

VCPORA's Weekly Vieux, August 7, 2020

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French Quarter Pedestrianization Meeting

Monday, August, 17

5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

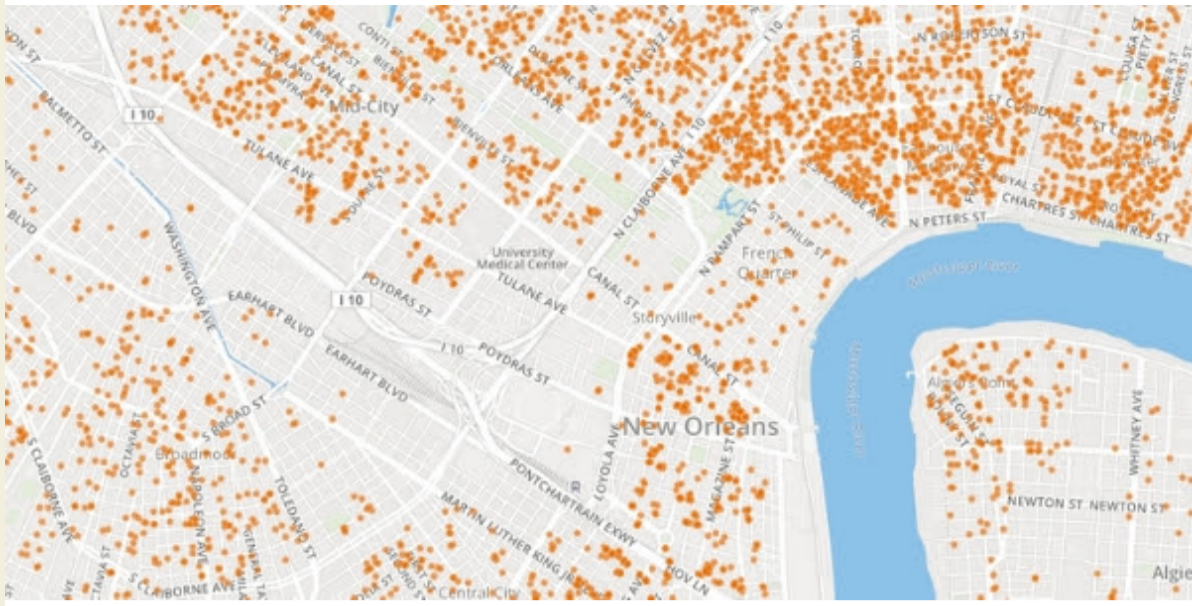
Zoom Meeting ID: 990 5239 0624

Passcode: 192217

Dial in: 1 (646) 558 8656

We have continued working with the city and our members to review concepts for pedestrianization in the Mayor's plan for "[Reimagining the French Quarter](#)". Some ideas would support local businesses and reduce the harmful impacts of excessive vehicles and merit community exploration, while others could have damaging effects on residential liveability in this fragile historic neighborhood. Review our analysis of the preliminary concepts [here](#).

We have consistently stated that public participation is critical in this process and are pleased to announce that **Councilmember Kristin Palmer will be hosting a Zoom teleconference for residents to discuss these concepts and gather your feedback.** This meeting will be held August 17, from 5:30 to 7:00 pm. You can join in the video by downloading [Zoom](#) (it's free) or by calling in using the above information. Don't forget to submit your comments on these concepts on the City's [website](#).



Short Term Rental Update

Yesterday, the City authorized the [6.75% Short Term Rental \(STR\) Tax](#), approved by voters last year, that equalizes the rates applied to hotels and STRs. Designed as part of the Mayor's #Fairshare initiative with the Louisiana Legislature, it will generate revenue for the city's Infrastructure Maintenance Fund. However, a contentious 25% of the total will be doled out to New Orleans & Company, a private nonprofit agency tasked with marketing the city's tourism industry. Though voters agreed that STRs should be taxed at the same rate as hotels, many question the wisdom of sending these precious dollars to tourism promotion, particularly at a time when the city's vulnerability due to an over-dependence on tourism is laid bare. Additional concerns include whether linking this tax to desperately needed infrastructure repairs could actually reduce enforcement of illegal operators, which would still be paying the taxes via platform agreements.

