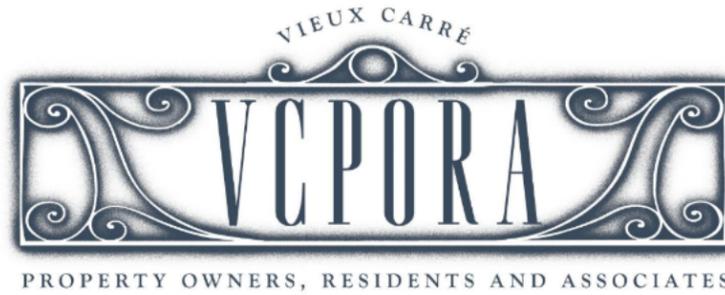


VCPORA's Weekly Vieux - August 21, 2020

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VCPORA's Weekly Vieux Friday, August 21, 2020

In this Issue:

Pedestrianization Update
Hard Rock Hotel Update
Economic Development District Security Tax Update
Two Hurricanes Expected
#FQThenandNow



Pedestrianization Update

Following a well attended [neighborhood demonstration](#), Councilmember Kristin Palmer held two Zoom conference meetings this week to receive feedback from residents and businesses regarding the City's "Reimagining the French Quarter" [preliminary concepts](#). Nearly 350 attendees tuned in between the two meetings and submitted over 600 comments.

These discussions made apparent that there are several concepts on the design table that are of major concern to a diverse array of French Quarter stakeholders and that there are many concepts that would receive broad community support, provided that this process includes transparent, inclusive, and thorough engagement.

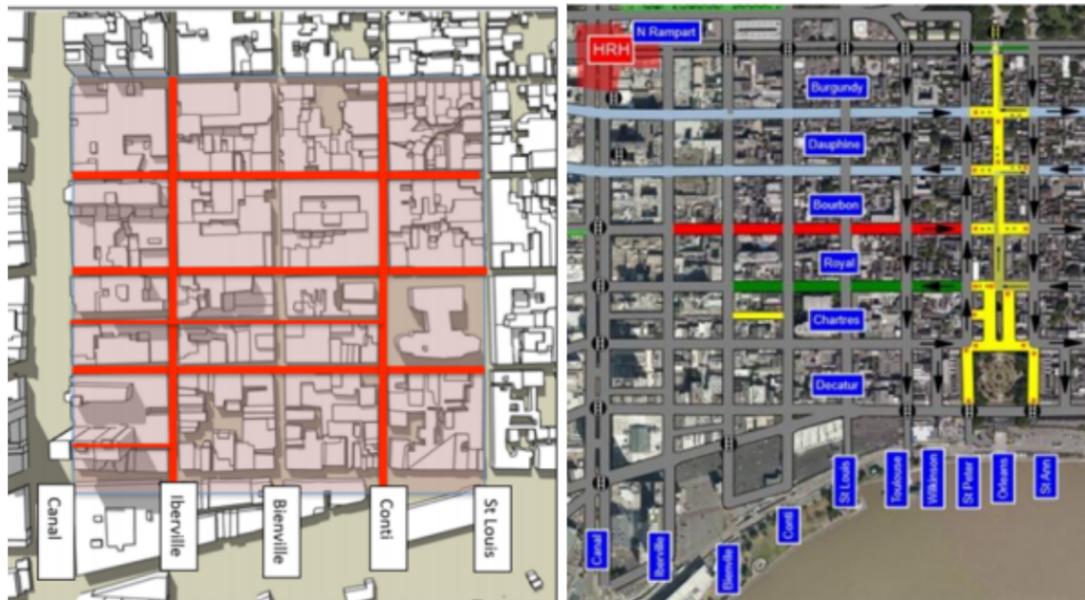
VCPORA's position

In our conversations with the City's Tiger team, other organizations, and our members, we have consistently maintained our opposition to the conversion of any residential street into a pedestrian mall, which includes Orleans Avenue, St. Peter, and St. Ann Streets. Further, blocking commercial streets from traffic without consistent, accountable enforcement will create additional quality of life issues for residents and businesses alike. We will continue working to promote concepts that receive full community support and contribute to an improved experience and quality of life for all users of the French Quarter - concepts like sidewalk repair, a reduced speed limit, a safer North Rampart Street, and improvements around the French Market.

Major Concerns

The "Civic Spine" or pedestrian mall that was depicted on Orleans Ave was, by far,

the most alarming concept. Many of you expressed a shared opposition to an idea that would remove vehicular access to your homes and introduce commercial activities onto the streets of a quiet residential corridor with few to no businesses to support. Generally, the expansion of any pedestrian malls, including the “Upriver Safe and Social” concept met strong opposition in both calls as attendees continuously pointed to the lack of effective enforcement of sound and crowd management on the existing pedestrian malls of Bourbon Street and Royal Street. Many commented on the inherent walkability of the entire neighborhood and questioned whether these ideas would only open the door for unintended consequences.



