

Canal Street

Progress Report & Analysis of Current Conditions

2025



ADOPTED
28 OCTOBER 2025



Message from the Chair

It is with great excitement that the City Planning Commission presents its adopted Canal Street Progress Report & Analysis of Current Conditions. This report provides a comprehensive accounting of the status of the Commission's 2018 Canal Street Study and further analysis of the corridor in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hard Rock Hotel collapse, and the January 1, 2025 terrorist attack.

Despite holding the status of "The City's Main Street," Canal Street has lagged in critical public and private investments needed on a corridor of such importance. This study provides a much-needed update to the CPC's 2018 Canal Street Study to highlight the successes of the past seven years and identify action items in need of further attention.

Importantly, this report also emphasizes the extent to which recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted the retail landscape along the corridor, which have been particularly hard hit, resulting in a loss of more than half of retail establishments over the past 10 years. The importance of pedestrian safety is also a key piece of this study, and through a reimagining of the streetscape, this Commission believes that we can create a better pedestrian environment that will also enhance the overall sense of place along the corridor.

Though there has been much progress towards achieving the goals of the 2018 Study, there is still work to be done. This report provides clear, achievable steps towards implementing those action items either stuck in-progress or that have not been started.

This plan would not have been possible without the input of corridor stakeholders, strong collaboration with the various City agencies with jurisdiction over the street, and the dedication of our City Planning Commission staff. The further implementation of the action items within the plan will require sustained collaboration between all participants and interested parties to accomplish these common goals.

We look forward to continuing this important work and assisting with its implementation to realize a stronger, safer, and more vibrant Canal Street.

In service,



Katie Witry
Chair
New Orleans City Planning Commission



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CHAPTER #1

Introduction

In 2018, the City Planning Commission conducted a study of Canal Street at the request of former Councilmember At-Large Jason Williams. It was not that the street had not been thoroughly analyzed throughout its history, the request recognized that there had been numerous studies and still very significant improvements the public would like implemented. The 2018 study focused on detailing the studies in decades past, bringing forward recommendations that might still be relevant, and providing a modern vision for Canal Street.

Canal Street's history is long and, like any significant corridor, has experienced an evolution in its appearance and function, but its stature as the main street of New Orleans has remained. The width of the public right-of-way of Canal Street is incredibly wide compared to most streets, due to a plan in the early 1800s to accommodate a waterway connecting the Mississippi River to what is now Basin Street. Though the waterway concept never materialized, the right-of-way remained and has been improved to accommodate a tremendous amount of vehicular, transit, and pedestrian traffic in addition to a high density of commercial activity.

Background

Canal Street was not always a hub of business and commerce. Until the mid-19th Century, institutional and residential uses lined the street. Nearby Royal and Chartres Streets in the French Quarter were the commercial centers of that period. That soon changed after the adoption of the elevator and multi-floor stores became common. The available space on Canal Street also allowed for more expansive building footprints that could accommodate the large, dry good stores emerging at the time.

With the turn of the 20th Century, construction techniques improved to the extent that tall office buildings were being constructed, one example being the Maison Blanche building constructed in 1909. The first half of the 20th Century was marked by

tremendous success of the department stores and retailers along the street, and making it a regional destination for shopping and gathering.

Starting in the mid-20 Century, retailers began following their consumers to newly developed suburban communities. Retail naturally follows target populations and suburban communities became more and more attractive due to proximity of consumers, cheap green-field developments sites, and easy access for a public that increasingly adopted private motor vehicles as a preferred mode of transportation. This also marked the beginning of modern planning initiatives for Canal Street's future.

Canal Street in the late 1950's was characterized by the fear of competition to the street's dominance over the regional retail market by new suburban markets. Many of the plans completed during this time addressed this directly and prescribed solutions to put Canal Street and the entire CBD in a better position to compete with the growing suburban areas. In many cases this meant adapting the area to provide suburban amenities. Much of the direction of the studies and recommendations during this time focused on supporting a new tiered roadway and beltway system around the CBD to provide convenient access for motorists traveling from suburban communities.

