ-
95 Roma Campanile, e-mail message to author, May 5, 2011.
96 “Addendum Number One: Development Partner for the C. J. Peete Housing Development RFQ #
06-120-10-16.”; Campanile, notes from the second meeting of Lafitte consulting parties.
HUD and HANO made available and explained briefly the alternatives analysis that they had produced for each of the projects, but these analyses were completed before the public consultation meetings began. The meetings were not framed as opportunities to explore new solutions to the challenges of planning housing in these historic places, but instead as a forum for comments on the current approach.

At a charrette for the Lafitte project in fall of 2006, residents were told to "start with a blank slate" and to imagine what density and building types they’d like to see on the site. Their ideas for new designs were then taken as a rejection of preservation. One of the community development partners, Nadine Jarmine from Providence Community Housing, described the process at an April 2007 consultation meeting:

We had 350-400 people attend, not all former Lafitte residents. We started with a blank slate. We told them they could create whatever they wanted to create. They could pick out different design types. Few indicated that they wanted to come back to the barracks style that currently exists. We took that as a clear indication that they do not want to come back to what they’d left.

Charlene Vaughn of the ACHP asked how the developer had addressed the issue of preservation.

Nadine [Jarmine]: [The charrette] predated this process [Section 106]. We posed the question a couple of times, but not in a technical way. A lot of residents came to the January meetings. We kept it generic and did not want to steer the conversation in any direction. We didn’t talk about demolition or anything. We were just saying, if you had a choice, what type of density and building types would you prefer?
Vaughn: Do you think that if you introduced the concept of historic preservation, you would get a different outcome?

Jarmine: No.97

The ways public input processes predisposed residents to desire new construction came up in several of my interviews. Said Walter Gallas, “the carrot of this bright, shiny and new suburban style housing is dangled in front of someone; and they say, ‘I want that, I want that,’ and that’s how it’s pitched.”98 John Schackai told me, “it’s much easier for architects to start with a clean piece of paper than it is to go and measure a building and then figure out how to use it.”99

Post-106 resident charrettes at Harmony Oaks resulted in the preservation of a non-historic community center, and resident input was part of the overall site design process. However, this was outside the formal required consultation meetings of Section 106. Most decisions about how many and which buildings were preserve were conducted afterwards by the project developers in conjunction with SHPO.100

SKEWED PARTICIPATION

One of the greatest challenges for HANO and HUD was the agencies’ ability to reach public housing residents to participate in the review. It was daunting: the number of residents connected to the four housing developments is enormous, and the social networks that are invaluable for information sharing and community organizing remained severely compromised after the chaos of Hurricane Katrina. Residents, not being able to return to their public housing units in

97 Campanile, notes from the second meeting of Lafitte consulting parties.
98 Gallas, interview.
99 Schackai, interview.
100 Freeman, interview; Matthew Morrin, interview by author, New Orleans, LA, January 18, 2011.
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<th>ATTENDEES OF THE SECOND C. J. PEETE CONSULTING PARTIES MEETING</th>
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May 3, 2007

Source: Campanile, notes from the second meeting of C. J. Peete consulting parties.

New Orleans, were scattered all over the country—and even those who were back in town were not necessarily in the same neighborhood as they lived in before. To address these obstacles to participation, meetings were held by HUD in other cities where many public housing residents still remained, and a survey of evacuated HANO residents was eventually conducted seeking input on redevelopment.\(^{101}\)

Nonetheless, the large majority of those voices heard during the formal historic preservation process were not those who would be returning to live on these sites or even in their immediate neighborhoods. During the C. J. Peete consultation meetings, the lack of a diverse group of consulting parties was raised several times as an issue. Accounts were mixed: the HUD staff said they had reached out to neighborhood groups, but Jocquelyn Marshall and Lenny Harris were concerned that people they knew in the neighborhood had not heard about the meetings. Marshall and Harris are the only former C. J. Peete residents who attended the formal consultation meetings, and two of the very few Central City residents whose opinions were actually noted in the records of the decision making process. (Cynthia Wiggins, a resident at Guste Homes in the neighborhood, did attend and speak at the first public meeting.)

Location of the consultation meetings was decidedly suboptimal: the first two public meetings were held across the river at the Fischer Community Center in Algiers, and subsequent consultation meetings for all of the projects were held at Holy Angels Chapel in the Bywater. Neither neighborhood is easy to reach by public transportation, and neither location has significance or even close adjacency to any of the four projects being discussed.

Although each meeting was opened with a presentation and distribution of materials by HUD staff, there is a sense that not everyone at the meetings understood the complicated procedural issues of Section 106, nor how to utilize that framework to advance their ideas and concerns. Midway through the consultation process, in an April meeting, Ms. Paul of the Lafitte development exclaimed, “Historic? When did it become historic?” in response to a discussion about preservation goals. 102 Vaughn, in her capacity as advocate for the public, “found that the African American residents were not given the deference, nor the tools to participate fully. They should have had a consultant that could walk through and talk about historic preservation, what it means [and] doesn’t mean … The playing field needs to be equal when you put people at a table to consult.” 103

Concerns were also raised throughout the process about documentation and access to information. Whether or not the plans and proposals, the alternatives analyses, the archaeological and HABS documentation, and public meeting notes were available on the website at the time, they are not easily retrievable now.

102 Campanile, notes from the first meeting of Lafitte consulting parties.
103 Vaughn, interview.
MINIMAL DIALOGUE

In an ideal world, "public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision." The process concerns above demonstrate that, here, the public's contribution to the core decision-making was minimal, and this was clear to preservation advocates. "I felt kind of helpless," said one interviewee. But even if this was the case, there is something to be said for a process that facilitates dialogue, bringing disparate groups together in a discussion. Did this happen?

An advocate in the 106 review process can be involved in several ways, most directly as a formal consulting party. Any member of the public can also provide comments about individual projects. HANO and HUD invited emailed comments about the Big Four, which were then published in the four Section 106 documentation reports. The anonymity of the comments, and the lack of transparency about how they were selected for public viewing, makes them minimally useful in understanding how the public at large felt about this issue. Eight out of the twelve emails published spoke for demolition and the mixed-income redevelopment model. Some were outwardly racist; several referred to the "entitlement" of public housing residents at a time when many other city residents were suffering the loss of their homes. "I am a middle-class, divorced mother of one and am totally opposed to having these people return," wrote one. "PLEASE DO NOT CONCENTRATE OUR POVERTY," wrote another.

