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Protecting 'Place' in African -American Neighborhoods: Urban Public Space, Privatization, and Protest in Louis Armstrong Park and the Treme, New Orleans.

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**PROTECTING 'PLACE' IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN NEIGHBORHOODS:
URBAN PUBLIC SPACE, PRIVATIZATION, AND PROTEST
IN LOUIS ARMSTRONG PARK AND THE TREMÉ, NEW ORLEANS**

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

in

The Department of Geography and Anthropology

**By
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B.A. University of Kentucky, 1993
M.A. Louisiana State University, 1996
May, 2001**

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ABSTRACT

In the past fifteen years, urban scholars have increasingly studied "the end of public space." Central to their arguments are the thesis that these communal spaces, traditionally held by city governments and theoretically open for use by all citizens, are waning. Much of this space has become "privatized." Corporations and individuals often buy, renovate, and design such spaces either in conjunction with city programs or as part of their urban renewal, gentrification, and development plans. These plans often seek to excluded certain minority groups or target spaces in low-income communities. The process is largely driven by the present need for cities to market urban symbols and urban cultural landscapes to middle-class consumers in the present post-industrial economy. Sometimes, however, communities successfully resist efforts to privatize urban public places. The Tremé neighborhood of downtown New Orleans, fought off attempts to privatize Louis Armstrong Park, a scenic but neglected urban park adjacent to the French Quarter. In addition to drawing on the neighborhood's misfortune in being the target 1960s slum clearance project that created Armstrong Park, the neighborhood was able to take advantage of the fact that many of the cultural symbols the City of New Orleans uses to identifies itself with have historic roots in that very community. The local residents' calls for public, culturally relevant uses for Armstrong Park, and the city's desire to develop the Park were seemingly met when Congress created the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park to protect and promulgate New Orleans Jazz and

associated cultural traditions. As the National Park, which will locate its visitor facilities in Armstrong Park, takes shape, the question becomes will the processes of exclusion and gentrification drive away Treme residents and their cultural traditions.

CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

In geographies, settings are important. This might especially be the case in urban environments where landscapes, livelihoods, and life can be differentiated so drastically within relatively short distances. So it is in the French Quarter and adjacent neighborhoods of New Orleans. In heartland New Orleans, for example, the setting for this study, Decatur Street, a bustling thoroughfare lined with a mixture of old New Orleans icons and contemporary commercial enterprises marks the riverside of the French Quarter (Figure 1). Attached to Decatur Street is Jackson Square, New Orleans' most famous and most-photographed place. It is a gated park. During the day Jackson Square's manicured foliage provides a welcome natural departure from the solid Old World architecture and strong aromas of the Quarter. Parallel to Decatur, six blocks away from the river, is Rampart, the street that marks the rear, or interior, boundary of the Quarter. The antithesis of Decatur, Rampart lacks most of the Old World charm and even less of the glamorous commercial establishments. In place of the Hard Rock Cafe, The House of Blues, French Market, and the world renowned Café Du Monde, on Rampart one finds local bars such as Donna's Bar and Grill and the Funky Butt, along with parking lots, gas stations, and several gay-oriented businesses. Just off Rampart is a gated park dedicated to Louis Armstrong.

Locationally and functionally Armstrong is the opposite of Jackson Square.

During the day, Armstrong is largely absent of pedestrian traffic except for the grounds crew, a handful of transients, and an occasional tour group. Although the plant landscape is well cared for, other markers of neglect can be found throughout. Benches are in disrepair, asphalt walkways lie crumbling, litter lines the edges of the lagoon. The lagoon's bridges, minus their protective latticework, are shabbily repaired. Throughout, faded and peeling paint and broken light bulbs testify to the park's more festive past.

Several imposing structures and monuments occupy Armstrong. From the park's St. Ann Street entrance, the Mahalia Jackson Theater for the Performing Arts seems to rise from the lagoon. To the left of the entrance, the stylized masonry of Congo Square validates its Historic Landmark status. Casting its shadow on Congo Square is Municipal Auditorium, the city's first attempt at a multi-purpose assembly hall. Few structures in New Orleans dominate the surrounding landscape like Municipal Auditorium.

Tucked away on the right rear side of the park is the "jazz complex," an assemblage of historic, but de-contextualized buildings. Anchoring the complex is Perseverance Hall No. 4, the first Masonic Hall in Louisiana. Also part of the complex is the Rabassa House, a raised Creole cottage. Salvaged from a so-called slum clearance project in the 1950s, the Rabassa house is unique among the cottages and shotgun houses of downtown.

Despite its shortcomings, Armstrong Park is an ideally situated green space. It can potentially serve as a public space for tourists and the Tremé community. Unfortunately, not a year after the park was opened in 1980, complaints began to surface concerning the park's lack of atmosphere; violence and drugs seemed to be the important problems. Armstrong Park's darkest hour came in 1987 with the murder of a female tourist. The murder highlighted an ongoing controversy concerning the park's future between the city and the neighboring community, a future that would ironically be determined by the park's past.

After World War II, the exodus of middle class families to the suburbs - - along with their tax dollars and jobs—left large populations of poor residents with substandard housing and a crumbling infrastructure. Through federal programs such as urban redevelopment (1949) and urban renewal (1954) the federal government began to pay attention to the deteriorating conditions of urban areas by clearing slums to create new housing, parks, green spaces, and other public facilities in their place. Although these programs originally sought to revive American cities by improving the living conditions of the poor, it soon became clear that creating a climate suitable for investment was a more important goal of state-funded urban renewal programs. Unfortunately, this method of development led to the loss of community and cultural history in

many neighborhoods due to the clearance of historic urban landscapes and the displacement of inner-city residents.

Surrounding Armstrong Park is a neighborhood called Tremé, one of the oldest African-American neighborhoods in the country. The name is shortened from Faubourg Tremé; *Faubourg* being the European equivalent to *suburb* in the United States. Tremé has a rich cultural and architectural heritage. On any given day in Tremé visitors are likely to encounter a jazz funeral or a second-line parade, a parading tradition in New Orleans' African-American communities where in residents follow the parade as it winds through the streets. On a couple of select days one might catch a glimpse of local residents masking as Indians. Tremé's rich cultural, however, is juxtaposed with its social fragility and poverty. In many cases the architecture is just as fragile and poor.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the city of New Orleans demolished ten blocks of a deteriorating downtown neighborhood as part of an ongoing effort to build a cultural center. The demolished houses were part of the Tremé neighborhood, an area widely recognized for its cultural and architectural history. By 1972, the plans for the cultural center had been scrapped because of a lack of money and were replaced with a plan to build a park dedicated to Louis Armstrong. Armstrong was a pioneer of jazz, an indigenous American art form that traces some of its roots to the Tremé neighborhood. With the

completion of the park in 1980, the city solicited plans from private developers to convert the area into a commercial amusement park, but the plans submitted for this purpose were met with strong community protest. Although the effect of this opposition is debatable, many observers have credited the community for stifling the plans for a commercial amusement park. Currently the park is a venue for New Orleans cultural events.

This dissertation will explore how New Orleans' political economy and cultural community, including Tremé, shaped the development of Armstrong Park as a public space. The purpose of this research is to add to our knowledge of the social construction of public spaces through the investigation of one empirical case study from New Orleans. More generally, I will examine the political, economic, and cultural processes involved in the planning process to understand how distinct notions of what a public park should be, altered the material urban landscape through time. Importantly, this dissertation will reveal how these processes operate in spatially and locationally specific ways. More specifically, an examination of Armstrong Park is significant for at least three reasons. First, the park does not follow the larger trend of privatized public spaces in contemporary American cities, characterized by either the shifting of publicly held spaces to private corporations or the provision of quasi-public spaces by private companies. Secondly, the methodology used in this project incorporates both political economic, cultural, and political approaches to

understanding urban spaces and concrete places—approaches that are typically viewed in geography as oppositional and incompatible methods of analysis. Lastly, this dissertation will demonstrate the importance of providing inclusive public spaces in American cities. Perhaps insights from this study might influence urbanites, officials and local citizens to rethink their ideas of how previous definitions of “the public” have resulted in the expulsion or exclusion of unwanted patrons from urban spaces like parks, heritage sites and community neighborhoods.

The perspectives of geography can be seen at several turns in this dissertation. Of perhaps most importance and geographical relevance are the following: 1) the geographical specificity of destructive urban development policies; 2) the city’s persistence in considering the importance of location in the development of public building; 3) the relationship between New Orleans’ changing physical environment and its internal social geography, 4) the legitimate and created importance of Tremé as a culturally rich place, and 5) the explicitly geographical process employed in the creation of the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park. Finally, the concept of geographical scale is central to the discussions about the creation of communities of resistance.

Historical Overview of Tremé

Before examining the recent history of Armstrong Park, the Tremé community, and the political economy of New Orleans, I wish first to provide a general historical context of the area. Since the founding of New Orleans in 1718, the area beyond the walls of the French Quarter existed as a public space of one type or another. Known first as the “city commons,” the area behind the Quarter was a place for collecting firewood and grazing. In addition, settlers used this space to hold games and celebrations. These activities were typical of the spaces outside walled European cities. Later the area acquired military significance. In 1760, French fears of a British attack spurred the construction of Fort Ferdinand in part of the commons. Soon after the fort’s construction, New Orleans was ceded to Spain (1763-66). In Spanish hands, the fort remained in various stages of disrepair for twenty years. By 1793, word of an American invasion caused Governor Carondelet to reconstruct the fort; when the United States took possession of New Orleans in 1803 (after a return to the French in 1801), the fort was once again in a state of decay (Shenkel, 1980; Cangelosi, 1984).

By 1810, the city incorporated the area formerly known as the commons, including the space occupied by the fort. In 1812 under the order of the city council, city surveyor Jacque Tanesse began to subdivide the land on a plan similar to that of the French Quarter. The site of Fort Ferdinand was left as an

open public space called "Place Publique" (Cangelosi, 1984; Shenkel, 1980). According to Shenkel (1980), Place Publique was officially called "Circus Square" because traveling circuses often performed there when in town (21). The site would soon become a public place for New Orleans' slaves.

Unlike other southern American cities, slaves and free Blacks in New Orleans are believed to have led a better life than plantation slaves. (Blassingame, 1973; Dominguez, 1986; Christovich, 1980) Blassingame (1973) attributes the better status of New Orleans "Blacks" to the mobility and anonymity of slaves and the large number of free Blacks in the city. Slaves engaged in activities ranging from performing skilled labor, which allowed them to do contract work throughout the city, to attending elaborate slave balls, to gathering openly to drink and gamble. Although slaves initially gathered at locations of their choosing, complaints from white citizens led to the supervision of the weekend congregations.

During the mid-eighteenth century, the land adjacent to the City Commons, specifically along Bayou Road, was organized into plantations. One of these would eventually belong to Claude Tremé. Beginning in 1800, Tremé subdivided and sold his land to both Whites and Creole people of color. The result was Faubourg Tremé, one of the first planned subdivisions outside the Quarter (Figure 1). As the subdivision matured, Blacks and Colored Creoles formed many important social and cultural institutions.

The third attempt to complete the cultural complex began in 1968 under the administration of Mayor Victor Schiro. A \$5.8 million bond issue paved the way for a Lincoln Center-style performance hall. The firms of Mathes, Bergman and Associates, and Harry Barker Smith recommended the construction of the New Orleans Theater for the Performing Arts for \$4.6 million. Once more, the \$9 million costs required to complete the facility greatly exceeded the bond amount. And once again, the city postponed further construction.

At this point, three plans had resulted in the construction of the monolithic Municipal Auditorium and Theater for the Performing Arts. The final attempt to finish the cultural center complex coincided with the election of Mayor Moon Landrieu in 1970 and the death of Louis Armstrong one year later. A committee appointed by Landrieu to select the site to memorialize Armstrong choose the still unoccupied space of the frequently proposed cultural center in the Tremé neighborhood. The idea was to complete the center and to rename it in honor of the great "Satchmo." Proponents deemed the site appropriate because of its proximity to Congo Square and other sites important to the birth of jazz.

To revise the old cultural center plans, the city hired the San Francisco architectural firm of Lawrence Halprin and Associates. The elaborate Halprin plan included additional performance facilities, restaurants and bars, Louisiana cultural exhibits, and several amusement park attractions. Because of

numerous complaints about parking, primarily from patrons of arts performances and CBD and French Quarter businesses, Halprin revised the plan several times. Ultimately, the city did not use the Halprin plan and hired the Baltimore firm, Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd, who with local architect Winston "Robin" Riley, presented an acceptable two-phase plan. The first phase consisted of a Congo Square renovation, the Jazz complex, lagoon and fountain system, landscaping, and parking, and resulted in the park's current form. The project's second phase sought to make the park a contributor to the city's coffers. In that regard, the city considered two multimillion-dollar plans during the 1980s, both of which proposed amusement park entertainment complexes for Armstrong Park.

The Armstrong Park Debate

To understand the history of Armstrong Park requires an understanding of the development attitudes of the city and the character of the community. New Orleans' neighborhoods have a strong tradition of community based political activism (Hirsch, 1992). This ability to organize may be an important factor in explaining the strength of the Tremé community's influence in the debate concerning the formation of Armstrong Park. Since the 1960s, residents of Armstrong Park's adjacent neighborhoods have organized themselves into community units to combat further destruction of their neighborhoods and to influence decisions about the park. One such

organization was the Tremé Community Improvement Association (TCIA) a grassroots residential group that became the primary agent of Tremé in the fight against the privatization of Armstrong Park. Very practical results came from their efforts: the TCIA assisted in the relocation of the 410 families displaced by the clearance of blighted houses in the 1950s and 1960s to make room for the cultural center, and the TCIA also negotiated successfully for half of the cultural center jobs to be awarded to Tremé residents.

Fairly quiet during the years of park construction, Tremé residents became vocal after the park's opening. For example, in 1980, with the park still new, Jim Hayes, Tremé's most vocal activist expressed concern that private development might restrict access to the neighborhood's children and the poor by charging an admission fee. With the announcement of a \$96 million bid by the private development company, Armstrong Park Corporation, Hayes became incensed (Figure 4). He worried about the effect of the development of Tremé's rental property and absentee landlord situation. Hayes also felt the promise of jobs (once again) would brainwash the community into accepting the project without debate and thoughtful consideration about its impact on the community (Frick, 1980; Beaulieu, 1983).

To incorporate local citizen input into the development process, the City Council arranged a series of "town meetings" with Tremé residents. More importantly, the council included residents of Tremé within two committees to

review submitted plans. A 10-member citizen panel of Tremé-affiliated people was allowed to report its findings to a five-member committee of city officials. In their review of the three proposals, the citizen panel flatly rejected each—including the Armstrong Park Corporation. Citizen panel member Jacqueline Robinson suggested that the park only required partial development. “We think that the park needs development [to attract visitors] . . . But it [development] doesn’t necessarily have to destroy it [park]” (Dansker, 1983). The panel’s report to the council stated that proposals must maintain open access, and develop with “cultural, social and architectural schemes of the neighborhood” to be acceptable. According to Robinson, the panel envisioned the park as “a place dedicated to jazz, a monument to Louis Armstrong and the neighborhood he came from” (*Times-Picayune*, 1983).

Tremé residents and local activists also reacted negatively to a plan to develop the park by the Tivoli International Corporation of Denmark. The plan called for the park to be developed similarly to Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen.

At a series of public meetings, residents attacked the plan for not honoring the park’s original intent. Concerning the Tivoli project, Carl Galmon (head of The Louisiana Committee Against Apartheid) said, “Tourism doesn’t do anything for African-Americans. Let the African-American community develop Armstrong Park and let the tourists have City Park” (Eggler, 1989). Leaders from The Committee to Save Armstrong Park voiced similar sentiments. They argued

that the plan creates “a totally Eurocentric park that would be of no interest to Blacks” (Ibid.).

Unable to find private funding for the \$50 million park, the city shelved the Tivoli plan in the early 1990s. The above comments by opposition groups suggest that the Tremé community imagined a park much different from the city’s expectations. In fact, prior to the Tivoli proposal, Tremé leaders wanted to convert the park into a community and tourist “gathering place.” One Tremé committee displayed its plans at the annual “Jazzin’ in the Park “ event in 1987. Tremé area Councilman Mike Early said this about local sentiments: “There is a definite movement toward some use of that park that will involve the community, and it will definitely center around the heritage of the music and culture” (Times Picayune, 1987).

Finally, the latest effort to make the park financially as well as culturally productive led to the creation of the New Orleans National Historical Jazz Park. In 1990, Louisiana Congressman J. Bennett Johnston (then chair of the Senate committee overseeing the budget of the Department of the Interior) proposed the park’s creation. The passage of Public Law 103-433 in October 31, 1994 established the park as a national site where the public would be provided with opportunities to experience jazz and to support those groups involved in the music’s culture and history.

Methodology

This dissertation will attempt to examine the various phases of development of Armstrong Park and to analyze the reasons why many proposed plans were never realized. In particular, I seek to determine what factors, cultural and other, prevented developers and the city of New Orleans from privatizing Louis Armstrong Park. For this, I conducted community interviews and sought out secondary materials. I also reviewed planning documents to understand the city's changing notions of what type of public space Armstrong Park should be and what activities and people would be accepted, as well as unwanted. This information was supplemented by accounts from New Orleans newspapers and interviews with city officials. After compiling this information, I was able to compare it to the development plans proposed by private corporations to determine if there were issues the city could not reconcile, such as financing or terms of the lease. From public documents, such as minutes from city council meetings and public hearings, I was able to illustrate the range of groups in opposition to private development. I wondered: Were they well organized? Did they work together or was their division along class and racial lines? What were their strategies and demands? Did they have alternate plans for the park? These types of questions formed the basis for part of this study.

Organization of Dissertation

With the goal of placing the events surrounding the attempted privatization of Armstrong Park, and the subsequent resistance, within the context of larger public space, and urban and community development trends, this dissertation is organized as follows. The opening chapter introduces the reader to Louis Armstrong Park and Tremé. Overviews of the different aspects of the public space debate as described in the literature, as well as other studies also included in the introduction. Chapter Two focuses on a two-hundred-year period roughly spanning 1750 to 1940s New Orleans African-American cultural traditions, institutions and structures appeared. Chronologically, Chapter Three overlaps much of Chapter Two. Beginning approximately in the 1890s, this chapter discusses the threat to the above mentioned traditions posed by the national urban development trends, aging housing stock, and infrastructural improvements. Specific emphasis is given to urban renewal programs. Armstrong Park is discussed in Chapter Four. There, the two-phased development process and ensuing opposition are discussed in the context of New Orleans' development process, which itself is part of the larger economic processes. The fifth chapter follows the failed attempts at privatization with a discussion of non-commercial cultural development ideas for Armstrong Park. Significant attention is given to the efforts of the National Park Service (NPS) to better address urban populations

and to directing more attention toward the country's cultural resources, a discussion that leads into creation of New Orleans Jazz NHP. Chapter Five also looks at the housing and community development issues currently operating in Tremé. This study concludes by summarizing the findings of the previous chapters and placing Louis Armstrong Park in the context of the public space issues discussed in the literature.

Conclusion

This dissertation examines the factors and conditions that have shaped the development of Louis Armstrong Park in New Orleans, Louisiana. Of particular interest is the effect of New Orleans' cultural politics and urban political economy on private development in the park. This study is significant because by focusing on the contested nature of public space, I outline the process by which space is negotiated by various players. I speculate that some combination of community activism and lack of private financial support sealed the fate of private development in the park. Further, I believe the community's activities are in part supported by its attachment to Tremé's rich cultural history. The ability of New Orleans culture, particularly the parading traditions and jazz music, to galvanize diverse groups is also significant. In addition, the difficulty in securing financial backing is probably based on the park's location in an area perceived as dangerous and peripheral to downtown's tourist landscape of the Quarter.

The results of this research have theoretical implications about the nature of urban development and the changing nature of public space. In each case, the political economy is considered the driving force in determining how space is used. However, the importance of community-based concerns in the development of Armstrong Park provides alternative ways to consider urban places. Consequently, a geographical approach is well suited for this study. On the one hand, the discipline has a history of analyzing urban social environments and theorizing about urban change, especially from the political economic perspective. On the other hand, the prominence of culture and the significance "place" in recent work on urban development further adds to the relevance of a geographical approach to this topic. Furthermore, in addition to space, place, and culture, other concepts central to geography, like territory and boundaries, are very important to consider when dealing with minority communities like Tremé.

Although I describe general political economic trends, the results of this study highlight the uniqueness of place, in this case of New Orleans and the Tremé community. Although low-income and minority communities exist in most urban areas, few have the cultural heritage of New Orleans and Tremé. The results of this research will be of interest to planners and local officials of cities where centrally planned urban development and grass roots community development are at odds. By analyzing the experience of Armstrong Park,

local governments may learn how to coordinate development plans with community input, as well as learning how to work on local projects with federal officials. The research can also be a model for low-income communities that feel threatened by government and corporate development plans. As the Tremé residents and other concerned citizens proved, organized opposition can be effective against corporate and government interests, and result in the possibility of more democratic public spaces.

CHAPTER TWO . PREVIOUS APPROACHES TO URBAN PUBLIC SPACE STUDIES

Despite the extended history of Armstrong Park in New Orleans, only three major studies have sketched the area's development from the late eighteenth century to the present. Each reveals the changes in land use from the city commons and Tremé plantation, to Congo Square and Faubourg Tremé, to the cultural center and eventually to Louis Armstrong Park. The area's cultural significance and uncertain future are themes expressed in each study.

The architectural study of Robert Cangelosi (1975) identifies Tremé as typical of many of New Orleans's historic neighborhoods, suffering from blight and the developmental pressures of a growing city. His goal was to examine and understand Tremé's past and present to devise a plan for the neighborhood's future development. Cangelosi's historical study describes the area's changing land uses in response to the city's development and control by three different countries. The study includes the city's acquisition and subdivision of the Tremé plantation and the faubourg's subsequent occupation, primarily by free people of color or *gens de couleur libres*. Also documented are the creation and activities that occurred in Congo Square. The report concludes by discussing the changes in the neighborhood in the 1960s and 1970s due to the construction of the Cultural Center and Armstrong Park, and

The second study, by Shenkel and Chalelain (1980), examines the cultural history lost in the destruction of eight blocks of the Tremé neighborhood in 1970. This history of Congo Square and Faubourg Tremé is more richly detailed than Cangelosi's study. Discussing Congo Square for example, Shenkel and Chalelain consider the accounts by Cable (1886), Blassingame (1973), architect Benjamin Latrobe (1805), and the local newspaper. Their historical account of Tremé. Specific attention is given to the cultural and economic institutions created by and for the Tremé community, including St. Augustine's Church, the Tremé Market, and various lodges and halls. The importance of the halls and lodges (and thus Tremé) in the creation and development of jazz is emphasized.

The third study is Huaracha's (1994) *Evolution of a Public Open Space: From Congo Square to Armstrong Park, New Orleans, Louisiana*, which at least in title, refers to the evolution of Armstrong Park as an open public space. In addition to the history of Congo Square and the Tremé area, this study includes the history of the Storyville area and the construction of Interstate 10 over Claiborne Avenue. More current than the previous two studies, Huaracha's research provides considerable detail to the 50-year, on again-off again, construction history of the Cultural Center and Armstrong Park. Making effective use of the archives of the *Times-Picayune* newspaper, Huaracha's study highlights the concerns of the major parties interested in the park's

development, including the Tremé community, the city, developers, and cultural arts patrons. Huaracha also outlines the creation of the New Orleans National Jazz Park and speculates on its importance to the future of Armstrong Park.

Taken together, these three studies provide an accurate account of the cultural and political evolution of Armstrong Park and the surrounding area. However, the accounts provide little more than a chronology. It was not their goal to situate Armstrong Park within the larger contexts of ongoing changes in New Orleans's urban landscapes, nor to analyze the Park according to the theoretical frameworks of public space, urban redevelopment, the urban political economy or the construction of place. Happily, their contributions allowed room for my attempt to contribute to the academic literature by demonstrating how the often oppositional ideas of place and space construction have worked together to shape the development of an urban public space.

Although the debates over Armstrong Park and its history make it a unique example, in some respects this case is representative of the contested and negotiated nature of urban public spaces in other contemporary American cities. Over the past 15 years, the concept of public space has been re-explored in urban geography and related fields. Don Mitchell's introductory article in volume 17 of *Urban Geography*, a special issue devoted to "Public Space and the City" (1996) is an excellent example. He writes that the concept

of public space “is very much on the agenda of public discourse surrounding everything from the nature of citizenship to the threat of the rise of homelessness” in American cities (127).

Although most published materials touch on more than one aspect of public space, the literature can be divided into three theoretical approaches: (1) different notions of who and what constitute an “appropriate” public; (2) political-economic analyses of the privatization of public space; and (3) historical, cultural, and political investigations of “counter” public spaces.

In the first approach, scholars examine ideas about citizenship and community to explain what groups and behaviors are permissible in public spaces and who makes these decisions. This approach examines commonly accepted ideas of what an “appropriate public” is and argues that such ideals may be far less inclusive in practice than in theory. The second approach focuses on privatization. Academics argue that urban public spaces are “shrinking” while places created and provided by corporations are becoming more common. This shift in ownership creates a host of questions about why these new spaces were created and how they are regulated. Because this phenomenon is viewed as product of late capitalist market economies, the approach may also be called the political economy of public space. Lastly, the “counter public-space” approach studies how specific groups are excluded from public spaces, for whatever reason, and how these groups form their own

spaces. Common topics in this approach include studies of how the creation of counter-public spaces socially and politically empower groups despite the fact that such spaces have a tenuous existence in urban landscapes. Although these three approaches to public space clearly overlap and are somewhat contrived, organizing the literature in this manner will highlight the range of issues that inform and direct this work.

Who Constitutes an “Appropriate” Public?

The first approach to public space explores what peoples and groups comprise the “public” in urban spaces and identifies who defines the groups that fit this definition. Berkeley’s People’s Park (Mitchell, 1995), Boulder’s “The Hill” (Staeheli and Thompson, 1997) and New York City’s Tompkins Square (Smith, 1992) are examples of public spaces/places where the types of people and activities permitted are questioned by officials, business owners, and middle-class residents. In each case there were conflicts between mainstream and marginalized groups. The academics exploring these conflicts sought to understand what philosophical and theoretical concepts underlay the construction of public spaces.

According to Don Mitchell, public space is envisioned in oppositional and dualistic ways. He once stated, “As a legal entity, a political theory and material space, public space is constructed through a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion, order and disorder, rationality and irrationality, violence and

peaceful dissent" (1996:154). In the case of People's Park, the administration of the University of California at Berkeley, the city itself, and some local residents and businesses envisioned the park as a clean and safe public space. Local political activists and the park's homeless squatters held a conflicting vision of the park as an open and unregulated area. Mitchell (1995) saw these seemingly distinct visions as reflecting Lefebvre's concepts of representational space and representations of space. Representational spaces are conceptualized and objectified scientific spaces, such as the planners technical - rational view of the city, while representations of space are "directly lived through its associated images and symbols . . . ," "the dominated space which the imagination seeks to change or appropriate" (Lefebvre 1991:39).

When day-to-day experiences of space do not coincide with representational spaces, conflict may result. In the case of People's Park, the planners' abstract view was valued as more real than the lived experiences of the homeless because the homeless were not valued citizens. Other scholars have also examined how corporations, officials, and different groups mobilize concepts of the "public," and thus citizenship, to exclude legally and morally certain segments of society from specific areas—a practice at odds with the idea of public space as open to a diverse, heterogeneous population. To understand this contradiction, some writers have defined the histories of citizenship, community, and the "public" at particular moments in time and

space. In Lynne Staeheli and Albert Thompson's (1997) analysis of "The Hill," a loosely defined public space in Boulder, Colorado, "counter cultural youth" are depicted as non-citizens by local officials. Citizenship is described as synonymous with membership in a community. Citizens are able to "participate in public affairs and decide the fate of the community" (Staeheli and Thompson 1997: 30).

This right to participate in a community is a geographical one because citizenship entails spatial access to the places where public decisions are debated, resolved, and enacted. This legal definition of citizenship is derived from liberal political theory, but Staeheli and Thompson also discuss a moral definition of citizenship derived from republican political theory. Moral citizenship is conferred by a political community to those capable of acting responsibly to the community. Moral citizenship then, can be viewed as a sign of social status. According to the authors, "The metaphorical space between the legal and moral meanings of citizenship set the conditions for debate over which citizens should have access to material public spaces" (31). The disrespect and irresponsibility of Boulder's youth, therefore, are the grounds for their exclusion from "the Hill" by the mainstream community.

The importance of scale in the functioning of public space is discussed in Susan Ruddick's examination of a shooting at a downtown Toronto Café. In "scale" Ruddick is referring to the geographic area and specific population

associated with a public space. She argued that public spaces are scaled not at a predetermined level, but as function of political context and construction. Ruddick's theory runs counter to the common assumption that public space lies "within the purview of communities defined at the local level, accessed and defined by surrounding neighborhoods or urban communities"(139). Continuous with this assumption, local scale occupies a position alongside other local places in a hierarchy of increasingly larger and dominant scales. Ruddick, suggests the complex and shifting relationship between scales discussed below, one where the normative hierarchy of scale is subverted.

Ruddick discussed the scaling of public spaces in the context of identity construction (139). Scaling is "produced in the act of creating and contesting social identity. Identity in turn is formed and maintained through public-space (135)." Ruddick made a couple of observations addressing this question. One is that some spaces are more public than others, in part due to who the users are, meaning that public space conflicts in low-income and middle-income communities produce different effects, principally due to the middle class's ability to appeal to audiences at other scales (140). In addition, through the process of conflict, the public realm may be reconstructed, resulting in a transformation not only in the scope of the problem, but also in potential outcomes for the public (or reconstituted public). The name given to this transformation, scale jumping, is evident in the attempts of protesters to

politically link their struggle to places and people outside the immediate area. In those cases the protesters are attempting to increase the public realm so as to shift their conflict from the margins to the center.

The Cultural and Political Economy of Public Space

The second approach, political economic, considers public space in quite different terms. The primary concern of scholars is not about access to space by various marginalized groups, but rather how public spaces are moving from the public realm to the private one. Exclusion is still an important concern, but the basis for denied access is not defined solely by class, race, gender, or age. Rather, exclusion from these spaces is based on behavior perceived as threatening to the public's consumptive practices. The following section provides a selection of the range of perspectives considered within the political economic approach.

In *The City Assembled*, Spiro Kostof (1994) dedicated a chapter to discussing contemporary public places and their urban designs. He identifies the contemporary trends of revitalizing Old World town squares and creating new ones. These new squares usually attempt to replicate "the layered wealth and authenticity" of Old World squares with classic names such as forum, agora, and commons. Other new squares are designed to recapture the communal aspect of "traditional" public spaces. Kostof criticized these efforts in their failure to recognize that the social world that produced these places is

fading. Many of the functions that typified Old World spaces, such as the dissemination of information, drawing water, market shopping and public punishment have been replaced by revolutions in communication and technological innovation. Kostof (1994) argued that:

Efforts to reinvest the urban plaza with purpose emphasize the use of public space as an artist's canvas. We are shown that signature designs by artists, architects or landscape architects—each a unique and idiosyncratic creative vision—are given a chance to consume an esthetic experience in lieu of the kind of social experience that was the town square's *metier*: the free interaction of strangers (181).

In this passage, Kostof points to the changes in both the type of experience to be had by the public and in the official concept of public spaces held by planners in contemporary American cities.

The historical lineage of the “designer square” Kostof describes above can be traced to the “image making function of the corporate high-rise plaza” (Kostof, 1994:185) From the modernist practice of reducing the site coverage of skyscrapers, privately maintained public spaces have evolved. The process continued with the spread of corporate atriums and shopping malls. Although skeptical about the public nature of spaces produced privately, Kostof is optimistic that encounters in these places may encourage the creation of better public places.