By the 1970s, the commuter infrastructure conversations had been settled with the construction of the Pontchartrain Expressway and elevated Interstate 10 over Claiborne Avenue, and the scrapping of plans for a Riverfront Expressway. Though plans continued to discuss traffic and transportation, the focus began to shift to enhanced zoning controls, preservation of historic structures, streetscape amenities, and the continued issue of declining retail activity. The Oil Boom of the 1970's and 1984 World's Fair briefly offered hope that the decline of Canal Street's stature as a regional shopping destination would be curtailed. In preparation for the World's Fair, the Downtown Development District invested

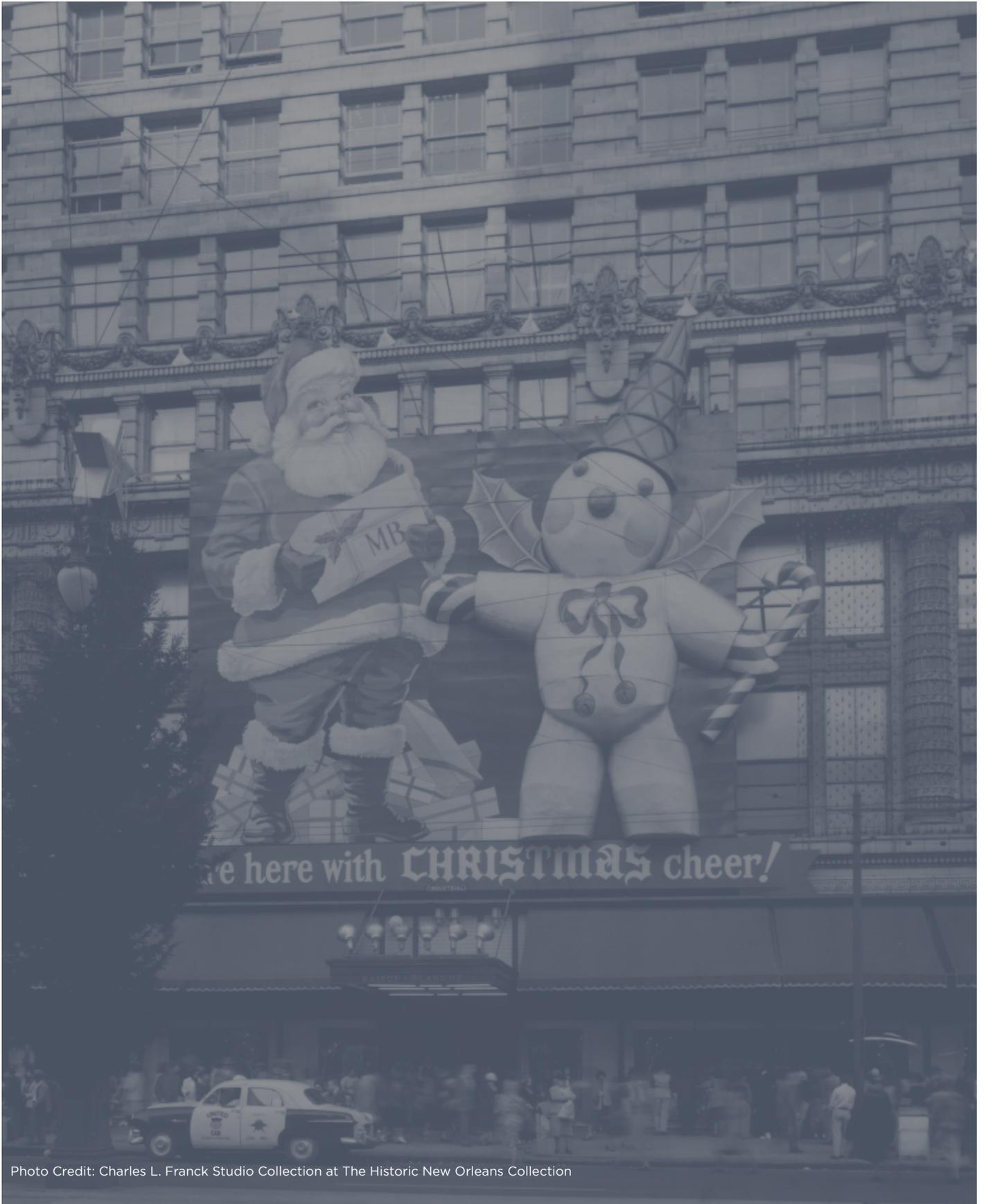


Photo Credit: Charles L. Franck Studio Collection at The Historic New Orleans Collection

\$2 million for new paving, street trees, lighting, curbs and ramps along Canal Street. New high-rises were constructed on and near Canal Street, and there appeared to be positive momentum on the corridor. Canal Street was also designated as a local historic district in 1984 to curb a rash of demolitions in the previous decade which saw 12 historic structures demolished along Canal Street between Claiborne Avenue and the Mississippi River.