In-person stakeholder communication seems to have happened among people who aren't typically colleagues—for example, advocacy preservationists and residents—only in the context


105 Section 106 Review and Documentation for C. J. Peete Housing Development, 173, 182.
of the public meetings.\textsuperscript{106} Although the National Trust, for example, was an influential advocate against demolition, the organization did not play any community organizing role among those whose rights they were advocating for. This disconnect led people to be suspicious of their involvement, even though the arguments that the National Trust was making were more about housing rights than about building aesthetics.\textsuperscript{107} Una Anderson spoke about her own mistrust of the groups’ unison, explaining that

\begin{quote}
a convergence of those two voices can create, from very different corners and very different value sets, a pushback that stops ... progress from happening. What [public housing residents] really were saying in those conversations was, “I want to be part of something better,” but they didn’t trust that they ever could be.\textsuperscript{108}
\end{quote}

Two years later, the bitter taste in the mouths of many advocacy and institutional preservationists remains because of these foundational process concerns. Many of those who are familiar with Section 106 and its applications in New Orleans have a negative opinion of the integrity of the consultations; people speak of the process as rigged, a “mop up tool,” and “only as good as the agency that runs it.”\textsuperscript{109} If not addressed, these sentiments will continue to result in counterproductive debates, instead of constructive dialogue about the future of historic resources.

At the end of the consultation process, the consulting parties signed Memoranda of Agreement for each site, which included negotiated concessions by HUD, HANO, and the developers for each project to “mitigate” the negative effects of demolishing historic resources. These will be evaluated in the following chapter.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{106} Schackai, interview. \\
\textsuperscript{107} Gallas, interview. \\
\textsuperscript{108} Anderson, interview. \\
\textsuperscript{109} Perkins, interview; Gallas, interview; Schackai, interview; Stock, interview.
\end{flushleft}
In the terminology of Section 106, "mitigations" are actions designed to lessen the impact when federal undertakings are determined to negatively affect historic resources. One could call these preservation interventions, though mitigations do not necessarily deal directly with the physical preservation of structures. At Harmony Oaks, the redeveloped C. J. Peete, the mitigations outlined by the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) ranged from the saving of historic trees on site, to an oral history project and interpretive exhibit about Magnolia’s history, to the adaptive reuse of historic buildings. Though advocacy preservationists viewed the various mitigations as token, developers saw the requirements of the MOA tangibly impact their finances and their products, and residents of the new developments are daily affected by the design decisions made to comply with historic preservation regulations.
The most common mitigation effort for a demolished historic resource is simply to document it prior to demolition through photographs, drawings, written descriptions, and archaeological research. The question must be posed: whose and what histories are worth documenting, and how? How much of a mitigating effect does documentation have for a disappeared building?

The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) is a “heritage documentation program” by which the federal government gathers data on historic resources as part of an ongoing nationwide survey. Today, the actual collection of the data is primarily performed by private consultants or volunteers. The HABS documentation for C. J. Peete was composed of photographs, architectural drawings, and a “complete written history” of the site and the surrounding neighborhood. HABS stipulations were included in the Memorandum of Agreement for each project, and are relatively specific, outlining specific exterior details to be photographed for each of a “representative sample of buildings.”

HABS documentation is important for architectural historians and future students of the sites, and the data collection itself is an admirable goal of the federal government. However, the premise of the survey is that it is possible to document a building in an objective, impersonal way that demonstrates its true value as a historical object. Thus the endeavor as a whole does not further a person-oriented agenda, but a bricks-oriented agenda. Though building exteriors at Magnolia were treated in detail, just one apartment interior was documented, and it was photographed when barren, emptied of the items that would have spoken to people’s lives within the housing development. Though the streetscape and site photographs were called for, “other

objects (such as automobiles) will be excluded from the photographs," and the few glimpses of residents leave one wanting more. The written history of the housing development, like the Magnolia Street Housing Project’s nomination report for the National Register, is academic, focused on what one could find out about the place from archival research instead of from on-the-ground investigations.111

The counterpart to this written history is the exhibit and oral history project, which was included as a requirement by the Memorandum of Agreement. Shantrelle Lewis, an experienced curator and museum professional from New Orleans, responded to the call for consultants and was selected for the contract. The project, unfinished as of this writing, is a distinct departure in form and content from the documentation performed by the HABS photographers. Lewis is hoping to title her project “The Wild Magnolia,” in a nod to the turbulent history and the strong, unique culture represented in the development. Our interview was the first and only mention I had heard of specific names of former residents, including well-known musician Harold Baptiste; artist Willie

111  Magnolia Street Housing Project, National Register # 99001038.
Birch, whose work has been shown all over the world; and Kenneth Jackson, the grandson of
the founder of a legendary local jazz club across the street from the Magnolia called the Dew
Drop Inn.

The themes that came up in her interviews were also distinct from the "official" historical narra-
tives in the National Register and HABS histories. Lewis found that people talked about commu-
nity culture, music, and social gatherings. Many mentioned the Magnolia Indians (one local tribe
of the city's Mardi Gras Indians) and neighborhood social clubs—rich, unique traditions in the
historic African American community in New Orleans that are not well known to outsiders.112

What Lewis saw as the primary theme to emerge, alongside frank discussions about racial seg-
regation, poverty, and violence, was community:

The stories themselves ranged from family life to Katrina to crime to ... community and
the culture of the neighborhood ... The recurring theme that continued to come up was
how much of a community the Magnolia was. I think in every interview that we did, from
interviewing people who were in their twenties to interviewing one of the first ... to move
in with her family, [it came up] that the Magnolia was such a community.113

Lewis sees her project as contributing to a historical narrative that will be more inclusive of resi-
dent voices.