While his account lists examples of spaces created in corporate high-rises, Kostof's discussion says little about corporate motivations. In contrast, M. Christine Boyer (1993) speaks directly to the phenomenon of corporate-

produced public spaces like New York's Battery Park City. She argues that through the "art of dissimulation" corporations are producing aesthetically pleasing "luxury spaces" such as atriums, parks, and events, and passing them off as public spaces. They are produced in exchange for the zoning exemptions and tax abatements that companies receive without public consent.

Boyer argues that "By adopting the language of the public realm, corporate developers make their projects appear to be promoters of local tradition and interests, not just global alliances" (115). Boyer harshly criticizes multinational capitalism for its concentration of development on specific areas at the expense of poorer "interstitial" places. These poor spaces, along with multinational luxury spaces, comprise what Boyer calls "the fragmented reality of the private city" (114). She claims that the spatial restructuring of the 1970s and 1980s that produced luxury spaces is directly related to the decline of low-income neighborhoods. As subsidies and exemptions increased for corporations, cities generated less revenue than expected. Poorer communities, therefore, received few resources.

Boyer's presentation of privatization emphasizes why multinational corporations produce these types of public spaces. Other scholars, including Don Mitchell (1995) and Sharon Zukin (1995), attribute the production of privatized public spaces to the feelings of middle-class Americans. These authors suggest that corporate decisions to produce these spaces are in

response to middle class fears of the urban “other,” such as African Americans and the poor.

The political economic perspective does not always focus on privately held spaces. The activities of traditionally held public spaces may also be scrutinized based on their effects on a city’s economic interests, including speculative business or real estate. Neil Smith’s 1992 examination of New York City’s Tompkins Square is one example. Smith begins by reconstructing the city’s attempts to rid the park of drug dealers and users, the homeless, and “rowdy kids.” At this point, the conflict at Tompkins Square Park is much the same as “The Hill” and People’s Park. However, instead of discussing the democratic concept of public space, Smith explains how the clearing of the park facilitates the further gentrification of New York’s Lower East Side. Much of Smith’s argument examines the city’s justification of its real estate and development practices by characterizing the city as an urban jungle in need of taming.

Counter-public Spaces

The third approach to the analysis of public space addresses the creation and maintenance of counter public spaces. This approach, which also focuses on the plight of excluded or marginalized groups, receives less attention than the first two approaches in the literature. Tompkins Square Park, Peoples Park, and Boulder’s “Hill” demonstrate that protests and riots are

tactics often used by groups currently marginalized. The fact that these groups occupy the margins foreshadows the probability of long term success in defining those public spaces. How then do marginalized groups, particularly racial and ethnic minorities, respond to the exclusion from public space and the public sphere? The following works offer some insight.

In *Race, Culture and the City* (1995), Stephen Haymes relies heavily on the scholarship of geographers and other urban scholars in emphasizing the importance of maintaining these urban communities in the face of post-industrial urban change. Haymes cited works by Drake and Clayton (*Black Metropolis*, 1964) and Castells (*The City and Grassroots*, 1983) to illustrate how the development of social, political, and economic institutions formed the basis of a civil society that was a source of pride for the residents. Moreover, these communities were important as places of political resistance. Haymes (1995) stated, "Within the black urban community place making and therefore the production of public spaces is linked to day-to-day survival. But it is within the realm of day-to-day life, of daily survival, that black urban communities create public spaces that allow them to develop self-definition or social identities that are linked to a politics of resistance" (11).

Haymes emphasized that the construction of contemporary landscapes has led to the destruction of African-American communities. Black civil society is destroyed—as well as the capacity for Blacks to create their own public

spaces—by the spatial and social disorder created by urban renewal.

According to Haymes, white middle-class institutions “dismantle” Black spaces by “textually and visually represent[ing] space in their image of redevelopment” (126). In other words, the bourgeois or enlightenment ideas of the city are racially and spatially biased.

Dolores Hayden (1995) also provided specific examples about how racial, ethnic, feminist, environmental, and class-based groups have produced vernacular urban landscapes that reflect cultural identity and document social group histories. Examples include the preservation of specific buildings that make sites of ethnic heritage, such as particular types of markets, shops, or religious structures; everyday, lived spaces such as porches, yards, and gardens; and the performative spaces of community, such as festivals and parades. Through the construction of such alternative spaces, groups reclaim access to urban space to attain economic and political rights. Hayden likened these spaces to Lefebvre’s “counter-public spaces” in that “They offer an alternative kind of social reproduction within their space at the same time they critique the available space, past and present” (36).

The ideas advanced by Hayden and Haymes are important for this project because the creation of Congo Square and Tremé have historically provided alternate spaces for Black and Creole people. The subsequent leveling of parts of Tremé to make room for a cultural center disrupted and

destroyed the social relation and spaces of the Tremé community, as well as the capacity of the citizenry to create public spaces. Their resistance to city plans to create a new public park can be seen as an issue of daily survival as well as an opportunity to define a political identity and to maintain their own geographical territory.

CHAPTER THREE. TREMÉ'S HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although the focus of this dissertation is Louis Armstrong Park and urban public space, the occupants of the surrounding Tremé community are of prime importance and cannot be overlooked. The reason lies as much in the significance of local culture to the present negotiations over Armstrong Park, as with the link between Tremé and the Park forged by the demolition of Tremé houses in the late 1960s.

The cultural historical significance of Tremé is bound in the lore and mythology of New Orleans, particularly that of the "Creoles of Color." To the uninformed tourist and many New Orleanians alike, the subject of Creoles of Color calls to mind the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries relationship between "exotic Mulatto women" and White Creole men euphemistically termed *placage*. To the more informed, however, Creoles of Color made important contributions to New Orleans as artists, poets, scholars, politicians, craftsmen, and soldiers. The achievements of Tremé's Creoles are significant given their status as second-class citizens in New Orleans' tripartite racial hierarchy. At the close of the nineteenth century, Creole accomplishments proved essential ingredients in the cultural and political advancement of Black New Orleanians.

As time passed, the social composition of Tremé changed from predominately Colored Creole and White, to increasingly Black and poor. The Americanization, darkening and eventual deterioration of Tremé did not

however, reduce the cultural significance of the area. In fact, the longevity of its parading traditions and the evolution of jazz music carried the cultural legacy of Tremé well into the twentieth century.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the present uniqueness of Tremé by examining its historical landscape and cultural traditions. The goal is to introduce the cultural elements that provided the Tremé community with the cultural resources used during the 1980s and 1990 to counter efforts to privatize Armstrong Park. The first part of this chapter attempts to define territorially the place called Tremé and to explain why the delimitation is so important and difficult to accomplish. The second part of this chapter looks at the creation of Tremé's social and cultural traditions that evolved as a response to racial prejudice and American nationalism.

Bounding Tremé

Any study about Tremé, whether contemporary or historical, must first address the difficult task of defining the area's boundaries – a geographer's duty. Depending on the work consulted or people queried, Tremé comprises of either 1) the small area bounded by Rampart Street, Orleans Avenue, Claiborne Street, and Esplanade Avenue, an area of approximately 42 city blocks and 128 acres, or 2) an extended area that heads upriver to Canal and lake-ward to Broad, or approximately 224 blocks of almost exactly one square mile (640 acres) (Figure 2). The almost triangular section bounded

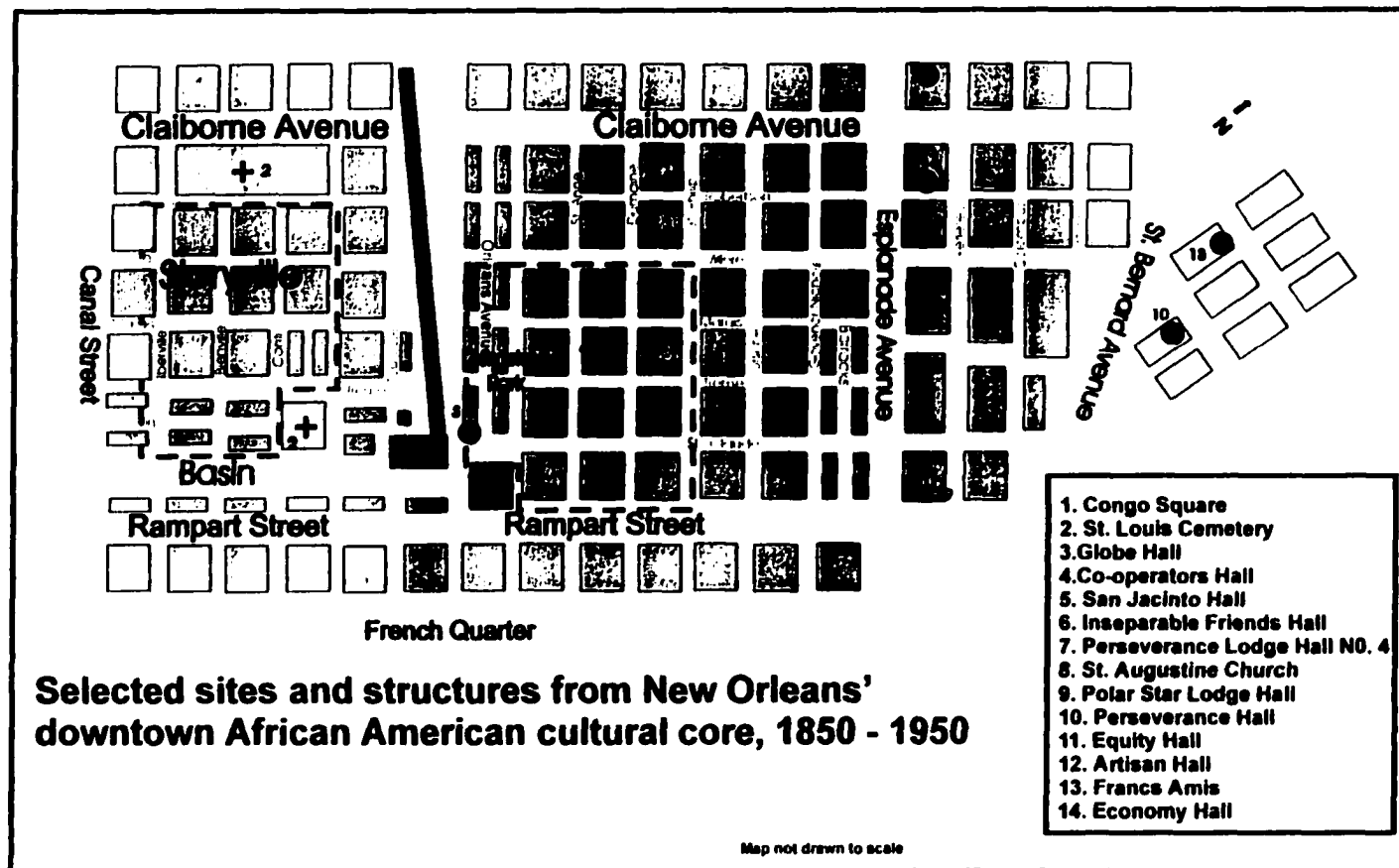


Figure 2. Map illustrating different perceptions of Treme

by Claiborne, Esplanade, and St. Bernard is also considered by most to be apart of Tremé. This appendage of 16 blocks covers approximately 40 acres.

These territorial limits are significant for this study because changes in the area are accompanied by racial demographics that could possibly affect the balance of power in decision-making processes and electoral politics.

Furthermore, depending on Tremé's boundaries, historically significant areas or structures may either be located in Tremé, or fall outside its borders.

Further complicating the task of establishing the territorial extent of Tremé is New Orleans' ward system (Figure 3). Wards are long-standing political districts used for local and state elections and to assess property values.

While neighborhoods may be fuzzily defined, political and legal boundaries, such as the wards of New Orleans, must be precise. The ward system was initiated in 1805, which predates most significant expansions of the Quarter.

Tremé was not included in the ward system until 1847. The present ward configuration is largely based on changes dating to 1852 with the consolidation of New Orleans' three municipal districts. The configuration has changed little since the annexation of Carrollton in 1880. The stability and longevity of ward boundaries, according to the Bureau of Governmental Research (BGR 1961), fostered an association between geographical location and social, economic or political status. Examples the BGR give associate the

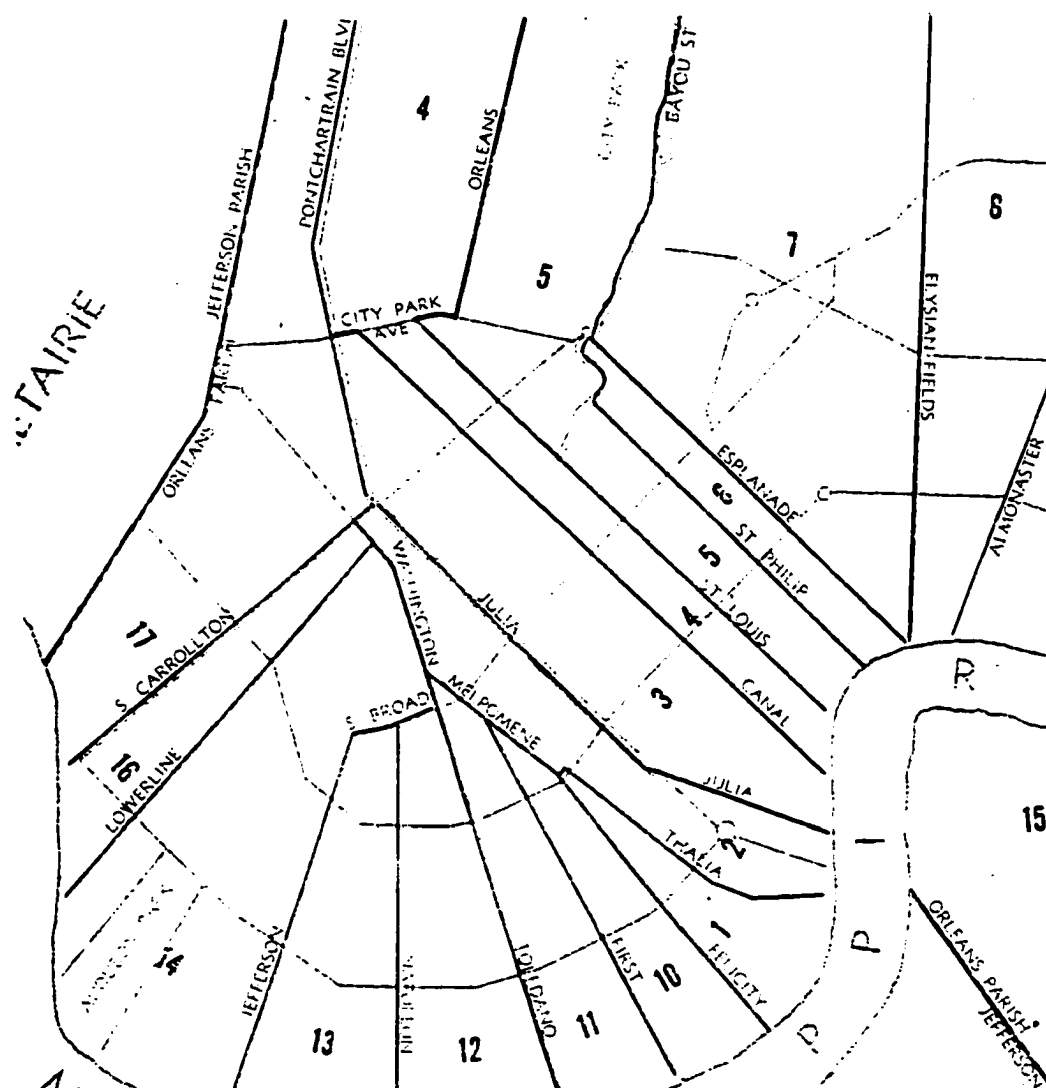


Figure 3. Map of New Orleans' Wards (1884)
Source: Bureau of Governmental Research

15th Ward with the west bank community of Algiers, the 14th Ward with affluence, and the Third Ward with politics. According to the BGR:

This type of reference was quite prevalent in the prior history of the city. Part of it is historic part is neighborhood association. However, with the advent of rapid transportation and a high degree of population mobility, it is rapidly dying out. At the present time it exists probably among older population groups, those associated with politics, and in certain neighborhood ethnic groups (22).

A more true statement about New Orleans wards cannot be made. When many of New Orleans' older residents, or Blacks in particular, are asked which part of the city they are from, the answer is often either a ward or housing project. Interestingly, New Orleans gentrifiers are just as likely to answer the same question with the original faubourg name or a trendy name such as By Water or Holy Cross. The same is true of Tremé. Until the 1960s, it was known as the Sixth Ward (Hayes 2000).

The first step in establishing borders for Tremé is to distinguish it from the surrounding areas. For many years the city was of little assistance. In a series of neighborhood profiles produced by the Office of Planning Policy about 20 years ago, Tremé is included in the volume titled *Sixth Ward/Tremé/Lafitte* (1978). Lafitte refers to the housing project built on Orleans Avenue in the 1930s. The Sixth Ward is presented as the geographical extension of Tremé across Claiborne Avenue. Although the area's cultural heritage is mentioned, the profile is primarily a social and economic inventory. The grouping is odd,

but it satisfies the three major ways of identifying community in New Orleans, that is, by neighborhood, project, and ward.

The most important distinction made when discussing downtown neighborhoods involves the Seventh Ward. Although Black Creoles lived mostly throughout downtown, the Seventh Ward is most recognized as "the" Colored Creole enclave. The reason may lie less in the ward's ethnic composition, than in its radical politics. Recalling the activities of Creoles, such as lawyer and activist A.P. Tureaud, Hirsch (1992) says "Although not all Creoles were "radicals" and not all such dissidents were Creole, there is no doubt that the Seventh Ward historically served as a base for those pursuing radical racial goals" (271). The links between Creoles and radicalism are discussed later in this study, but an important point needs to be made now. The phenomenon of ward associations is possibly the outcome of Black attempts to unify their city politics in the face of Louisiana's White republicans and Jim Crow laws. According to Hirsch (1992), attempts by "Lily" White republicans to expel Black members from the party inspired Blacks to create their own civic organizations (264).

The first ward association was the Seventh Ward League, founded in 1927. The development of other civic leagues led to the creation of a "federation ward association" called the New Orleans Federation of Civic Leagues (Hirsch, 276). Even though the Seventh Ward was formed in 1852, in

all likelihood it was probably not until the political events of the twentieth century that the current association with Black Creoles was solidified.

Most contemporary studies differentiate between Tremé and the Seventh Ward as if they were equal units for analysis. The proper comparison however, would be between the Sixth and Seventh Wards, or between Faubourgs Tremé and Marigny. Since the Seventh Ward looms larger in cultural history of Creoles than Tremé, many of the people and places associated with the Tremé are credited to the Seventh Ward. In truth Tremé and the Seventh Ward share territory and history (Figure 4).

The range of opinions about what areas comprise Tremé is evident in the works on Tremé and Louis Armstrong Park. Christovich and Toledano's (1980) account of Faubourg Tremé refers to several legal and church documents to determine the geographical extent of Tremé and its social composition. Their efforts are afforded the most credibility in this story, at least historically, in defining the "official" boundaries of Tremé. The most important tool they used to locate Tremé was a series of maps that illustrated the initial settlement of the Tremé plantation, and its gradual expansion lakeward along the Bayou Road. Cangelosi used the same method to acknowledge a larger Tremé, but confined his study to a small section. The respect given to Christovich and Toledano in this study does not invalidate other perceptions of Tremé. In fact, this chapter illustrates how less formal notions about what,

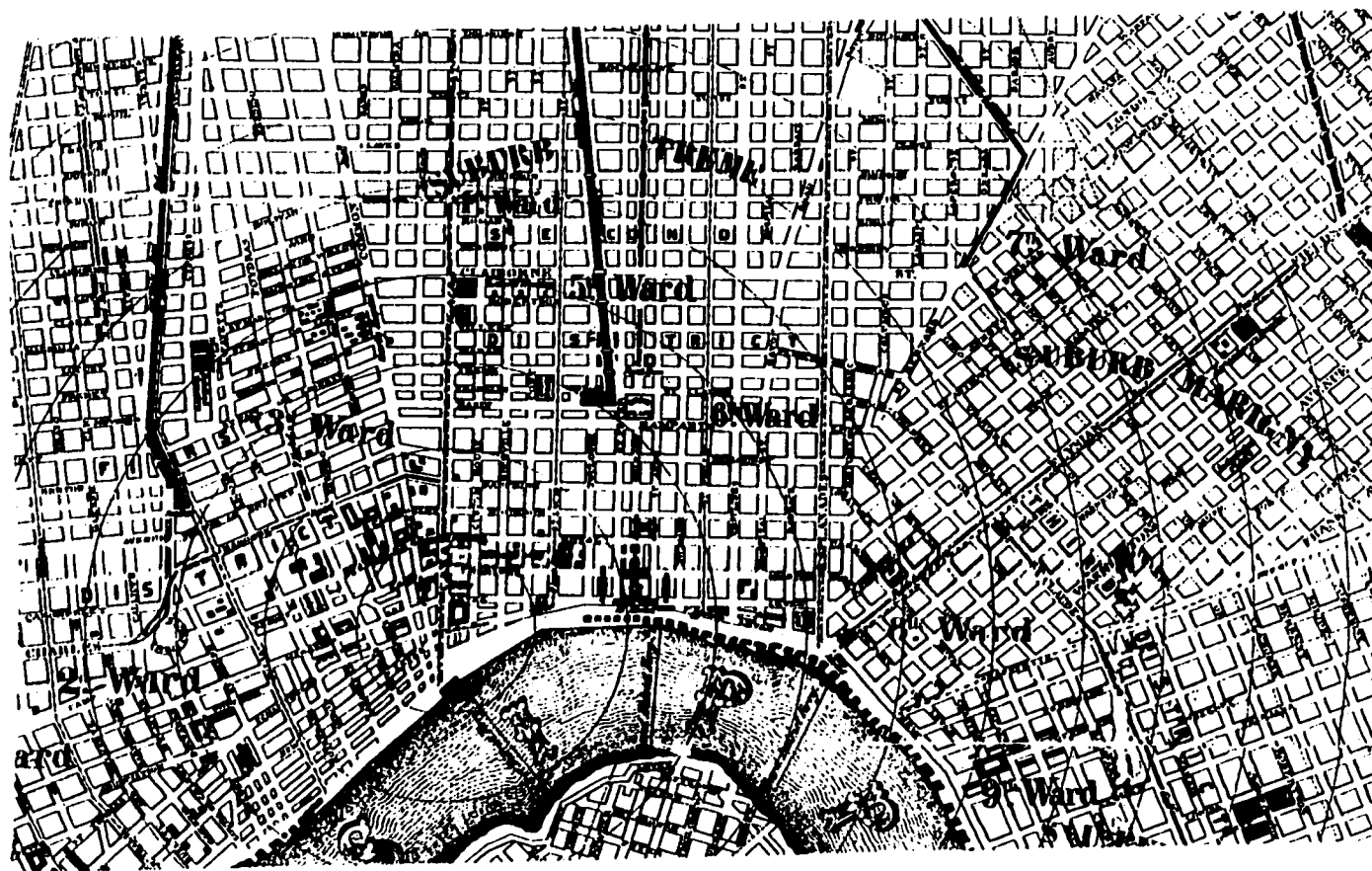


Figure 4. Map depicting both New Orleans' wards and faubourgs (1884)
Source: Historic New Orleans Collection

areas comprise Tremé are relevant. The Christovich and Toledano study makes no reference to wards, and instead it refer to planned neighborhoods. Christovich and Toledano report that Claude Tremé first began to sell lots in his plantation in 1798. As early as the Woiserie map of 1803, the early subdivision of Tremé is apparent. Not until 1812 though, would the city surveyor Jacques Tanesse officially plan "the New Faubourg Tremé." Five years earlier in 1807, a surveyor laid out Faubourg Marigny, making it New Orleans' first suburb. Joseph Pilie plotted Faubourg New Marigny, adjacent to Faubourg Tremé in 1809 (Toledano 19-24). The border between Faubourg Tremé and Marigny fell not along Esplanade but approximated St. Bernard Avenue.

The discussion about wards and the territorial extent of Tremé extends not from a desire to confine the parameters of this study, but to acknowledge and explain the existing confusion. The case needs to be made that the historical people and places discussed in this chapter as comprising the various cultural traditions of Tremé are indeed, in and of, Tremé. This is particularly important when claiming Tremé's status as a counter public space. The conclusion concerning the territorial extent of Tremé is that neighborhoods are neither wholly compatible nor incompatible with ward designations. Both political boundaries and historical settlement are valid descriptors. This study refuses to confine Tremé to the area bounded by Claiborne, Orleans, Rampart

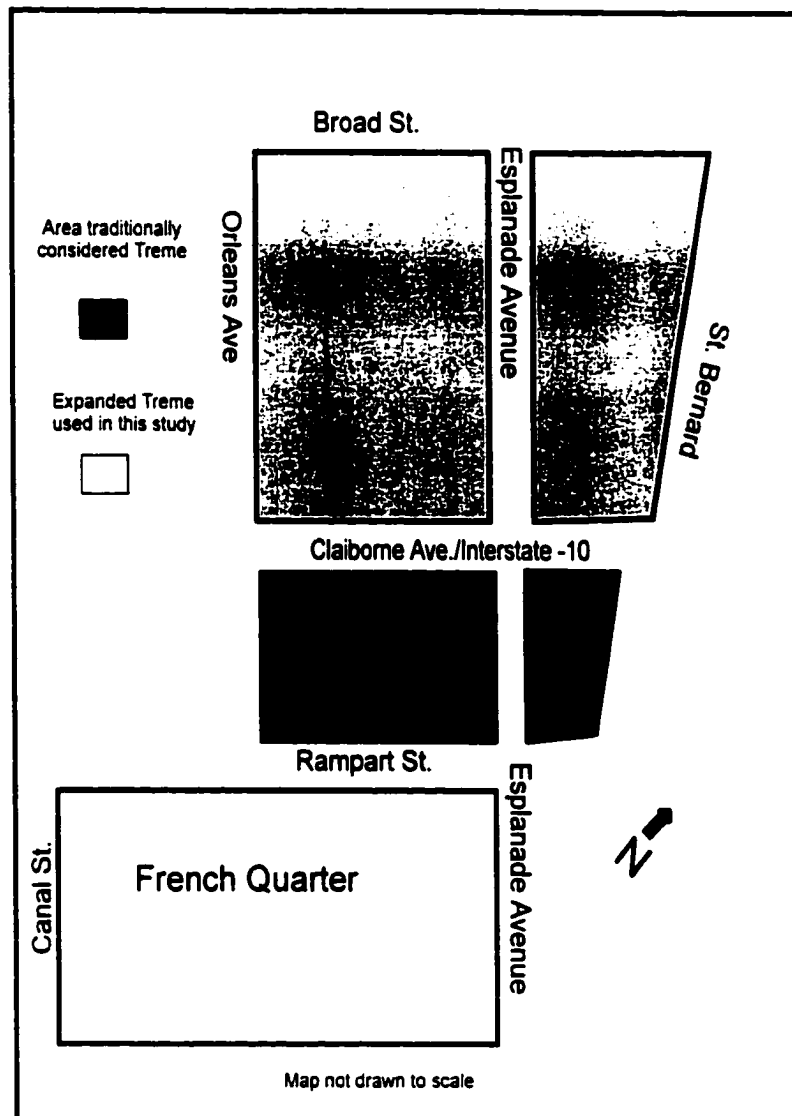


Figure 5. Map of "Downtown cultural core" of New Orleans

and Esplanade, especially in light of the historical evidence otherwise. The reduction of Tremé to that small area by some is understandable though, based on its isolation from the larger area, a topic to be discussed later. This study does however focus on an area of Tremé between Rampart and Claiborne, plus a few blocks of the City Commons and Faubourg New Marigny, that contained a concentration of structures and places representative of the Tremé historical community (figure 5). The city of New Orleans recently gave its Support to the notion of a “greater Tremé” by approving the creation of the Tremé Historical District.

Congo Square

The cultural history of Tremé is largely thought to have its origins in the first decade of the nineteenth century, with the area’s residential development. As the population expanded, religious, educational, and commercial institutions appeared to serve the population. Many of these institutions eventually became part of the community, and local culture. Prior to the subdivision of Claude Tremé’s plantation and the plotting of Faubourg Tremé, however, the area behind the city was the setting for communal and market activities that would define the area’s public activities for the next two and a half centuries. The following section analyzes the public activities that occurred in this area in the one hundred-year period between 1780 and 1880.

Congo Square, located in a small corner of Armstrong Park, is one of New Orleans most venerated and sacred places. Throughout the centuries Congo Square has existed under several names based on the activities that took place there, the names include; place public, circus place, and Congo plains. It is most known as a place where slaves gathered to commune and dance. New Orleans' colonial history as a possession of France and Spain, and a harsh physical setting produced a more lenient brand of slavery than existed elsewhere in North America. Slaves were allowed, and often expected, to work outside their bonded status. Slaves were also give powerful social and legal rights.

Scholars and lay persons alike consider much of contemporary African-American culture, at least in New Orleans, to be directly linked to African cultural practices that persisted in Congo Square well into the nineteenth century. The square is frequently mentioned by jazz scholars as the place most associated with the origins of jazz (Kmen 1972) (Johnson, 1991:119).

As the subject of countless popular and academic articles, Congo Square has been used to illustrate Black slave performance and methods of colonial governance by the French and Spanish. Others make reference to Congo Square to disprove the African origins of jazz thesis (Collins 1996). Jerah Johnson (1991) provided one of the more contextual treatments of Congo Square. He took care to account for the square's non-musical functions

which served to elevate the square's importance to more than just the slave population. Johnson asserted that Congo Square's performative functions challenged the "Quadroon Balls as antebellum New Orleans' most celebrated public black institution" (120). The Square's non-musical/dance origins, he stated "adds to our understanding of the early city, its economic development, and the formation of its social and ethnic configuration as well as the origins of its celebrated public culture" (120). The non-musical/dance functions Johnson referred to are the Square's origins as an open-air market first used by Native Americans and then by slaves. The area's market functions are important to this study given the centrality of the market concept to notions about public space.

Johnson suggests that the Congo market started on Orleans Street, just outside the city's paltry fortifications, in the 1740s. There, slaves sold the products of the free weekend labor. The market survived largely unregulated, throughout the French and Spanish periods, well into the nineteenth century. Johnson suggested that the Sunday dance/music rituals were a by-product of the Square's original market function (121). The market eventually declined and the Square became increasingly associated with music and dancing, activities that once passed the time between business transactions. Johnson attributed the market's decline to competition from other markets. The construction of what is presently known as the "French Market," by the Spanish

in the 1780s had little effect on the slave markets until 1823 when a "centralized vegetable vending facility" was added. The slave market also suffered from boat vendors docked at the nearby Carondelet Canal turning basin. The final blow to the slave market came with the opening of the Tremé Market in 1839-40 (140). The market catered to the area's expanding residential population.

In addition to the decrease in business, dancing probably increased in importance at Congo Square as the result of 1808 and 1817 rules restricting dancing to designated areas on Sunday (141). The change in the way slaves were treated was directly related to the purchase of Louisiana by the United States in 1803. In 1817, the New Orleans City Council mandated that slaves could only gather on Sunday afternoons at Place Publique, and only under police supervision. By 1822, the area had become known as Congo Square. There, slaves gathered to sing, dance and visit with other slaves and free Blacks. Several accounts attest to the "Africaness" of the festivities, including language, movements and instrumentation (Johnson; 1991). The reactions of New Orleans' residents to the gatherings were mixed. Many Whites, including slave owners, felt that Congo Square was useful in relieving the tensions of slavery. But other residents perceived the activities in Congo Square as primitive, pagan, and a likely cover for voodoo. Slave activities in Congo Square began to wane in the 1850s with a series of restrictive ordinances and

physical improvements issued by the Americans. By the 1860s, Johnson reported, Congo Square ceased to function as a “public institution.” The gatherings continued until 1862 when New Orleans came under federal control. After the Civil War, Congo Square was renamed Beauregard Square to honor Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard, a local son. Yet the square continued to be used for circuses, music festivals, balloon rides, and other activities (Shenkel, 1980). One of the most noted post-performance events of Congo Square occurred when members of “The Holy Name of Jesus,” a radical Black Catholic church located in Treme, marched to Congo Square to mourn the assassination of Abraham Lincoln (Alberts 1998, 118).