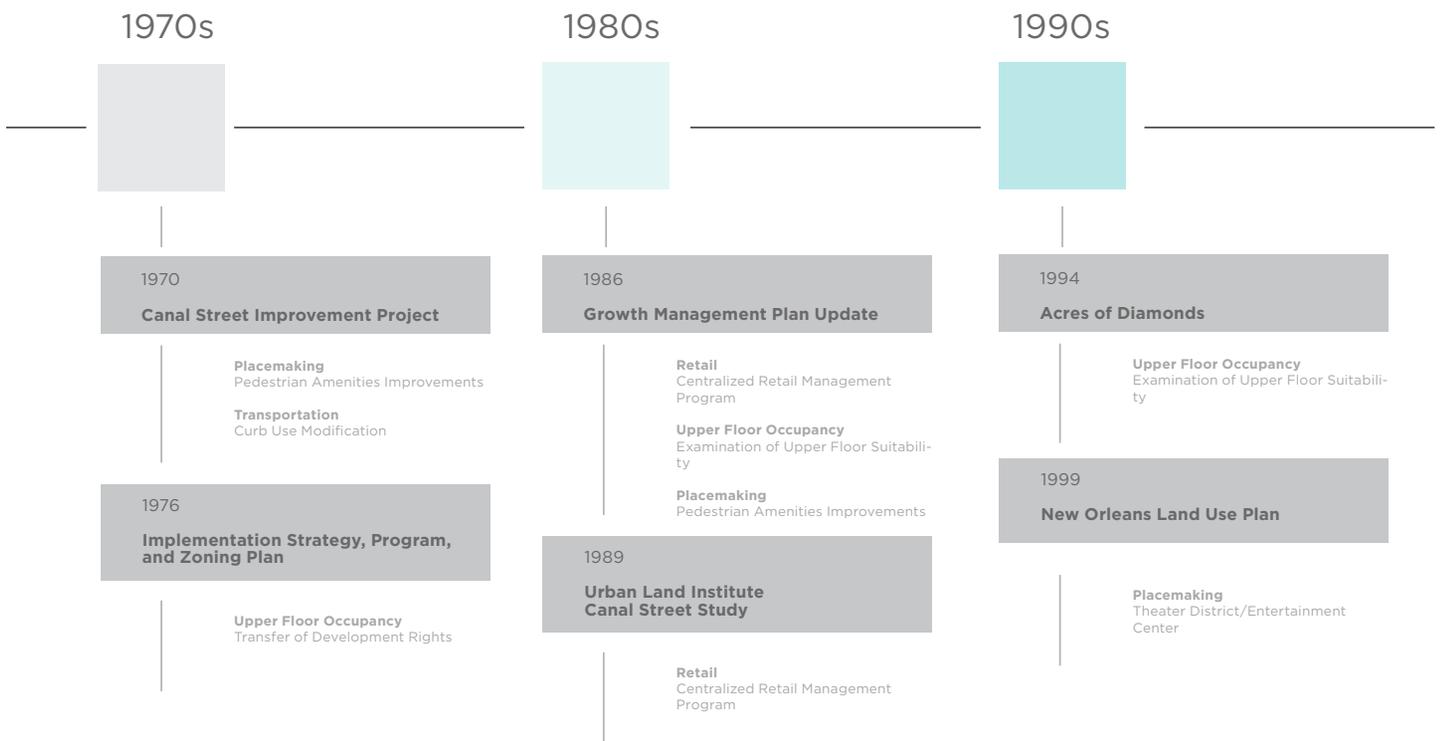
The 1985 economic downturn resulting from the “oil bust” had a swift and noticeable impact on Canal Street. Vacancies along the street increased, offices vacated their upper floor spaces, and multi-level retail was especially hard hit. Businesses on Canal Street were also faced with new competition in the retail market with the opening of One Canal Place in 1983 and the Riverwalk shortly after the World’s Fair.

The next comprehensive study on Canal Street was conducted in 2004 by the Canal Street Development Corporation (now the New Orleans Building Corporation) and the Downtown Development District.

This provided thoughtful recommendations related to placemaking, zoning, upper floor redevelopment, transportation, and opportunity sites along the corridor. Many of the 2004 study’s recommendations are still relevant today, and were advanced in the CPC’s 2018 study of Canal Street. The two most recent studies’ focus are really not much different than that of studies 50 years ago: retail attraction and retention, occupancy of vacant upper floor spaces, better curb use and transportation management, and an enhanced effort to address long standing quality of life issues.