I think that what I wanted to see happen is that the stories—that there's a particular pic-
ture painted of the Magnolia that's actually coming from the voices of the people them-

112 "Mostly Black Mardi Gras Event Shows A City in Pain", Washington Post, February 21, 2007; Sara
Zewde, "Theory, place, and opportunity: black urbanism as a design strategy for the potential
removal of the Claiborne Expressway in New Orleans," (master's thesis, MIT Department of
Urban Studies and Planning, 2010), 86.

113 Lewis, interview.
selves. So that when people are looking back at New Orleans' history pre-Katrina, and the housing projects are drawn into the discussion, that it won't be external discussions that are being had about the projects but it will be from the individuals who were in these areas, in these communities themselves speaking on how the projects really were.114

"The Wild Magnolia" will be an exhibit in one of the community spaces at Harmony Oaks. It will feature video and other representations of the stories from the oral history project, as well as artifacts from the archaeological investigations on site, which predominately uncovered everyday items from the pre-Magnolia days of the Belmont neighborhood. A documentary based on the resident interviews is also in production.115

REPRESENTATIVE STRUCTURES

The most visible mitigation was the preservation of three buildings on each of the public housing sites. At Harmony Oaks, the developers rehabilitated two historic buildings—the administration building and one residential structure—, plus the 1970s-era community center that sits on Washington Avenue between Freret and South Robertson Streets. In each of the other projects, it was the administration building plus two residential structures. At Harmony Oaks, the administration building is now office and community space, while the residential structure contains ten units of housing. Only at Harmony Oaks have the historic buildings opened for use at the time of this writing; at Lafitte and Saint Bernard, the structures stand vacant, waiting for the rest of the site to be constructed first.

The approach to choosing buildings to preserve illustrates the different rationales for preserv-
tion of different stakeholders. Yusef Freeman, the developer’s project manager at Harmony Oaks, was much happier to work with the administration building than the residential building at C. J. Peete. Its front columns, exposed beams and vaulted ceiling in the interior, and sloped green roof all made that building more marketable as historic resource than the modest, sparse-ly-ornamented public housing structure beside it. In his personal opinion, Freeman said, “the building with those pillars in the front is a beautiful historic building, but I didn’t really think that the residential buildings had much character.”

The preserved community center, though not historic and architecturally undistinguished, was saved due to conversations with the residents during the public Harmony Oaks design meetings run by the developer after the Section 106 reviews had ended. Jocquelyn Marshall explained the person-centric significance of the community center and why she had fought to keep it standing:

116  Freeman, interview.
They actually wanted to tear [the community center] down, but we were very opposed to that. You all can take the housing, but our residents need some social services to prepare them for their return ... We may not have the resources but we have sweat equity in this community and this community center. The previous President, Miss Augusta, she fought really hard, with other leaders, to actually get that center, so we weren’t going to let them tear that down. That was one thing I was willing to stand in front of.\textsuperscript{117}

Freeman and other members of the Harmony Oaks development team spoke about the lengthy rehabilitation process for that residential building and the meticulous design oversight of SHPO. There was particular frustration over the fact that SHPO had required the team to brick up one historic window to conceal modern piping. Other small frustrations included choosing shutters for the building (which had not had them before), and that the doors had to be painted a cream color. In the interior of the units, only a few hints indicate the historic quality of the building: fireplaces remain intact, and the formerly-metal staircases have been "encapsulated" by a HUD-

\textsuperscript{117} Jocquelyn Marshall, interview by author, New Orleans, LA, January 18, 2011.
approved brown plastic. The layout of each unit is a bit irregular when seen alongside the new construction units on site, but the effect overall is very similar.

Rather than concern themselves with what looked most historic, preservation advocates focused on how the preserved elements of the built environment could best showcase the site’s significance. Elliot Perkins, the city’s director of Historic District Landmarks Commission, told me that he hadn’t understood why the administration buildings had been chosen as representative structures: if it was the housing that was historically significant, why not preserve more of the residential structures instead? Other preservation advocates told me they would have liked to have seen the preservation of an entire courtyard of buildings, to better recall some of the site design as opposed to just the individual building design. The courts site plan was typical to this period of public housing, and seen as one of its key strengths and design attributes. At

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118 Perkins, interview.
119 Hobson-Morris and Varnado, interview.
Saint Thomas, an entire court was preserved and still acts as a successful space.

**SALVAGE**

The Memorandum of Understanding asks that HANO, SHPO, and the developer institute “a timely and cost-effective salvage plan to identify, retrieve, and move historic building materials” for re-use in local projects. The New Orleans Neighborhood Development Collaborative is proud that bricks from C. J. Peete were used to build the front steps of each of its new construction homes, which are targeted at moderate-income homebuyers. Advocacy preservationists remember better one failure at Lafitte, where red Luduwici tiles (considered one of the defining architectural features of the buildings) were tossed off the roofs to shatter by asbestos abatement contractors. Gallas, who tried to stop this destruction and even blogged about the incident, called
it "the usual ruthless thing you do when you have a controversial preservation issue: you just move ahead.""121

DESIGN, COST, AND TIME OF DEVELOPMENT

Not only did the State Historic Preservation Office have significant control over the design elements of all of the preserved buildings on site, but they also had design review over the new buildings of each development. In the case of Harmony Oaks, SHPO also reviewed off-site units because they are located in the Central City National Register Historic District. In the case of Lafitte, the local Historic District Landmarks Commission (HDLC) had additional design review over the portfolio of off-site and on-site housing because of the adjacent local historic district.