By the time officials restricted slave gatherings to Congo Square, important demographic changes were taking place only a couple of hundred yards away to the northeast, specifically the movement of Creoles of Color, Whites, and Blacks into Faubourg Tremé.

Creole Treme

The social climate that fostered Louisiana's and New Orleans' variety of slavery also cultivated unions between the state's European, African, and Native populations. The relationships between Africans and Europeans in particular produced a population of free people of color that would not only have more privileges than slaves, but in many cases embraced French lifestyle. These Creole communities have been the subjects of many academic

and nonfictional studies. Louisiana and New Orleans' unique racial characteristics are repeatedly noted. Hirsch and Logsdon (1992) have pointed out that New Orleans' pattern of race relations are much like other New World slave societies with a three-tiered, multiracial social structure "typified by an intermediary or mixed race with a social value somewhere between Whites and Blacks (189)." Although some people or places located in Tremé, Toledano's architectural survey provides the only detailed account of the roles that free people of color played specifically in Tremé; much of that study is devoted to that topic. Concerning the Creole presence in Tremé, Toledano noted that "Free persons of color played a predominant role within the entire geographic area. Because of their social, economic, architectural, agricultural, military and religious development, they created an area unique in the history of the United States" (85). The meticulous, if unstandardized records of births, deaths, marriages, and real estate transactions kept by the Catholic Church and local government allowed the authors to document the activities of free Creoles in Tremé. Records identified free people of color using the designations; *negre libre*, *gens de couleur libre*, *femme de couleur libre*, and *homme de couleur*. Blacks were further distinguished with the use of arbitrary color designations such as; *brique*, *marabon*, *griffe*, *octarona*, *quarteroon*, *mulatto*, *moreno*, *pardo* and *negre*. Toledano used these records to demonstrate the constant Creole presence in Tremé since 1726. *Placage* relationships, slave manumission, and

the history of Tremé Creoles as soldiers and officers in colored militias are all discussed. More important for this study is the information about the institutions and landscapes Creoles produced to serve their community.

The business successes of Tremé Creoles also find a place in Toledano's study. It is estimated that in 1860 free people of color held property worth between 13 and 15 million dollars. According to Toledano, New Orleans' most wealthy people of color "were brokers, all associated with Faubourg Tremé" (104). Some of the more prominent included the Mary, Macarty and Lafon families. In addition to being propertied and well educated, many wealthy Creoles gave generously to both Creole and Black causes. The accumulated wealth and philanthropy of Creoles became essential for both groups given the political changes of the 1800s.

The environment that cultivated racial order ended with the American acquisition of New Orleans in 1803 with the Louisiana Purchase. As could be expected, the subsequent influx of Americans brought a clash of racial ideologies. Upon the purchase of Louisiana, Americans were confronted by Creoles of Color with demands for equal citizenship, to which Louisiana's Governor and territorial assembly answered with a resounding "no." Logsdon and Bell (1992), remarked that the territory's policy toward Louisiana's racial system was communicated in the declaration that "Free people of color ought

never insult or strike white people, nor presume to conceive themselves equal to whites" (207).

The term Creole radical refers to a group of politically active French speaking Blacks, predominately but not exclusively Creoles of Color, imbued with the egalitarian republican principles of revolutionary France and Caribbean. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the group rejected the oppression of the United States' dual racial order, seeking the abolition of slavery and universal male suffrage based on the humanitarian documents of the French and American revolutions.

The aspirations of the Creole radicals, based on the desire to retain and improve on the relative privileges afforded their class during French and Spanish colonial rule, drew not only from the oft-educated and politically conversant Creole but largely from the influx of San Dominguan refugee, and foreign French. Preceding the arrival of the Haitian immigrants by less than a decade, Americans were acutely and accurately wary of the potential for slave insurrections. But the Americans were unable to immediately institute their dual racial order due to the numerical advantage of New Orleans' Creoles, both Black and White, and the inertia of Creole culture.

In New Orleans, Americans became more insistent on imposing their racial order. A solidification of an American racial order was averted when the Americans, fearing a slave revolt and British invasion commissioned Black

militia units in 1815. Racially oppressive conditions returned in the 1830s, but Black Creoles escaped many of the effects due to a new political arrangement that divided New Orleans into three municipalities in 1836. The intent was to provide financial independence to the Americans, but it afforded the Creoles of the first and third municipality limited cultural autonomy. The new territorial arrangement provided Creoles some level of security, but the governing decisions of the time definitely reveal a heavy-handed American cultural bias.

One of the first victims of the American ascendancy was Creole New Orleans' racial order. Black Creoles felt pressure from the Americans in areas other than their race-based political status. There was also an assault on their status vis-à-vis the Catholic Church. In the first decades of Americanization New Orleans' religious leaders attempted to realign St. Louis Cathedral's liberal religious tradition toward the conservatism of Southern planter society. For more than forty years the church's French-speaking board of trustees successfully stonewalled attempts by the American Bishop's to install pastors sympathetic to America sentiments. Important, and in fact integral, in the trustees' governance of St. Louis Cathedral was their prominence as French Freemasons. The trustees' egalitarian Masonic ideals contributed to the "strong current of religious ecumenism at St. Louis Cathedral" (Bell 1997, 148). The eventual defeat of the trustees was based partly on the loss of parishioners to St. Patrick's, the newly founded English-speaking church, and

emigration of Black Creoles to St. Augustine. More damaging was the revelation that the president of the church's trustees, E. A. Canon, was also the state's grand master of Freemasons. In addition, it was revealed that Masonic rites were being performed in Catholic cemeteries, possibly involving non-Catholics.

One of the ways Black Creoles fought the changes in the church was by creating their own religious and educational institutions. In 1836 a group of Colored Creole nuns called the "Sisters of the Presentation" began holding school in the first Tremé plantation house. The school operated until 1840 when financial strain forced its sale. The Ursuline nuns purchased the school under the condition that it continued the education of colored children. Over the next 25 years several of the former "Sisters of the Presentation" nuns, along with free colored entrepreneurs, like Louis Charles Roudanez built and administered a set schools, asylums and hospices as the Association of the Holy Family and the "Sisters of the Holy Family".

While the Catholic faith and the French language were important unifying forces for Colored Creoles the church's racist and segregationist practices forced many Creoles to find solace in what Logsdon and Bell call "traditional French anti-clerical" outlets such as Masonic orders and spiritualists. The growing instigated Black Creole efforts to protect their French culture and colonial political status by drawing on French and West Indian revolutionary ideas.

In addition to being Masons, spiritualists, and writers, Creoles created their own social and benevolent organization. The oldest of those were the Society of Artisans and the Economy Society. The Economy Society, the older organization, was organized by upper class, professional Black Creoles. Its purpose was to distinguish itself based on the aforementioned characteristics.

Economy Hall, along with St. Augustine church, was probably the most important building in Tremé during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In addition to being the hall of one of Black Creoles most successful societies, important political events took place there. In 1963, a group of Black militiamen organized a vigilance committee that met in Economy Hall (Logsdon and Belle 219). Belle recalled a more important 1863 meeting in Economy Hall where the unionist Union Association, led by noted political leader Thomas J. Durant, advocated limited Black suffrage for free Blacks. Before the ascendancy of Durant, the unionist movement was a group of White French radical Masons. According to Desdunes (1911), the Society of Artesans was formed as a response and critique of the exclusive Economy Society (29, 30; Logsdon and Bell: 319). The Society of Artisans, "for colored mechanics," on the other hand, was formed by Black veterans, artisans, and craftsmen. The society's primary function was as a forum for radical romantic literature (Bell 90-94). Despite their differing origins and orientations, both societies and other antebellum organizations served to reinforce Black Creole social structure

throughout the nineteenth century. Not so surprisingly, members of both groups participated in spiritualist and Masonic activities.

The connection between Black Creoles, many of whom lived in Tremé, and the radical thought of Masons, spiritualists and romantic writers is understandable, given their French ancestry and threatened social position. The connection became stronger because many of the organizations that Tremé residents belonged to were headquartered in the neighborhood. The Masonic presence in Tremé is represented by the Polar Star Lodge at 1433 North Rampart and Perseverance Lodge No. 4, formerly of 901 St. Claude, but presently in Armstrong Park.

The increased power of the Americans, fueled by the assimilation of Irish and German immigrants, led to the reunification of New Orleans in 1852 (162). According to Tregle (1992), by this time Creoles had fallen behind the Americans in almost every indicator except numbers. They were no longer able to effectively challenge the wealthy, powerful and ever numerous Americans (152,156).

As the nineteenth century progressed, slave uprising, and the Northern abolitionist movement increased the violence against slaves and free Blacks. Both Creoles of Color and the sizable American Black population suffered under the increasingly hostile racial climate that plagued the south during the

1850s. Changing racial attitudes limited the advantages of Creoles, driving many away from New Orleans.

Benevolent Societies

While many societies similar to those mentioned above flourished in the nineteenth century, it was in the years after the Civil War that the number of societies swelled. Emancipation created a class of freed people who fled into New Orleans from the surrounding plantations. The biggest obstacle for this newly freed class was maintaining their health. The same was true in other cities where people were forced to live in crowded, unsanitary conditions. To survive Blacks shunned charity; they instead turned inward toward mutual aid and benevolent societies. Through dues, fines and taxes these groups were able to provide or subsidize medical care and burial expenses.

Jacobs (1988), citing nineteenth-century medical research, suggests that four-fifths of the city's inhabitants belonged to some type of benevolent society.

Blassingame (1973) concurred as to the importance of these societies for Blacks, suggesting that a minimum of 226 prominent societies were in operation in New Orleans between 1862 and 1880. Included in that number were "benevolent associations, militia companies, rowing clubs, Masonic, Odd Fellow, Eastern Star, Knights Templar lodges; religious societies; social and literary clubs; orphan aid associations; racial improvement societies; and baseball clubs" (147).

So great was New Orleans' penchant for organizations that by the early twentieth century it is estimated that nearly 300 groups were meeting regularly (243). Due to the non-sectarian nature of New Orleans' benevolent associations, both Blacks and Creoles participated. Although some clubs were socially heterogeneous, they were usually split along ethnic lines (156). Blacks started local chapters of several national organizations (243). Some of the organizations located in or associated with Tremé were La Societe des Artesans (The Society of Artists) (1834), Societe d'Economie (Economy Society) (1834), Les Jeunes Amis (The Young Friends) (1867), and La Concorde (1878). In the decades following the Civil War, the Economy Society possessed more property (\$4,000) than any Black society, and organized the Economy Hotel Joint - Stock Company, one of New Orleans' most sound Black joint-stock companies (Blassingame 147, 72).

Performance Traditions

In the eyes of preservationists, Tremé is worthy of attention because of the neighborhood's historic architecture. Likewise, historians and social scientists find interest in Tremé based on its political protest tradition within the context of the United States oppressive bi-racial ethnic system. To others though, the uniqueness of Tremé rests in its cultural arts traditions including jazz and brass band music and a parading tradition that includes jazz funerals, societies, and Mardi Gras Indians. To many, including the activists who were interested in maintaining access to Armstrong Park and retaining the areas

traditional population, these traditions better represent contemporary Tremé.

This section introduces these traditions and discusses their connection with the neighborhood.

Much is made of Tremé's role in the birth of jazz. The origins of this questionable notion probably extend from a connection drawn with the music of Congo Square. Tremé's truest claim should be its second-line parading tradition. Second-line parading (or simply second lining) in New Orleans is a unique tradition that cannot be equated to the holiday parading that occurs in other American cities or with the parading associated with Mardi Gras in New Orleans itself. The second line parade historically occurs in New Orleans' Black communities as an annual activity of various social and civic organizations, or as a funeral procession commonly referred to as a "jazz funeral." The second-line for which the tradition gets its name refers to the people not affiliated with the parading society, funeral party or brass band (all of which are usually considered the "first line'), but who follow the procession.

Regis' (1999, 2000) discussion of New Orleans' second-line parades, anniversary parades and funerals in particular, devotes considerable attention to the spatial aspects of the traditions. Importantly, she situates the parading activity as taking place within urban and public spaces. Her analysis therefore uses concepts used in this and other studies of urban public space. She states, for example, that anniversary parades transform the urban landscape creating safe places for communal activities for locals, people of different

neighborhoods, and outside visitors with different ethnicities and social status than those who inhabit the inner city. Regis also argues that second-line parades challenge the spatial apartheid of the inner cities by challenging the implied territorial boundaries of these same areas (1999). In Regis' analysis of New Orleans funeral parading tradition, the discussion touches on the parades ability to create and/or reclaim space for people who are in addition to not being landowners, are under constant territorial stress from an oppressive police force and gentrifiers (2000).

Although not the only Black community with a tradition of parading, Tremé is often noted as having one of the city's highest concentrations of this tradition. The following section gives a brief overview of Black New Orleans parading traditions and suggests possible reasons for its association with Tremé.

During the nineteenth century parading was customary in many communities across the country. A common component of parades was military brass bands. These bands were the latest in a lineage that began in sixteenth century Europe. This tradition was adopted by Black New Orleanians resulting in the New Orleans street band, an unquestionable contributor to the formation of jazz and a fixture in New Orleans still active parading tradition. Schaffer's "Brass Bands and New Orleans Jazz " (1977) is one of the few books that acknowledge in detail the complex relationship of these two musical traditions. Jazz would be added to the tradition later.

Classically trained Colored Creole musicians dominated New Orleans post Civil War musical scene. Their social demotion prior to the war forced professionals and skilled craftsmen to rely on their musical avocations for subsistence. Fortunately New Orleans provided numerous opportunities for musicians to earn a living. They were hired to play for New Orleans festivities. Slight changes in instrumentation and dance orchestras could be converted to brass bands better suited for parades and outdoor picnics. Benevolent societies were some of the most frequent employers of these bands.

The growth in the number of Black societies of all types coincided with a rise in the popularity of Black brass bands creating fertile ground for the most venerated of New Orleans parading traditions, the funeral with music (Figure 6). The marriage of the two makes perfect sense. Blassingame (1973) made these comments about the role of the society in death: "They also assured members an impressive and proper burial by paying for the bands to lead the processions, taking care of burial expenses, holding special rites over the body, marching in the special regalia in the funeral procession, and wearing mourning badges for the deceased" (187). Concerning the role of the bands, Schaffer stated, "Funeral processions were only one duty of brass bands, though they did epitomize the bands work" (66). Schaffer continued that the antecedents of musical funeral processions could be found in other cultures and nations. The tradition was even spread widely in New Orleans. At some point during the second half of the nineteenth century the brass band funeral,



Figure 6. Treme Jazz Funeral
Photograph by author

as presently practiced, became associated with Black New Orleans culture. The basic formula for a traditional New Orleans funeral follows:

(There is an assembly) at a mortuary or home with a band at the head of a procession of the mourners or lodge members. A dirge is then played to set the mood of the morning, moving the procession to the deceased's church, accompanied by familiar hymns and slow marches. After the ceremony, the band leads the way to the cemetery playing dirges and hymns. Once at the gravesite, the musicians form a corridor for the hearse, and a drum roll accompanies the final procession known as "cutting the body loose." A solemn hymn of farewell ends the gravesite music. The band retreats a respectful distance from the cemetery and begins playing spirited marches accompanied by spirited celebration and spontaneous street dancing (Marquis 1999:16).

With the development of subsidized medical care, membership in benevolent societies became less important. An outcome was that funerals with music became less common since costs, in most cases, had to be borne by the family. The tradition would also undergo changes as increases in population exceeded the capacities of New Orleans small downtown cemeteries, forcing people to be buried in outlying areas. In a vaguely understood transition, the decline of burial societies was countered by the rise of social organizations that each year hold street parades where elaborately decorated members celebrate the anniversaries.

Funerals however, were but one aspect of parading common to benevolent and social clubs. These organizations also sponsored elaborate anniversary parades. New Orleans musicians who were interviewed beginning in the early in the 19th century provide insightful comments about the social

club's role in funeral parades and anniversary parades. Respected clarinetist George Lewis offered the following remarks about anniversary parades:

We would play for parades every Sunday during the spring and summer. Each club would hold a parade on its anniversary every year. They still have one or two parades a week in New Orleans but nothing like what used to be. There are not enough musicians to play (Russell 217).

Fellow clarinetist Edmond Hall reported similar observations:

As for why New Orleans was such a musical city and had so many bands, I think one reason had to do with the clubs. There are a lot of private clubs and organizations, in New Orleans. Two or three guys would get together, you know and make up the club and it would grow. So, when a member of a club died, they would hire a band for his funeral, and if a club had a part in a parade, they would have a band for that too. All the clubs tried to outdo each other (217).

Anniversary parades still play a big part in New Orleans and they still employ brass bands. Clubs, which parade on Sunday, but now primarily in the fall, try to outdo each other in dress, music and dancing (Figure 7).

These same halls and lodges played important roles in the development and evolution of jazz. The two Masonic halls located in Tremé, Perseverance Lodge, and Polar Star are thought to be associated with jazz, but only weakly. However, it is assured that jazz musicians played the dances and balls held in the relatively large meeting halls (Earth Search 292, 293). The presence of jazz is more certain in the Black benevolent halls like the Perseverance, San Jacinto and Equity Halls.

Within a block of Tremé was the Francs Amis Hall. Its designation as a hall of high importance to jazz stems from its booking of high society dance



**Figure 7. Anniversary parade of Treme
Social Aid and Pleasure Club "Dumaine Gang"**

music as well as hot jazz (U.S. Department of the Interior 1993:91). A Creole hall, Francs Amis is often noted by musicians as having an admissions policy favoring light-skinned Creoles (Earth Search 289-290). New Orleans drummer Warren "Baby" Dodds recalls his experience at Francs Amis.

When we (he and a creole friend) got old enough, we used to go to Francs Amis Hall, but I couldn't get in until he would talk to those fellows at the door in Creole. Inside, the girls wouldn't dance with me until he'd tell them in Creole, "Dance with him," and would tell them I was from uptown and a nice boy" (Russell 23).

Dodds also pointed out that the boy was Creole, but had dark skin.

Suggesting, as most scholars do, that the important distinction between Blacks was cultural and not racial. Another take on the perceived differences between Creole and American Blacks and the development of jazz comes from Creole violinist Paul Dominguez:

You see, we Downtown people, we try to be intelligent. Everybody learn a trade, like my daddy was a cigar maker and so was I. . . We try to bar jail. . . Uptown, cross Canal yonder, they used to jail. . . There's a vast difference here in this town. Uptown folks all ruffians, cut up in the face and live on the river. All they know is-get out on the levee and truck cotton-be longshoremen, screwmen. And me, I ain't never been on the river a day in my life. . . See, us Downtown people, we didn't think so much of this uptown jazz until we couldn't make a living otherwise . . . they made a fiddler out of a violinist-me, I'm talking about. A fiddler is not a violinist, but a violinist can be a fiddler. If I wanted to be make a living, I had to be rowdy like the other group. I had to jazz it or rag it or any other damn thing. . . Bolden cause all that. He cause all these younger men Creoles, men like Bechet and Keppard to have different styles altogether from the old heads like Tio and Perez. I don't know how they do it. But goddam, they'll do it. Can't tell you what's on the paper, but just play the hell out of it. (Buerkle and Barker, 10-11)¹

¹ Cited directly from Buerkle and Barker but originally a series of quotes from Mister Jelly Roll (Lomax 1950: 80-86).

The Tremé equivalent to Francs Amis in terms of importance to jazz was Economy Hall. George "Pops" Foster, a jazz musician who played in both Uptown and Downtown New Orleans, including Perseverance Hall, made the following remarks about Economy Hall, "The Economy Hall was high class, compared to other halls like Hopes Hall. When you made the Economy it was like working Carnegie Hall." (Russell 105)

New Orleans most famous Trombonist, Edward "Kid" Ory's experience at Economy Hall is one of the most interesting. The quote below recounts that experience while mentioning other Tremé Halls:

The first job I got was at Globe Hall. It was a big place, had a capacity of about 2,000 but they tore it down later. Then I started working in Gretna (La.) at weekends, and soon after at the Economy and Co-operators Hall. . . I rented the Economy Hall and Co-operators Hall - I tied them up for a whole year - I rented both halls. I sometimes got Buddy Petit to work with me, and I'd put him at the other hall when I couldn't get anybody to play over there. Sometimes, I kept the Co-operators Hall dark, until I couldn't get anymore in the Economy Hall, then I'd open both halls . . . Louis (Armstrong) was with me when Pete Lala (a White Storyville proprietor) and I were running dances together at his place on Claiborne, between Conti and St. Louis Streets. Pete Lala got mad when I didn't cut him in on the dances at Economy Hall and the Co-operators Hall. So he got about fifty cops to go around and run my customers away. I felt I was going to lose my health down there - I didn't like the climate - so I packed up and came to Los Angeles (Russell 176-181).

As with other aspects of jazz, some discrepancies exist concerning the role of Storyville, New Orleans' famed red-light district. It was named for Sidney Story, the alderman who conceived of the ordinance to concentrate New Orleans prostitution. By some accounts jazz was rarely played in

Storyville. Others claim that Storyville provided the setting for many of New Orleans' Black and Creole musicians to play together, creating the musical amalgam and deviant-sexual persona of jazz (21). These were the events that produced the "uneasy symbiosis" between Creoles of color and the "burning soul" of Black Africans (Buerkle and Barker 17).

Another New Orleans tradition that developed in the late nineteenth century and is strongly associated with Tremé is the masking of Blacks as Native Americans (Figure 8). Of the parading traditions discussed thus far, masking Indian is easily the most colorful, and spontaneous. It is also the only parading tradition originally of, and remaining in, the New Orleans Black community. The tradition is basically comprised of three parts. The first is the year long process of constructing the suit to be unveiled Mardi Gras Day. From preliminary sketches to finished product, the cost of a suit may run as high as several thousand dollars. Then, in the months leading up to Mardi Gras members of tribe gather at a neighborhood bar to "rehearse." The third phase of the tradition is the actual parading. On Mardi Gras morning gangs assemble at a common location. From there they rove around the streets in search of other Indian groups. Along the way traditional songs are sung in what is thought by many to be an Indian language but what turns out to be Louisiana Creole. Because the tribes don't follow a set route there is no guarantee that tribes will meet. Sometime during Mardi Gras day, most tribes travel to Claiborne neutral ground in Tremé, increasing the chance tribes will meet. In



Figure 8. Mardi Gras Indian
Photograph by author

the event of a meeting, the Big Chiefs of each tribe eventually come face to face and engage in a trade of toasts, and a display of costumes that rivals peacocks.

More so than brass band funerals and club parades, the origin of masking is hard to ascertain. The general consensus, although not undisputable, is that the tradition started downtown, possible around the 1880s. Elise Kirsch (1951) recalls seeing Indians passing through her Treme/Seventh Ward neighborhood during that time. Based on the name of the first tribe, the Creole Wild West, connections have been drawn between the parading tradition and a “wild west” show at that was part of the Louisiana Exposition.

An article by Berry (1998) relates this cultural practice to the strong presence of Warrior mythology based on African slave and Native American figures, specifically St. Mallo, Bras - Coupe, and Black Hawk (Berry citation) St. Mallo was a fugitive slave who led a band of maroons in the marshes of coastal Louisiana. St. Mallo’s maroons, like other maroon societies, led a symbiotic existence with plantation slaves that included exchanging provisions, and arms, and inter-marriage. Bras-Coupe was a fugitive slave who raided plantations from the cypress swamps just beyond Tremé. The story of both men, and the Native American, Black Hawk, live on in Black New Orleans’ cultural practices, particularly in the work of writer George Washington Cable.

Berry concluded that Cables’ treatment of Bras-Coupe and his depiction of Congo Square in “The Dance and Congo Place” elevated the African

runaway to tragic warrior, a noble figure teeming with cultural expression.”

Berry identifies Coupe's dance as “the taproot of second line dancers who would make improvisational pageants of thousands of funerals in the years to come; here in cameo is the impulse that drove Black men to mask Indian at Mardi Gras, the hunger for freedom, the costume symbol of revolt.” Berry's goal was to recognize the importance of warrior mythology in New Orleans culture. Its maintenance through folklore, ritual, poetry, prose and performance, serve as methods of recalling and developing a community memory of resistance.

The association of parading, funeral traditions with Tremé are easiest to explain. First, as mentioned above, benevolent societies were not only responsible for providing burials for their members, but their halls and lodges were also often starting points for the funeral processions. Furthermore, St. Augustine, in the heart of Tremé, served as the most important church for Creoles for the first century of its existence. Lastly, the Catholic cemeteries St. Louis No. 1 and 2 were within easy marching distance.

For at least the second half of the twentieth century, neighborhood bars have played a central role in all three of New Orleans Black parading traditions. The role of neighborhood bars as community serving and community contingent institutions is most apparent in the social aid and pleasure club or secondline parades. In addition to most clubs beginning their parades at a home bar, parade routes are mapped out to stop at other local bars along the way. The stops seem logical, because parades can last up to four hours.

Jankowiak's (1986) study reveals though, that an economic relationship exists between the clubs and bars. In return for a monetary donation or the provision of refreshments for club members, a bar is rewarded by being designated as a stop. Conversely, bars that do not contribute may be left off the parade route. The difference may be hundreds of dollars of business, significant for small neighborhood operations (28). The Mardi Gras Indians are similarly linked to local bars. Traditionally gangs or tribes have a bar that serves as a home base.

The function of neighborhood bars in funerals extends from their role as "the social clubs for the poor" as well as being keepers of the two beat, or brass band tradition. In the event of a bar patron's death, fellow customers traditionally contribute what they are able, to cover the cost of providing music for the funeral. Often the arrangements are made with the bar owners (189).

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to illustrate the growth and development of Tremé culture and institutions from the colonial periods of France and Spain to the first quarter of the twentieth century. The purpose was to show something of the traits that have made Tremé a unique community in New Orleans. The political, economic and social activities of Tremé's vibrant Creole community and the market and performance activities of Congo Square are the roots of a host of services, institutions, traditions, that comprise Tremé's local cultural

heritage. It is this culture that Tremé activists would refer to in their call for culturally relevant uses for Louis Armstrong Park.

As a geographical study, the parading aspect of both jazz and the Mardi Gras Indians takes on greater importance than the non spatial forms of cultural expression. It comes as no surprise though, that these explicitly territorial processes receive little credit as methods of claiming space and identity construction.

Declaring Tremé a counter public space and community of resistance does not necessarily make it unique among other poor and oppressed communities in New Orleans. Indeed, unequal power relationships based on wealth, race, and nationality have inspired the creation of any number of “safe” communities. The political significance, however, of New Orleans’ radical Creole tradition and its ties to Tremé, increase the neighborhood’s identity as an oppositional community.

The cultural legacy of Tremé, with its organizations, institutions, structures and cultural practices was not solidified until the second half of the nineteenth century with the introduction of American Blacks to New Orleans and the Blackening of its Creole population, a process that occurred by in migration, but more importantly through changes in the social status of Black Creoles at the hands of racism and Americanization.

In the post Civil War period, Creoles were forced to abandon their intellectual and aristocratic pursuits to support themselves in trades and crafts. The reduction of privileges for the free people of color, however unfortunate, was an important factor in the formation of an "elite Creole radicalism". The subsequent radical Creole class was bent on overturning America's racial order. They abhorred the "caste-like" attitude of a minority of Creoles who attempted to pass for white or use their distinctive history as a basis for privilege. Logsdon and Bell (1992) add, "whatever may have been the case in other parts of the south, no one has found a correlation of political conservatism, wealth and light skin color among the black political leaders of New Orleans during the Civil War" (p. 218). The most notable organization of this cause was the *Comite des Citoyens* or Citizens Committee. Largely composed of Creole residents from Tremé in 1890, its purpose was to challenge racial discrimination on legal grounds and make attempts to change attitudes. Among its important contributions were its efforts in defending Tremé residents Homere Plessy and Rodolphe Desdunes in the landmark case *Plessy versus Ferguson* (1896). Even though Creoles of Color were a separate legal class and usually considered themselves superior to American Blacks and slaves, many contemporary Blacks view their accomplishments as sources of pride. The reasons may very well be that Creoles are African descended people. Their success and accepted existence erodes the racist ideologies of white supremacy, which state that any presence of Black "blood"

makes a person Black (Zack 1993). The Creole identity has persisted into the twentieth century, often with disturbing attitudes about skin color that were not always a prominent part of the Creole identity.

CHAPTER FOUR. URBAN CHANGE

The production and maintenance of Black cultural traditions that started in 18th century Tremé continue as the twentieth century came to a close. During the first half of the century, jazz transformed itself from a highly racialized and sexualized art form into a respected international phenomenon. Although New Orleans style jazz eventually lost favor nationally with the advent of the swing and bop genres, at home it remained important. In the past 50 years New Orleans has also witnessed a revival of the brass band tradition, first with the tradition's delayed foray into recorded music, followed by infusion of contemporary rhythm & blues, and later hip-hop. In addition, the masking tradition of the Mardi Gras Indians, jazz funerals and the parading of the social aid and pleasure clubs continue, although in a more self-aware and sometimes commodified form.

Unfortunately though, New Orleans experienced changes during the 20th century that produced detrimental and destructive consequences for the Tremé community. While the factors that influenced urban change varied, some came in direct response to, or with the assistance of, federal legislation passed to rectify urban economic ills. Other changes resulted from the geographical expansion and aging that happens to all cities. New Orleans' urban landscape, Tremé in particular, fell victim to these processes of growth and development, which effectively removed its places of action, community, performance, and resistance. In New Orleans, the city's first reform mayor, Delesseps "Chep"

Morrison administered the greatest of these changes. Having just returned from serving in World War II, the new mayor gained national media attention by effectively implementing the urban and transportation development ideas of others, specifically the previous administration's ideas for a union passenger terminal, the highway projects of Robert Moses, and ideas conceived by city planner Brooke Duncan (Hass 1974, 43). Under Morrison's watch, the city implemented the "most massive building program in the city's history" (51).

The goals of this chapter are to introduce the trends and factors that influenced urban change in the United States roughly between 1930 and 1970, and to discuss how these factors played a role in dismantling New Orleans' vernacular institutions and the creation of spaces like Louis Armstrong Park. In addition, this chapter discusses the creation of public spaces through federal and local slum clearance projects, particularly those intended to create civic and cultural centers.

By explicitly revealing the city's policy toward the creation of public buildings and spaces within a larger urban context, this chapter reveals New Orleans' attitude toward marginally depressed residential communities, especially Tremé. This account is given as a background to the events of the 1980s and 1990s. Before broaching the subject of federally inspired landscape change, this study discusses the most deterministic factor in the growth of New Orleans, the geographical environment.

Taming Nature

Life in New Orleans has always passed under the constant threats and complications associated with the city's physical environment. Water, in all of its local forms – rivers, bayous, backswamps and marshes, lakes, rain, humidity, and the occasional hurricane - - has been the primary concern. For over two hundred years the threats of flood have dictated where and how New Orleanians live. Historically, buildings were located on the natural levees of the area's rivers and bayous, effectively restricted the city from developing very far away from its waterways. Ironically, the natural high ground, created by centuries of periodic flooding, drew people closer to the waterways. The resulting crowding almost secured New Orleans' destruction when fire twice struck the quarter in the 18th century.

If life along the river proved to be dangerous, life in the back-swamp presented different, but equally dangerous living conditions. Backswamp is the name given to the poorly drained low-lying areas away from the Mississippi's natural levee. As a consequence of standing water and crowded conditions in the backswamp, New Orleans was plagued by outbreaks of mosquito borne epidemics. A series of Yellow fever outbreaks and floods in the late 1800s prompted the city to address its "three-pronged" sanitation problems of clean water, drainage and a citywide sewerage system. In 1896, the city created the New Orleans Drainage Commission, which was soon absorbed by the

Sewerage and Water Board. By 1900, improvements to the city's drainage system reduced the number of mosquitoes and improved health conditions. By 1906, the mostly autonomous board had constructed the foundation of New Orleans present drainage, sewer and water works systems.