This study update will report on the progress made towards achieving the recommendations promoted in the 2018 study, add new strategies for implementation, and discuss any barriers to achieving those goals.

Figure 1 : Timeline of Canal Street studies reviewed for the 2018 Canal Street Study



Study Goals

Council President Helena Moreno introduced Motion M-24-500 directing the City Planning Commission to revisit the CPC's 2018 Canal Street Study. More specifically, the study request asked that the Commission re-examine key recommendations, identify any ongoing or new gaps, ascertain what recommendations from the 2018 study - if any - have been implemented by the City of New Orleans or its partner agencies, analyze new aspects, and address any barriers to implementation of key recommendations to address and incorporate desired improvements.

The principal question forming the foundation of this study is very straightforward: What has been done to improve Canal Street since 2018, and how have recent global events and local tragedies impacted the street's ability to accomplish the vision established? This type of study is essential to any plan, whether for a corridor or citywide, because it

keeps ideas fresh and top of mind for agencies and decision makers. It also provides all of the stakeholders involved in the 2018 study and those stakeholders new to the street an opportunity to discuss current physical and market conditions to determine if this is still the correct path forward.

In conducting this update, CPC staff have taken this opportunity to provide more implementation details for the recommendations advanced in 2018. Many recommendations were presented as concepts, but this document aims to provide some additional concrete steps and a sequence of events for implementation.