“Upper Quarter Safe & Social” (left) and “Civic Spine” (right). Review the [presentation](#) to view these in detail.

Councilmember Palmer expressed that she does not support the "Civic Spine" concept as proposed because residents must retain access to their homes and parking spaces. Further, she also would not support the "Upper Quarter Safe & Social" concept as proposed, because businesses must maintain access for deliveries, customer drop off, and parking garages. She agreed with callers that the City must demonstrate effective enforcement of existing rules on the books designed to support quality of life for residents and businesses.

Councilmember Palmer stressed repeatedly that the concepts presented in the City's [website](#) are only ideas meant to engage the public in dialogue and noted that the timeline presented in the concept presentation, which suggested implementation in three to six months, is not accurate. She concurred that they were released prematurely before they were ready to be fully vetted through public engagement.

She has committed her office, and the City, to ensuring a wider public involvement process before any of these concepts grow into designs for implementation.

Concepts to Explore

While there was overwhelming opposition to expanding pedestrian malls, many callers expressed interest in exploring ways to improve the residential, commercial, and visitor experience of the French Quarter. There was widespread agreement that the damage inflicted by heavy delivery and garbage trucks could be mitigated by reducing sizes and frequency of trips. Repairs and upgrades to the sidewalks, including storm water management features that will increase ADA accessibility, overall walkability, and long term sustainability of the French Quarter were universally appreciated.

Many supported the reduction in speed both in and around the neighborhood and the inclusion of a protected bike network. The pedestrian and cyclist safety interventions on N. Rampart were received enthusiastically.

Councilmember Palmer referred to another concept, a circulator that could provide effective transit for visitors and employees within the French Quarter and reduce vehicles by utilizing perimeter lots.

It is also worth noting that initiatives such as [Moving New Orleans Bikes](#) and [New Links](#) could make traveling to and from the Quarter by bike and transit more viable. Supplementary solutions, such as the [hospitality worker shuttle](#) proposed last year, could further reduce traffic impact by eliminating the need for a car altogether.

Lastly, the ideas aimed at expanding vendor space and adding streetscaping elements around the French Market were generally supported as an appropriate location for this type of intervention.

Next Steps

A curb-use study examining all street spaces and their related signage is underway and will be available in the next few weeks. The City Council is moving forward with an ordinance to reduce speeds on the interior French Quarter streets from 20 miles per hour to 15 miles per hour. Additionally, the City has identified portions of Governor Nicholls and Barracks Streets to receive sidewalk improvements beginning next month.

Stay Involved

Share your comments and concerns on the City's [webpage](#) and also by emailing the City Council and Mayor directly.

District	Councilmember	Email	Phone
Mayor	LaToya Cantrell	mayor@nola.gov	(504) 658-4900
At-Large	Helena Moreno	morencouncil@nola.gov	(504) 658-1060
At-Large	Jason Williams	jasonwilliams@nola.gov	(504) 658-1070
District A	Joe Giarrusso	joseph.giarrusso@nola.gov	(504) 658-1010
District B	Jay Banks	jay.banks@nola.gov	(504) 658-1020
District C	Kristin Gisleson Palmer	kristin.palmer@nola.gov	(504) 658-1030
District D	Jared Brossett	councildistrictd@nola.gov	(504) 658-1040
District E	Cyndi Nguyen	cyndi.nguyen@nola.gov	(504) 658-1050

If you would like to discuss this with VCPORA directly, email our Executive Director at erinholmes@vcpora.org.

In case you missed it – Recent coverage on these efforts

[French Quarter residents rally against proposals to make historic neighborhood more pedestrian friendly](#)

[Pushback on city concepts for French Quarter pedestrian malls](#)

[French Quarter residents to meet to discuss proposed pedestrian mall](#)

[French Quarter pedestrianization concerns raised in 300-person zoom call](#)

[French Quarter neighbors, workers question the purpose of proposed pedestrian-only zones](#)



Photo by Marta Jewson via The Lens

Economic Development District Security Tax Update

Yesterday, City Council [approved the ability](#) of the French Quarter Economic Development District (FQ EDD) and the French Quarter Management District (FQMD) to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement in order fund the Supplemental Police Patrol Program (SPPP) using the French Quarter security sales tax. As a reminder, the "Quarter for the Quarter," a 0.2495% sales tax initiated in 2015, currently funds the Louisiana State Police's Troop N to exclusively patrol the French Quarter Economic Development District. It is set to expire this year unless voters choose to renew it during a special election on December 5, 2020.

Mayor Cantrell had previously proposed to reallocate the security sales tax funds toward Homeland Security officers while the City is facing a funding shortage for additional security due to the dramatic reduction in hotel assessment fees, which previously supported the SPPP. This CEA seeks instead to allocate funds to FQMD to hire post-certified officers, bring the Supplemental Police Patrol Program under the supervision of NOPD, require consent decree adherence, and maintain the [French Quarter Task Force app](#).