New Orleans' greatest agent of urban change was a city engineer named A. Baldwin Wood. Wood developed pumps for New Orleans drainage and sewerage systems that garnered him fortune and international acclaim. His 1913 screw pump design was used by the Dutch to drain the Zuider Zee, (a land-locked arm of the North Sea) while his trash pump (1916) enabled sewerage pumping stations to operate without debris screens or attendants. The implementation of Wood's pumps allowed large amounts of water-laden land to be drained (Thompson, 1959; Wood, 1925).

While New Orleans' pumping stations effectively freed the back-swamp marshes for development, it would take an equally impressive feat to push New Orleans development to Lake Pontchartrain, New Orleans last obstacle to expansion. The Wood pumps' equivalent in that endeavor was the New Orleans Lakefront Development. Although resorts and amusement parks dotted the shallow lake, its inability to accommodate storm water without flooding adjacent areas made large-scale settlement impossible (Filipich 1971, 57). The parish's main concern was to "replace substandard levees and unhealthy conditions occasioned by the marsh along the lakeshore with sufficient high land and protective structures to secure the city from flood

disaster" (5). In that pursuit, in 1873, the Louisiana legislature authorized the Levee Board to conduct the necessary research and to begin improvements (7). As early as 1895, the Parish Levee Board had discussed making improvements to the lake that would encourage people to leave downtown to live in the lakefront area (3). In 1927, at an estimated cost of \$27 million dollars, the land reclamation and shoreline improvements of the Lakeshore Development began. By 1930, the new shoreline, five and a half miles long and reaching 3,000 feet into Lake Pontchartrain was complete (9).

Unfortunately, the stock crash of 1929 and the following depression reduced the Levee Board's capital expenditures and effectively placed a moratorium on further projects. The problem was circumvented with a bond financing agreement with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and Federal Financing Agency (17). More significant federal involvement came with the design of the Lakefront's Lake Vista residential development. Designed in 1936 in the mold of the "garden city" movement developments, the project was hailed by New Orleans' mayor Maestri as a "poor man's project". The Works Project Administration (WPA) contributed \$3,153,000 in federal relief funds for the project's completion (Filipich 1971)

By mid-century, New Orleans' environmental constraints were largely in check, allowing the internal migration of rich and poor alike to areas previously uninhabitable. Pierce Lewis' (1976) analysis of New Orleans, one of the most informative books on the social and geographic development of the city, even

after 25 years, explains how the geographical expansion of New Orleans, by way of the taming of its natural environment, spawned incredible social change. He describes how early environmental constraints forced people of different means and ethnicities to live in fairly close proximity to one another. Supposedly, this retarded the antagonisms that usually arise from the isolation of poor and minority communities.

According to Lewis, the suburban expansion into parishes outside of Orleans, Jefferson Parish in particular, didn't happen until the 1960s. Until then, growth in New Orleans was by in-fill. The internal movement of population toward the lake, facilitated by the Lakeshore Development, was almost exclusively White. The Blacks, still concentrated in separate "back swamp ghettos", began to expand and grow together (98). This had been preceded by changes in the 1890s. During the later part 19th century, wealthier Creoles and Whites began to leave the French Quarter. They moved out Esplanade Avenue and into the Gentilly neighborhood. Poor Blacks and newly arriving immigrants, particularly Italians, replaced the exiting Creoles. In addition to concentrating poverty, the French Quarter and other downtown areas began to deteriorate because of age and the lack of upkeep.

The 1930s saw the fortunes of the French Quarter change with the creation of the Vieux Carre Commission, a regulatory body charged with maintaining the Quarter's architectural character. From that time onward, the Quarter experienced increases in property values and the number of

commercial enterprises. The synchronous revival of the Quarter and the city's spatial expansion placed the city's poor black population under increased housing pressure. Figure 9 shows how urban change forced population shifts in downtown residential areas. For now, the development of the "New Texas" CBD depicted in the map is less important than the (pre-WWII) forced migration and displacement of Blacks out of the Quarter and into Tremé, the Seventh Ward, and public housing - all caused by the rising property values and the aesthetic revival of New Orleans' simple, but historically unique architecture

Civic Center

The residential mobility catalyzed by the taming of New Orleans' environmental threats did not immediately translate into losses to Tremé's cultural landscape. However, with structures over 100 years old, and residents from two of New Orleans most marginalized ethnic groups, Blacks and newly arriving Italians, the deteriorating area began to seem increasingly expendable. The marginalization of the Tremé community is revealed in the literature by a "non-displacement thesis" which basically attempts to lessen the offenses against New Orleans low income Black community at the hands of urban development by comparing New Orleans' history with urban renewal with that of other cities. The concept of non-displacement is taken from a series of articles stating that New Orleans exercised an urban renewal policy that sought not to displace residents, except in "early" public housing cases. There are

several other examples where authors cite New Orleans' benevolent urban development while decrying the unequal nature of the city's development politics. Moe and Wilkie (1997, 107), for example, make the following claim about development projects in Tremé:

(The) bad planning decisions that erased historic streets and ruined neighborhoods for elevated expressways still catalyze the preservation movement here. Claiborne Avenue, for instance, the traditional path of black Mardi Gras parades was all but wiped out by an overhead expressway. Still New Orleans has escaped much of the physical damage seen in other cities. Though some areas were cleared for new public housing developments during the depression, New Orleans shows few scars from postwar urban development.

Smith and Keller (1983, 135) suggested, in reference to the Super Dome, that the demolition of a "gray area" for a civic center was an acceptable and desirable act. To support their point, they cite following by Dome financier James Jones,

It was a downtown gray area where a late and visionary post war mayor – DeLesseps (Chep) Morrison successfully exorcized a wretched slum and replaced it by a civic center complex, thereby raising the value and attractiveness of adjacent land. The subsequent addition of office buildings, apartments, and hotel structures confirmed the wisdom of municipal regeneration."

The construction of Municipal Auditorium was the first significant structural intrusion into Tremé. The building was to be the first component of a proposed Civic Center, the predecessor of the assembly center/ cultural center project, and eventually Armstrong Park. A 1928 Times Picayune article places the construction of Municipal Auditorium as part of a larger parkway and plaza

project. The article expressed concern that the \$2 million allotted for the project, was insufficient for the planned space:

An auditorium can be built to take care of the city's need in the way of convention Hall, municipal theater, and general gathering place not only at the present time but for years to come . . .but not enough (money) to realize at once the dream of late Mayors Berhman and O'Keefe and others for a great plaza and parkway extending from N. Rampart St. to N. Claiborne Ave (*Times-Picayune*, 1928).

The article continues, "The plan would be to proceed with the construction of the auditorium and if possible work on the parkway and beautification program in the future as funds permit." New Orleans' historian, preservationists and musician Jack Stewart recalls the largely forgotten details of a Harland and Bartholomew master plan for New Orleans that proposed linking Jackson Square with Beauregard / Congo Square. The initial plan called for the demolition of blocks in both Tremé, including the parish prison, and the Quarter (Stewart 1999). The Harland and Bartholomew plan Stewart mentions is from a 1931 planning report (City Planning Commission) 1931(Fig 10 and 11). The document is actually Chapter 6 of a City Plan Report addressing Civic Art. The illustrations show the cultural center extending two blocks into the French Quarter. The third of the reports' three sections proposes a civic center located behind the Vieux Carre. An attached letter from City Planning and Zoning Commission Chairman Charles Favrot Supported the proposed location of the Civic Center for the following reasons:

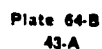


Figure 10. Overhead view of proposed Civic Center
Source: Harland Bartholomew and Assoc.

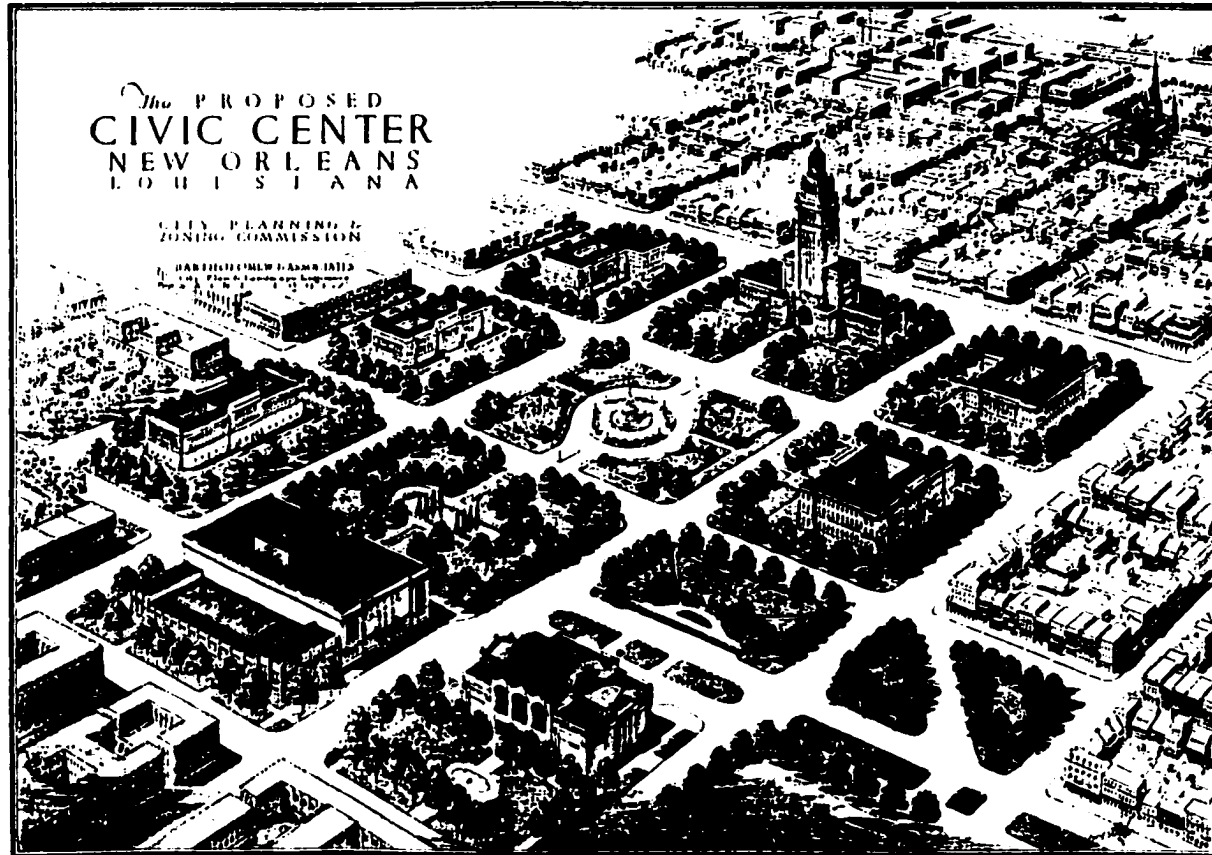


Figure 11. Representation of proposed Civic Center
against French Quarter backdrop
Source: Harland Bartholomew and Assoc.

- 1) It is apparent that the trend of commercial development is above Canal Street and moving back toward Claiborne Ave. No Civic Center should be immediately surrounded by intense commercial development.
- 2) This center is just six blocks from Canal St. which is a reasonable distance from the center of commercial activity.
- 3) The site is well surrounded with main arteries for traffic by which it can be approached with the least inconvenience and without passing through the traffic congestion of the highly developed commercial areas.
- 4) Property values throughout this section are low and will probably not materially enhance, so that's its eventual acquisition will not be too costly.
- 5) The locations proposed is on the same axis as the old Civic Center of the City of New Orleans, which has a very strong appeal for the formation of the new Center.

The report itself introduces and expands on the concept of grouping public buildings. No concern, however, is expressed for the community. In fact, the planned clearance of the community is justified with the following statement.

The property of this neighborhood is not valuable nor in a good state of repair. The neighborhood has shown little tendency to improve in recent years. It is believed that the creation of a public building group facing Beauregard Square and the Squares bounded Rampart, Dauphine, St. Peter, and St. Ann would result in an appreciation of property values and in substantial improvements in the immediate vicinity. . . The public building group plan would therefore stimulate and encourage a high character of building development in a district where it might otherwise not be expected (44).

The idea of grouping public buildings introduced to New Orleans by Harland and Bartholomew in the 1920s remained a dominant development theme through out the 1950s and 1960s. Interestingly, Part II of the same

report focused on suggestions for maintaining the historic character of the Vieux Carre. Evidently, the clearance of the Quarter for the stated purpose was not incompatible with the preservation suggested. Included in the report was a proposed ordinance for such a purpose and recommendations from the Vieux Carre Commission and American Institute of Architects.

The Civic Center, as proposed, was never constructed beyond Municipal Auditorium (possible explanations why are discussed later in this chapter). As a result, the clearance of Tremé was postponed. However, the construction of the Municipal Auditorium did not leave Tremé's cultural landscape unscarred. Its construction required the destruction of Globe Hall. Located on St. Claude and St. Louis Avenues. Globe Hall is recalled by one jazz historian as "The most renowned 19th century downtown dance hall for colored people (Collins 106)."

The Civic Center or parkway project as proposed for Tremé and the French Quarter was never constructed, nor is there any record of money ever being allocated for the project other than the Municipal Auditorium. There are a few possible reasons why this was the case. The first is that Great Depression began. The effect of the Depression on the Lakefront project was discussed previously, but unlike the Lakefront, the parkway was not seen important enough for a New Deal remedy. Secondly, the city may have been financially more committed to constructing the criminal court building, which was completed in 1931.

It may be argued that the destruction of Storyville, although not formally part of Tremé, was one the first significant losses to New Orleans' urban cultural landscape. In 1939, the federal government razed the building that once housed the district's brothels, cabarets, and cribs to make way for the Iberville housing project. The legal vice that characterized the district had ended more than twenty years earlier in 1917 when the Department of War outlawed legalized prostitution within five miles of Naval bases but the buildings remained intact until their demolition. In some ways, the loss of Storyville leaves little to lament. The activities that occurred there were not of the highest social value. To some, the establishment of Storyville just outside Tremé in 1897 was one of the first intrusions into the neighborhood. On the other hand, and more commonly, the clearance of Storyville can be viewed as the first example of the government, local and federal, effectively dismantling a culturally unique landscape. Following the Depression, WWII put a damper on many major construction projects in New Orleans and elsewhere.

Post War

After World War II, America increased its efforts to rescue inner cities from decay. The United States Housing Acts of 1948 and 1954 served as the instruments of improvement. The financial commitment to the health of urban areas encouraged local governments to secure federal money. Eager to receive their "fair share," state legislators and local politicians seemingly created projects where federal money could be used. Unfortunately, thousands

of urban residents were displaced and countless historic structures lost as a result of slum clearance practices. In large cities, residents found themselves relocated into public housing projects (Bellush and Hausknecht 1967).

In addition to urban renewal, the interstate highway program was also a force of displacement and demolition during the 1950s and 1960s. The federal campaign to construct a national highway network began in 1944 with the National System of Interstate Highways. The effort, authorizing 40,000 miles of roadways, was funded by Congress at the 50% level. Under this program Robert Moses proposed an elevated expressway along the riverside of the French Quarter. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 created a larger, better-funded program in the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, commonly called the Interstate System. Unlike urban renewal, which affected mostly the urban poor, the interstate highway program divided farmland and scarred scenic rural landscapes across the country.

The devastation caused by Urban Renewal's clearance of blighted houses is said to have come to New Orleans late. For over a decade, from the first redevelopment provisions of 1949 to the mid-1960s, New Orleanians successfully blocked the use of urban renewal programs that proposed creating private market housing. James Andre (1963), in discussing New Orleans' early experience with urban renewal, reported that "New Orleans was destined from the start to be the only major urban area in the United States without any urban renewal projects." Although the city demonstrated a dire and increasing need

for housing, the state of Louisiana passed legislation, introduced by way of New Orleans, denying any city in Louisiana the right to decide whether or not to implement urban renewal programs of their own. The legislation stemmed from opposition to a 1950s proposal by the city of New Orleans to redevelop a section of New Orleans bounded by South Broad, Poydras, Tulane and South Claiborne. Before the plan, called the Tulane Project, could receive federal approval, James Comisky Jr., the local assessor for the First, Second, and Third Wards encouraged local residents to oppose the plan. Around this time a group of New Orleans' businessmen recommended to the New Orleans Commission Council an urban housing plan being used in Baltimore Maryland. Baltimore's plan used strict enforcement of local ordinances to encourage the rehabilitation of private property rather than the expropriation, razing and resale by the local government (26). In 1953 the city canceled the Tulane project in favor of a similar private rehabilitation plan.

To insure that federally assisted programs wouldn't again threaten property owners, Comisky and the Owners and Tenants Association drafted a bill restricting the municipal use of eminent domain. The bill passed through the Louisiana Legislature in 1954. The law prevented New Orleans from using federal funds assistance to clear or replace slums with private market housing by allowing the owners to retain equity in the land. The statute greatly limited the effect of a 1948 law giving municipalities condemnation power for slum clearance. Andre noted that many of the arguments against urban renewal

were based on claims that the program was un-American, unpatriotic and Communistic (46-53).

After unsuccessful attempts to amend the law in 1955 and 1956, the city was finally able to implement an urban renewal program in the late 1960s. Most likely, it did so by using a loophole in the 1954 law that exempted property owners from retaining equity in land "expropriated for municipal uses such as playgrounds, schools, streets or municipal buildings." In this case the municipal use was a cultural center project planned for the Tremé neighborhood and Civic Center planned for the CBD.

It is important to make a distinction between the proposed civic center/plaza/parkway plan of the 1920s and 1930s and the cultural center plans of the 1950s and 1960s. Although the two plans were similar, coming from the same project, there is a difference in how the two plans theoretically envisioned the creation and use of public space. The parkway project, like the Lakefront, was inspired by late nineteenth and early twentieth century movements seeking to improve urban life by creating cleaner, safer, and more organized urban spaces. The City Beautiful movement is often cited as an inspiration with references also made to the Garden City movement. In these manners, the parkway project, anchored by Municipal Auditorium would have served to "civilize" an area of town defined by a drainage/shipping canal, cemeteries, warehouses, dance halls, brothels and an increasingly depressed residential community. Certainly there were very real economic concerns and

civic needs, but there also was goal of building virtue into urban landscapes.

In New Orleans, Mayor Morrison oversaw massive changes in the urban landscape, including the revival of the parkway/civic center project revived first as the Assembly Center, and later as the Cultural Center. After the war, the Civic Center plans resurfaced several blocks away in the Uptown, Back'o town area. The reason for the change of location is unknown. Jack Stewart speculated that the Vieux Carre Commission (VCC) had grown in power and frowned upon the original plans that extended into the Quarter. Stewart also suggested that Delesseps "Chep" Morrison's, half brother Jacob, a Quarter preservationist, may have advised against the original plans. Stewart may have been partially correct. In 1936 and 1937 a growing preservationists movement persuaded voters and the city council to create a Vieux Carre Commission empowered to protect the French Quarter. After a few idle years the Commission became a popular and productive organization. Jacob Morrison was indeed a vociferous advocate of French Quarter preservation. He served as a member and legal council for the Vieux Carre Property Owners Association. The wavering commitment by the VCC not only questions why the civic center project moved but also provides further insight into the outsider opinions about Tremé. In 1946 the Vieux Carre Commission waived its jurisdiction over several areas including the riverside of Rampart Street, nearly running the length of the Quarter and running ½ a block into the Quarter. The stated justification was the area's location in an industrial and commercial area.

For the next 15 years the Vieux Carre Commission would refer to and treat those areas as peripheral. As a result, Rampart Street's architecture is less historic than that of its parallel counterpart, Decatur Street. Jacob Morrison likely had his brother's ear on development issues that affected the Quarter, but "Chep" was not elected until 1946. By that time the location of the Civic Center had changed (Gallas 1996).

One of the earliest indicators of New Orleans' plan for the cultural center in the post World War II period comes from the Master Plan for New Orleans prepared by Harland and Bartholomew and Associates for the City Planning and Zoning Commission (1951). Chapter 11 of the report, titled, "A Preliminary Report, Public Buildings" served to:

Analyze the adequacy of the present public buildings serving the city as a whole, to determine their adequacy and defects, to estimate future need, and to present a plan whereby present and future needs can be provided for on a long-range basis and in accordance with sound planning principles (ibid, 3).

The report identified "central public buildings" including certain administrative offices, facilities for public assembly, and cultural centers as separate from public schools, and branch libraries and post offices. The "Principles and Standards" section of the report clearly states that public buildings should be located near but not within the CBD so as not to impede the growth of commercial activity. On the other hand, public buildings are offered as barriers to limit the sprawl of commercial and industrial uses. "In most cities, including New Orleans, some of the area adjacent to the central

business district is depressed or lacking in vitality. Such areas often constitute excellent locations for public building groups" (ibid).

The report's analysis of New Orleans' existing cultural and assembly buildings found them to be widely scattered and suggested grouping the buildings by function in four locations. For the assembly group, the report recommends a sports exposition building to supplement the Municipal Auditorium. The report makes the following comment about the planning and development process of the assembly group:

The problems involved in the planning and construction of major streets, parking, and public building in the vicinity of Beauregard Square are so closely interrelated that detailed planning of all these facilities must be carefully coordinated. Piecemeal design of the component improvements could easily destroy the workability of the overall plan or make its execution so expensive as to be wholly impracticable. The entire area should be developed as a single unit. Since a large amount of clearance is involved it might be logical to include the proposed improvements in a large-scale urban redevelopment project which would also embrace an additional area of deterioration north and west of the proposed assembly center (ibid, 33).

This statement is worthy of citing because it speaks directly to the issues that would plague the Assembly Center/ Cultural Center project in all its incarnations.

No real effort or progress was made toward the construction of an Assembly Center until the City initiated its capital budget program in 1955. The complicated program incorporated the planning, legislative and executive branches of the city government in the construction of public services, buildings

and physical infrastructure. In the first step, the City Planning Commission outlined the capital construction projects for the next five years, and recommending the level at which each should be funded. Next, the Mayor issued a budget message with his recommendations. It was then up to the City Council to approve or reject the mayor's appropriations. Lastly, if the project was to be funded by bond issues, a public vote needed to be taken.

Between 1955 and 1960, \$1,050,000 was expended to acquire land for the Assembly Center. In 1955 no money was appropriated, but the Planning Commission designated the first four squares to be purchased. Between 1955 and 1959 funds were appropriated in every year except 1957. In that year the CPC released another preliminary public building report. The grouping of public buildings in the report increased from four to seven complexes. The new complexes included an international center, the historic complex at Jackson Square, and the Union Station Complex including the new union passenger terminal, a new post office and a federal office tower. Although there is a consistent record of appropriating money for the Assembly Center, not all parties inside or outside the government were pleased with the project's progress. An indication of the lack of direction in the project can be seen in the comments of the New Orleans' governmental watchdog, the Bureau of Governmental Research (BGR). In both 1958 and 1959 the BGR recommended that the proposed bond election for the Assembly center be turned down for the lack of planning. Out of the seven proposed issues totaling

\$5.37 million in 1959, \$250,000 was for Assembly Center land acquisition. The BGR listed the following arguments in favor of the proposal: rising land costs, the need for parking, and the potential benefit and stimulus for the tourist and convention trade. Ultimately though, the BGR blasted the city because the sketchy project had not been subject to a public hearing and was not part of the master plan for the city's physical development (Times Picayune 1959).

Similarly, from 1958 to 1961, the City Planning Commission refused to include the Assembly Center in its Capital Program. For 1959 and 1960, in addition to needing a plan, the Commission cited the need to secure federal funding, and to consider the proposed International Center (1960). Towards that end, the City Planning Commission presented Public Building Report II, (1960) focusing specifically on the Cultural and International Centers. Unlike the previously mentioned 1957 report, Public Buildings Report II, focused specifically on stimulating tourism and improving entertainment facilities with new development and public assembly facilities (figure 12). The scope of the public building report, as it related to the cultural center was, "to promote a nucleus for recreation, entertainment and culture in New Orleans and ultimately a high density dwelling area in the core of the city." From that time onward, the cultural center was no longer seen as a targeted site for conventions, a use reassigned to the International Trade Mart. The City Planning Commission's recommended components for the cultural center follow:

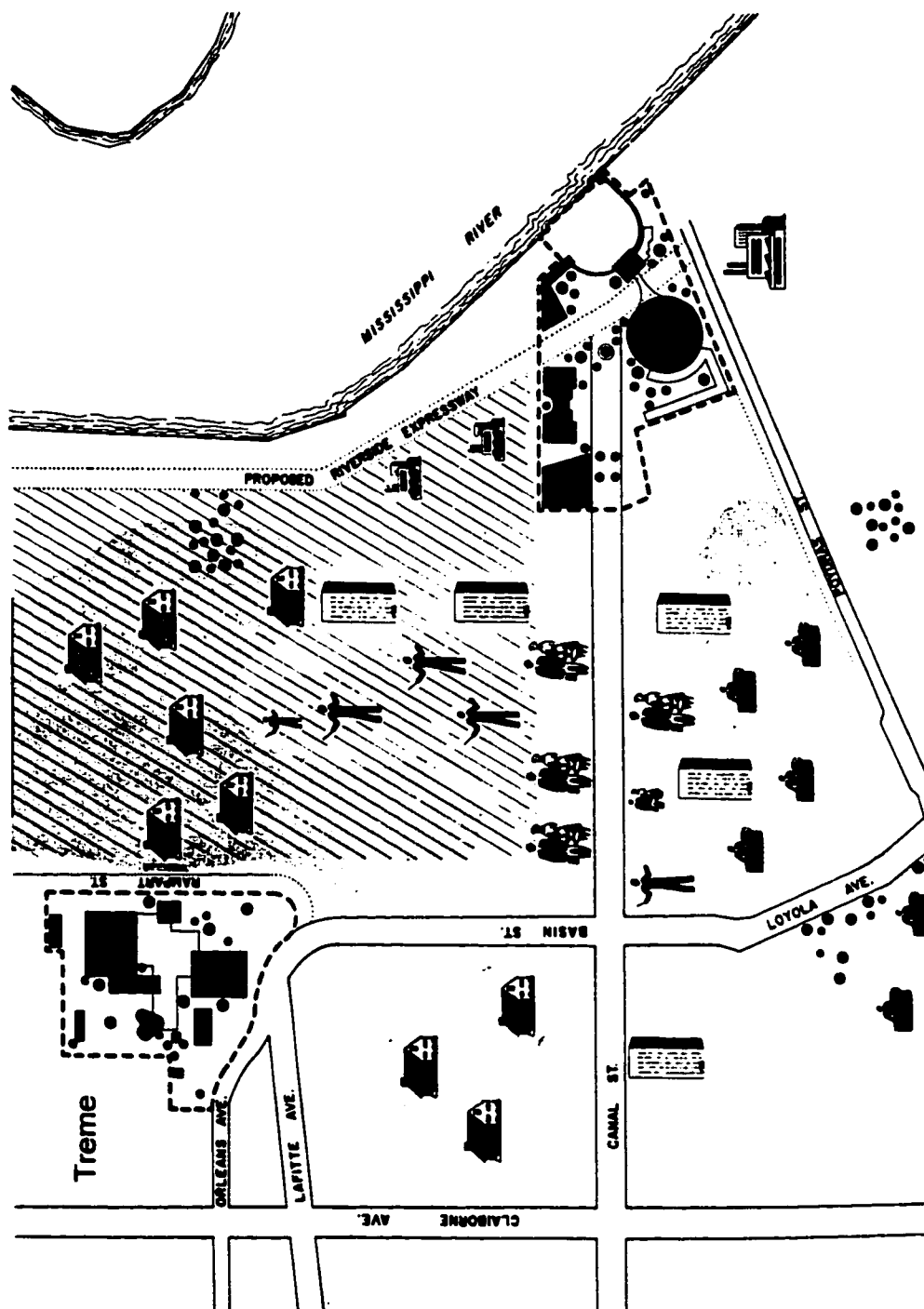


Figure12. Illustration of downtown land uses from Public Buildings Report II, including Assembly Center and ITM.

- 1) The existing Municipal Auditorium
- 2) An opera house seating 4,000
- 3) A concert hall seating 2,500
- 4) A legitimate theater seating 500 – 600
- 5) A museum
- 6) A community facilities building
- 7)) Parking for 2,000 cars
- 8) Outdoor areas for exhibits, musical presentations, and carnival ceremonies
- 9) Apartment units
- 10) Related uses (restaurants, lounges, shops)
- 11) Auxiliary uses (schools, churches)

The 1931 report by the City Planning Commission discusses plans for a riverfront park at the foot of Canal Street as part of a Canal Street beautification project. The project is described as an:

Improvement of the open space between the L. and N. and Public Belt Railroads, and the river at the foot of Canal Street. The Dock Board has recently completed three attractive buildings facing on this open space. A fountain is to be located in this area (5).

Development of the river front area in general grew into an effort to create an international trade organization, a project that would evolve into the World Trade Center and Spanish Plaza. Commonly celebrated as a success of the Morrison administration, the project actually began before WWII as an effort of local businessmen to establish a trade link with Latin American countries through the port of New Orleans. In 1942, the plan was pitched to the manager of the Port of New Orleans as a single structure housing various components of a trade facility, including exhibit space and conference rooms. The idea came to life in 1945 as the International House. Almost immediately planning began

for the International Trade Mart, which opened in 1948. Both facilities operated as private nonprofit agencies. By 1948, the trade project was closely associated with Morrison (Haas 1974 63-66). With the success of the trade projects came the idea to construct a larger, more centralized, facility. According to planning documents, the International Center concept originated in a preliminary buildings report (1957) that proposed revitalizing lower Canal Street with a group of public buildings including those occupied by the Port Commissioners of New Orleans and the U.S. Customs House. Later in 1957, the plans for Canal Street were incorporated into the broader "Prospectus for Revitalizing Canal Street." By 1960, the Economic Survey of the Central Area of New Orleans, prepared by the Chamber of Commerce, named the complex the "International Trade and Assembly Center."

A New Orleans' City Planning Commission report on the city's public buildings from the early 1960s discusses a proposal for an International Center at the foot of Canal Street. Anchoring the proposed complex would be the International Trade Mart (ITM), an office tower housing "world trade firms, services, exhibitors and consulates." As proposed in the Public Buildings Report II, the ITM will consist of:

- The Custom House
- The Dock Board Offices
- The International Trade Mart
- A convention hall w/related exhibit and parking spaces
- A major hotel
- Consulates
- Travel agencies

- A land, water, and air transportation terminal to include a heliport
- A center for tourist information and trips throughout the region
- Continuous trade shows

Restaurants, bars, shops, green areas, fountains and lookouts.
(City Planning Commission V)

Although the area did not develop exactly as envisioned, there were three products from the planned ITM. The World Trade Center, a 33-story office tower, opened in 1966. Two years later came the now - demolished Rivergate Convention Center. At the foot of the Trade Center is the Spanish Plaza, a goodwill gift from Spain. Construction of the plaza, including a 50-foot pool, began in 1964 (Gambit 2000).

In 1964, the city committed \$1,700,000.00 for the purchase of an area bounded by N. Villere, Dumaine, N. Liberty, St. Ann, Marais and Orleans, Basin Streets, the remaining three Squares. The assumption was that the money would be refunded by the Federal Government.

With the land designated and funds appropriated, the city began a process of gradual "slum clearance" that would last over ten years. Figures 13-15 depict the progress made toward the clearance of houses for the Civic Center, Assembly Center, and Cultural Center projects. Concerning the lost structures, Christovich and Toledano (1980) comment:

. . . more brick structures and historic buildings of quantity were demolished by this project than remain on any similar number of squares in the area beyond Rampart . . . House types and styles, like those considered worthy of National Register status in the Vieux Carre were razed.