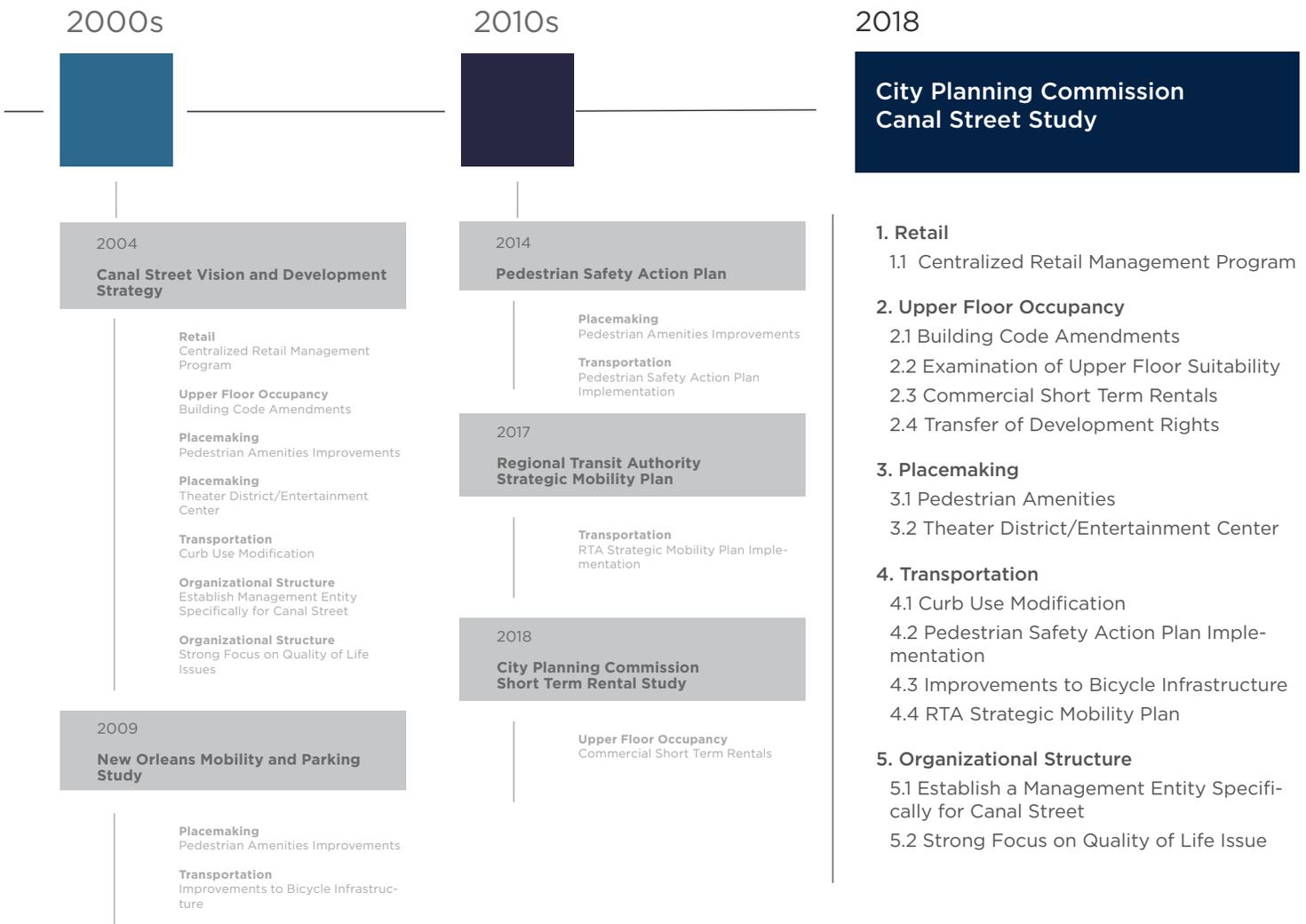


Figure 2: City Council Motion directing the CPC to conduct an update of the 2018 Canal Street Study

MOTION

NO. M-24-500

CITY HALL: September 19, 2024

BY: ^{HM} COUNCILMEMBERS MORENO, HARRIS AND KING

WHEREAS, on May 24, 2018, the City Council passed Motion M-18-200 directing the City Planning Commission to conduct a public hearing concerning previous studies and advisory reports regarding the improvement of Canal Street between Claiborne Avenue and the Mississippi River, and analyze news aspects of such; and

WHEREAS, as a result, the City Planning Commission released a report in October 2018 addressing M-18-200 entitled *Canal Street Study*; and

WHEREAS, the City Council is aware of this study and would like the City Planning Commission to reexamine key recommendations, identify any ongoing or new gaps, ascertain what recommendations from the 2018 study – if any – have been implemented by the City of New Orleans or its partner agencies, analyze new aspects, and address any barriers to implementation of key recommendations to address and incorporate desired improvements; and

WHEREAS, specifically, the Council seeks updated direction and recommendations to revitalize Canal Street including but not limited to the following areas: retail attraction to the Canal Street corridor; any impediments to spurring upper floor occupancy; placemaking opportunities encouraging walkability, multi-modal forms of transportation, consistent landscaping, lighting, seating, public safety and wayfinding that preserves historic architecture and character; transportation considerations including pedestrian safety, bicycling, bus and street car lines, and transit centers; as well as organizational structure considerations (multiple