As a result of these different entities having influence and review over the designs, time and

cost was added to the development process. Neither developer whom I spoke to considered the added time a significant burden, and costs of renovation, though larger per square foot than the new construction on site, were acknowledged to be manageable at the small scale of two or three buildings. Matthew Morrin, the project manager for Enterprise Homes at Faubourg Lafitte, remembered SHPO’s involvement as quite detail-oriented—perhaps, at some points, confusingly so—but not unreasonable with regards to cost added. This was in part because their team had already submitted designs, with the help of HDLC, which spoke to regional architectural details.122

Unsurprisingly, opinions differed on the question of whether preservation influences had improved the design at the new developments. One architect and advocacy preservationist scoffed at the designs of the new construction, which were supposed to be contextual to the surrounding community. “I think the faux architecture of the new buildings is demeaning. One of the worst sins in preservation is to build a building that looks kind of old, and that’s exactly what they’re

122 Morrin, interview.
Courtyards became gated parking lots at Harmony Oaks, 2011. Photo by author.

"doing," he commented. Walter Gallas expressed his discontent with the new designs at Harmony Oaks: "it just looks like they've replicated C. J. Peete, but only in wood!" Though there are architectural details that tie Harmony Oaks buildings to New Orleans vernacular architecture, other aspects of the development design read much like other HOPE VI developments in cities around the country: streets have been reestablished through the site, buildings are scaled at two-story, townhouse structures with separate entrances for each unit, and fenced parking lots have, in an inverse pattern, replaced the courtyards as block interiors.

By contrast, advocacy preservationist Elliot Perkins lauded the developers at Lafitte for the varied designs of site buildings, and the efforts made to tie the streetscape of the development to typical frontages in the Treme neighborhood. At least some of the positive design outcomes are outgrowths of the oversight of local and state preservation agencies. Morrin described SHPO’s insistence on putting windows in the back as well as the fronts of site residences—a design

123 Schackai, interview.
124 Gallas, interview.
change which he sees as positive in retrospect, though it may have been costly.  

None of the described mitigations are likely to have been implemented without the Section 106 process; but to the average bystander today, the effects of historic preservation on the redevelopment of Faubourg Lafitte and Harmony Oaks are minimal. The ethos of urban renewal and large-scale site redesign are much more visible than any of the preservation interventions. The 106 process did not result in keeping more buildings than originally proposed by HUD and HANO, nor did the process itself encourage practitioners at the sites to think creatively about how to commemorate significance of the demolished historic resources. Finally, the public consultation meetings failed to contribute to a broader discussion about history and cultural preservation in post-Katrina New Orleans.

125 Morrin, interview; Perkins, interview.
How could stakeholders have successfully incorporated historic preservation at the Big Four redevelopments? First, historic and community preservation goals would have been weighed from the beginning alongside the aspiration of producing well-designed, high quality affordable housing in a financially feasible plan. Historic preservation is a planning tool for supporting livable neighborhoods and buildings, and should be recognized as such.

Secondly, success should be measured by built outcomes. The success of a preservation intervention is not linearly related to the number of buildings saved, however. I personally would not assert that any of the Big Four should have been preserved in entirety; but I share the opinion of Nicole Hobson-Morris of SHPO and others who would have liked to see an entire courtyard
rehabilitated at Harmony Oaks and Faubourg Lafitte. At Saint Thomas, prior to Katrina, five buildings were preserved in their historic court configuration. The renovated court gives visitors the ability to understand what the built site was like when fully extant. By contrast, the two preserved historic buildings at Harmony Oaks stand side by side, with no exterior interpretation, and offer little suggestion of what it felt like to live in and walk through the historic Magnolia.

Finally, and just as important, is the potential of a public review process to educate the public. Historic preservation processes should result in a broader understanding of history and contribute to a community’s understanding of how the past informs the future of their built environment.

This chapter offers some concrete recommendations to approach better outcomes in these categories. My recommendations are directed at federal agencies undertaking future reviews, but more pointedly at those advocates who fight for greater prominence of the preservation movement and greater rights for the public in determining the fate of significant resources. HUD, as this case study has shown, may rarely have anything to gain from fully complying with Section 106 regulations, and from the broadening of the concept of significance: these are likely to result in increased costs and less agency control over development outcomes. By contrast, HUD’s low-income clients and preservation advocates do have something to gain: protection of home and “what matters.” It is the duty of the preservation community to think critically about how to pressure agencies to comply with preservation regulations, and to lobby for the evolution of preservation regulations to further their goals.

The “process concerns” brought out during my research, as summarized in Chapter 4, confirmed arguments made by the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the advocacy and policy work that has taken place since 2007. Below I’ve summarized the four most important process concerns, and put forth broad recom-
mendations.

Section 106's regulatory safeguards to require public review of federal actions and to promote historic resource protection cannot function at any level if the process is subverted, so two of my recommendations are simply procedural.

1. Concern: 106 was initiated too late.

Recommendation: Initiate consultation as early as possible: most simply, before key decisions have been made about the fate of historic buildings.

2. Concern: Alternatives to historic resource destruction were not considered.

Recommendation: Structure development timelines such that consulting parties are able to propose alternatives that could feasibly be implemented.

These recommendations are sides of a coin; at the Big Four, as I have described, decisions on unit mix, financing, and redevelopment model had already been made by the time consultation was initiated, limiting the space to investigate alternatives to demolition. Moreover, the tight deadlines associated with Low Income Housing Tax Credits compressed the time available for inventing options and finding solutions to the problems of preservation at these complicated sites.

The last three recommendations offer ideas to improve the aged, narrowly scoped, and marginally influential Section 106 process. They attempt to solve the key problem—how could historic preservationists' concept of significance evolve to help protect communities, including low-income New Orleanians, from the destruction of their neighborhoods or homes?—within the
framework of an admittedly flawed formal process.

3. Concern: Stakeholder participation was limited to few groups, and limited numbers of public housing and neighborhood residents.

Recommendation: Broaden Section 106 to encompass consultation on cultural and community preservation, in addition to historic preservation.

Recommendation: Improve vehicles for public comment.

4. Concern: The public’s opinion was not taken into account; the process failed to create dialogue between interested and disparate groups.

Recommendation: Shape the process to allow for “true consultation”—the sharing of ideas and solutions across groups with different areas of expertise, points of view, and roles in the redevelopment—by engaging a neutral facilitator.

I’ll further elaborate on these three recommendations below.

BROADEN SECTION 106

Section 106 resides in the National Historic Preservation Act. It is used to examine federal actions affecting historic resources. However, historic resources do not stand alone in the built landscape. Section 106 addresses the broader context of an undertaking’s impact by requiring the initiating federal agency to identify an Area of Potential Effect (APE), “the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties.” The APE forms a spatial boundary for examining the impact of the
proposed undertaking on viewscapes, the creation of noise and other disturbances from demolition or construction, and other environmental qualities.