Karley Frankic, Executive Director of FQMD notes that "there will be several more legislative steps before the December election including writing and finalizing a tripartite CEA between the FQ EDD, FQMD, and the City, as well as approvals by the State Bond Commission and the Secretary of State. We continue discussion with the City's Office of Homeland Security about working cooperatively to assure unified command, app maintenance, and supervision by the NOPD 8th District."

Safety and security is a priority for all who live, work, and play in this neighborhood. VCPORA has written in support of this initiative and stress that the partnership between the FQ EDD and FQMD will help residents and businesses maintain accountability over security management and budgeting.

VCPORA will work to ensure that the priorities of French Quarter stakeholders are addressed during the creation of the CEA and will continue to provide updates.

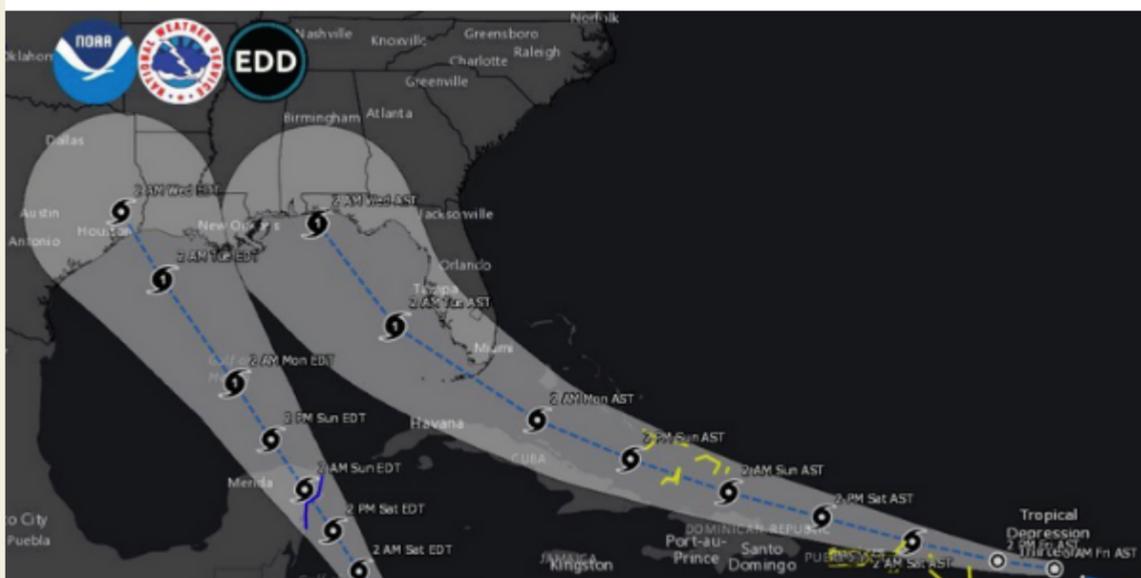


Hard Rock Hotel Update

The bodies of construction workers Jose Ponce Arreola and Quinnyon Wimberly [have finally been recovered](#) from the Hard Rock Hotel, a full ten months after the property at 1031 Canal collapsed and left three dead and dozens more injured. The body of the third victim, Anthony Magrette, was retrieved the day after the collapse.

Developers have maintained that the retrieval of the bodies were paramount before full demolition of the building could take place. They also cited the need to remove three adjacent structures - the 150-year-old [1019-25 Canal](#), 111-year-old [1027 Canal](#), and a parking garage at 1022 Iberville. Those demolitions were completed in mid-June. (As a reminder, the two Canal Street properties are owned by LLCs registered to the same Officer/Manager of the Hard Rock property).

Although the body removal and adjacent demolitions have been completed, a timeline for the demolition of the main structure at 1031 Canal is still forthcoming according to a spokesperson. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's [final report](#), like the demolition timeline, is pending.



Two Hurricanes Expected

New Orleans is set to receive turbulent weather early next week as a result of Tropical Storm Laura and Tropical Depression 14. Both are predicted to strengthen into hurricanes before making landfall. Be sure to [make hurricane preparedness](#) plans now. Gather what you'll need to shelter, prepare for potential power and water outages, and stay safe and informed by texting LAURA to 888777 to subscribe to NOLA Ready alerts. Check in with your neighbors to see if they may need any additional assistance.

Remember that if the City issues a mandatory evacuation, all residents and visitors must leave. The City of New Orleans can provide free transportation via [pickup from an Evacuspot](#) if you can't evacuate on your own during a mandatory evacuation. Text EVACNOLA to 888777 if you might need to use City-Assisted Evacuation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, you should also include face coverings, hand sanitizer, and disinfectants in your evacuation supplies.



#FQThenandNow

VCPORA and the [Vieux Carré Commission Foundation](#) continue our #FQThenAndNow series this week with a post on the Old Absinthe House. Head over to [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to check it out. This weekly series showcases historic pictures, current pictures, and fun facts about our favorite French Quarter locales. Follow #FQThenAndNow the [Vieux Carré Commission Foundation](#) so you don't miss any upcoming posts from this series.

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