

NEWSLETTER

Special Edition | Katrina 15



Residential Development



Commercial Revitalization



Land Stewardship

**New Orleans
Redevelopment Authority**

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2300 BLOCK OF ANDRY STREET - BEFORE (LOWER NINTH WARD)

2300 BLOCK OF ANDRY STREET - AFTER (LOWER NINTH WARD)

This special edition of the NORA newsletter commemorates the 15th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. The anniversary brings back memories of catastrophic losses and systemic failures, but also gives us an opportunity to appreciate our progress and look ahead to our future.

Our staff has reflected on this moment with me and I would like to share some thoughts from one of our accountants, Paulette H. Smith: "When NORA moved into its current location...it was like a ghost town on the Boulevard. There was not much activity at all and quite frankly it was little scary looking. It was nothing like I remembered it as a little girl when my grandmother and I would take the bus to what was then Dryades Street... My, my, my, what a transformation that has taken place on the corridor as a result of NORA programs..."

Of course, the stunning transformation along O.C. Haley is just one example of the collective impact of NORA's Board of Commissioners and dedicated staff over the last fifteen years. Our Director of Human Resources, Anita L. Briant, remarked to me recently that "NORA is the blueprint to recovery." Looking at our impact, it's hard to disagree! Citywide, NORA has returned 76% of its vacant property inventory to commerce, including the disposition of 1,610 properties to adjacent property owners through the Lot Next Door program. We have invested a total of nearly \$80 million in the development of 831 affordable housing units, rehabilitation of 681 thousand square feet of commercial space, and improvements to green space on 168 acres of land within the city.

The progress is even more remarkable when you consider that, from its founding in 1968 all the way through 2005, NORA had only operated on a relatively small scale, tackling scattered blight one property at a time. At the time Katrina struck, NORA was a staff of 10 that included small Legal, Disposition, and Finance Departments alongside the Executive Director. There was limited expertise and resources to develop, evaluate and implement the strategic affordable housing, economic development, and green infrastructure programs that are synonymous with NORA today. At one point within the last fifteen years, NORA had grown to more than five times its pre-Katrina size to fill gaps and leverage the work that the City of New Orleans and other public agencies needed us to do.

NORA has become a proactive agency — one that seeks out people and funding opportunities and does the heavy lifting to implement projects and programs based upon our strengths and core competencies. We no longer wait for people or funding to find us, we find them. While I am justifiably proud of how the agency has adapted and risen to the occasion to respond to our community needs since 2005, I am most excited about the work in progress today, outlined in this newsletter, that will position this city for the future. As we observe the fifteenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, NORA continues to be focused on the development of a more resilient built environment to match the resilient people that call New Orleans home.



- Brenda M. Breaux, Executive Director



AUGUST 29, 2005 - PRESENT

- 831 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS created
- \$101 MILLION leveraged
- \$39.9 MILLION invested
- \$12.9 MILLION in land subsidy

HAPPENING NOW

DEVELOPING AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP - LOWER NINTH WARD

NORA and its development partners (Home By Hand, SBP USA, Lucas Construction, and UnCommon Construction) are putting the finishing touches on the first of ten new affordable homeownership opportunities in the 2200 and 2300 blocks of Andry Street in the Lower Ninth Ward near the Martin Luther King, Jr. High School. Home by Hand Executive Director Oji Alexander states that "Home by Hand is very excited to see our first two NORA-OHIP [Orleans Housing Investment Program] houses nearing completion in the Lower 9th Ward neighborhood. We have two very excited buyers who have been working through our program, anxiously awaiting to move into their new homes. It is rather poetic that the completion of these homes coincides with the 15 year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. We hope this is just the beginning of Home by Hand's contribution towards delivering homeownership opportunities to this historic neighborhood."

Homebuyer Dahlia El-Shafei expects to close on the first completed home shortly: "I dreamed of becoming a homeowner for so long, but I didn't believe it was possible until I became involved with Home By Hand and the NORA OHIP Program. The process took determination and perseverance, but I learned so much about being a responsible homeowner in the city I love. As the house was getting built, I fell more and more in love with the neighborhood and feel so grateful for the opportunity to make my home here. Now that it's approaching closing, I'm getting excited to plant roots, meet my neighbors, and share and build with the community that helps make New Orleans so great, the Lower 9th Ward."

COMING SOON

DEVELOPING AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP - PONTCHARTRAIN PARK

Earlier this month, NORA's Board of Commissioners approved the award of seventeen (17) properties to seven for profit and non-profit developers (Home by Hand, SBP USA, Tulane Canal Neighborhood Development Corporation, Jericho Road Episcopal Housing Initiative, Curtis Doucette, Jr., Property Quest, LLC, and Neighborhood Restoration of Baton Rouge) as part of the expansion of the Orleans Housing Investment Program to Pontchartrain Park. Lauren Avioli, Real Estate Development Manager of SBP USA, states that "SBP is excited to continue our partnership with NORA by building 5 resilient, energy efficient homes in historic Pontchartrain Park, New Orleans's first suburb developed for Black homeownership. We are honored to be able to create new opportunities for low- and moderate-income families to purchase homes in Pontchartrain Park and be part of the neighborhood's important legacy."