However, in creating the APE, SHPO and federal agencies are directed by the regulations to use the lens of traditional preservation, focusing on effects on historic resources that are either listed on or have been determined to be eligible for the National Register. In our case study, the APE by the above definition would correlate only to historic districts or buildings near the Big Four, instead of to vernacular neighborhood boundaries, demographic tracts, or to the area that site residents would likely displace to. As has been described in this thesis, the buildings of the Big Four have a complex identity, and their redevelopment will have a complex spectrum of effects. The redevelopments affected many historic resources, but the sites also stood to become a testing-ground for mixed-income redevelopment, will impact economic development and neighborhood revitalization in post-Katrina New Orleans, and measurably alter the demographic characteristics of several neighborhoods. Though advocacy preservationists did call for the definition of larger APEs during the early consultation meetings, it was a greater APE in area that they desired, not a broader APE in scope.

The Section 106 guidelines for selecting consulting parties is actually quite general, requiring that groups or persons invited to consult have a “demonstrated interest in the undertaking... due to the nature of their legal or economic relation to the undertaking or affected properties, or their concern with the undertaking’s effect on historic properties.” However, consulting parties at the Big Four overwhelmingly represented the worlds of historic preservation and government, instead of representing residents, cultural communities, or nearby business owners. Though neighborhood groups were invited to the consulting party meetings, for unclear reasons, they rarely if ever attended. A recent National Trust report examining contemporary applications of

Section 106 suggests that national and state interest groups comprise a large share of participants and that non-affiliated individuals face barriers to participation. In situations where bricks-centric preservation considerations are supplemented by person-centric preservation considerations, the expertise of historic preservation professionals and advocates should likewise be supplemented with a greater degree of input from the impacted community. Residents and community members must feel just as welcome to participate in the formal preservation frameworks of Section 106 or local preservation processes, as preservation “experts.”

I tie broadening participation in Section 106 to the efforts of the National Trust and others to embrace a more progressive concept of significance, of which the “This Place Matters” initiative is one indication. Historic preservation is sometimes the only regulatory tool available to communities facing building demolition, gentrification, or market-driven change. But potential advocates for community preservation—for example, the Mardi Gras Indian tribes who regularly danced second lines through the Magnolia, or the musicians who have connection to Central

City through the Dew Drop Inn across the street—would not have been invited to attend the 106 meetings for C. J. Peete, because they were not necessarily concerned with the buildings themselves. Broadening 106 to include more diverse stakeholders and a wider understanding of the APE aligns with the ultimate goal of understanding significance more broadly, which I argue will strengthen the preservation movement.

This recommendation may concern advocacy preservationists, who have nuanced and specific ideas about when and how to preserve historic structures. In many situations, their views will differ from the average member of the public. The National Trust’s report cautions against letting public participation override preservation principles, for example, by asking the public to vote on a topic “rather than basing decisions on standards of historic character and compatibility.” It may seem problematic to suggest broadening a process about preservation, when there are so few regulations to protect historic resources to begin with.

Moreover, the argument of community significance can be used to erode the arguments for building preservation. Roma Campanile argued for the demolition of B. W. Cooper by downplaying the value of the bricks themselves:

> It’s not really the buildings that are historic. It’s more about the community and the shared experiences... Family bonds and ties, [residents’] relationships and experiences growing up on that site, using the neighborhood buildings and churches. I think it’s very much a cultural history. ¹²⁹

Robert Tannen, a local attorney, responded that

¹²⁸ Ibid., 148.
¹²⁹ Campanile, notes on first meeting of B. W. Cooper consulting parties, April 17, 2007.
the culture we are trying to preserve will not be there, the residents will be displaced by a mixed-income population. These new projects will be a totally different composition of totally different cultures.\textsuperscript{130}

At the Big Four, building preservation had a direct link to community preservation: it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to renovate the entire housing development as a mixed-income community given both the stigma and physical configuration of the buildings. Additionally, historic preservation groups aligned (in desired outcome, if not reason) with coalitions who were concerned with social justice and equity in housing policy; yet this interesting link was treated with suspicion and left unexploited. Different preservation rationales can still contribute to a shared preservation vision. In cases like this, preservation advocates have much to gain from learning to express their interests as part of a broader dialogue about urban change and resource protection with people in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{131} Even if this dialogue takes place somewhat in the technical realm of a 106 review, it would advance the goals of the preservation movement by laying groundwork for more effective preservation advocacy. Work that exposes social history is able to bolster grassroots efforts resisting gentrification, demolition, and other acts that are destructive of urban communities. And as some of the most threatened historic fabric exists within inner city neighborhoods, reconciling community and historic preservation coalitions is critical to the continued relevance of the historic preservation movement.

**IMPROVE VEHICLES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

Along with a broader range of consulting parties, federal agencies would be well-served to provide improved vehicles for public comments. "The public," offers the National Trust report

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{131} Anderson, interview.
on Section 106, “is a sweeping term that includes individuals who care about historic places, but who are not typically affiliated with an organized preservation advocacy group.” They are typically given a place during consultation; during the Big Four reviews, members of the public were allowed to speak at preliminary meetings (given they had signed up in advance), and to submit comments by email to a generic HUD email address.

This anonymous email address (which can be compared to a closed comment box), and the black and white text-based web form that FEMA uses for their 106 review processes, are five or more years behind the times. The Web 2.0 model prefers a “participation, not [blog] posting” model, and calls for a richer user experience using imagery, stories, and interpersonal communication. It is, assuredly, more difficult than simply putting up a website: increasing public participation, especially among communities of color or those underserved by the internet, requires a thoughtful outreach strategy. Today’s advocates are focusing not only on adults, but on youth, reaching “the public” in schools, through community based organizations, and via the technologies—for example, text messaging and Twitter in addition to email—that they typically use.