Figure 3: States-Item Editorial Cartoon



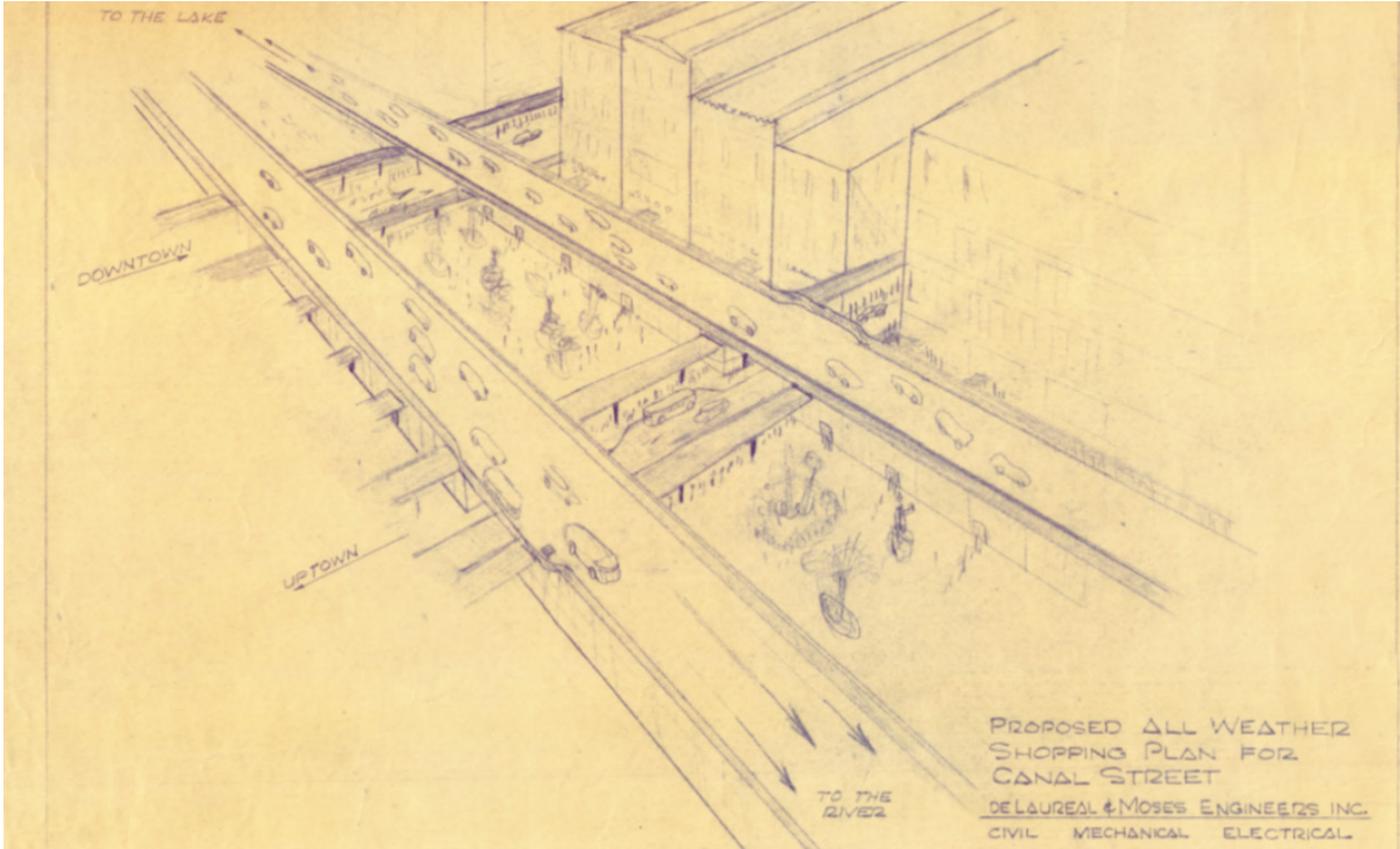
Figure 4: Canal Street Mall Rendering



Figure 5: Canal St. Vision & Development Strategy Theater District Rendering



Figure 6: All Weather Shopping Plan



Land Use Background

In 2018, the CPC staff conducted a land use survey of Canal Street between the Mississippi River and Claiborne Avenue, and surveyed major building permits between 2010 and 2018. This study update will build on the field work conducted in 2018 and attempt to provide more insight into the recent trend in land uses, specifically along the historic portions of the study area. Additionally, this section will provide a snapshot of trends in Code Enforcement violations, 311 service calls for issues within the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Works, building permits, and traffic related incidents. Much of the feedback received from stakeholders in the corridor has been focused on safety and the state of repair, and these new data aim to provide areas of focus for infrastructure and quality of life issues.

Occupational Licenses for Retail Uses

The 2018 Study focused much of its analysis on the retail mix in the corridor. At the time, 35 per cent of the entire corridor's uses were classified as retail goods establishments, but 56 per cent of its historic blocks (400 through 1000) were retail uses. For this update, the staff obtained occupational license data for businesses along these historic blocks to add an additional point in time for trends related to land use in this segment. These data reflect land uses in operation in 2013, 2017, and 2025, and provide a look into trends pre- and post-COVID-19 pandemic.

Though the number of Occupational Licenses has decreased significantly over the past 12 years, nearly all of those losses are attributed to shuttered Retail Goods Establishments, which decreased by greater than half, from 64 to 31. Other uses in the study area have remained relatively stable or have increased in number in this timeframe. Hotels and Restaurants have both experienced growth with three new establishments each. Personal Service Establishments, which include spas, massage, and nail salons, saw an increase from 2012 to 2017, but then returned to baseline by 2025. These types of businesses were especially hard hit during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the nature of the businesses requiring contact with patrons, which was restricted for some time.

Still, the loss of half of the study area's retail business is a significant finding in this dataset. The staff further isolated the types of retail uses in this time period to determine which were most impacted.

The Occupational License dataset shows that

the study area has lost nearly half of its businesses since 2012. This is a staggering finding, even after walking the corridor and hearing from stakeholders along the street. Nearly all the losses have been from business primarily selling goods such as beauty supplies, clothing, and electronics. Over 60 per cent of these businesses closed between 2012 and 2025. This confirms much of what has been discussed with stakeholders on the street and the desire to bolster the retail offerings along the street. The only retail business type to add to its total was Convenience Stores, which added one total business. Souvenir shops and Beer, Wine, and Liquor stores lost two businesses each over this time period. Combined, these three uses were much more resilient than other businesses and only experienced an 18 per cent reduction in total number of business licenses.