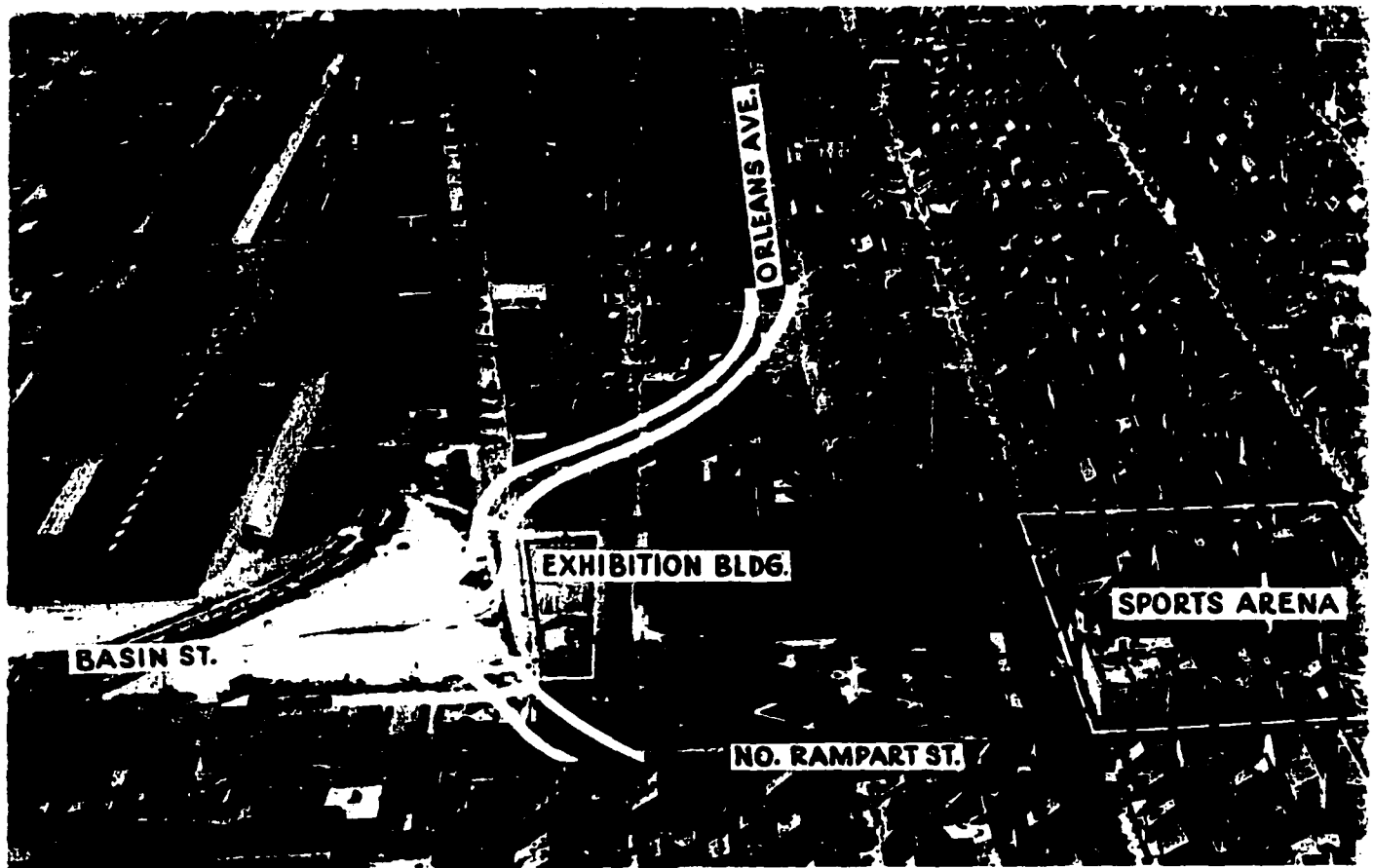


Figure 13. Photo outlining land to be cleared for Assembly Center, also shown is the plan to connect and widen Basin and Orleans Street.
Source: Annual Mayors Report, 1955-1956.



Figure 14. Photo outlining addition land to be cleared for Assembly Center
Source: Annual Mayors Report, 1957-1958.



**Figure 15. Photo showing first land cleared for Assembly Center,
and completed Basin - Orleans connection**
Source: Annual Mayors Report, 1960 - 1961.

The biggest windfall for the project was the allocation of \$8 million for what had become the Cultural Complex. The largest chunk of which, \$ 4.5 million, was earmarked for the construction of the complex's first cultural building in 1968. The building's construction would be the only construction phase of the cultural center. The once again revised plan, now under the administration of Mayor Victor Schiro, proposed a Lincoln Center-styled facility.

Constructed in New York in the 1960s, Lincoln Center was the vanguard of cultural centers built in the 1950s and 1960s to showcase the performing arts. During this time, civic and cultural centers became one of the more common uses spurred by urban renewal. Lincoln Center, its performance halls and nearly 5000 apartments were constructed on 14 acres of Manhattan slum property. Acquired for \$ 7.5 million, the project displaced approximately 2,000 residents (Goodman 1967). The final outcome in New Orleans was the Theater of the Performing Arts, later dedicated to Mahalia Jackson.

New Orleans' cultural center was never constructed beyond the Theater for the Performing Arts. Attributing the failed construction to a lack of money is overstating and oversimplifying an obvious fact. At the root of the issue was the over eagerness of the city to create a public building complex like other cities. As architectural writer Monroe Labouisse (1974a, p78) suggested, "The main point to remember here is that the Cultural Center began as a planning concept and remained no further thought out for many years. Yet demolition of Tremé was ordered on this pretext." Labouisse continued, "Funds began to

appear and be spent for land acquisition and clearance. But all the while, there was no plan to finance a project of such enlarged scope. It was taken on faith, apparently, that the whole project would inevitably be funded somehow, and this alone justified, the demolition of the neighborhood and the relocation of its people”.

While financing remained an issue, Labouisse (1974b) offered that another reason the culture center failed was a general change of opinion about large-scale urban redevelopment projects. Locally, the successful opposition to the riverfront expressway, a proposed uptown bridge, and the coinciding release of the Friends of the Cabildo's architecture series signaled a change of opinion. Unfortunately, Labouisse added, the damage had already been done in Tremé.

Interstate - 10

Although presently not recalled as notoriously as urban renewal, the destruction caused by federal interstate highway projects disrupted countless urban communities. In New Orleans, Tremé was one such community. While the wheels churned to get the cultural center off the ground, plans were being made to route I-10 down Claiborne Avenue. While Claiborne Avenue lacked the cultural and architectural history of the cleared Tremé blocks, it served a greater function as an open public space and business district. By many accounts, Claiborne's tree lined neutral ground served as a community gathering space. (Figure 16) A study by the Claiborne Avenue Design Team

(CADT), refers to the neutral ground as "a de facto park and front yard for the communities bordering that street. Children played there; families picnicked there; games were held there; clubs rallied there; parades began there." (39)

One of the most popular uses of Claiborne Avenue, both before and after the interstate was constructed, was Black Mardi Gras. Prior to the 1950s, the intersection of Claiborne and Dumaine was the place to view Mardi Gras Indians. Now the passing of the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club's parade makes the intersection of Orleans Avenue and Claiborne Avenue the nexus of Black Mardi Gras activity (32). A 1961 *Times-Picayune* editorial speaking of the eminent destruction of the Claiborne Avenue neutral ground for the construction of Interstate-10 read, "It will take many years to heal the wound represented by the elimination of this grand-style reservation of open-park." The article's enduring sentiment though was that Claiborne's transformation for traffic purposes was "indispensable to general progress." Prior to the expressway's construction, the section of Claiborne Avenue from Canal Street to Elysian Fields contained almost 500 oak trees. A plan by the Parks and Parkways Commission proposed relocating 51 of the 253 "inner" oaks at a cost of \$125 per tree. At the time the larger 222 trees that lined the outer edges of the neutral ground were to be unaffected by the construction. By the time the expressway was finished in 1968 few of the inner or outer row of oak trees between Canal and Elysian Fields survived (Figure 17).



Figure 16. Photograph of Claiborne Avenue before Interstate - 10
Source: Historic New Orleans Collection

Unlike urban renewal, transportation projects could not completely avoid middle-class areas of interest. Such was the case with New Orleans and the proposed river-front expressway (Figure 18). The fight against the expressway, known as the Second Battle of New Orleans, would be widely identified as the definitive battle between local communities and destructive federal projects. Baumbach and Borah (1981) give a play-by-play of the near decade-long battle between pro- and anti- expressway factions. The controversy, which ended in a victory for the expressway opponents, is relevant because it occurred at the same time as the destruction of the Claiborne Avenue neutral ground and subsequent construction of an elevated section of Interstate 10. The arrival at this decision required a monumental campaign to transform the proposed expressway into a national issue. The relationship of the riverfront expressway to the events in Tremé may not be immediately obvious. Early support for an elevated riverfront expressway by Robert Moses and Harland Bartholomew and Associates was slow to progress because of other capital intensive projects such as the Union Passenger Terminal, the Greater New Orleans Bridge, and the Pontchartrain Causeway. The idea gained attention with the creation of the Central Area Committee (CAC) of the Chamber of Commerce. Like chambers of commerce elsewhere, the Central Area Committee was composed of influential New Orleans business people. Following is a description of the Central Area Committee by Baumbach and Borah (1981):

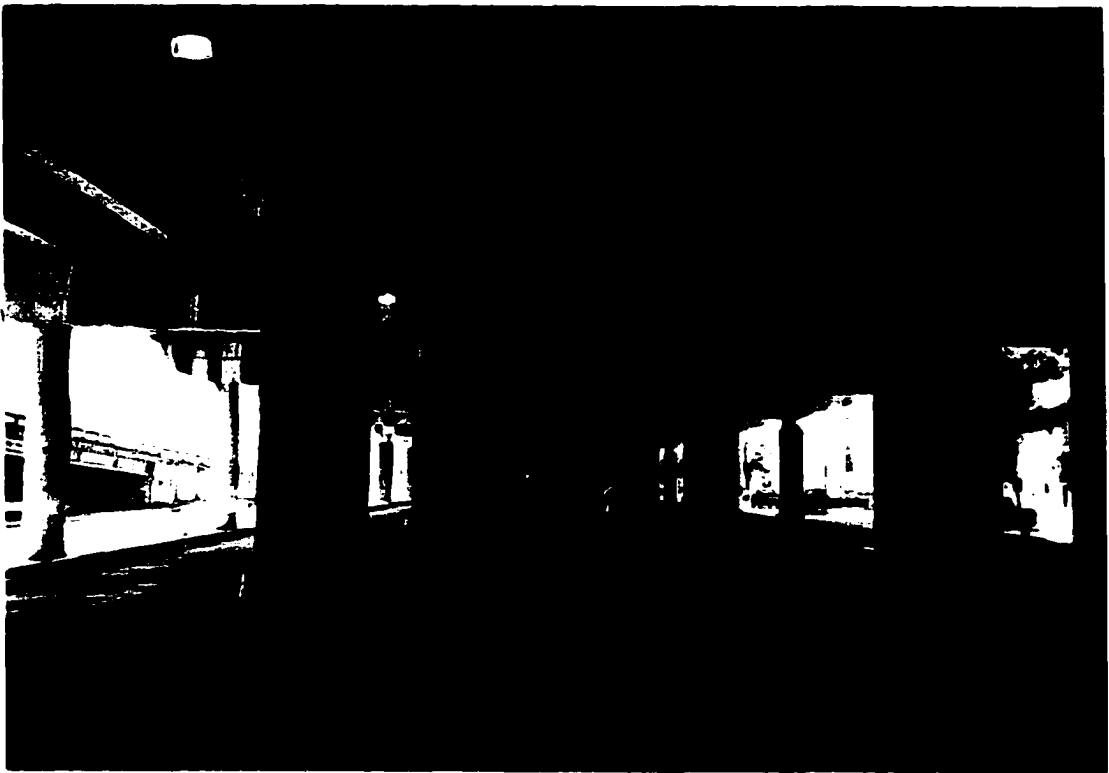


Figure 17. Photograph of Claiborne Avenue after Interstate - 10

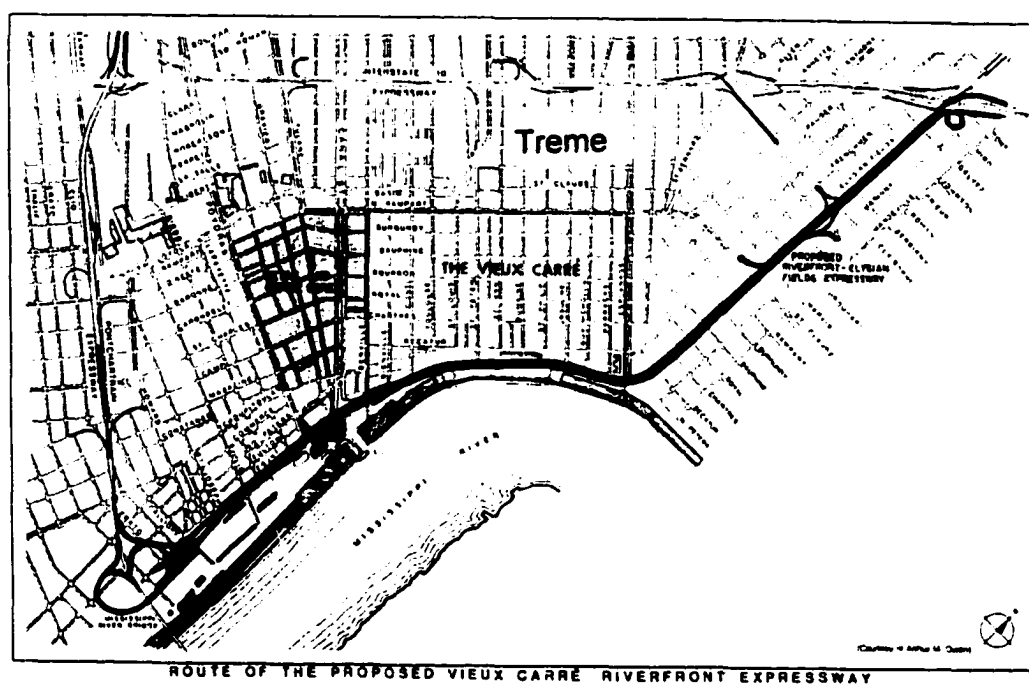


Figure 18. Map of proposed riverfront expressway
Adapted from Baumbach and Borah

Central Area Committee members represented leading institutions and organizations - the city's power structure. Because they sat on many other powerful and prestigious boards in the community, the collective influence of the committee's members was enormous. The committee soon became one of the most powerful and influential special-interest groups in community affairs, and its thinking and philosophy dominated the policy and decision-making process in transportation planning in New Orleans during the 1960s (34).

Concerned with keeping New Orleans urban core linked with its rapidly expanding suburbs, the CAC recommended "a system of high speed, limited access freeways" (Baumbach and Borah 1981, 35). Shortly afterward, and under the encouragement of the CAC, the City Planning Commission endorsed the riverfront expressway. Early on, preservationists unanimously opposed an elevated structure. However, based on a desire to alleviate French Quarter traffic, some favored a grade-level thoroughfare. During the early 1960s the debate between preservationists and those in favor of the expressway escalated. In addition to the CAC and planning commission, New Orleans Mayor Victor Schiro and the *Times-Picayune* newspaper joined expressway proponents. Then in 1964, the project was designated part of the Interstate Highway Project, making it eligible for 90% federal funding.

In the face of mounting opposition the preservationists made a conscious effort to elevate the controversy to the national level. One of the first and most productive moves came from a meeting between preservationists and Stewart Udall, Secretary of the Interior. Udall suggested that seeking National Historical Landmark designation for the Vieux Carre was the best ways of

proclaiming and protecting the area's integrity. Preservationists also took their cause directly to the national media with letters and stories printed in the *Washington Post* and *Saturday Evening Post* (Baumbach and Borah (1981, 64-66). Within the course of the Riverfront expressway controversy, preservationist increasingly and successfully courted the national media (100).

The French Quarter would also receive the benefit of National Historic Landmark Status. On July 1, 1969, the "Second Battle of New Orleans" ended when the Secretary of Transportation canceled the project because of the predicted detrimental effect it would have on the Historic French Quarter.

The riverfront expressway controversy is relevant to this study for two reasons. First, the project is similar to the Claiborne Avenue I-10 expressway in type and time period. The controversy is also relevant because the method of opposition that the preservationists used, increasing the scale of the controversy to a national level, provides a possible model that other groups might use to accomplish their goals.

Whether or not the government could have chosen a route for I-10 less detrimental to Treme is difficult to answer. By routing I-10 along the Claiborne Avenue neutral ground (median), the government was able to minimize the amount of residential displacement. The same is true of New Orleans' first expressway, Earhart Boulevard, built along a railway right-of-way, and the routing of most of the New Orleans section of the Pontchartrain Expressway along the right-of-way of the New Basin Canal (Chase 1979: 216-

217). Charges of racism in the placement of I-10 are equally difficult to justify because the downtown by-pass, I-610, also resulted in property losses for the largely white Lakeview neighborhood. What is questionable is the de-territorialization of communities already socially and economically depressed.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter, particularly the second half, is to illustrate the erosion and destruction of Tremé's and New Orleans' cultural assets by the implementation of national ideas of development and modernization. Because of Harland Bartholomew and Associates' planning, New Orleans had very specific plans about its public spaces, especially its buildings. Furthermore, the city seems to have given due consideration to the question of locating its public facilities. The successful adoption of these ideologies is made more significant due to the geographical selectivity of the process. The construction of urban renewal and transportation infrastructure projects in low-income communities is not unknown, quite the contrary. Still, it is important to highlight the questionable intrusion into Tremé if only because it is currently viewed as such an important area to the city's cultural landscape. The misfortunes of the Tremé community are only highlighted by the intensity and passion preservationists bring to the fight against development projects in other parts of the city.

By 1970, two of New Orleans' most important public spaces, at least for downtown Blacks, had been destroyed. The Claiborne Avenue neutral ground

was gone, replaced by Interstate-10. In a perverse irony, the space still exists, but the "place" does not. The highway department constructed an elevated highway on Claiborne, instead of one at grade level. Casting its shadow downward, most of the life and activity that filled the area between the north and south bound lanes of Claiborne Avenue are gone. The second public space lost was of the informal and counter space variety. The section of Tremé lost to the urban renewal/cultural center project comprised a landscape of agency, resistance, community, and tradition in a time of violence and oppression toward Blacks.

One thing that can be taken from the first attempts to build a public facility in the vicinity of Municipal Auditorium is the attitude by the city that the Tremé neighborhood was expendable for those purposes. Furthermore, the Civic Center as proposed was seen not just as civic art but a method of stimulating development and improving property values.

The truth pertaining to New Orleans development scenarios is closely approximated by the largely University of New Orleans College of Urban and Public Affairs (CUPA) articles referenced. Ideology and traditionalism did indeed retard the urban renewal and redevelopment at the rate of other cities. It is inappropriate, however, to trivialize the development projects that occurred in Tremé, whether because they occurred during the 1960s or because of their small scale. It is even more inappropriate to attribute the lack of development to New Orleans' traditional preservation movement. Preservationists have

been active in New Orleans since before the World War I but have selectively chosen their battles. The decades immediately following World War II can be characterized as destructive for Tremé and productive for the city in terms of urban development. The construction of Municipal Auditorium in 1929 and the Theater for the Performing Arts (1971) created new public spaces for New Orleans mostly middle-class and white concert going crowd, public spaces less accessible to the Black population.

CHAPTER FIVE. ARMSTRONG PARK

The significance of music, jazz in particular, in the development of New Orleans' tourist industry is unquestionable. Jazz, however, is conspicuously absent from the modern built tourism landscape. During jazz's early years, it was regarded as a scourge to the city (Times Picayune 1918), but by the 1940s, New Orleans had changed, proclaiming the once demonized art form to be a New Orleans treasure. In her discussion of the role of music in the packaging of New Orleans tourism, Atkinson (1997) noted that instead of promoting jazz in many of the Black neighborhoods where it thrived, the city chose to support jazz piped through "safe cultural channels" such as staged performances, and passively experienced museums and archives. He further stated that in New Orleans' "Music is used to mark where revelry is permitted. Music serves as a signal that a space is open for occupation. Within the French Quarter, where the music stops, the tourist hesitates to venture." Jazz, however, is not highly visible in the relatively recent explosion of the tourist-oriented Quarterfront development since 1985. None of the developments between the convention center and the moonwalk, a riverfront promenade in the vicinity of Jackson Square, represent the city's musical heritage. Jazz, for the most part, is more or less to be encountered or experienced only in a few streets of the Quarter. Bourbon Street, for all its lore, offers little in the way of jazz. Tourists are just as likely to encounter popular dance music, blues, and Cajun or zydeco music.

The failure of New Orleans to recognize the importance of its cultural resources, such as jazz, is directly related to the city's attitude toward economic development, its political and demographic constitution, and its economy. As this chapter documents the evolution of the cultural center project into Armstrong Park, it reveals how public spaces are developed differently under those changing social, political, and economic conditions.

This chapter examines the two-decade effort to construct Louis Armstrong Park. The policies, programs, and politics of the government officials and business leaders should, according to contemporary urban political economic theory, show a trend toward privatization. Furthermore, following the development of other downtown projects will aid in determining whether or not, or to what extent, the eventual failure of plans to privatize Armstrong Park was due to either the lack of development capital, or the concentration of capital in other areas.

For the greater part of this century, the city, often in tandem with private developers, has sought to create a public landscape oriented toward performance art and entertainment in the area that is now Armstrong Park. The Lincoln Center-styled incarnation of the cultural center never materialized, but the plans to develop the cleared section of Treme did not end. True to its history, the project would lay dormant until the next infusion of capital or creative development concept. Unfortunately, the next inspiration for the development of the Cultural Center was the death of Louis Armstrong on July

6, 1971. Shortly after Armstrong's death, Mayor Landrieu assembled "The Citizens Committee for a Memorial to Louis Armstrong" to decide on a proper tribute to the life of Louis Armstrong. On June 30, 1973, the committee, co-chaired by then Juvenile Court Judge, and future mayor Ernest "Dutch" Morial recommended that a park named in Armstrong's honor be constructed in the vacant lot surrounding the Municipal Auditorium and the "cultural center" (as the Theater for the Performing Arts was then known). The idea was to create a park, with input from the relevant parties, in the mold of earlier New Orleans outdoor music venues and that was consistent with the musical heritage of the surrounding area (Katz 1972; Times Picayune 1972). At the time, neither cost of construction nor the source of funding was known. Interestingly, Mayor Landrieu saw the proposed park as falling in line with other development plans scheduled for downtown including: the New Orleans Center shopping plaza and Hyatt Regency Hotel across from the Super Dome, the federal complex at Lafayette Square, the Pan-American Life building, the Spanish Plaza, the development of Jackson Brewery, and the development of air rights over the river front (*Times-Picayune*, 1972). The projects that Landrieu spoke of represent a shift in the national economic development trends and local urban development priorities.

Here, the Armstrong Park project is reviewed with emphasis given to the opposition to the efforts to privatize Armstrong Park in the 1980s. The park was fought first by middle - class "theater goers," and then by Tremé activists and

New Orleans' African American community. Before discussing the specifics of the planning process, an overview of New Orleans' 1970s and 1980s economy and development strategy is presented.

During the early 1970s, large-scale federal projects such as urban renewal and the Interstate Highway Program ceased to be major factors in the rearrangement of urban landscapes, including New Orleans. In lieu of those federally administered projects, urban development occurred via private financing, the local administration of federal funds, and various public-private initiatives. The most obvious example of this phenomenon is the decentralization of public housing. In addition to the perceived failing of large - scale federal development projects, the new development projects were driven by the changing structure of the larger economy. Foreign competition, cheaper overseas labor markets, and outmoded U.S. production techniques ushered in the decline of America's manufacturing and industrial base. Louisiana's post - war economy however was based primarily on the oil and gas industry, the port of New Orleans, and to a lesser extent tourism. Over dependence on the petroleum industry tied the city's economy more strongly to the price of oil than the industrial factors influencing the rest of the country's economy. The petrochemical industry's contribution to the local job market extended to fields not directly tied to the production of oil. As a result, when high oil prices crippled much of the U.S. economy during the 1970s, New Orleans enjoyed a boom. Conversely, the country's economic recovery in the 1980s was

accompanied by a fall in oil prices that pushed New Orleans' employment rate into double digits.

Several local urban scholars point to late 1960s and early 1970s development decisions as the start of the present period of urban change in New Orleans. The period is characterized by the city's implementation of development policies termed management or corporate centered growth that concentrated on the core of the downtown/riverfront area. Key elements of this policy included increasing the importance of the private sector in economic development decisions, limiting the role of the public sector to the provision of resources and infrastructure, and attracting the appropriate services and sectors to the area of development. The results of these changing priorities are seen as early as the 1970s in the buildings projects mentioned by Landrieu above. There is some disagreement among New Orleans urban scholars about which of two factors, the defeat of the expressway or the decision to build the superdome, spurred New Orleans growth during that period.

The defeat of the proposed riverfront expressway in 1966 is often listed as the event that most singularly impacted the development of New Orleans' riverfront landscape. Had the expressway succeeded, projects currently along the riverfront would not have been possible. Included in that list of projects, are the World's Fair and its spinoffs, the Ernest Morial Convention Center and River Walk Mall, The Jackson Brewery shopping center, the Aquarium of the Americas, the Imax Theater, and Woldenberg Park. The expressway's defeat is

also significant because it galvanized New Orleans' vocal preservationists, and forced New Orleans' pro-growth proponents to switch to a managed growth or corporate centered strategy of development.

Smith and Keller (1983) regard the construction of the Superdome as the first of two important battles that followed the defeat of the Expressway. They tout the Superdome as a magnet for hotel construction, for increases in out of state tourism, and as presenting a justification for CBD development. The Superdome, however, located back o'town, may not be very important for the development of the riverfront.

Lauria (1994) suggested that the construction of the Hilton Hotel (completed in 1977) paved the way for later riverfront projects by being "the first non-maritime use of CBD riverfront land." The project required the developers to obtain access to the Poydras Street wharf from the Port Authority (111). The significance of gaining access to the riverfront as a factor in New Orleans' urban change can not be overstated, especially given the importance of port functions and the autonomy of the port and levee authorities. A mistake is made though, separating the development events before the 1970s, such as the ITM, from those afterward. The division understandably eases analysis by limiting the time frame but negates the events crucial for this study's emphasis on both the present and evolutionary aspects of the city's policy toward urban development and public spaces. This study suggests that the greater part of the 20th century is a relevant period of analysis for urban change.

Whether the Superdome or the canceled expressway led the way for the development of the 1970s and 1980s is less important than the fact of the development itself and how it was carried out. By 1970, New Orleans was already experiencing a wave of new developments. Realizing the need to capitalize on those developments without losing its unique landscape, the City of New Orleans and the Chamber of Commerce joined efforts and commissioned a study to create guidelines for growth. The effort resulted in the creation and adoption of a Growth Management Program (GMP) in 1975. The program outlined eleven goals that sought to concentrate development in areas of high intensity usage while providing protection for the city's historic structures and neighborhood. The first three listed below summarize the direction which city officials and business leaders envisioned for the development of downtown. The third of these policies is arguably the most influential in the development of New Orleans' downtown landscape, namely because any changes in the riverfront would involve the consent of New Orleans Levee Board and Port Authority.

1) Strengthen downtown New Orleans as the administrative, office, retail and entertainment center of the region. Major new development should be concentrated in multi-purpose centers at Poydras Street, the riverfront and the Superdome area. All major commercial development should be located in the heart of the CBD.

2) Promote growth while preserving historic continuity. New developments, in areas with historic buildings, should relate architecturally to the existing buildings to achieve this goal. When possible, historic buildings should relate architecturally to

the existing buildings should be renovated and put to use. All demolition of such buildings must be halted.

3) 'Return to the Riverfront'. Maritime functions along the CBD riverfront should be phased out as soon as possible to allow new development. Pedestrian use should be encouraged along the riverfront and developments should not block public access and view. (Brooks and Young, 1993 pg. 255).

The teeth of the program came from the recommended creation of historic districts, zoning legislation, and a special tax district.

Almost immediately after the adoption of the GMP, the city conceived of an "incentive zoning program" to temper the intensity of CBD construction by encouraging developers to include pedestrian amenities in new constructions. The taxing district, the Downtown Development District (DDD), was approved in 1975. By charging a tax on CBD properties, the DDD is able to fund its services and capital projects in addition to what the city provides. The historic district recommendation was satisfied in 1976 with the creation of the Historic District Landmark Commission. Historic districts in New Orleans fall under the jurisdiction of the Historic District Landmark Commission (HDLC), a city agency empowered by a 1976 ordinance to "regulate, preserve, and protect historic districts and landmarks within the city of New Orleans." The purpose of the HDLC, as reads the enabling legislation is to:

Promote historic districts and landmarks for the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation, protection and regulation of buildings, sites, monuments, structures, and area of historic interest or importance within the City of New Orleans; to safeguard the heritage of the city by preserving and regulating historic landmarks and districts which reflect elements of its cultural, social,

economic, political, and architectural history; to preserve and enhance the environmental quality of neighborhoods; to strengthen the City's economic base by the stimulation of the tourist industry; to establish and improve property values; to foster economic development; and manage growth

Within the guidelines of the GMP, and behind an oil-fueled economy, New Orleans witnessed a commercial building boom marked by increases in office space and hotel rooms.

Of these projects undertaken in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there can be little doubt as to which generated the most lasting results. That project was the 1984 World's Fair. Forecast to be a financial disaster, the Fair proved otherwise; spin-off developments from the Fair have been welcome additions to the downtown tourist landscape. When the Fair closed in 1984, the former site was left with enormous development potential. In preparations to host the Fair, the city had transformed nearly 80 acres of river front land, mainly docks and warehouses, into improved fairgrounds. After the Fair, conversion of the existing facilities was almost immediate, with the Fair's main building being converted into the New Orleans' Convention Center. After two expansions, New Orleans' Ernest Morial Convention Center is now the second largest such facility in the country, and can claim to be the country's largest convention space under one roof. Potential (space) exists for a third expansion, which would push the New Orleans Convention Center into the top spot (Eggler 1999). Another direct spin-off from the World's Fair was the Riverwalk mall, a festival marketplace shopping center built in 1986 by the renowned mall

developer, Rouse Company. Indirectly, the Fair transformed the warehouse district into an upscale residential and art district, and spawned the construction of several hotels. The most recent additions to the riverfront include a new streetcar line, Woldenberg Park (1988) and the Aquarium of the Americas (1990).

While Brooks and Young (1984) adequately explained how the City of New Orleans' government and business communities were able to unite in an effort to guide the increasing development of the 1980s, little attention was given to the city's success in securing federal development dollars. Mumphrey and Moomau's (1984) description and analysis of New Orleans' early effort at developing economic development programs focuses on New Orleans' use of funds from U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA). The idea was to use the EDA to finance public projects being considered at the time. The new projects differed from public works projects of the past in that their benefits were to reach beyond the immediate benefit of job creation and instead focus on the stimulation of future tourism. Through early EDA plans and strategies that were eventually collapsed into an Economic Development Strategy (EDS), the city identified projects for funding. The EDS identified three goals for its New Orleans efforts: 1) improving the skill and education of the workforce, 2) developing manufacturing in Eastern New Orleans, and 3) encouraging and fostering the expansion of New Orleans' business sector. The economic programs most relevant to development of

downtown New Orleans were Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG), used for large-scale projects and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), EDA and Small Business Administration (SBA) funds intended for small-to-medium sized business (105).

Guiding the UDAG program were the concepts of targeting, leveraging, and partnerships. The targeting concept basically refers to the competitive, objective process of determining a city's suitability for to receive funding. The concept of leveraging refers to the process of the UDAG generating private sector investment. Key to the UDAG program is the commitment from the private sector to financial. The third concept for UDAG is the establishment of partnerships between the federal government and state and local governments, the private sector and neighborhood residents. One of the ways partnerships are built into the UDAG program is that the decision to participate in the program are made locally after dialog between governmental agencies and neighborhood organizations.

The Community Development Block Grant program, in comparison, was created in 1974 to aid the revitalization of distressed communities through the funding of improvement and creation physical infrastructure, public service and facilities, housing renovation and economic development. Unlike the UDAG program, CDBG funds are intended to benefit low and middle income people. Furthermore, CDBG funds were distributed by the state on a city basis instead of on a project - by - project basis as with UDAG grants. HUD's Section 108

loan program allows an eligible city to borrow three times the amount of its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement.