Several preservation groups in New Orleans have comprehensive and significant online engagement strategies. DOCOMOMO Louisiana writes both a Twitter feed and blog with historic anecdotes and photographs highlighting important or threatened modernist historic resources in the city. They recently circulated an online petition to “Save Wheatley”—the Phillis Wheatley School in Treme—which has as of today garnered over 1500 signatures from advocates all

135 Thanks to Stefanie Ritoper for sharing her work on this topic.
over the country, including a few former students. The Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans, recognized nationally for its activities, maintains a photostream meticulously documenting each building proposed for demolition in the city, which amounts to dozens per week. Their advocacy department also has an incredible Facebook presence, with Senior Advocate Michelle Kimball posting status updates and information about preservation issues (in New Orleans and beyond) every few hours. Although it seems plausible that these efforts primarily reach individuals already familiar with the preservation community, and access to web-based resources is by no means universal, these strategies are examples that Section 106 actors—HUD and federal agencies as well as preservation advocates—could use when crafting an engaged, interactive approach to public input.


ENGAGE A NEUTRAL FACILITATOR

It is self-evident that the federal agency whose undertaking has triggered a given 106 process is not neutral, and therefore is not necessarily incentivized to thoroughly or fairly facilitate a public discussion about alternatives. Though there are surely 106 reviews that do go well and include “true consultation,” the process is advisory and has no decision-making authority: hence the prevalent view that Section 106 is only as good as the agency that runs it. A National Trust report recently found wide disparity among federal agencies in preservation staffing, expertise, internal training and education, and Section 106 monitoring procedures; HUD was singled out as systematically non-compliant. The agency was specifically identified as a contributor to “Section 106 by crisis management,” bringing demolition cases to the ACHP at the last minute.  

The Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP) is called to serve in the role of independent agency, and Charlene Vaughn called herself a facilitator in our interview. She attempted to bridge information gaps between residents and HUD staff throughout the Section 106 reviews, consistently requesting that documents and plans be made public and asking frequent questions about resident involvement in the processes. However, Vaughn and her ACHP colleagues are not given the tools or power to fully inhabit a facilitation role. ACHP staff do not control the location, time, agenda, or content of the meetings, but are simply invited to attend and participate by the relevant federal agency. In fact, the ACHP reviews only 1 to 3 percent of a large volume of 106 processes that occur each year. 

The National Trust report recommends that the ACHP “vigorously assert Section 106 as its core
mission," scale down involvement in other federal preservation initiatives and consider opening a western office. The report also advocates that ACHP staff undergo training in conflict resolution and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods. As the report observes, “Consulting parties and the project proponent are often locked into positions, do not speak the same language, are mistrustful, or impatient ... In other cases, a project may not necessarily be controversial, but may feature complex issues or impacts that make it challenging to achieve structured consideration in consultation meetings.” Both of these characteristics were certainly evident in the Big Four consultation processes.

A successful model for 106 could reflect tenets of the consensus-building approach to public disputes as written about by Lawrence Susskind and others. Though the ACHP would be a natural choice to form a network of Section 106 facilitators, other institutional preservationists such as State Historic Preservation Officers could also feasibly be trained to act in this role. Susskind recommends careful selection of stakeholders, who then undergo an exploratory, non-binding discussion about possible solutions to the dispute. This period of “inventing options” is critical, for it allows consulting parties who are “locked into positions” to engage in discussions of substance with minimal risk to their constituencies’ interests. This could be a preceding step to, if not a replacement for, the federal agency discussions that ultimately have decision-making authority.

Some practitioners are exploring techniques for mediating values-based conflicts, where it may not be possible for parties to compromise or find mutual gains because their positions are based on deeply-held beliefs. Susskind writes that “instead of aiming to resolve these disputes, the

142 Ibid., 112-116.
143 Ibid., 124.
mediators might [try] to help the parties understand and respect the views of their opponents and, most of all, [help] them avoid demonization of the other side."\textsuperscript{145} Perhaps what I've called "true consultation" reflects this idea: public processes of historic preservation should themselves actually help disparate members of the public discuss, understand and come to terms with the stories of our past, even if the outcome is ultimately destructive of the historic resource itself.\textsuperscript{146}

The idea that improving the Section 106 process will make a positive impact on neighborhoods, historic resources, or for communities of color is admittedly idealistic. Echoing Ned Kaufman's conclusion that historic preservation gains for underrepresented communities are meaningless without accompanying social change, there are a chorus of voices arguing that simply perfecting our democratic processes will not result in more equitable outcomes. Susan Fainstein writes that those championing deliberative democratic processes may be progressive, but do "not adequately confront the constraints on democracy in a society where resources are privately owned and controlled."\textsuperscript{147} The heavily stratified real estate market in New Orleans is a difficult space within which to find glimmers of what she describes as the criteria for justice: equality, democracy, and diversity.\textsuperscript{148} The Central City National Register Historic District, adjacent to the forty acres of new pastel housing at Harmony Oaks, still contains blocks upon blocks of crumbling historic shotgun homes inhabited by low-income black New Orleanians. But however small the step, implementing the above recommendations would help confirm for marginalized communities that the products of their built landscape (their homes, their memories) are worth learning about and honoring.

\textsuperscript{145} Lawrence Susskind, "Reconciliation vs. Resolution: The Logic of Mediating Values- and Identity-Based Disputes," \textit{Dispute Resolution Magazine} 17, no. 2 (Winter 2011), 26.

\textsuperscript{146} This section was informed by a discussion with Lawrence Susskind on 3/21/11.

\textsuperscript{147} Fainstein, \textit{The Just City}, 28.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., chapter 1.
Formal historic preservation processes, local as well as national, suffer from the flaws of the Big Four Section 106 reviews. Rather than spend time thoughtfully discussing how best to commemorate a historic resource’s significance, given the meaning that a place has for the people that lived there, preservation advocates often concentrate on trying all means possible to save its physical structures. Physical preservation is not always possible or desirable. For the preservation movement to evolve alongside contemporary urban challenges, its members must broaden their definition of significance, and find new ways to commemorate and interpret historical and cultural meaning at places where historic resources cannot be saved in full.