These new homes will not only support continued redevelopment in this important African American neighborhood that was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but also incorporate best practices for the future by achieving the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety FORTIFIED Gold standard for hazard resilience, Environmental Protection Agency Energy Star Version 3 standard for energy efficiency, and NORA's own standard for residential stormwater management — the first in the city! These new affordable homes will meet the most rigorous standards ever imposed by NORA or any other public agency in the city and will substantially outperform traditional construction in durability, energy efficiency, and operational costs.



Ongoing construction of new affordable housing on Andry Street - LOWER NINTH WARD



AUGUST 29, 2005 - PRESENT

- 691,000 SQUARE FEET rehabilitated
- \$130.4 MILLION leveraged
- \$13.6 MILLION invested
- 1,000 JOBS CREATED (estimated)

HAPPENING NOW

INVESTING IN SMALL BUSINESS STOREFRONTS

NORA is currently working with small business owners to improve approximately 40 buildings and make them more resilient through the second generation of our Façade RENEW Storefront Improvement program on Alcee Fortier Boulevard, Basin Street, Broad Street, and St. Bernard Avenue. The program provides 3:1 matching grants up to a maximum of \$37,500. Businesses like the Broad Avenue Pharmacy at 1400 North Broad Street are getting new impact-resistant storefront glass systems, signage, paint, and other repairs to enhance their appearance, increase business, and protect them from future hazards.



Broad Avenue Pharmacy - 7TH WARD

COMING SOON

BRINGING BACK A NEIGHBORHOOD ANCHOR

This fall, construction is slated to begin on the long-awaited renovation of 1800 Onzaga Street, the once and future home of Vaucresson's Sausage Company, with financial support from the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority and the City of New Orleans. The project has been in the works for several years and was delayed this spring by the coronavirus pandemic and zoning entitlement issues. French Quarter Fest and the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival were cancelled and proprietor Vance Vaucresson has been forced to adapt his business model in response. Yet, the Vaucresson Sausage Company and partner Crescent City Community Land Trust (CCCLT) have never wavered in their commitment to the project.



Architectural design rendering of 1800 Onzaga Street - 7TH WARD

“This is exactly the type of project that we envisioned when we expanded on the model of a community land trust,” said CCCLT Executive Director Julius Kimbrough, Jr. “A community land trust normally develops permanently affordable single-family homes, but in our case we wanted to produce single-family and also apartments and commercial spaces that are permanently affordable. Vaucresson Sausage had been a 7th Ward family business for three generations when Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, so to bring them to their home neighborhood in 2020 through a cafe and retail location and to add two permanently affordable apartments in the process is a huge win. This community has been waiting for Vaucresson's return for years and, like all New Orleans neighborhoods, is in need of affordable rental units and blight elimination.”

Be on the lookout for the return of Vaucresson Sausage Company on St. Bernard Avenue at Onzaga Street in 2021.



AUGUST 29, 2005 - PRESENT

- 168 ACRES of vacant lots revitalized
- \$12.1 MILLION invested in greening
- 414,819 GALLONS built in stormwater capacity

HAPPENING NOW

MANAGING STORMWATER IN PONTILLY

The Pontilly Neighborhood Stormwater Network project, undertaken in partnership with the City of New Orleans, is in the final phase of construction and scheduled to be finished before the end of this year. The project includes the construction of green infrastructure interventions on 45 NORA lots in the Pontchartrain Park and Gentilly Woods neighborhoods. Runnels redirect stormwater runoff from the street onto NORA lots to allow for natural infiltration. The lots have been excavated and planted with native species of trees to detain and absorb stormwater runoff. Improvements to NORA lots are designed to complement improvements to the Dwyer Canal as well as streets and alleys. When complete, the \$18.4 million project will both beautify the neighborhood and reduce flood risk.



Near-complete stormwater detention basin - PONTILLY

COMING SOON

REDUCING RESIDENTIAL RUNOFF IN GENTILLY

Approximately one third of the expected total number of projects within the Community Adaptation Program (CAP) are complete and implementation is expected to continue into early 2022. The program, designed to assist Low to Moderate Income homeowners in the Gentilly Resilience District, was developed in partnership with the City of New Orleans Office of Resilience and Sustainability as part of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development National Disaster Resilience Grant.



Community Adaptation Program participant with newly installed infiltration trench - GENTILLY

Through the program, NORA works with homeowners to remove impermeable surfaces and install permeable paving systems, rain gardens, rain barrels, stormwater planter boxes, infiltration trenches, detention basins, and trees in order to maximize the absorption of rain on site and minimize the runoff that the city's drainage system needs to pump out. CAP homeowners embrace their role in reducing flood risk. "We have a responsibility to take care of the City of New Orleans" said CAP participant Colette Delacroix. "That's the first and foremost piece of this puzzle for me -- it's to take care of our neighbors, to take care of our neighborhood."

The impact of the program is already starting to be recognized by green infrastructure practitioners and the public alike. Just a few weeks ago, CAP won First Place in both the Professional and People's Choice categories of the EPA Region 6 Outstanding Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development Project Competition, and proved it is a model that deserves to be expanded across the city.