Black Politics

The civil rights gains made by Blacks in the 1960s, coupled with percentage increases of urban Black populations, including New Orleans, resulted in newfound political power. It is unclear, however, whether these gains affected the plight of Armstrong Park. The following section discusses, albeit briefly, the political gains made by Blacks in New Orleans over the past forty years and then speculates on their impact on the city's Black cultural politics.

Within the city limits of New Orleans, between 1960 and 1990, as the total population declined and whites moved to the suburbs, the proportion of registered Black voters increased dramatically. These changes resulted in the election of increasingly racially liberal white mayors, and eventually Black mayors and City Councils dominated by Blacks. Huey Perry's chapter in *Racial Politics in American Cities* (1997) gauges how the political enfranchisement of Blacks affected governmental actions and policies in New Orleans and Birmingham. He concluded that in the areas of public sector activity, police treatment of citizens, municipal employment, executive employment and minority business assistance, Black political enfranchisement has positively affected governmental policies. The one exception is assistance to minority business. Potentially important for this study is the increase in Blacks to

executive government positions. As Perry noted, even though executive government positions are few, they have potential to make policy decisions affecting Black communities (193).

The study of New Orleans racial politics and political regimes by Lauria, Whelan, and Young (1994) summarizes how the policies of New Orleans' modern political regimes are based largely on the political economy. It reveals how the availability of federal monies in the administration of Maurice "Moon" Landrieu and the first term of Ernest "Dutch" Morial permitted the mayors to promote development without courting the business community. The disappearance of federal money in the early 1980s however, highlighted the need for cooperation between the Office of the Mayor and corporate interests. During the administration of New Orleans' second Black mayor, Sidney Barthelemy, the city's path was characterized by the vision of the "New Corporate Leadership." If the events surrounding Armstrong Park are placed into this urban regime equation, the city's reluctance to fund the park and its effort to secure private management make sense. The city's efforts can be viewed as attempting to seduce the local residents (electorate) with "promises of trickle-down jobs fostered by a corporate-led pro-growth coalition." (18)

While Whelan, Young and Lauria accurately identified the process in the 1980s and early 1990s, they also foresaw the possibility of the progressive regime to reappear if President Bill Clinton was able to re-infuse New Orleans with federal money. In their own words "it is possible for equity oriented Black

politicians (possibly in Dutch Morial's mode) could persuade the Black electorate to support a more progressive regime (18)." In this case, a progressive regime was one that would allow the concerns of lower and middle-income groups to be heard and supported over the concerns of corporate and conservatives. The election of Dutch Morial's son, Marc, as mayor in 1994 satisfied the criterion of a Morial molded mayor to institute progressive policies, but the election of moderate Democratic president in Bill Clinton, and a conservative Congress limited the federal funding available to cities. Still, as a popular Marc Morial concludes his second term, the Office of the Mayor is once again viewed as a powerful agent in guiding the direction of the city.

It should be noted that the role played by New Orleans' Black leadership in the plight of Armstrong Park has been a tacit question from the outset of this research, especially considering their Creole heritage. But Lauria has suggested that using Creole heritage to group the Morials and Barthelemy in terms of their political policy is ineffective. The economy, personality traits, and opposition prove to be at least as important as factors.

Presently there is no hard information to suggest the election of Black, as opposed to White mayors had any particular influence on the Armstrong Park debate. A case can be made though, that intra-Creole political antagonisms did effect the development process. The case in point is the strained relationship of New Orleans' first Black Mayor, Ernest "Dutch" Morial, and his Creole successor Sidney Barthelemy. The animosity between these

two became apparent in the Armstrong Park debate in 1983, when the city decided to reject the bid of the Armstrong Park Corporation for Phase II development of the park. Early on, Barthelemy, then a councilman, rejected the idea, only to support the proposal for Tivoli Armstrong Park later in the decade. Although neither Barthelemy nor Morial are from Tremé, the roots of this conflict are relevant to this study because it is related to the Creole protest tradition of Tremé/Seventh Ward.

In Hirsch's account of modern Black politics in New Orleans, the roots of the Morial/Barthelemy are traced back to the 1960s and the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The act spurred the creation of a new set of political organizations aimed at placing Blacks in local legislative races. Hirsch made the point that the first Black political organizations, COUP and SOUL were ideologically aligned with New Orleans' historically divergent communities. SOUL (Southern Organization for Unified Leadership), based downtown, was directly linked to CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and adopted its militant outlook. COUP (Community Organization for Urban Politics), on the other hand, "brought together young, Black professionals who represented the 'assimilationists' and conservative tendencies found in that downtown (7th Ward) Creole stronghold." (290) Another influential Black political group in New Orleans is the uptown based organization, BOLD (Black Organization of Political Leadership).

Moon Landrieu, who became mayor at a time of increased white flight to the suburbs, cultivated Black leaders, facilitated by the abundance of federal funds for poverty programs -- all of which needed leaders. Landrieu was able to successfully place leaders of SOUL (Sherman Coplin, Don Hubbard, Edwin Lombard), BOLD (Jim Singleton, Dorothy Mae Taylor), COUP and the Urban League (Sidney Barthelmy, Henry Braden, Robert Tucker) into new programs (298). Their organizations, in turn, followed the Landrieu line.

The close of Landrieu's two-termed tenure forced SOUL, BOLD, and COUP to position themselves for the next administration. The three organizations chose sides with COUP offering weak support for Morial, who had spent much of the 1970s out of the political spotlight due to his position as an appellate court judge. According to Hirsch, Braden and Morial had a ongoing rivalry that arose from their shared 7th Ward origins. Within a year of Morial's election the police raided the New Orleans Regional Service Center, detaining forty-three COUP members. COUP leadership, including Barthelmy and Braden, called the raid politically and personally motivated. For the next eight years Morial and COUP maintained what Hirsch called "a virtual political war" which was often played out between councilman Sidney Barthelmy and Morial. Whelan commented that (1984) Morial was hounded by a group of city council member referred to as the "Gang of five. " The group was composed of Barthelmy and Boissiere of COUP and three white councilmen. The effects of

the Barthelemy - Morial conflict on the attempts to privatize Armstrong Park are discussed later in the chapter.

In sum, New Orleans witnessed an explosion of downtown (CBD and Quarter) development in the 1970s and 1980s driven by the oil boom, federal funds, and a change of attitude. Another important factor was the gradual demographic shift, resulting from white flight that led to a Black majority and subsequently the election of Black political officials. It was in this context that the city of New Orleans and developers built Armstrong Park. After working through the details of the construction and development process, this study will follow how local opposition and the development economy influenced the Armstrong Park project.

Armstrong Park - Phase 1

The Armstrong Park project gained momentum in April 1973. Early in the month the Citizen's Committee announced the selection of the heralded San Francisco urban design firm, Lawrence Halprin and Associates, as the planners for Armstrong Park. One of Halprin's most noted accomplishments is San Francisco's Giradelli Square. Under the contract, Halprin would receive \$50,000 for their services. The more important event in April was the announcement of a \$1 million grant from HUD for sight improvements to the park. Late in the summer of 1973, Halprin unveiled its design concept to City Hall and to the public. The planetarium and museum of the cultural center plan were replaced by restaurants, clubs, gardens, a casino, and a lake. The

design would come under fire from several groups. Eventually the city terminated the Halprin contract. Under the direction of Robin Riley, Armstrong Park was scheduled to be completed in two phases, the first of which included the completion of the lagoon, "renovations to the jazz complex," Congo Square, the fence, parking, and general landscaping. The second phase would seek to incorporate the private sector.

Armstrong Park - Phase 2

A completed Armstrong Park opened on April 15, 1980, with a dedication celebration fitting for the highly anticipated and controversial, \$10 million, 8-year project. The city that needs little excuse to party "pulled out all the stops" for the dedication of Louis Armstrong Park. Morial's Executive Assistant Dr. Anthony Mumphy referred to the production as "the greatest free show on earth". The scheduled performers included international jazz stars such as Count Basie and his Orchestra, Dave Brubeck, and Lionel Hampton. Local stars included Al Hirt, Dave Bartholomew, and Dejan's Olympia Brass Band. Also on hand were numerous gospel choirs, African dance troops, jazz bands, Mardi Gras Indians, and second line clubs. In addition to performers, the dedication featured slide shows, films and photographic exhibits (Times Picayune, 1980, 1980a).

Behind the scenes, the city was preparing for Phase II of Armstrong Park development. In the second week preceding the dedication, Mumphy announced that the city had enough money to operate the park for a year with

cleanup and security, as a passive park. He also stated that two firms would conduct a \$90,000 study to determine the park's future management options and functions (Times Picayune, 1980). In other words, the study would determine how best to make Armstrong Park financially profitable or at least self-sufficient. The 1980s witnessed Ernest "Dutch" Morial and Sidney Barthelemy entertain several proposals to develop Armstrong Park an attempts to complete Phase II of the Armstrong Park proposal. In 1982, the city presented the bid proposal form that explained among other thing, the cultural and economic development concepts of Phase II development (City of New Orleans 1982). Three of the proposal submitted stand out as significant, those of Tommy Walker Spectaculars (TWS), the Armstrong Park Corporation, and lastly, that of the Tivoli International Corporation.

A 1981 *Times-Picayune* article introduce TWS as one of the first bidders for the development job. Although the TWS proposal never gained the city's endorsement, Tommy Walker Spectaculars deserves credit as the first thouroughly researched and well prepared proposal. The company's decision to bid for the development of Armstrong Park was decided through a feasibility study prepared by the Harrison Price Company of California (1982). The process included inventorying present and projected facilities and physical land, as well as considering the operating cost of revenues for operating the park for the previous years.

By way of entertainment, TWS planned a mix of daytime commercial recreation and nighttime entertainment. Specific activities included daily jazz funerals, "festival days," concerts, parades, "strolling performers," and nightly fireworks. In addition to on-site restaurants and clubs, the report suggested a 350-room hotel overlooking Congo Square. The project's \$21 million development cost and yearly operating budget would be financed by a "nominal gate charge" (Harrison Price Company 1982). As it happened, TWS lost out to the bid of the Armstrong Park Corporation (APC). Those who follow local politics will find it interesting that another loser in the process was "Creative Entertainment Management Association" run by Louis Charbonet, a former TCIA member and longtime politician (Leser 1983).

Armstrong Park Corporation

On February 24, 1983, after more than a year of considering Phase II development proposals, Mayor Dutch Morial selected the bid of the Armstrong Park Corporation (a local company), to develop and manage the park. Their \$96 million proposal included three hotels, with bars and restaurants. The hotels, priced at \$59 million, distinguished the Armstrong Park Corporation's bid from the other bids of \$21 million and \$14 million respectively (Figure 19). After an intense debate involving the Tremé community and City Council, the Armstrong Park Corporation's plan was dropped (Armstrong Park Corporation 1983; Dansker and Drew 1983). The City Council's rejection of the Armstrong Park Corporation's proposal marked the end of the "first round" of Phase II

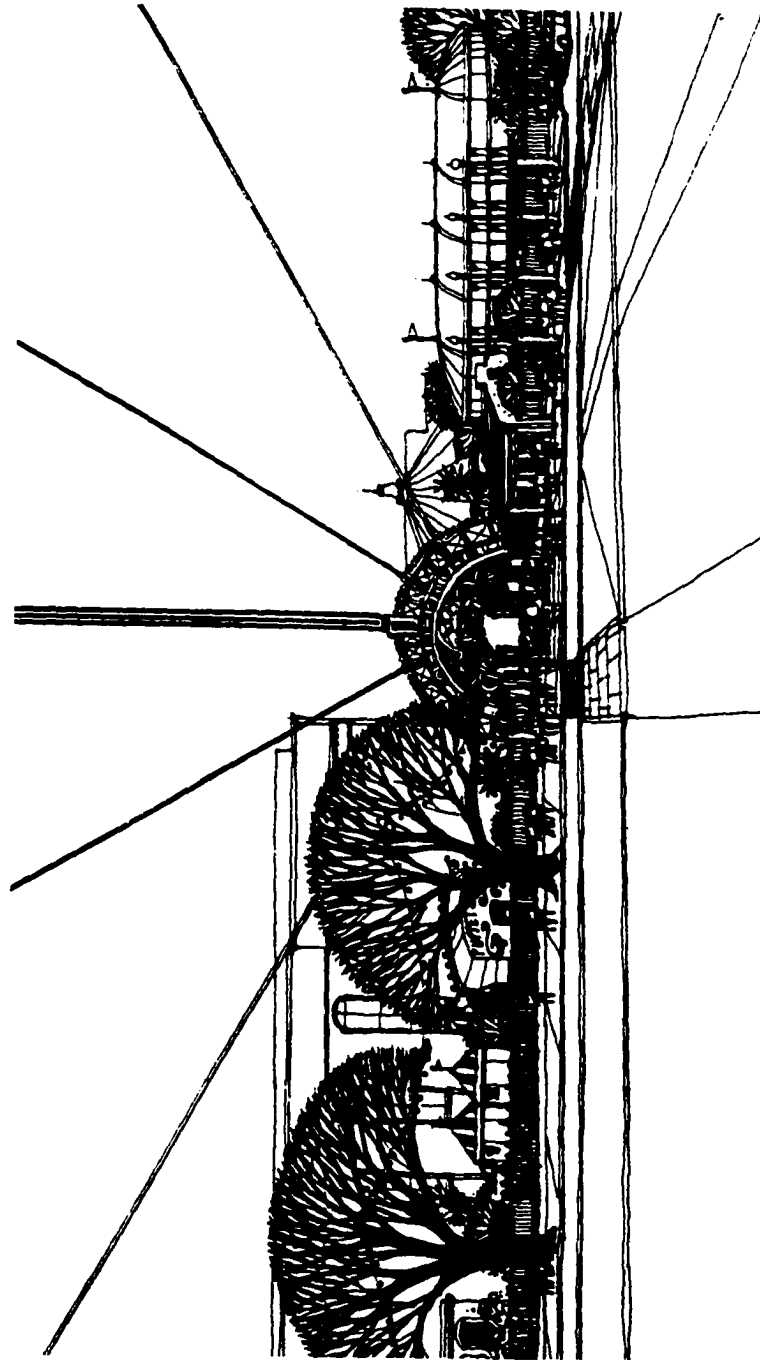


Figure 19. Plate from Armstrong Park Corporation's
Master plan for Armstrong Park

development proposals. Plans would continue to be submitted for Park development well into the next decade. In 1984, Kapelow returned with a less intrusive plan that the city decided not to support. Local lawyer David Fine headed a group of investors who also submitted a smaller scale proposal in 1984. Unlike that of Armstrong Park Corporation, Fine's proposal (\$5million) would focus specifically on the promotion and preservation of jazz. Absent from the plan were the hotels, restaurants and shops that doomed the APC plan as too intensive. Both plans failed after the Morial administration refused its support. (Donze 1984a, 1984b) The grand-scale plans returned in 1987 when another local developer announced a \$100 million dollar entertainment center (Donze 1989). By that time, however, the city was looking toward another proposal to save Armstrong Park.

Tivoli Revisited

With the election of Sidney Barthelemy as Mayor of New Orleans in 1986, the complexion of the Phase II development process of Armstrong Park changed. As a City Councilman, Barthelemy was instrumental in defeating the Armstrong Park Corporation's proposal. In the spring of 1987, Barthelemy formed The Armstrong Park Committee, a group of government, business, and community leaders to address the issue of Louis Armstrong Park. In an effort to include the community in the planning process, activists and Ronald Chisolm were named as co-chairs of the committee. As stated, the goal of the park was to attract people and create jobs without altering the community's character

(Donze 1987). At the time, Armstrong Park was facing difficult times. The murder of a tourist in the park in January 1987 led the superintendent of New Orleans' Park and Parkways Commission to call for the park's closure. In October of 1987, after a three-and-a-half-year hiatus from seriously entertaining Armstrong Park development plans, the city announced that the Tivoli Corporation was being sought to complete the project. After initial discussions, the city sent a delegation to Copenhagen, led by Barthelemy. The Treme Community Improvement Association's (TCIA) Ronald Chisolm also made the trip (Warner 1987).

Armstrong Tivoli Park, as it would be called, was designated "The city's top priority economic development project in the area of tourism" (City of New Orleans 1989). Modeled after Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, Denmark, the park would include a mix of amusements, attractions, concerts, restaurants and gardens. The park would target both tourists and natives. In Armstrong Tivoli Park's master plan, Tivoli International envisioned a paid admission facility dotted with a variety of family amusements, pavilions, bandstands, gardens and an international restaurant (Figure 20)(Tivoli 9). To accommodate the planned attractions, the master plan suggested drastic changes in the parks' physical design. Only Municipal Auditorium, the Theater for the Performing Arts, Congo Square and the Jazz complex would have remained the same. As a paid admission facility, the park would remain fenced, but was allowed to hold free events inside.

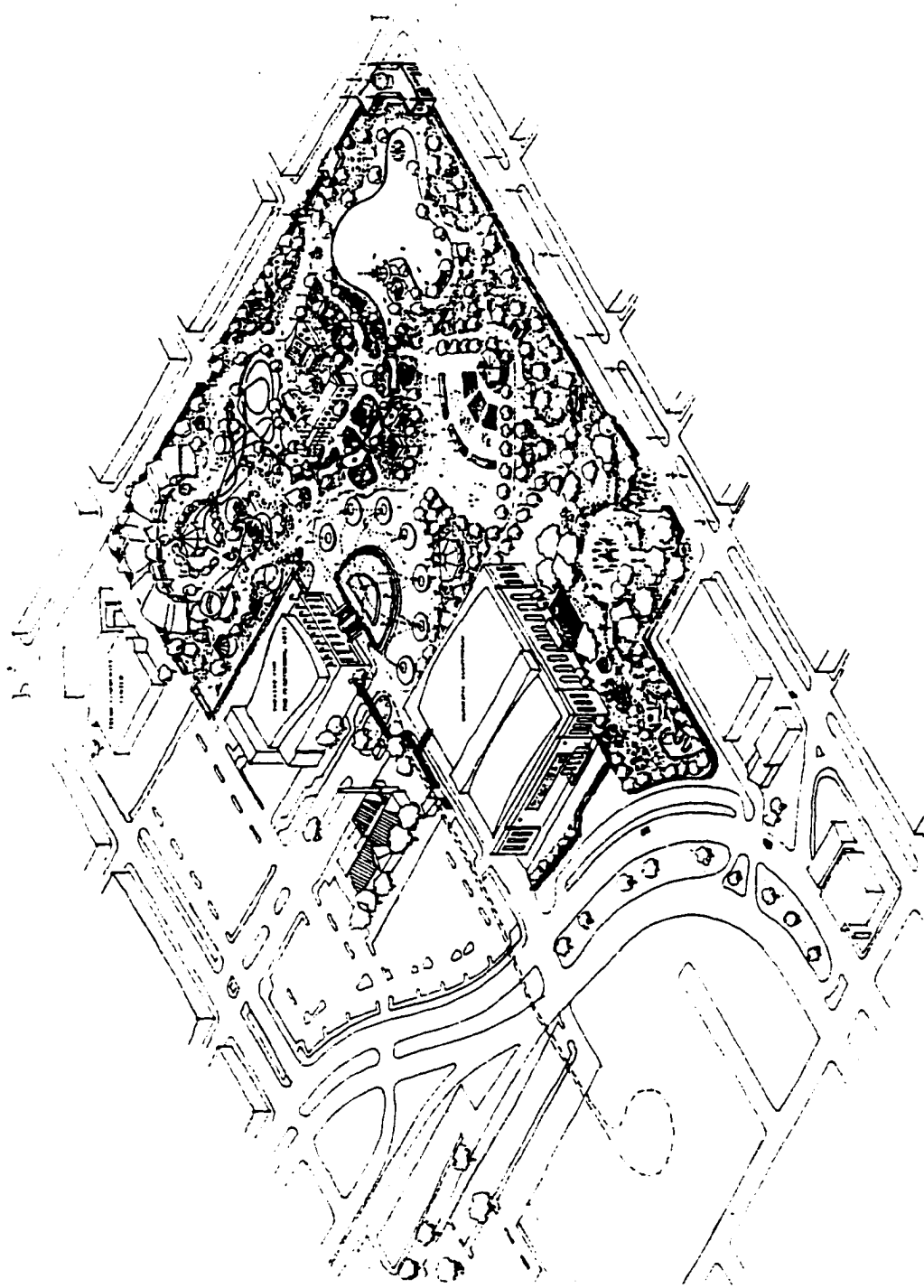


Figure 20. Design for Armstrong Tivoli Park

The city's strategic funding strategy for the Tivoli project was presented as an economically feasible endeavor, conservatively priced at \$56 million. The economic justification was bolstered by the notions that the park would provide "first class establishments" for jazz, increase international tourism, and change the city's adult-only perception. The park was also presented as a future employer of Tremé neighborhood residents in occupations ranging from construction workers, to street musicians and vendors. Financing for the \$56 million project was broken down into short-term, intermediate, and long-term strategies. In the short-term, funding was projected to come from a \$20 million state commitment, with the remaining \$36 million coming from the HUD Section 108 loan guarantee program. Intermediate funding would come from the issuance of public stock. Lastly, long-term funds for profitable businesses would come from the private sector (Economic Consulting Services). Just as in the case of the APC, the Tivoli plan failed in large part due to Tremé community opposition. The following section discusses the ways in which the Tremé community chose to confront the threats and intrusions into its public and residential spaces. Also considered are the factors that both hindered and empowered the community throughout the process. The ultimate goal is to follow the successful opposition to the development efforts. This section also discusses opposition to the development of Armstrong Park from middle-class New Orleans and the city council.

Armstrong Park - Opposition

Tremé's history of community-based self-help organizations and political activism, such as mentioned in the fourth chapter, was of little use in fighting the outside development efforts of the 1950s and 1960s. By the time preparations were being made to construct the elevated interstate over Claiborne Avenue and to construct the Cultural Center, the radical Creoles had long vacated Tremé and were residing in, or more correctly, identifying with, the Seventh Ward. At the time, politically active Blacks were more concerned with securing their civil rights than fighting to save a deteriorating neighborhood. As a result, Interstate-10 was constructed with little, if any opposition. This quote from a Claiborne Avenue businessman typifies the hopelessness of the community in the face of the interstate, "You can't fight things like that. It was modernization that made this a ghetto and nothing we could do would have made a bit of difference." (*Times-Picayune* 1984)

The construction of the I-10 elevated expressway spurred action by the Tambourine and Fan Club, a Black cultural organization serving the Sixth and Seventh Wards. In 1970, the club began a dialog with the City of New Orleans, including the Office of the Mayor and the Planning Commission concerning revitalization and development for an area dubbed the "Claiborne Corridor." The club sought to reinvigorate the area adversely effected by the construction of I-10 only a couple of years earlier. Louisiana Department of Highway funds were also made available for a feasibility study of "alternate plans for

developing the public land underneath and adjacent to the I-10 corridor.” In 1973, the State authorized the Claiborne Avenue Design Team (CADT) to begin the study. Three years later, the CADT, a group comprised principally of engineers, and social scientists, but also activists, scholars, and other citizens, presented the Claiborne Avenue Interstate -10 Multi-Use Study. The study included neighborhood histories and other points of historical interests for the area between Poydras, Peoples, Galvez, and Rampart/St. Claude to highlight the damage to the area and to justify funding for improvements.

The CADT study proposed an \$80 million redevelopment project that included a realignment of Claiborne Avenue, changes to the existing ramps, and land acquisition, in addition to the creation of community facilities and beautification projects. The study also presented two less intensive alternatives, one for \$72 million and another proposing mostly beautification and recreation for \$10 million.

The earliest citizen opposition to the Cultural Center came from the Tremé Community Improvement Association (TCIA). The organization grew from a neighborhood cleanup campaign in 1969 and evolved to address unemployment and blight in Tremé. Most notably, the TCIA is the organization that gave voice to the perceived injustices suffered by the Tremé community. The TCIA was co-founded by James Hayes and Ron Chisolm, individuals who remained outspoken activists in the Tremé Neighborhood for nearly 25 years. Another member of the TCIA at the time was State Representative Louis

Charbonnet. In addition to being a fixture in the local political scene throughout the next thirty years, Charbonnet would also submit an unsuccessful bid for the Phase II development of Armstrong Park.

In 1972, the TCIA demanded 50 percent of the new jobs from the cultural center (which when completed would be called Theater for the Performing Arts). The jobs would serve as reparations of sorts for the displaced residents. Central to the TCIA's request was a claim that New Orleans' relocation agency was negligent in their federally funded effort to relocate and compensate the 178 families displaced for the cultural center project. The city defended the claim with the assertion that residents in the area "jumped the gun" in moving, and that bureaucratic red tape slowed their efforts. The TCIA was also troubled with the loss of historic landmarks, voting strength, and the possibility of further displacement of the area's tenant-based population due to increasing rent and or changing land use (Ott 1972a). Soon after the TCIA's demand for jobs, local and state officials responded with pledges to tap available development funds for physical improvements for the area, and to assist residents in their fight against zoning changes (Ott 1972b).

The announcement that the cultural center would become the home of a memorial park for Louis Armstrong was well received by the Tremé community.

A landscaped open space was seen as better than the cleared eight blocks left over from the demolition and failed cultural center project. The strongest initial opposition to Armstrong Park came not from Tremé residents, but patrons of

New Orleans cultural arts, local architects and planners, and a city council member. The early opposition is introduced in a 1973 *Times-Picayune* article (Lafourcade). Even before the first public meeting, the project was criticized as being shallow, and not authentic. The harshest criticism came from groups who had stood to benefit from the cultural center, namely educators, the Women's Auxiliary of the Chamber of Commerce, and the Junior League. They took issues with the Museum of Science and Industry being left out of Armstrong Park plans, and for the refusal of park planners to convert a school within the planned park boundaries to spared and converted for use as a school for the creative arts.

Tremé was less vocal, but not totally quiet. They began to express opposition that their community center, a component of the plan, would be built outside the park's boundaries. According to Lafourcade (1973), Tremé people felt that they, meaning Blacks, were being segregated, a charge Riley denied. The fence, he offered, was required for security purposes. Locating the community center within the fenced would only restrict its accessibility. The above opinions were all expressed before the first public meeting.

The first public meeting was basically a formal restatement of the above ideas. Those opposed to the Halprin plan made the following points: There needed to be provisions for onsite parking; elderly arts patrons require drive-up access to auditoriums; the planned admissions fee was not characteristic of a "people's park;" there were complaints about the omission of the science and

industry museum; the park would compete with downtown businesses; the abandonment of bond-funded cultural center plan betrays public trust; the proposal was Disneyland-ish, and it lacked children's activities.

Balancing the comments against the proposal were remarks by representatives from the New Orleans Jazz Club, the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation, the Orleans Parish School Board, Human Relations Committee, the Council of Arts for Children, New Orleans Recreation Department, and prominent community groups, Tremé Community Improvement Association, and the St. Mark's Community Center (Eggler 1993). For the next three years, park proponents battled with theater and opera goers over parking. The proposed plan for parking called for an \$8 million parking garage to be constructed near the completed park. The patrons however, demanded that 2,000 parking spaces be created onsite at the expense of at least some of the planned lagoons. To support their efforts, a coalition of arts patrons submitted 28,000 signatures in an effort to have an election called on the matter. When Armstrong Park opened, the arts patrons' parking spaces were within the park boundaries.

The Tremé community was fairly quiet during the early years of park construction; it basically supported the whole process. In 1974, however, the community unsuccessfully attempted to reject \$500,000 in federal community development funds meant to cover cost overruns on the Tremé Community Center. The group cited a distrust of Landrieu administration and fear that

accepting the money would result in a loss of control in the center. Most importantly, in rejecting the funds for the community center, Tremé representatives concluded that the neighborhood's primary concern was to establish a program to maintain and increase home ownership, particularly among Black residents.

Armstrong Park's completion in 1980 changed the nature of the opposition offered by the Tremé community. In the case of Interstate-10, the purpose of activism was to encourage the government to fund programs and improvements to make the "Claiborne Corridor" a livable space. The damage was largely done and the community could suffer little else by way of the improvements proposed. With the Phase II development of Armstrong Park additional insult could be added to the initial injury. The community's complaints could be categorized into four basic concerns; public access, minority businesses, management, and property values. The most consistent concern of the community throughout the process was the threat of exclusion from Armstrong Park based on a gate charge.

On the day of Armstrong Park's grand opening celebration, Tremé activists used the opening ceremony to utter their first public words of opposition to the park. Jim Hayes threatened, " I think this park's beautiful, and I think most of you do, but I want you to remember that because of this park, a lot of black people suffered, and they're still suffering . . . somebody's going to pay for all this suffering." (Pope 1980)

Similar remarks would be often heard throughout the next decade. Four months after the grand opening, and facing the inevitable phase II development process, Hayes comments became less caustic and more pragmatic. He is quoted as saying, "If the Park is closed to the community, there could be some serious consequences. What happens if the kids have to pay 25 cents to get in? That's what we are worried about" (Frick 1980).

The threat became real after Mayor "Dutch" Morial approved the development plans submitted by the Armstrong Park Corporation in the spring of 1983. The voices of opposition came from the Tremé community and from within the city council. First of all, the Tremé community was upset over the intensity of the plan and the City Council had questions concerning the selection process. To address Tremé's concerns, the City Council created two sub-committees to study the proposals submitted by the Armstrong Park Corporation and others. One of the committees was a ten-member group of local residents. The second was a five-member group composed of city officials. In its report to the city council, the citizen panel rejected all three proposals, citing a lack of community representation in park management, and of the intensity of proposed development (Times Picayune 1983). The basis for their decision was that the changes suggested would destroy the park as it existed. The committee refused to approve any plans that would make the park a paid admission facility and proposed changes outside of the cultural and architectural context of the neighborhood. In lieu of the proposed development

the citizens sub-committee suggested that a nonprofit corporation govern Armstrong Park. Interestingly, councilman Sidney Barthelemy, a member of the city subcommittee, supported the findings of the citizen's sub-committee. The City Committee, which submitted its report a month later, chose to ignore the community's concerns and supported the Armstrong Park Corporation's bid. The report's recommendations were seen as a compromise between private development and community control. First, the committee suggested that negotiations between the Armstrong Park Corporation and the city be conducted by an advisory committee comprised of two council members, a Tremé resident, a representative from the mayor's office, and a member of the original Armstrong Park development committee. The report suggests a plan of Armstrong Park that reduced the intensity of development. Sixty-percent of the park would contain restaurants, bars, performing areas, hotels and any other attractions. This fenced area would be approved as a paid admission section of the park. The remaining area would be less intensive and operate without an admission fee. A nonprofit corporation would advise the park in planning and management decisions.

The lone critic on the city committee was Councilman Sidney Barthelemy. Two months prior, Barthelemy supported the community committee's rejection of the development plans due to their destructive impact on the park. Barthelemy echoed his earlier sentiments, adding that "Tremé is somewhat of a low to middle income neighborhood and for people to have to

pay \$5, \$6, \$8 to get in – they would not participate at all (Dansker and Drew 1983).” Barthelemy’s position on Armstrong Park is ironic given his future enthusiasm for the proposed Tivoli development to be discussed later.

In the midst of the wrangling between the Mayor, the City Council (and its two committees), the city was sued twice. An activist group called the International Black Brain Banc sued to halt the transformation of Armstrong Park based on the threat posed to Congo Square, an African-American cultural site. Destruction of the site or the exclusion of African Americans was argued to be unconstitutional. Barthelemy’s dissenting opinion was shared by the City Council, which voted in December to reject the Armstrong Park Corporation’s proposal. The council cited community concerns and the lack of control over the park once a long-term lease was signed. Barthelemy commented, “You don’t create parks to make money. . . you create parks as a place for people to bring their families and have fun. We’re losing sight of that concept with Armstrong Park.” (Donze and Dansker 1983) The Council’s decision effectively ended the first round of Phase II development plans by disallowing the mayor to enter into a leasing agreement with the Armstrong Development Corporation. Closure was reached when the courts ruled that the council must be involved in long-term leasing agreements. While the city council was definitely involved with the bid and selection process, their decision was an unquestionable victory for the Tremé community.