Through engaging the history of the built environment in communities challenged by economic
distress or persistent segregation, preservation advocates will broaden their constituencies and their impact. The preservation movement could thus begin to contribute to more equitable and democratic redevelopment practices. Part of this contribution should be to advance the potential of formal preservation processes to educate people about their history, while providing a space for sharing meaningful cultural and community narratives. The discussion of significance—"why preserve?"—should confront the difficult as well as the positive histories of a place, and honestly weigh historic preservation within the full range of other planning considerations.

At Harmony Oaks, the substantive discussion about history came after some 1,400 units of housing were demolished and the community dispersed. The creation of the "Wild Magnolia" exhibit and oral history project is laudable. But by this point, the advocacy preservationists were no longer involved in the discussions, institutional preservationists had little jurisdiction over the site, and the project was shaped by an independent consultant for the project developer. I am optimistic about the outcomes, because a consultant was chosen who has a personal interest in preserving New Orleans' heritage and who is professionally experienced in curating the stories, art, and culture of African Americans. Nevertheless, it would have been beneficial to involve the preservation advocates who had fought for the preservation of the buildings and who have expertise in interpreting the built landscape. This is a perfect example of a case where cultural and community preservation and historic preservation could strengthen each other's impact and meaning.

The questions surrounding historic preservation at complicated urban sites continue to arise in New Orleans. The integrity of the Section 106 process for the Phillis Wheatley School has been disputed by both local preservation advocates and the Historic District Landmarks Commission, and the fate of the school remains under question. Protests at the site by preservation groups are ongoing, while neighborhood activists call loudly for a new school. It has not been a smooth
or collaborative conversation. Following FEMA’s decision to demolish Wheatley, DOCOMOMO Louisiana formally withdrew participation from all 106 reviews going forward for lack of confidence in the integrity of the processes and frustration at what they perceive as a misuse of their time. Dozens of similarly contentious Section 106 reviews have been carried out by FEMA alone, and dozens more will be necessary in the coming decade.

The biggest upcoming challenge for historic preservation and public housing in New Orleans is Iberville, Lafitte’s counterpart public housing development just north of the French Quarter in Treme. One of only two 1940s-era developments still standing in the city, and the only one whose future is not certain demolition, Iberville was recently named a finalist for the first Choice Neighborhoods implementation grant. Choice Neighborhoods, a federal housing program designed to replace HOPE VI, has several key differences from its predecessor. The Notifica-

150 “Section 106 Notices for Louisiana.”
The NOFA document places less emphasis on demolition and density reduction than on neighborhood planning and community asset building, though still within the framework of poverty dispersal and mixed-income housing. Accordingly, the proposal for Iberville calls for demolishing fifty of the seventy-four buildings on site, but renovating the remaining twenty-four.\textsuperscript{152}

The financing model is similar to those used at Harmony Oaks and Faubourg Lafitte: Low Income Housing Tax Credit units will outnumber public housing units. The demographics of the development, and membership in this longstanding community, will therefore undoubtedly change in the coming years. State and Federal Historic Tax Credits are also proposed to finance renovations of the historic buildings, which will mandate design approval by SHPO for the renovated units and require adherence to the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.\textsuperscript{153}

The efforts to preserve historic buildings at the Big Four should be recognized as important precedent for local advocates’ participation at Iberville. Because historic preservation is an integral part of “Iberville Renaissance,” advocacy and institutional preservationists should act now to involve themselves in the discussions about what buildings to save, how to preserve them, and what measures will be taken to interpret their history for future generations and current residents of the site.

These actors’ early involvement and public participation would serve two purposes: one, to help inform the preservation outcomes with their technical expertise; two, to affirm their interest in advocating for low-income communities of color in New Orleans. This is an exciting opportu-


\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 42-3.
nity for advocacy preservationists and institutional preservationists to find common ground with residents of Treme in advocating for community preservation alongside historic preservation. The ability of HANO to address either concern justly and skillfully is an open question; those invested in preserving public housing cannot stand on the sidelines.

A Section 106 review has not yet been scheduled for Iberville, although the second round proposal for the $31 million grant will go to HUD this spring. In an ideal world, HUD and HANO would begin as soon as possible the process of engaging residents and community members in the discussions on the history of this storied and fascinating area of the city, which evolved from an informal area for vice in the nineteenth century, to the famous mapped Storyville prostitution district at the turn of the twentieth century, to public housing in the 1940s. Public understanding of the site and neighborhood’s history is an intangible but important “community asset” that the Choice Neighborhoods program could recognize and support.

In a city where preservation is respected and historic buildings are cherished, this decade has posed enormous challenges for the future of the historic built environment. With some work to build understanding between coalitions, New Orleans could be an example not just of preservation gone wrong, but of preservation contributing to a more just city.
Appendix 1

Compiled data from the United States Housing Census at the block level, 1940, 1950, and 1960.

Appendix 2

Timelines showing important events in the lifespan of the Magnolia Street Housing Project/C. J. Peete/Harmony Oaks and important events for public housing redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans.

Appendix 3

### 1940 Housing Census

(data at the block level)

<table>
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<th>Tract 93</th>
<th>Number of Structures</th>
<th>Number of Units</th>
<th>Vacant (for sale or rent or other)</th>
<th>Predominant Year Built</th>
<th>Occupied by non-white (out of # reporting)</th>
<th>% non-white</th>
<th>1.51 or more persons/room (out of # reporting)**</th>
<th>Units needing repair or having no private bath (out of # reporting)**</th>
<th>Average monthly rent</th>
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<td>24</td>
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<td>36/49</td>
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<td>8/49</td>
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<th>Occupied by non-white (out of # reporting)</th>
<th>% non-white</th>
<th>1.51 or more persons/room (out of # reporting)**</th>
<th>Units needing repair or having no private bath (out of # reporting)**</th>
<th>Average monthly rent</th>
</tr>
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<td>1900-1919</td>
<td>56/61</td>
<td>95%</td>
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<td>19/19</td>
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<td>$15.40</td>
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1940 Housing Census
(data at the block level)