These concerns were amplified at the [announcement of the city's new Chief Administrative Officer of land use regulation](#). Former STR empire operator Peter Bowen has been tasked with heading the new Office of Business and External Services, overseeing the Departments of Code Enforcement and Safety & Permits, which controls short term rental permitting and enforcement. Bowen formerly served as general manager for San Francisco-based Sonder and led his company to becoming the largest STR operator in the city. In fact, his resume claimed that he "Blitz Scaled the New Orleans market for Sonder from launch to 1,000 apartments (2,500 rooms) in under 36 months."

We find this appointment shocking, given that Mr. Bowen spent years growing a business model that displaces residents, disrupts neighborhoods, and dissolves land use regulation for the benefit of wealthy, out-of-town investors. As the city is facing unprecedented unemployment rates coupled with a wave of pending evictions, how can someone with these credentials assume the roles of interpreting and enforcing the very rules designed to protect the most vulnerable? We will be following this development very closely.

In good news, a Federal Judge has ruled in favor of the City of New Orleans in a suit filed by STR property owners. In 2019, the City Council revised the Short Term Rental regulations and eliminated the "Temporary STR" category that allowed for investor-owned, whole home rentals in neighborhoods by requiring a Homestead Exemption for residentially zoned properties. The lawsuit asserted violations of the Commerce Clause, First, Fourth, Fifth, and Eight Amendments of the United States Constitution, arguing that the revisions constituted a takings claim, among other issues. Yesterday, Judge Ivan Lemelle issued a final ruling in favor of the City, dismissing all of the plaintiffs' claims. The plaintiff's may appeal the decision to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals but this represents a significant win for New Orleans' STR regulations and the countless hours of community involvement in crafting them.



Willie's Chicken Shack Update

Last week, we announced that we are [continuing our appeal](#) against the City's designation of Willie's Chicken Shack as a "Standard Restaurant". We asked for your support in helping to fund the appeal. We also realized that our online donation form was faulty. We have since fixed the issue - our apologies for any confusion it may have caused. Thank you for your support on this critical issue. If you want to help stop the spread of fast food chains, [donate to our appeal today](#) and help us send a message to the City: uphold existing, community-crafted land use regulation, and maintain the integrity of the French Quarter.



COVID-19 Meal Assistance Extended

The City of New Orleans officials announced a 30-day extension of the [COVID-19 Meal Assistance Program](#), which engages local restaurants to provide food to eligible New Orleanians experiencing food insecurity. Eligible recipients are COVID-impacted residents not receiving other federally supported food assistance, including seniors, adults with high-risk health conditions and special medical needs, COVID-positive individuals or those who are quarantined, homeless residents, and children under age 18. Twice daily meals will now be available to eligible recipients at least through September 4, 2020. Eligible recipients can apply by calling 311 or going to nola.gov/311. Ineligible residents in need of food support are encouraged to call 211 to be connected to other services.



NOPD 8th District Newsletter

Commander Anthony Caprera has released his July edition of "[From the Captain's Desk](#)", an 8th District NOPD Newsletter. Read it for July crime statistics, COVID-19 updates, community news, and more. Questions or feedback for the Commander can be directed by email to ajcaprera@nola.gov or by phone to (504) 658-6724.

In addition, [COPS 8](#) is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the 8th District Police Officers. They provide items and equipment which are necessary but not readily available, including bullet-proof vest carriers, scooters, bikes, computer equipment, food, office supplies, repairs, recognition awards, and continuing education so that our officers are well trained and educated to cultural and social leadership. See [their website](#) for details.



#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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