The opposition to the Tivoli proposal by the Tremé community was more intense than for the Armstrong Park Corporation's proposal. Unlike the earlier proposal, the Tivoli proposal lacked the political antagonism between the Mayor and City Council that accompanied Armstrong Park Corporation's. This time, the mayor, city council and the state representatives were all in agreement. The unity of these politicians forced the opposition to become more assertive. Upon learning of the proposal, the opposition organized quickly. Although several groups made their opposition known, the main antagonists were the Tremé Community Improvement Association and The Committee to Save Armstrong Park. While the TCIA was a longstanding Tremé-based organization that drew its inspiration from Hayes and Chisolm, The Committee to Save Armstrong Park represented a higher profile group composed of activists from throughout the city.

The opposition to Tivoli Gardens is perhaps more easily understood if placed in the context of the political climate of the late 1980s and early 1990s—a period characterized by a brief increase in Black nationalist sentiments and a heightened interest in African identity. At the time many Blacks identified strongly with the plight of Nelson Mandela and apartheid-bound South Africa. The most visible marker of this brief activist period was in Black popular culture. Politically “conscious” rap groups such as Public Enemy, Arrested Development, X - Clan, the Jungle Brothers, KRS-1, and A Tribe Called Quest

enjoyed a period of success, while Spike Lee's *School Daze* and *Do the Right Thing* echoed similar ideas on the big screen. During this time African regalia and paraphernalia became so popular as to become faddish. In the fight against Tivoli, this movement manifested itself in an effort to retain access to Congo Square.

The community activists received inspiration early in the process when the lack of private investors forced the city to seek public funding. After briefly considering a publicly funded bond issue for the Tivoli project, the city decided to apply for a \$36 million HUD loan. Public hearings, mandated as part of the application process, provided a forum for the community to air their concerns.

While both the TCIA and the Committee to Save Armstrong Park opposed the development, the two groups didn't agree completely. Their differences, alluded to in a grass-roots community newspaper, are difficult to glean, but involve the TCIA's perceived allegiance with the city (Akinsiju 1990a). As mentioned earlier, Mayor Barthelmy named Jim Hayes and Ron Chisolm co-chairs of a committee created to find suitable development for Armstrong Park. Chisolm was also part of the delegation that traveled to Copenhagen to meet with the people of Tivoli. Newspaper accounts report that Hayes and Chisolm were cautiously open to the proposal. An unnamed community activist who claimed he participated in the fight against Tivoli offered that he disliked Hayes for nearly giving away Armstrong Park and the Congo Square to outsiders. A meeting between the TCIA and the Committee

to Save Armstrong Park was called to settle their disagreements and resulted in a march on City Hall for the first day of the annual Jazz and Heritage Festival.

In spring 1990, the actions of the anti-Tivoli activists began to yield results. The groups requested that the HUD application be dropped elicited responses of surprise from City Council person Johnny Johnson. Later in the month, the *Data News Weekly* (Akinsiju 1990b) reported the following comments from a memo from Johnson to fellow councilperson Dorothy Taylor in a confidential memo, "The history of Armstrong Park is truly the history of and it should have a dominant Afro-American theme - i.e. Gospel, R&B, Jazz Drama Hall of Fame. There is no historical dispute of Congo Square and the gathering of African Tribes and Slaves in celebration." The following month Tremé activists marched on City Hall. As the spring grew into summer, mayor Barthelemy became more pessimistic. It is unclear whether HUD denied the funding or Tivoli withdrew first, but the plans for Tivoli Armstrong Park died in the summer of 1990.

The argument over whether or not an amusement park was a use fitting for urban development funds provides a segue into a more specific discussion of the role of federal development programs in the development of Armstrong Park and Treme. The Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) program was created in 1977 to aid the economic recovery of severely distressed areas by stimulating economic development through large industrial, commercial and

housing projects. Since the beginning of the UDAG program, New Orleans has aggressively sought funding. According to Mumphrey, between 1978 and 1983, New Orleans received fifteen UDAG grants, a large number compared to the city's size. The downtown development projects that utilized UDAG funds included the Exhibition Hall/Sheraton Hotel project (\$14 million), the Riverwalk (\$8 million) and Canal Place (\$6 million). All three projects were initiated at the same time that the city was attempting to find a developer for Phase II of Armstrong Park. Without a selected developer and plan, UDAG funding was unobtainable. With the approval of the Tivoli plan the city sought out Community Development Block Grant (CBDG) funds.

Although it seems that downtown New Orleans' projects received favored consideration for federal development funds, particularly for those developments geared toward the worlds fair, that is not the case. Of the fifteen UDAG grants New Orleans received from the program's inception to 1983, several were directed for housing and industrial projects. More relevant for this study is the fact that Treme received considerable funds for improvements to the Claiborne Avenue area in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1981, the City of New Orleans, FHA, and State of Louisiana completed a joint-use project proposal with the intent of addressing the "landscaping and beautification" goals of the CADT's Plan 3 (City of New Orleans 1981). The city's study listed the Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG) along with the city's Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization program as major sources of funding

for the CADT's Plan 3 objectives. The CDBG program had been in place in the "Claiborne Avenue Corridor" area since 1975. In its six years in existence before the release of the city's 1981 study, the CDBG program contributed or allocated nearly \$7 million of improvements, including roadway improvements and housing rehabilitation. \$1.2 million had tentatively been earmarked for similar programs for the seventh year of the CDBG program. The study proposed an addition \$6.8 million dollars for the Claiborne Avenue area including: ongoing projects, median and sidewalk improvements, green space, pedestrian access, and recreation area improvements, and cemetery renovation. It is unknown how many of the proposed improvements were complete, but there are visible signs of improvements in the area of the elevated expressway. In addition, according to the 1984 *Times-Picayune*, the state spent \$4 million, administered by the city's Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization Unit, on landscaping and lighting.

The defeat of the Tivoli proposal ended Phase II efforts to privatize Armstrong Park. There was another development project, however, that typifies the aspirations of city and business leaders for the development potential of Armstrong Park, and the concerns of Tremé activists' about potential community disruptions. In 1991 the State of Louisiana passed legislation allowing riverboat gambling. In the following year Governor Edwin Edwards signed a bill providing for a single land-based casino in New Orleans. The casino operated by Harrah's Jazz was scheduled to open in the spring of

1996. Until completion of the construction of the permanent casino at the foot of Canal Street, it was decided that Municipal Auditorium would be refitted to operate for 18 months as a temporary casino.

The announcement of another large-scale development project for Armstrong Park raised the familiar questions from the equally familiar community activists and organizations, from Jim Hayes, Randy Mitchell, and Ronald Chisolm, and St. Mark's United Methodist Church. In addition to questions about preventing rising rents and displacement, and access to Armstrong Park, questions were also raised about whether or not the casino developers would provide jobs for Tremé residents and if there were any plans to invest in Tremé beyond the improvement of the auditorium (Eggler 1993).

As a result of their concerns, the Tremé community won several concessions from the City of New Orleans and Harrah's Jazz. Harrah's was required to provide skilled job training for workers from Treme and to create a Casino Relations Board to meet with concerned members of the Tremé community. In November 1994, a \$41 million renovation of Municipal Auditorium began. The casino opened on May 1, 1995. In the end, Tremé residents were awarded construction jobs, and in partnership with the Greater Tremé Consortium, a non-profit community development organization, Harrah's established a scholarship program for students in Tremé area high schools. The temporary casino also provided lighting and landscape improvements for Armstrong Park.

Any thoughts about the temporary casino being an economic engine were dashed when the casino earned only a third of its projected earnings in its first month of operation. Five months later, Harrah's closed the temporary casino, halted construction on the permanent casino, and filed for bankruptcy (Advocate 1995).

Conclusion

The 1970s were dynamic years for urban New Orleans. Some of the changes the city experienced were due to political and economic changes on the national and federal level. The passage of civil rights voting legislation increased political participation at the same time that interstate highway construction from the previous decades carried whites out of New Orleans to suburban Jefferson and St. Tammany parishes. The large-scale federally administered programs that produced those interstates and cleared "slums" gave way to locally administered programs that encouraged private enterprise and community development. In the city itself political traditionalism gave way to a development philosophy advocating tourist-oriented development while monitoring growth. One of the first undertakings under the changes of the 1970s was the creation of Louis Armstrong Park, a project that was very much a product of the development philosophy of the 1950s and 1960s.

The Phase I development of Armstrong Park reflected the project's dual origins in the conflict between the patrons who favored development of the park oriented toward the uses proposed for the cultural center versus those who

avored a more entertainment oriented park. Phase I also introduced the issues of access and exclusion from Armstrong Park. Those issues became magnified during the Phase II development process when the approved proposals included admissions fees. The decade-long opposition to the privatization of Armstrong Park carried out by Treme activists and African Americans in New Orleans was based on the displacement of Treme residents for the assembly center/cultural center project. In addition, activists were able to highlight Treme's architectural significance, and the historical importance of Treme as the locus of New Orleans Creole society, including Congo Square and the music and parading traditions associated with Treme area societies and organizations.

One of the most anticipated outcomes of this study was the determination of how development of Armstrong Park proceeded with regard to the economic trends and development plans of the 1970s and 1980s. Specifically, did Tremé activists alone rebuff Phase II development plans for Armstrong Park, or were activists aided by other factors, such as a financing bias in favor of the CBD and Riverfront development at the expense of development in distressed areas like Tremé?

The use of UDAG funds for the high profile development projects mentioned above certainly speak of the corporate bias suggested by Boyer and other scholars. The development of Armstrong Park certainly seems a project worthy of a UDAG grant. Had it not been for the objection of the Treme

community, UDAG funds might have been sought for the APC proposal. The same can be said for the use of CDBG funds for the Tivoli project.

Furthermore, as the activists stated during the Tivoli controversy, the use of development funds from programs like CDBG would be more most appropriate for neighborhood community development projects and not for the benefit of private corporations. So, even if a bias toward commercial development projects could be proven, it would not necessarily be seen as negative.

CHAPTER SIX. POST- PRIVATIZATION

The late 1980s brought another change in the perception of urban development. Nationally, and in New Orleans, local cultures and cultural traditions began to be viewed increasingly as valuable objects of study and the object of tourism efforts. In New Orleans, tourism had been seen as the long-term objective of urban development since the early 1970s, but with an emphasis on entertainment instead of cultural enrichment. At some point though, the city's politicians, both cultural and elected, began to lend their support to the plans for Armstrong Park similar to those envisioned by the Tremé community. It was not until 1999 when the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park (henceforth referred to as JAZZ) entered into a long term leasing agreement with the City of New Orleans that efforts to utilize Armstrong Park in a manner consistent with traditional New Orleans culture were realized.

This chapter examines the period that followed, and for a short time overlapped, the grand privatization plans of the 1980s in order to document the transition to more public uses for Armstrong Park. The first part of the chapter discusses the creation of JAZZ, prefaced by the National Park Service (NPS) efforts to make the park system more responsive to urban populations and sensitive to the importance of cultural and historical events, particularly those involving minority populations. The National Park Service's gradual realization of the significance of "place" in their concept of cultural resources and the application of place - based criterion in the creation of JAZZ is also discussed.

The second half of the chapter looks at the events outside the walls of Armstrong Park that were changing the look and constituency of Tremé.

National Park Service

In the discussion of the private development proposals for Armstrong Park and the local opposition to those plans, the years between, 1984 and 1987 were ones in which the city did not support any development plans. It was during this period that the Park Service first became involved in Armstrong Park. For a brief period in the early 1980s Jean Laffite National Historical Park and Preserve (referred to as JELA) leased and occupied a section of Armstrong Park's Jazz Complex. JELA's stint in Armstrong Park was short and relevant neither to African-Americans nor to Tremé's culture. In 1986 though, a cooperative agreement between Jean Lafitte and the City of New Orleans proposed to develop the "exterior area and the Jazz Complex in Armstrong Park" as a site dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of African American and New Orleans music and culture. Under the agreement, the Committee to Save Armstrong Park would represent the Tremé community and would serve as an advisory board to review projects and programming (City of New Orleans 1986)

According to a cooperative agreement draft, the deal was subject to the following stipulations: to expire five years from the date of signing, could be terminated by either party on sixty days notice, or if not renewed at the time of annual review. For reasons yet to be determined, the agreement was either

never signed or immediately terminated. What is known is that by April 1987, Mayor Barthelemy had created the Armstrong Park Committee to devise a development plan for Armstrong Park that would minimally impact Tremé (Donze 1987).

After the failure of the Armstrong Tivoli Park proposal in 1990, JELA's mission was called into question for being at once too diverse and not diverse enough. The *Times-Picayune* editorial page often served as a forum for these views. On March 26, 1990, *Times-Picayune* columnist Bruce Eggler lamented the "identity problem" faced by Louisiana's only National Park, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. The park's mandate of preserving and interpreting examples of the natural and historical resources of the Mississippi River delta region had, according to Eggler, created a situation where the proliferation of sub-units made Jean Lafitte difficult to conceptualize (1990). At the same time there were calls for JELA to make African-American culture part of its interpretive mission. Ulysses S. Ricard Jr., assistant archivist for the Amistad Research Center, added support by noting Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve's lack of a site dedicated to the experience of African-Americans in Louisiana. The Park Service, he claimed, had already opened or planned cultural centers in southern Louisiana dedicated to Cajun, Native American, Isleño, and European immigrant cultures (Eggler 1990a).

During the same period, culturally oriented plans for Armstrong Park resurfaced. Michael Smith, Director of New Orleans Urban Folk Life Society,

suggested in print that Armstrong Park be developed into a city park dedicated to "New Orleans Music and Cultural Heritage." In an article addressing complaints about music in the French Quarter, Smith (1990) suggests moving the "objectionable" street performances to Armstrong Park where "such problems would be considered a blessing, and the community in Tremé could receive a greater and more direct benefit." The potential economic windfall for the Tremé community was also expressed. Smith (1991) also developed his ideas for Armstrong Park into a formal plan. Although not a wholly unique concept, Smith's proposal was one of the first and best conceived by a person outside of the non "local" community. All of these ideas were eclipsed, or incorporated, in the idea of a national park dedicated to jazz.

Centennial Committee

The impetus for urban, cultural parks like JAZZ came from a 1972 symposium organized to celebrate the centennial of the National Park Service. A National Park Centennial Committee was formed to plan a commemorative celebration. In addition to the symposium, the committee then asked the Conservation Foundation (1972) to assess the issues and problems presently facing the Park Service and those foreseen for the future. The project enlisted the expertise of dozens of individuals from a wide range of professions and disciplines organized into task forces to address what were deemed common points of Park Service interest. Particularly relevant for this study were the "Urban Needs" and "Education and Culture" task forces. At the project's

conclusion the Conservation Foundation offered recommendation for the future of the Park Service in the form of four summary recommendations and 17 special recommendations meant to guide future Park Service policy. Of the recommendations, one each of the former and latter provided insight into the changes that the national Park Service would undergo leading to the creation of parks similar to JAZZ.

In reference to urban America, the report's recommendations included, but were not limited to, developing public transportation linkages between urban area's and parks, promoting minority park use through outreach programs; hiring minorities as Park Rangers and NPS professionals; structuring interpretive programs to reflect America's cultural diversity; developing Park experiences that differed from traditional urban and suburban recreation programs; and conducting sociological research to determine how better to accommodate urban residents (ibid., 13).

The most relevant specific policy topic was "The Historical and Cultural Mission." It reasoned that in an under-funded system, the historical/cultural branch had suffered at the expense of preservation and of recreation parks (including the Southwestern archeological sites). The following solution was suggested:

Because we believe the park system's environmental mission should not be diluted or submerged, we recommend as a first step, Congressional consideration of a "National Park Historic and Cultural Coordination Act," which would call for program planning and staff inputs of the National Park Service's historical and cultural operations from such

qualified sources as the Smithsonian Institution, the National Endowment of the Arts and Humanities, and state and ethnic historical societies. (Ibid, 14).

Interestingly, Wolf Trap Farm, the first national park for contemporary cultural and performing arts (cited as valid and unique but not necessarily a concept that needed repeating), is offered as an example of a park where outside arts and cultural entities could be of assistance.

Although the recommended legislation never appeared, the Park Service added to its ranks parks such as Boston African American Historical Site (1980), Women's Rights National Historical Park (1980), and the Martin Luther King, Jr, National Historic Site (1980).

Theoretical Revision

In 1994, the NPS underwent a congressionally mandated revision of its thematic framework to insure that "The full diversity of American History and prehistory is expressed in the National Park Service's identification and interpretation of historic properties." The impact of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s on historical research inspired the revisions. Included in the goals were the expansion of interpretive programs to encompass a broader American history, and an evaluation of resources to determine their suitability as a possible addition to the National Park System or inclusion on the list of National Historic Landmarks or the National Register of Historic Places (NPS 1994, 2).

The framework consists of the following eight themes; the Peopling of Places; Creating Social Institutions and Movements, Expressing Cultural Values; Shaping the Political Landscape; Expanding Science and Technology; Transforming the Environment; and Changing Role of the United States in the World Community. The themes are linked by what the NPS calls the “historic building blocks” of People, Time, and Place. While the “People” and “Time” building blocks are important, it is the conceptualization of “Place” that is so novel and potentially useful to the NPS. Note the following except:

It recognizes that region, community, and other dimensions of place are relevant. This framework acknowledges the richness of local and regional experiences and recognizes difference in place - particularly regional difference - as an important factor in a fuller understanding of both the origins of national change and the impact of national trends and events. Because place is the concrete context in which our history unfolds, a richer reconstruction of the past must include local and regional experience to help build appreciation for our national experience (3).

In rewriting its theoretical framework, the National Park Service made a strong commitment toward a progressive, socially and culturally representative park system. And one focused on geography

Usable Knowledge

In 1996 the Park Service followed up with an equally strong commitment to social science research. The commitment, articulated in Usable Knowledge: A Plan for Furthering Social Science and the National Parks (1996), aimed to “conduct and promote state of the art social science related to the mission of the National Park Service, and deliver usable knowledge to the National Park

Service managers and the public.” The plan offered several recommendations for achieving the above objective; they include: the establishment of a social science office in Washington; using special initiatives and research competitions to increase the number of social scientists working with the Park Service; and including social science research by making it a component of restructured university partnerships (Machlis, 2000, 45). With the exception of a few tasks, the recommendations have been implemented. One of the more interesting outcomes of those recommendations was the creation of an Urban Recreation Research Center at Southern University - Baton Rouge to benefit urban National Parks. Southern was selected out of a competition between historically Black colleges and universities. Basically established at the national level, the next step of the “Usable Knowledge” is to filter the plan down to the regional and park levels. Geography and Economics are explicitly stated as vital and under represented among available researchers (47).

New Orleans Jazz NHP

The idea that would eventually bring jazz to Armstrong Park in the form of the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park has its roots in a 1987 Congressional resolution sponsored by Representative John Conyers. He described jazz as “A rare and valuable natural resource to which we should devote our attention, support and resources to make certain it is preserved, understood and promulgated” (Concurrent resolution 57, 100th U.S. Congress). The creation of JAZZ seems to have origins independent of Conyers

legislation . A November 2, 1990 bill sponsored by United States Senator J.

Bennett Johnston authorized a suitability and feasibility study for the creation of a unit of the National Park Service to interpret and commemorate New Orleans jazz² (Public Law 101-499). According to Johnston, the inspiration for the park was an epiphany:

This idea started really actually on my back porch. My son Hunter and I were out there listening to Harry Connick, Jr. and Winton Marsalis one evening, sipping a little sarsaparilla talking about New Orleans jazz. And the idea actually came to Hunter that "dad we ought to have a jazz park in New Orleans" and the light bulb went on. And it was such an immediate obviously successful idea that I then called up Lindy the next day, and you know how Lindy is, anything for this city, anything for jazz. Immediately the light bulb went on in her head as well. We began to realize the need for interpretation of New Orleans jazz, the possibilities of it; interpretation, education, or preserving the history of it, that I can't tell you how important and how exciting that I believe the work of this commission is (Preservation of Jazz Advisory Commission Meeting transcription, May 3rd, 1991: 5-6).

The most important component of the park creating process was the Preservation of Jazz Advisory Committee. The duties of the commission as stated in sec. (4)–6 of Public Law 101-499 were to advise the Secretary in the preparation of the suitability/feasibility study. What makes the commission so important is not its establishment, but its composition. The legislation required commission to be composed of people experienced, knowledgeable, recognized as experts on various aspects of jazz, and the history and culture of

² At the time, Johnston chaired the Senate Appropriations subcommittee for the Department of the Interior.

Louisiana and New Orleans. Of the 15 commissioners appointed, one was selected by the Mayor, seven had Ph.D.s, one was a former congressperson, and another was a lawyer. Interestingly, the Tremé community was written into the feasibility study process. One member of the 15-member commission was required to be a resident of the neighborhood. In addition, one of the commission's three public hearings was to be held in the Tremé neighborhood.

Satisfied with the findings of the resource/feasibility study, Congress passed Public Law 103-433 on October 31, 1994, establishing the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park. The following except from the legislation states the purpose of the Park as reads in the legislation:

In furtherance of the need to recognize the value and importance of jazz, it is the purpose of this title to establish a New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park to preserve the origins, early history, development and progression of jazz; provide visitors with opportunities to experience the sights, sounds and places where jazz evolved; and implement innovative ways of establishing jazz educational partnerships that will help ensure that jazz continues as a vital element of the culture of New Orleans and our Nation (Sec. 1202-b).

A key component in the park's enabling legislation was the creation of the New Orleans Jazz Commission, a hold-over from the earlier advisory committee. In the eyes of the City of New Orleans, the establishment of JAZZ became a source of pride and an excellent opportunity to sustain the cultural traditions that made the city a tourist destination. To the mayor, JAZZ represented a political accomplishment and a chance to unload the burden of operating Armstrong Park, Municipal Auditorium, and the Mahalia Jackson

Theater for the Performing Arts. Even though the newly created park was faced with uncertain financing based on Senator Johnston's announcement to retire at year's end and threats to reduce the number of national parks by the Republican controlled Congress (Eggler 1996), for the park developed by the administration of Marc Morial. Mayor Morial requested the city planning commission and capital projects department to draft a proposed uses plan for the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park in Armstrong Park. The slickly produced plan called for a grand renovation of Municipal Auditorium and the Theater of the Performing Arts, an overhaul of the park's physical landscape, and the addition of an amphitheater. The proposed plan recalled the glitzy 1980s plans in scale and cost (City of New Orleans 1996) (Times Picayune 1996).

All this was undertaken without the advisement of the National Park Service. Jack Stewart made these comments about the origins of the newly created park:

The latest thing was the city would get \$50 million for Armstrong Park. As a going away present, he (Johnson) was supposed to funnel \$50 million through the Park Service as a gift to the city and the Park Service was supposed to be the pass through agency for this money. Finally the \$50 million came down to \$5 million, down to \$ 3 ½ million, and \$3 ½ million to a visitor center. I remember the director of the planning commission asking can we at least do a study? The Park Service said we don't need a study, we know what we want to do (Stewart 1999).

In 1998, JAZZ unveiled its own plans in accordance with a legislative mandate to develop a Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement

for the park. The proposed action (Alternative C in the management plan), endorsed a concept wherein JAZZ would partner with other public and private entities in fulfilling its mission (Figure 21). In addition to providing the bulk of its programming through partnerships, JAZZ would also seek financial support from partnerships. Other components of the proposed action included placing an emphasis on jazz education. Most importantly, the proposed action actively preserving historical and cultural resources related to jazz and locating visitor and interpretive center in Armstrong Park. In August of 1999 JAZZ entered into a long-term leasing agreement with the city of New Orleans to occupy the jazz complex and adjacent green space for its visitor center. The decision to locate JAZZ in Armstrong Park proceeded in much the same manner as the unfinished cultural center's transformation into the site of the Louis Armstrong Memorial in 1972. In the former case, forty years of failed civic center and cultural center plans left a void in the landscape, and skepticism in the city's ability to efficiently oversee the urban development. Likewise, the failure to complete the Phase II development of Armstrong Park, made JAZZ the favored candidate for Armstrong Park.

Accounts of the early public hearings concerning the jazz park's creation suggest that racial antagonism infected the process. From the outset, however, many Tremé activists supported the plans for the creation of JAZZ and advocated its location in Armstrong Park. The Tremé community's support of JAZZ as a tenant of Armstrong Park comes from their vision of JAZZ being a

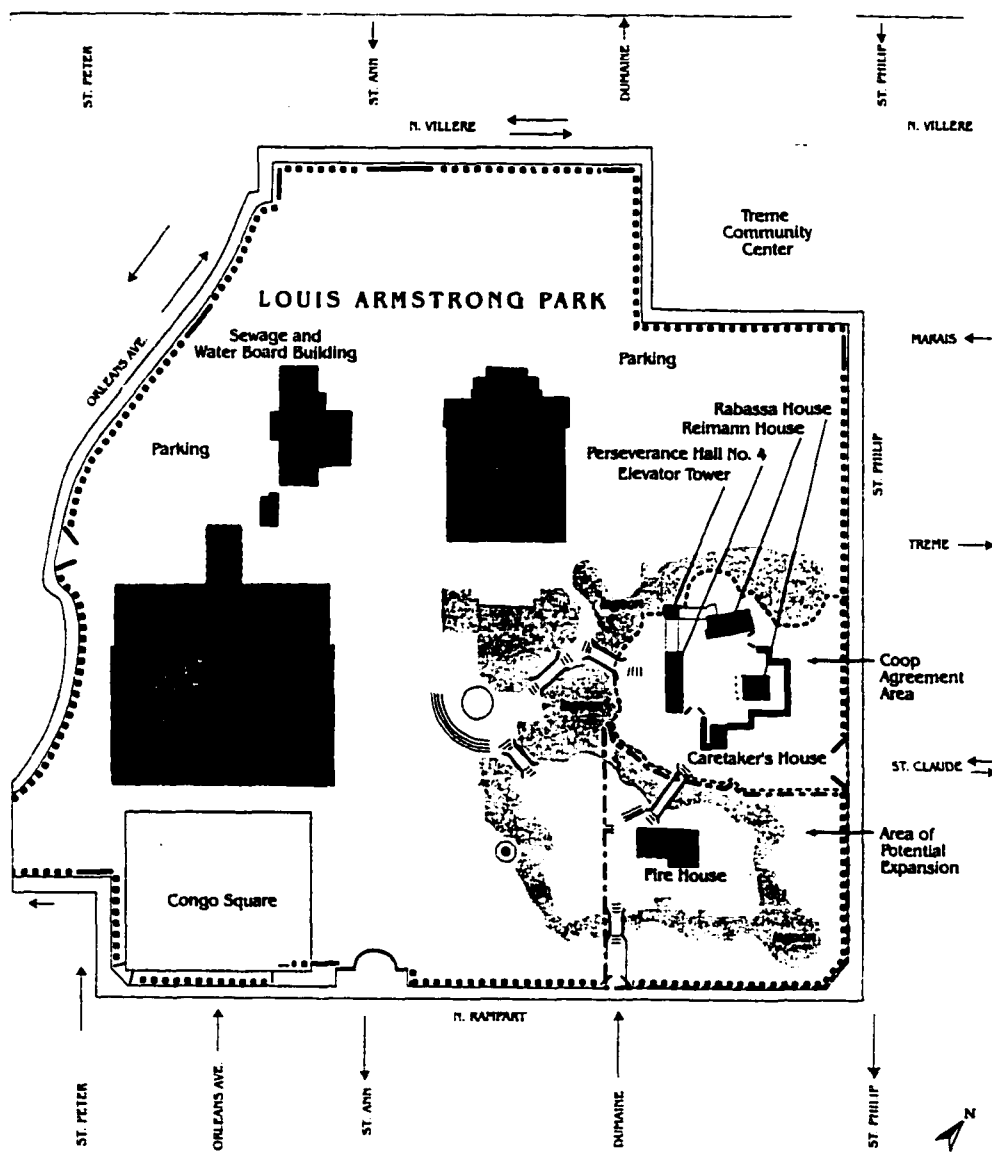


Figure 21. Map of proposed National Park Service presence in Louis Armstrong Park

"buffer" or "zone of interference." Meaning that most in the Tremé community saw the National Park Service as just in its cultural mission. Likewise, the city saw the JAZZ as a worthy replacement for a theme park.

The fact that many of the activists favored the establishment of JAZZ and its location in Armstrong Park should not be mistaken for their unconditional support. For the duration of JAZZ's existence, certain Tremé activists have tried to exact preferential treatment from the National Park Service. Discussions with JAZZ's first Superintendent, Rayford Harper, and Chief of Visitor Services and Education, Robin White, revealed that they were pressured from both uptown and downtown community groups for what amounted to economic assistance.

For years, plans to develop Armstrong Park were linked with efforts to develop the community, including calls for improved housing, increasing the level of owner occupancy, halting gentrification/displacement, and providing employment opportunities. Early news that the National Park Service was likely to inhabit Armstrong elicited calls for community involvement. Yet, neither in the jazz park's resource study or general management plan is there mention of the politically contentious debates or the economic disparity that exists in Tremé. There is a question of whether the position of the Park Service, in addressing only the official mission of the park, in this case jazz, is socially responsible. Secondly, what are the options for the Park in addressing the

community's social and economic concerns and can they be achieved without being implicitly stated? A necessary component of this question would be to determine whether other urban national parks are located in similarly depressed communities and if they are affecting social or economic change. If the National Park Service is going to be in the business of protecting cultural resources, it also seems to need to be in the business of dealing with related aspects of culture, including 'place' and even poverty.

Tremé activist Jerome Smith, who holds a seat on the New Orleans Jazz Commission and is Director of the Tremé community center, and Randy Mitchell, have been in the forefront of the recent community protest targeted toward Armstrong Park. In the past year Smith has expressed outrage over several issues, most notably JAZZ's attempt to establish a jazz education program at Tremé's Craig Elementary School without his permission. Most recently Smith asked JAZZ to divert part of the money earmarked for the construction of its visitor center toward funding a full-time music teacher at the same school. Commenting on the incident, present JAZZ Superintendent Gayle Hazelwood (2000) offered, "It is not our responsibility or role to right the wrongs that have been done to the Tremé neighborhood." In her opinion, JAZZ is not in the position to demand jobs for Tremé residents, act as a granting agency for Tremé programs, or to be the neighborhood's economic engine. "The park's decisions should not be made because of perceived economic advantages but on the merit of the resources being protected." More appropriately, JAZZ

should be seen as “the Hub of the wheel,” providing tangential or spin-off advantages for the community.

The fact that New Orleans Jazz is not a national park in the traditional sense presents unique challenges and opportunities for its operation. Within the National Park System nomenclature, which includes 22 designations, New Orleans Jazz is a ‘National Historical Park’. Every designation is explicitly territorial or spatial. Examples include the general ‘national park’ designation, ‘national battlefield park’, ‘national river’, ‘national seashore’ and ‘national lakeshore’. Each of these types of park is about a physical space, whether part of the natural or built landscapes. Some parks, such as memorials and monuments, are dedicated to events or people, but they are also about a location. The New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park is different. It is one of the few national parks whose area is not delimited. According to the Park’s General Management Plan, “the essence of the park encompasses the greater metropolitan New Orleans area.” A major challenge is getting the public to transcend the normative idea of a national park (i.e., Yellowstone, Yosemite) to an unbounded urban park dedicated to a cultural resource.

To me, as a park ranger for JAZZ for almost two years, it became painfully obvious that the public was having problems of conceiving of a boundless park. It became the case that whether asked openly “where is this park located” or specifically if JAZZ was “located in Armstrong Park,” the

answer given was, “we will soon be located in Armstrong Park,” a satisfactory, but less than complete truth. Unfortunately, Armstrong Park will probably become the *de facto* location of JAZZ, not just its visitor center and office space. There are other practical and material challenges at JAZZ, such as the high cost of providing regularly scheduled jazz performances.