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<th>Number of Units</th>
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<th>Predominant Year Built</th>
<th>Occupied by non-white (out of # reporting)</th>
<th>% non-white</th>
<th>1.51 or more persons/room (out of # reporting)</th>
<th>Units needing repair or having no private bath (out of # reporting)</th>
<th>Average monthly rent</th>
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<td>*</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Tract 52 |          |          |           |            |                    |        |                     |                        |                     |
| 5        | 39       | 87       | 1900-1919 | 84/97      | 97%               | 32.87  | 70/85               | 14.83              |                     |
| 6        | 26       | 66       | 1900-1919 | 65/66      | 96%               | 32.87  | 43/66               | 13.91              |                     |
| 7        | 11       | 20       | 1900-1919 | 20/20      | 100%              | 7.66   | 20/20               | 15.4               |                     |
| 8        | 20       | 45       | 1900-1919 | 52/45      | 92%               | 5.44   | 41/44               | 15.52              |                     |
| 9        | 24       | 42       | 1900-1919 | 41/42      | 92%               | 11.41  | 40/41               | 14.32              |                     |
| 10       | 35       | 25       | 1900-1919 | 24/25      | 96%               | 3.25   | 20/25               | 13.88              |                     |
| 11       | Unreported cemetery | | | | | | | | |
| 12       | Unreported cemetery | | | | | | | | |
| 21       | Unreported cemetery | | | | | | | | |

* A measure of overcrowding.
** A measure of substandard conditions.
1950 Housing Census
(data at the block level)

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<th>Vacant (nonseasonal, not dilapidated, for rent or sale)</th>
<th>Occupied by nonwhite (out of # reporting)</th>
<th>% nonwhite</th>
<th>1.51 persons/room or more (out of # reporting)*</th>
<th>No private bath or dilapidated (out of # reporting)**</th>
<th>No running water or dilapidated (out of # reporting)**</th>
<th>Average monthly rent</th>
</tr>
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<td>69/70</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>19/69</td>
<td>49/70</td>
<td>30/70</td>
<td>$15.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>63</td>
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<td>33/63</td>
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<td>57/58</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>17/58</td>
<td>37/53</td>
<td>26/53</td>
<td>$15.89</td>
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<td>1/94</td>
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<td>37</td>
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<td>36/36</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>8/36</td>
<td>33/33</td>
<td>33/33</td>
<td>$11.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>69</td>
<td>unreported</td>
<td>69/69</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<td>60/68</td>
<td>55/68</td>
<td>$15.66</td>
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<td>14%</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<td>16%</td>
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<td>8/45</td>
<td>$20.43</td>
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* A measure of overcrowding.
** A measure of substandard conditions.
### 1960 Housing Census
(data at the block level)

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<th>Tract</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Number of Units</th>
<th>Occupied by non-white (out of total # occupied units)</th>
<th>Occupied by non-white (% occupied units)</th>
<th>1.01 persons/room or more (# out of total occupied units)*</th>
<th>Sound (total)</th>
<th>Deteriorating (total)**</th>
<th>Average monthly rent</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A measure of overcrowding.
** A measure of substandard conditions.
Magnolia Street Extension opens 1937
Housing Act of 1937: first public housing legislation

1941
Housing Act of 1949: first urban renewal legislation

National Historic Preservation Act: first federal preservation regulation

1955
National Historic Preservation Act

1965
Housing Tax Credit program

1966
Tax Reform Act

1982
Central City Historic District listed on National Register

1986
HOPE VI:

1992
Tax Reform Act
HOPE VI:

1998
Hurricane Katrina: Magnolia Street

2005
Housing Tax Credit program
HOPE VI

Magnolia Street Extension demolished

1999

Source: Magnolia Street Housing Project
Source: Annual Report of the Housing Authority of New Orleans
Source: Tulane School of Architecture

Appendix 2
01-05-07
Prospective developers submit qualification bids for Big Four redevelopments.

01-17-07
Section 106 process initiated January 2005.

01-30-07 and 02-01-07
Section 106 public meetings.

04-17-07 and 04-19-07, 05-02-07, and 05-16-07
Section 106 consulting party meetings.

07-07
Memoranda of Understanding executed for Big Four.

11-07
Archaeological and architectural documentation begins at C. J. Peete.

12-20-07
City Council votes in favor of demolitions.

2005
8-29-05
Hurricane Katrina: All public housing developments emptied of residents.

2006
6-14-06
HUD Secretary Alfonso Jackson announces redevelopment plans for Big Four.

2007
03-01-08
C. J. Peete awarded HOPE VI revitalization grant.

2008
08-06
C. J. Peete awarded first allocation of "Gulf Opportunity Zone" Low Income Housing Tax Credits.

2009
Harmony Oaks opens to residents.

2010
Appendix 3


1908-1938

1941-1953

1954-1998

2011
For legibility, the bibliography is divided into categories: Books; Interviews; Journal Articles; Reports and Official Public Documents; Theses; Unpublished Documents; and Web Sources.

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Una Anderson, Executive Director, New Orleans Neighborhood Development Collaborative.

NONDC offices, 1055 Saint Charles Avenue, Suite 120, New Orleans, LA. January 20, 2011.


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Yusef Freeman, Vice President, Project Management, McCormack Baron Salazar. Telephone interview. January 25, 2011.


Shantrelle Lewis, Director of Public Programming and Exhibitions, Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute. Telephone interview. March 11, 2011.


Elliot Perkins, Executive Director, Historic District Landmarks Commission, City of New Orleans. Telephone interview. February 21, 2011.

John Schackai, Trustee, Louisiana Landmarks. 7830 Jeannette Place, New Orleans, LA. January 17, 2011.

Francine Stock, President, DOCOMOMO US/Louisiana. Richardson Memorial Hall, Tulane University School of Architecture, New Orleans, LA. January 20, 2011.


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Public Participation and Accountability Subcommittee of the National Environmental Justice
Advisory Committee, *Model Plan for Public Participation* (November 1996), Green
May 13, 2011).

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Authority of New Orleans*. Judy A. England-Joseph, Testimony. Washington, DC, July 8,

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United States Bureau of the Census. *Population of the 100 Largest Cities and other Urban
Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990*. Campbell Gibson, Population Division
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THESES


UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS

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WEB SOURCES


Stock, Francine. “Comments on Petition to Save Phillis Wheatley Elementary School.”