The disappearance of retail uses on Canal Street is a significant concern to every stakeholder on the street and is one of the primary focuses of every study of Canal Street since the 1950s. The next chapter of this report will discuss the retail attraction efforts for Canal Street, barriers to securing tenants, and retail trends that stakeholders could focus on to create a more vibrant corridor.

Figure 7: Vacant storefront at 819 Canal Street



Table 1: Occupational Licenses for retail uses located in the 400 through 1000 Blocks of Canal Street (2012, 2017, and 2025)

Retail Land Uses <i>400 to 1000 blocks of Canal Street</i>	2012		2017		2025	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Convenience	4	6%	4	9%	5	16%
Beauty Supply	4	6%	3	7%	0	0%
Beer Wine Liquor	6	10%	4	9%	4	13%
Apparel	26	41%	17	37%	10	32%
Jewelry	6	10%	6	13%	4	13%
Cameran & Photographic Supplies	1	2%	1	2%	1	3%
Hobby Toys & Games	1	2%	1	2%	0	0%
Optical Goods	1	2%	1	2%	0	0%
Music	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%
Souvenir	6	10%	4	9%	4	13%
Electronics	5	8%	4	9%	1	3%
Food	2	3%	1	2%	1	3%
Other	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%
Total	63	100%	46	100%	31	100%

Department of Public Works Service Requests

The City's 311 database shows that the Department of Public Works has received 950 requests for service since 2018. Requests to DPW can include issues related to drainage and catch basins, missing traffic signage, malfunctioning traffic signals, damaged sidewalks or streets, and street light outages. Nearly 45 per cent of all requests received during this time frame were related to streetlight outages or damaged light poles. Interestingly, over half of these requests were received throughout the year 2022. Though 2022 was a quiet hurricane season for New Orleans, this could possibly point to the City catching up on a backlog of repairs needed from the significant impacts of Hurricane Ida's 2021 landfall.

Spatially, the DPW requests are most concentrated in between the 600 and 800 blocks of Canal Street with 320 total. Streetlight outages still represent the highest number of requests in this area (105), but is closely followed by Damaged/Missing Sidewalks/Ramp or Curb Issues (76), and to a lesser degree by missing pavement markings. The concentration of lighting and sidewalk requests makes sense, being an area with the highest pedestrian traffic counts in the city, and highlights the importance of maintaining this public infrastructure to improve traffic and pedestrian safety.

Figure 8: 2018-2025 DPW 311 Service Requests



Code Enforcement Violations

Since 2018, there has been a total of 208 code enforcement violations found for various reasons in the study area. Most of these violations (71, 34%) were for Minimum Property Maintenance issues that include issues with exterior walls, windows, doors, gutters and downspouts, and decorative treatments. The second most common violation in the study area was for working without a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Districts Landmarks Commission, with a total of 36 violations. The remaining violations include 25 cases of Demolition by Neglect, 20 for Graffiti, and 14 Zoning violations.

The 900 and 1000 blocks of Canal Street have had the highest concentration of violations in the study area since 2018 with 70 total. Similar to the larger study area, the most common violations in these two blocks are Minimum Property Maintenance, graffiti, and Demolition by Neglect.