A more complicated issue for JAZZ to solve is the perception that Armstrong Park and the surrounding area is crime-ridden. The Park's explicitly secured landscape, defined by its fenced perimeter, limited hours of access, and until recently, a police substation, have not been enough to counter its dangerous reputation. There is an unwritten rule cautioning visitors to the city not to venture into, the “back of the Quarter.” The warning applies to the areas that lie beyond Bourbon Street, including Armstrong Park and Tremé. The residential section of the Quarter, which overlays much of this same area, shows evidence of this concern in the form of gated and barred properties. A locally favored intruder deterrent – walls topped with an assortment of broken bottles and glass shards – is often visible in the area.

The perception of Tremé as a crime-ridden place has probably retarded Armstrong Park's ability to become a successful commercial area, but this is difficult to quantify. With few exceptions, most notably the highly publicized murder of a tourist in 1987, violent crime does not occur very often in Armstrong Park. Still, the aura of crime is at least partly responsible for the

relative absence of patrons. The effect this perception had on the gentrification of Tremé is discussed in the second half of this chapter

Some of the concerns about crime in Armstrong Park are related to the landscaping and design of the park itself. In their study to identify the factors that influence visitor perceptions of public safety, Schoeder and Andrew (1984) found that although esthetically less pleasing, people felt safer in developed parks with few trees and long sight lines. The management implications of the study, however, “support the common belief that removing vegetation to increase visibility will produce an environment that feels safer.” Finally, and most importantly, the study advised park managers to realize that perceptions of safety and esthetics are influenced by feelings not associated with the recreation site.

A study of Tremé by the College of Urban and Public Affairs (CUPA) at the University of New Orleans (1995) suggests that the typical correlation between crime and an area’s income is not applicable to Tremé. The study cites police statistics that reveal Tremé’s crime rate in early 1990s was lower than in other parts of the city, and the first district. Most interesting is CUPA’s explanation of Tremé’s low crime rate. The report concludes that Tremé’s isolation from the surrounding area by a series of “hard-edges” reduces the criminal activity. On three sides Tremé is bounded by “hard edges,” defined as “not easily passable, often due to physical design.” Claiborne Avenue/I-10, Rampart Street, and Armstrong Park itself are these hard edges, leaving

Esplanade as the only thoroughfare that does not present an obstacle to entering or leaving Tremé. These hard edges, particularly I-10, act as "man made barriers" to the surrounding areas of crime, particularly that of the Iberville and Lafitte housing projects (67). The crime that does occur is localized. It is important to note that the area CUPA identifies as Tremé is the smallest of the areas identified earlier.

The issue of safety and crime in Armstrong Park has been transferred directly to JAZZ. Although many individuals have expressed the hope that JAZZ would improve the image of the area, there have also been comments made to JAZZ staff, some bordering on racist, expressing skepticism about the Park's ability to succeed in Armstrong Park. The actual feelings of the public are likely more pessimistic than openly expressed. The final version of JAZZ's General Management Plan contains public comments to the three proposed options for a JAZZ visitor. The list below represents the skeptical or negative perception of Armstrong Park/Tremé. A jazz photographer/writer's comments included this statement:

Most importantly, Louis Armstrong Park and the entire area north of Bourbon Street is not safe. We have friends who have been mugged there, and we did not feel safe when visiting the park in the daytime. We did not stay long. This issue is not well addressed in your document. What can be done to improve safety in that neighborhood (28).

Another comment reads:

The success of this proposal depends on improving the image of the Armstrong Park neighborhood for tourists (as well as many residents).

The neighborhood must be more secure, and the visitor must feel safe to visit the Park (39).

Following is one of the more harsh comments:

The goals of the park will never be reached if its primary location is Armstrong Park for the following reasons.

1) Due to its controversial history, there may never be an agreement reached between neighborhood leaders and government on its use.

2) The question of safety in the park will be difficult to address. Since the shooting death of a tourist at mid day in the late 1980s, all ground level tourist handlers tell them not to go in the park (47).

The most diplomatic comments about "Alternative C" came from the Vieux Carre Property Owners, Residents, and Associates Inc.:

The growth and development of the jazz park will probably result in welcome increases in security and safety in the area simply because of increased numbers of visitors. In addition though, it is important to include security personnel among the park's anticipated professional staff (21).

The damage done to Tremé in the 1960s can never be repaired, but the presence of the National Park Service in Armstrong Park brought to an end the proposed uses for Armstrong Park that excluded Tremé residents or betrayed their cultural past. That it has taken a federal presence to bring stability to Armstrong Park is ironic given the federal government's past role in disrupting the community. While the community continues to monitor the activities at Armstrong Park, often using older methods of protest, its efforts can now be directed in different ways.

The potential for New Orleans Jazz to succeed in its mission is real. Even without the aid of a visitor center, essential to most parks, New Orleans

Jazz stayed active in the local music community. In addition to its mainstay, the Summer Concert Series, the park has sustained its educational focus with workshops in the New Orleans Public School system. In the summer of 2000, JAZZ moved into temporary facilities in the French Quarter, allowing regular interaction with one of the country's largest tourist populations. The regularly scheduled interpretive performances and lectures used much of the Park's growing collection of audio, visual, and multi-media information on traditional New Orleans jazz.

Tremé Today

As New Orleans settles into its post-industrial economy, focused on attracting and accommodating tourists, its historic urban landscape will continue to increase in importance. Accordingly, New Orleans' already powerful preservation "lobby" will become increasingly embroiled with advocates for the urban poor and private developers to protect New Orleans historic and endangered architecture from demolition and alteration. A recent highly publicized battle over the placement of an Albertson's supermarket in a deteriorating central city neighborhood is only the latest in a long running debate (Preservation in Print 1999a, 1999b). In this case, many people in the local community welcomed the store as a future employer and catalyst for economic development, while preservationists noted the historic value of the structures slated for demolition. The biggest threat to low-income, long-term renters, however, seems to be displacement through gentrification.

The failure of Phase II development of Armstrong Park shifted public attention back to issues of housing and community development for Tremé's low income renter population. Since the 1960s, community activists have voiced their concern about displacement, gentrification, home ownership, and living conditions. The story concerning Tremé is that Interstate –10, the proximity of the Iberville and Lafitte housing projects, and Armstrong Park all played a role to slow the gentrification of Tremé. The disincentive for the gentrification of Tremé is mentioned in Knopp's (1990) discussion of Faubourg Marigny's transformation from a working class neighborhood to a middle class gay neighborhood in the 1960s and 1970s. Although similar to the Tremé in architecture, multi-ethnic social history, and proximity to the French Quarter, "the center of New Orleans gay social and cultural life." White gays' fears about living in Tremé, near large numbers of poor Blacks living in the Iberville and Lafitte projects slowed their entrance into the neighborhood. In addition to white fears, Knopp notes the resistant attitudes of Tremé residents, " . . . they fought, they fought, they fought! The blacks . . . [of Tremé] resisted change because of the race situation." Public housing influences more than the housing market in downtown New Orleans. Canal Street merchants see the Iberville housing project as a source of crime, and by the city as an obstacle to urban economic development (Cook and Lauria 1995).

Faubourg Marigny, the neighborhood adjacent to Tremé on the north, became the ideal residential location for those seeking property to renovate. The process of improvement never stopped there. The larger, more expensive homes of Esplanade Avenue have never suffered to the extent of other parts of Tremé. In addition, Tremé witnessed gentrification activity in the vicinity of St. Augustine church and Governor Nicholls Road. Residents in that area organized in an effort to improve the neighborhood with privately funded renovation, the creation of watch programs, and the enforcement of existing zoning and noise ordinances. Based on the character of their section, compared to other parts of Tremé, residents sought to have the area designated the St. Augustine Historic District. Their concern with quality of life issues sparked a heated debate over Tremé's tradition of live music.

One of the continuing points of contention in the Tremé community is the music played in neighborhood bars. Tremé has a longstanding tradition of live music at its corner bars. Some newer residents, upset at the noise level, have sought to quiet these bars by claiming that they are in violation of local zoning ordinances.

A dispute between Tremé bar owners and residents came before the City Planning Commission in 1993. Residents, organized as the Association of Residents of Tremé, charged that some of the local bars were violating zoning laws. Supporters of the bars responded, noting the importance of neighborhood bars in the development of young musicians and the historic

association of live music with New Orleans (Aiges 1993) (Times Picayune 1994). In all likelihood, most of the complaining residents were newcomers to Tremé, and not necessarily white. Jim Hayes made the point of noting that Blacks were behind efforts to close "The Little Peoples Place," a small bar close to Rampart Street. The efforts of Tremé's middle-class gentrifiers to influence the character of the community through associations are mentioned by Regis (2000). She uses one organization's distribution of leaflets suggesting certain guidelines such as not using house furniture on front porches, and not socializing in the street as examples of newcomers trying to change the character of Tremé. Once almost halted, the renewed gentrification of Tremé became increasingly visible, both in the landscape and in print. A Times Picayune article from January 2000 (Foster 2000) heralded the renovation boom in Tremé. However, instead of mentioning Tremé by name, the article referred to the area as Esplanade Ridge, the name of the historic district that coincides with much of what is considered Tremé. One renovator commented about the opportunities in Tremé: "Four or five years ago there were some real bargains on Esplanade, but no more. Those days are over on Esplanade, but you can see interest and renewal spilling over block-by-block into the streets off Esplanade." That observation is echoed by Lynn Pitts (2000), who when discussing the housing resurgence in Tremé purposefully discusses the centrality of the Tremé neighborhood's cultural traditions and social institutions. As irresistible a picture as she paints, Pitts also broaches

more difficult subjects ranging from the perception of crime, to the noise associated with Tremé's public music culture, to the numbers of gay gentrifiers.

For Tremé's lower-income residents, community and government related non-profit and religious organizations have long been a source of housing assistance and community action. The TCIA, discussed throughout this study, has been the most visible. The present incarnation of the TCIA is the Greater Tremé Neighborhood Consortium (GTNC). As an economic development and housing agency, one of the GTNC's main goal is to slow the displacement of long-time Tremé residents. The services the GTNC provides include emergency home repair, owner occupied-housing rehabilitation, home-buyer counseling and neighborhood beautification. The organization is funded by several public and private entities. The president of the GTNC happens to be James Hayes, previously introduced as the co-founder of the TCIA. As recently as the 1990s, however, accusations have been leveled at non-profit organizations for the mismanagement of the funds they oversee.

One example was the Tremé Cultural Enrichment Corporation, headed by an appellate court judge and his brother. The agency, which oversaw \$ 478,000 in state funds, terminated with few results and under suspicion of budgetary improprieties. The most notorious of Tremé's community based NGOs was the Armstrong Redevelopment Incorporated (ARC) (Cooper 1997a). Created and staffed in 1992 by the Barthelemy administration, the ARC administered a \$ 3.2 million federal special purpose grant for housing

rehabilitation in Tremé. In its two years of operation, the agency frivolously spent \$1 million, prompting a city audit. The ARC survived attacks from within the government with the aid of Mayor Barthelemy, but was finally closed in 1994 by newly elected mayor Marc Morial. Morial's decision would have lasting effect on Tremé (CUPA 1996) (Cooper 1997a, b).

Recently, considerable efforts have been made by the city and the local community to reclaim the formal and informal public spaces of Tremé. After decades of advocating projects that chipped away at both the community and its public spaces, the city has joined with NGOs and community organizations to promote community building. Marc Morial's administration has been particularly active.

The city's increased presence in Tremé during the administration of Marc Morial was the topic of an interview with Vincent Sylvain, Director of the Division of Housing and Community Development (Sylvain 1999). According to Sylvain, the city's involvement in Tremé was a two-part process. First, upon taking office, the present administration found the housing situation one with very little progress and with a housing authority riddled with charges of mismanagement of a federal grant. In establishing his plan of attack to address the city's housing need, Sylvain implemented what he called an Impact Neighborhood Strategy (INS), which clusters housing activities within certain geographical areas. The city initially selected four blighted areas with development potential. Not only was Tremé blighted, it possessed

development potential as one of the nation's oldest neighborhoods for people of color, a fact, Sylvain added, that should make Black people feel proud, not threatened or embarrassed.

The city's commitment to Tremé owes to another factor, the availability of funds. The city's renewed commitment to Tremé can be traced to the fall of 1994 when, in a bid to secure the remaining ARC funds (\$1.8 million), Morial promoted the creation of the Tremé Historical Development Corporation. The city's attempt to secure the ARC funds was threatened by a federal investigation (Cooper 1997a). The cornerstone of the city's attempt to revive Tremé is the renovated Villa-Milleur mansion on Gov. Nicholls Road and the African American Museum that it houses. The city spent \$1.2 million to renovate the building and grounds, including the slave quarters. In the years following, the city has also purchased several adjacent residential properties, converting them into a gallery hall and exhibit space. Yet to be completed is a sculpture garden and the renovation of a second Creole style structure that will house a permanent Tremé Museum. Most seriously, the city was facing the repayment of millions to HUD and having the remaining funds transferred to another city. Only after a commitment from the city that the funds would be properly administered was New Orleans allowed to keep the remaining money. To complement the remaining funds, the city presented the banking community with development plans. Included was a proposal to build a museum to "benefit and recognize the Tremé community and African-Americans in

particular and their contributions to New Orleans both from a cultural standpoint and an architectural standpoint.” The city’s effort to improve Tremé’s housing included a plan to benefit both owner occupied home and renter. For the low-income property owner the commitment was made to renovate the interiors of approximately 30 homes. For home exteriors, the city sponsored a paint program that had a ripple effect on other properties. To stem the tide of gentrification and keep traditional residents, the city offered special financing, down-payment assistance, purchase options, and a first-time buyers program to Tremé residents.

Fall 1998 was an important time for reclaiming space in Tremé. In October, the City Council authorized the creation of the Tremé Historic District. The new Tremé Historic District was carved entirely from the former 250-block Esplanade Ridge Historic District (Map). The District falls within the bounds of North Rampart, Orleans, North Broad, and a small triangular section usually identified as Tremé bounded by St. Bernard and North Claiborne. Therefore, no new structures or areas were brought under Historic District guidelines. The decision to abbreviate the Esplanade District was not welcomed by members of the Esplanade Ridge Civic Association, a community organization whose members reside within the Esplanade Ridge Historic District. They were concerned for their loss of influence on issues concerning the Tremé side of Esplanade Avenue.

The debate over the Tremé Historic District provides some insights into the concept of the coincidence of “power and space.” In most cases, the “power” gained through “space” is a function of authority, economic resources, or electoral politics, but this was not so here. The power obtained through the designation of Tremé as a historic district is nominal and symbolic. This may be better understood by discussing the demographic and architectural character of the area in question. Together, the area of the Tremé and Esplanade historic districts represents much of the 19th century growth of New Orleans toward Lake Pontchartrain. The farther away from the French Quarter, the architectural styles becomes newer and in most cases less valued. The exception is Esplanade Avenue, the defining thoroughfare of the Esplanade Ridge Historic District. Its stately homes were the Creole equivalent to St. Charles Avenue’s mansions. Because of the “ordinary” architectural quality of the area ceded to Tremé, the Esplanade Ridge Historic District /Civic Association lost little, except area. Understandably, the Esplanade Ridge Historic District /Civic Association offered only token opposition to the decision.

A different formula is required to assess the advantages gained by the Tremé community from the creation of the Tremé Historic District. Foremost is the legitimacy that historic district status gives to issues advocated by the Tremé community, whether involving historic structures or not. Related is the issue of Tremé’s territorial extent. The designation legitimizes the assertion that Tremé extends beyond Claiborne Avenue. Unlike the more affluent

Esplanade Ridge community, Tremé benefits from the additional tracts of Sixth Ward housing. The new area represents territorial legitimacy where, politically and economically, authority is fleeting. Lastly, the creation of the Tremé Historic District represents a victory for the institution of Tremé activism, rectifying an oversight from 1979 when the boundaries for the Esplanade Ridge Historic District were drawn.

Another related development project is the renovation of the Carver Theater on Orleans Avenue. Opening in 1950, fairly recently in the Tremé time line, the Carver served as one of the premiere theaters for New Orleans' Black community. The Theater closed in 1982. The Umoja Institute, a non-profit development corporation focused on Black community development, conceived the project. The organization purchased the theater, a historic landmark, in 1997, with plans to renovate the theater into an auditorium, recording studios, and exhibit space. This project has the full support of the Morial administration, which staged a full-scale media event to demonstrate its involvement. The city's endorsement, as in the case of the Tremé Villa, has elicited the financial support of Hibernia National Bank and Texaco. The project faces a tough battle, however, given the theater's location across from the Lafitte housing development (Gambit Weekly 1998).

The second noted attempt to reclaim space occurred the following month with the opening of the Claiborne Avenue Market underneath Interstate 10 at Claiborne and Orleans Avenue. The community styled "French Market"

operates year-round on Saturday and Sunday. The market started as a method of empowering residents of the Lafitte public housing development. According to Betty Washington, consultant for the Lafitte residents Housing Board and the market's director, the process of creating the market incurred very few problems except the usual bureaucratic red tape. Beginning in February 1998, the local councilman, mayor, and state representative were all in agreement with the market proposal. The right to use of the land underneath the interstate came from the city, which was using the land as a parking lot, a usage granted by the state, by way of the Federal Highway Administration. Although the market receives some assistance from the city, the lack of money remains the markets greatest obstacle.

The creation of the Claiborne Avenue Market represents the most practical and symbolic reclamation of space in the Tremé community. The interstate may have forever ruined Claiborne Avenue as a Black commercial district, a title now belonging to Broad Street, but given the flow of traffic and the availability of parking along Claiborne, the market can potentially be a permanent and positive force in the community. While no body will become rich selling bootleg urban fashions, incense, "cold drinks" or fish sandwiches, a successful permanent market represents a well-organized operation and the presence of a self-supportive economic community.

Importantly, the relationship between the Tremé community and the City of New Orleans is better than in recent memory. Many residents are cautiously

pleased with the city's success in revitalizing and repairing properties throughout the neighborhood. One such person is Cheryl Austin of the Greater Tremé Neighborhood Consortium. Interestingly, the GTNC was started with funds from Harrah's Casino with the goal of ameliorating the detrimental effects Tremé may have experienced from the temporary casino. The most notable exception is Randy Mitchell. Ever the community activist, Mitchell suspects that Vincent Sylvain has misused federal funds in his housing program. Other such objections can be seen in parts of a newsletter produced by Tremé activists accusing the city's development efforts of happening at the expense of Tremé housing and without providing economic benefits for the neighborhood.

Coda - Jazzland

The plan for a New Orleans amusement park founded on jazz did not end with the Tivoli plans. In 1990, developer Thomas Winindger advanced the idea of a regional theme park called Jazzland. The park, envisioned in the vein of Tennessee's Opryland and Dollywood, was proposed for New Orleans East. Not only was the idea not new, there were also similarities in the financing. One-third of the park's original \$74 million dollar price tag was slated to come from public funds, 10 from the state and 15 from the federal government. The federal contribution would come from the HUD 108 loan program. The city would use \$20 million in HUD housing and economic development subsidy as collateral.

By the fall of 1995 plans for the park began to solidify. Early concerns included whether the HUD subsidy would survive congressional appropriation in 1997 and how much the city would contribute to infrastructural improvements. HUD approved the loan one day before the start of FY 1996, saving the deal from budget cutters. Also, the city arranged with developers to receive premature payments to offset the city services and improvements, a percentage of park sales and profits, and a ticket tax to benefit economically depressed areas.

In a *Times-Picayune* letter to the editor, a city official countered negative risks by touting the park as an economic engine creating hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars in construction and daily operations. In addition, the park would contribute to New Orleans' family-oriented tourist landscape. The money, \$10 million, was eventually allocated as part of the state construction budget. The project received an economic boost in 1997 with an additional \$10 million in HUD loan guarantees. Jazz Land received its second economic boost in May of 1998 when the city approved it for a controversial property tax waiver. The waiver, offered by the state program begun as an incentive for large-scale commercial endeavors, freed the 140-acre park from paying taxes estimated at \$1.25 million per year. In lieu of the tax Jazz Land will contribute its revenue to a non-profit economic development organization targeting development problems in New Orleans East. The park received its final approval from the City Council in July 1998. On Memorial Day weekend 2000

Jazz Land opened. The park's theme areas include a jazz plaza, Cajun Country, Pontchartrain Beach, and areas dedicated to Mardi Gras and Gospel music.

Conclusion

Following the era of privatization, the Tremé community's decade-old call for the use of Armstrong Park that was consistent with the cultural traditions of the surrounding area began to take root with the greater New Orleans population. Fortunately, at the same time cultural elements were calling for changes to the focus of JELA, the National Park Service was increasing its attention to urban and minority populations and to designating parks more representative of America's diverse cultural and historical resources. The intersection of those movements led to the creation of New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park. In addition to recognizing jazz, a multi-ethnic art form rooted in the African-American experience, JAZZ was also charged with recognizing New Orleans' African-American parading traditions. With the decision to locate the JAZZ visitor center in Armstrong Park, the park was transformed from a public space scheduled for privatization to a liminal space with the potential to satisfy, at least partially, the desires of both the Tremé community and the city.

The creation of JAZZ is relevant beyond Armstrong Park and Tremé. The process was explicitly spatial, emphasizing parade routes and the location of important jazz related sites and structures. The geographical nature of the

process was in line with the Park Service's goal of becoming more sensitive to "place." Furthermore, in filling the New Orleans Jazz Commission and Advisory Board with people knowledgeable of the resource and politically connected, the NPS was able to increase the scale of JAZZ and Armstrong Park. In other words, the issue became relevant to people beyond the local community.

CHAPTER SEVEN. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the beginning, this study has proposed an analysis not of Louis Armstrong Park itself, but of the processes that have, and will, guide the Park's development. The distinction is important if not obvious. Armstrong Park performs few of the tasks that are traditionally expected from urban public spaces, at least in an academic sense. It is a depressingly sterile public space constructed and continuously reproduced as such by efforts to make the park safe and profitable. The park's operation only during daylight hours, its fence, and its peripheral location to French Quarter activities make it largely absent of the "deviant populations" plaguing other public spaces in New Orleans. Subsequently, conflicts plaguing other public spaces such as those involving the homeless and adolescents are not concerns. As such, the story of Armstrong Park lies not in the battles within its gates but outside. That is not to say, as Don Mitchell suggested, that a public space must meet certain criteria. Hopefully, this dissertation has illustrated that public spaces can exist in many forms. The central thesis of this study asks how New Orleans' community activists and cultural politicians gained the upper hand over the urban political economy in deciding how Armstrong Park would take form. As stated, the question tacitly assumes the authority or at least the primacy of the economy in shaping contemporary urban public landscapes. This is because, as the literature points out, the changes occurring in many urban public spaces seem

to be dictated by economic demands of the post-industrial economy. Also asked was how the processes at work operated spatially. This chapter summarizes the finding of the previous chapters before stating the final conclusion. Lastly, this chapter discusses the possibilities for further study that have surfaced in the process of writing this dissertation.

This study has demonstrated that Tremé is a neighborhood of unquestionable uniqueness within the City of New Orleans, and for that matter, North America. The structures in Tremé are comparable to those of the French Quarter in their architectural value, testifying to Creole artisanship that persists today. The social and cultural institutions that took root in Tremé during the early American and post-bellum periods, including mutual aid and benevolent associations, performance and parading traditions, social clubs, are an outgrowth of American ethnocentrism and racism and represent Creole efforts at retaining their social system and achieving political rights. The inscription of those efforts in the landscape through the construction of buildings and spatially expressed parading traditions created a sense of community and contributed directly to many present cultural traditions.

The twentieth century brought urban change to New Orleans that threatened to destabilize the cultural traditions formed in Tremé in the previous century. Improvements to the city's drainage system opened new areas for habitation. Moneyed people left the aging French Quarter and Tremé for

homes in Gentilly and farther out toward Lake Pontchartrain. The Quarter would experience a Bohemian renaissance. Tremé, on the other hand, did not, perhaps because of its proximity to the railroads, warehouses, and public housing projects of the City Commons. The greatest destabilizing influences were the de-territorialization of Tremé residents resulting from federal urban renewal and the loss of neighborhood public space and general continuity from the construction of Interstate-10.

The heart of this study is the continuing effort to develop the cultural center as Armstrong Park and the oppositional efforts of the Treme and African American communities. The context for the discussion was the change in federal development philosophy and New Orleans' emergence from political traditionalism, the oil bust and boom, and demographic changes in the New Orleans electorate.

In the period following the failure of Tivoli Armstrong Park plans, there is an increased awareness of the uniqueness of New Orleans' African American cultural traditions which leads the call for culturally relevant uses of Armstrong Park. To set up the creation of JAZZ and the Park Services' decision to locate a visitor center in Armstrong Park, there is a discussion about the evolution of Park Service policy as it relates to urban parks and parks with an emphasis on cultural resources. Also highlighted in the post privatization period are the

city's and the Tremé community's efforts to stem gentrification and retain a Black presence in Tremé.

This study concludes that attempts to privatize Armstrong Park failed for two equally important reasons. In their opposition to Armstrong Park's privatization, community activists used traditional methods of resistance. In the 1980s their cause was also aided by the political antagonisms between Mayor "Dutch" Morial and the City Council, particularly Councilman Sidney Barthelemy – a manifestation of the historic intra-Black political antagonisms in New Orleans.

The opposition offered by the Black activists of Tremé and New Orleans to the privatization of Armstrong Park was based on the following four principles: maintaining free access, winning a hand in management of the park, securing business contracts, and minimizing the effects on outside property values. Under girding those principles, however, was the argument that the areas cleared as part of the urban renewal/interstate highway projects represented more than one hundred and fifty years of historically significant architecture, and socially and politically important institutions associated cultural traditions, namely jazz and the three related parading traditions of New Orleans' Black community.

Except for the fact that Louis Armstrong Park was not completed as designed, it basically falls in line with other public spaces and the ideas of the

political economy. The logic of the urban political economy in the restructuring of the urban landscape may be read into this case as early as the desire to build a civic center where the park now stands. The same logic continued after WWII, as New Orleans sought to tap into the federal monies available for urban development. In addition, the idea to seek a private operator for Phase II falls in line with the rise of management growth or corporate-center growth policies.

The second approach to public space questions the types of people and activities that should be allowed in public spaces. An analysis of Armstrong Park based on the second approach is complicated by the failure of development Phase II development plans. The gate charge proposed by the two Phase II development proposals would have effectively excluded all those who could not pay. Under those conditions, Armstrong Park would have been transformed from a public open space in the traditional sense to a private space. In the present daily operation of the park, the patrons and their activities are not necessarily questioned. Because of the reputation of the neighborhood, the middle class has not sought to define the appropriate patrons. Similarly, because middle class whites rarely visit Armstrong Park, because of its perception as an unsafe area they are unable to transmit their safety concerns into the landscape. In a sense, the search for private Phase II development was an effort to control those who attended Armstrong Park.

Lastly, because the businesses of North Rampart St. lacked the high commercial and cultural profile of those along the river, they were also unable to influence the activities and patrons of Armstrong Park by creating a middle-class shopping environment.

The approach most relevant to this case is that of the counter-public space. The events of 1803 restricted the activities of New Orleans' slave and free Afro-Creole communities. In turn, these communities looked inward and created sites and landscapes where they were able continue their social and cultural traditions. Tremé's musically gifted Creoles, showing their courage to adapt and need to survive, competed and collaborated with uptown Blacks, who themselves were trying to survive and escape the horrors of their existence, to create jazz. During the same period New Orleans Blacks would solidify a three-part parading tradition, all strongly associated with Tremé, which would survive the increasing poverty and destruction of the 20th century to be appropriated as symbols of the city itself.

Within the above framework, the history of the cultural center/Armstrong Park represents a failure of the Tremé community to maintain the integrity of its cultural landscape. The pain is compounded by the reality that during the time of loss, the 1950s and 1960s, the community was not sufficiently empowered to counter its destruction. In the Tremé activist's fight to retain access to

Armstrong Park they drew upon a more richly historical, spatial, and non-essentialist ideal of Blackness than may exist anywhere in North America.

The future of Armstrong Park is uncertain, save that within three years JAZZ will locate its permanent visitor center there. Then the question becomes will the National Park Service's presence make relevant the issue of the "appropriate" public that is currently dormant? Furthermore, will JAZZ positively impact the Rampart Street business district? The answer is assuredly yes, but to what extent, and with what opposition is unknown.

Conclusion

There are two legacies that have the potential to shape Tremé, one architectural and material and the other social and cultural. The contrived separation fails under critical scrutiny, but in the everyday it exists. To the preservationist and gentrifier, individual structures, as well as, larger communities are thought to be valuable assets to the urban landscape. The renovation of dilapidated structures, halting the demolition of historic structures, and creative financing for home purchase are some of the methods preservationists and gentrifiers use. The traditional residents and activists see themselves, their community, and culture as the precious resource. In their minds preservation includes efforts to improve the resident's quality of life, create economic opportunities, encourage home repair, and protect and foster local cultural traditions.

Unfortunately, the results of this study are difficult to generalize to other places, especially in this country. There are other historic landscapes, and there are other vocal communities, but there are few places where the cultural landscapes and traditions are living and integral parts of the community as in New Orleans. And there are few places where the historic cultural traditions of a neighborhood or a larger poor minority community have been so imprinted on the larger city. For African-American communities there are no doubt many historic landscapes, such as pre-integration business districts or sites relevant to civil rights struggles, that have the potential to be reconstructed or revitalized.

Future Research

The obvious avenue for future research is to follow the development of the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park visitor center in Armstrong Park. If to this point, Armstrong Park hasn't functioned much as a public space, practically or theoretically, that will perhaps change. At some point, the National Park Service will need to secure its property, and more interestingly it will need to insure not only that the area is safe for visitors, but that it feels safe. Those efforts will require that the Park Service or the City of New Orleans institute a policy discouraging the sedentary activities of the park's most regular patrons, vagrants. There will also be questions concerning how New Orleans Jazz NHP will effect the neighborhood and business communities

outside Armstrong Parks' gates. Based on the comments of JAZZ Superintendent Gayle Hazelwood, it may be the case that the opening of New Orleans Jazz' visitor center may revive Tremé's activists fears about gentrification and rising property values.

This study also raised territorial questions about New Orleans' Colored Creole population. It is well-known that they lived predominantly in the downtown section, including Tremé and Faubourg Marigny. Creoles were also scattered uptown and further down river in what is now the Ninth Ward. As this study has stated, Faubourg Tremé was the early focal point of the Creole community. This claim is supported by the presence of St. Augustine Church and the number of Creole social halls in the area. At some point, Creoles became associated less with Tremé and more with the Seventh Ward. Their original elite organization, the Economy Society, was supplanted first by Franks Amis, then the Autocrat Club. Similarly, St. Augustine church fell in Creole esteem to Corpus Christi. The explanation may be as simple as outward migration from the city's aging core. However, just as the Tremé neighborhood developed as sense of community based on its cultural traditions and urban cultural landscape, a similar process may have been at work in the Seventh Ward.

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VITA

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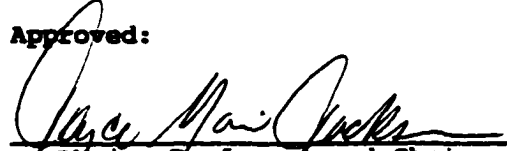
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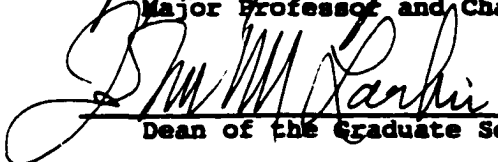
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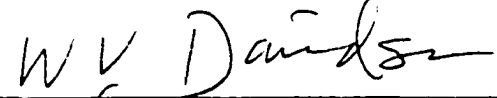
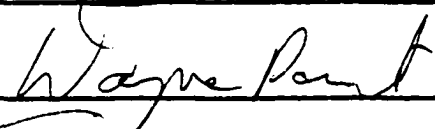


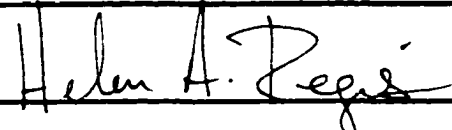
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Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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