Figure 9: 2018-2025 Code Enforcement Violations

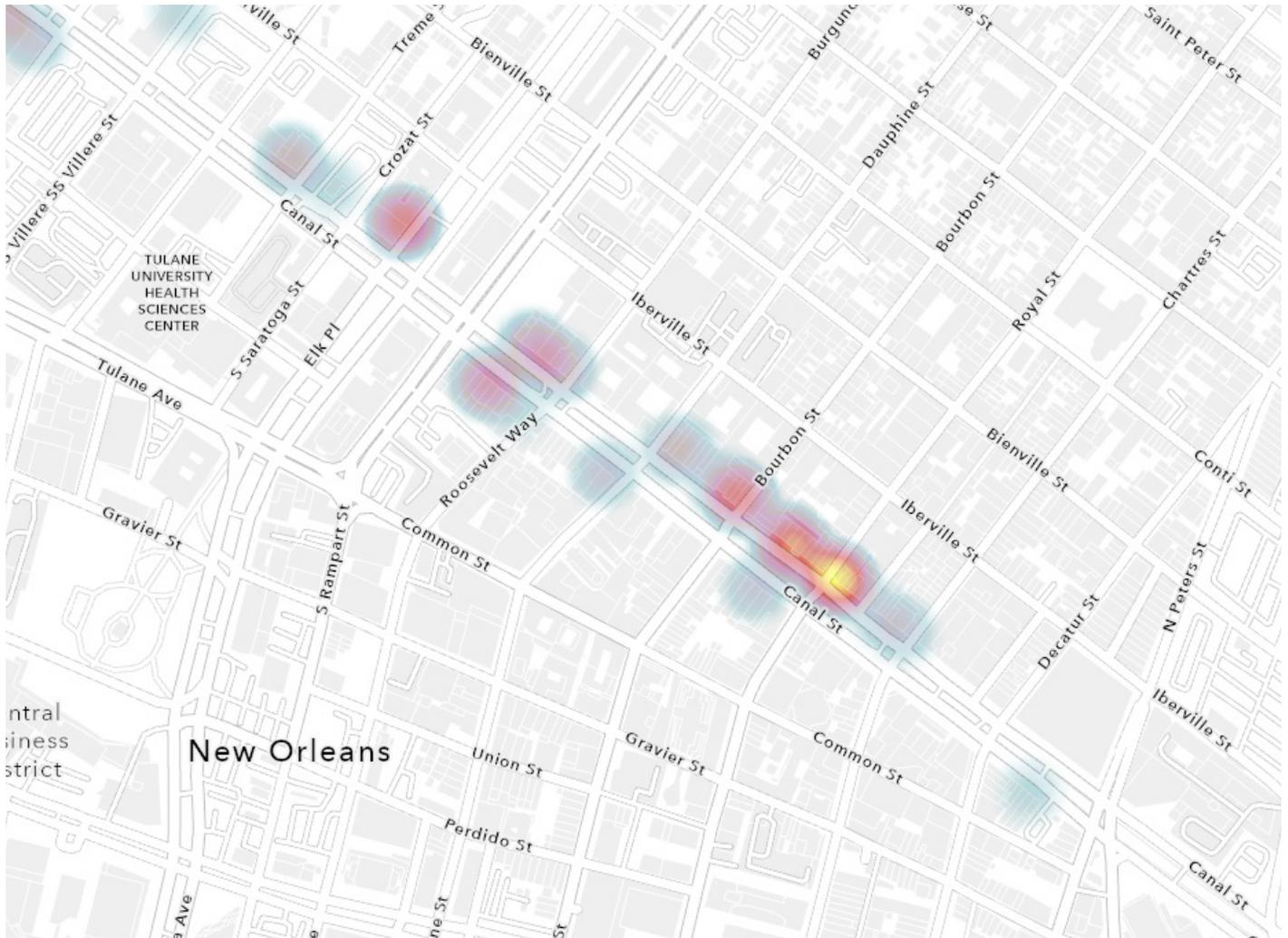


Sanitation

The City's 311 also receives requests for services handled by the Department of Sanitation. Between 2018 and 2024, Sanitation received relatively few requests for service, totalling 80 requests. Many of the requests are similar to those one might expect from a typical residential call, like the replacement of recycling and trash carts (16), large item pick-up requests (19), and missed trash service (13). Other requests, mainly Illegal Dumping, represent a major issue for the overall quality of life on the street for residents, visitors and businesses. Illegal Dumping was the most common Sanitation service request in the study area, representing 39 per cent of requests during this timeframe. Over half (58%) of Illegal Dumping requests were made for the 600 and 800 blocks of Canal Street.

The heat map below shows the concentration of requests in the 600 and 800 blocks mentioned above. It also shows a concentration of requests on both sides of the 1200 block between Basin and Crozat Streets. There were seven total requests on the 1200 block, all for benign items such as large item pick-ups (5) and recycling carts (2).

Figure 10: 2018-2024 Sanitation 311 Requests



Building Permits

City Planning staff also obtained information regarding building permits that were issued in the study area between 2018 and 2024. The staff focused on permits for significant work, or amounts greater than \$25,000, and included permits for Interior Demolition, NonStructural and Structural Renovations, and New Construction. There have been a total of 159 such permits issued since 2018. Renovations constituted 76 per cent of the building permit activity, an expected result in an area that mostly developed. The 159 permits represent a significant amount of activity in this area. This is especially true since 61 unique addresses were issued permits for significant work during this time. To put this into perspective, the above land use survey counted 31 ground floor land uses in operation in the 400 through 1000 blocks of Canal Street. In that same stretch, 50 permits have been issued for unique addresses since 2018.

The heat map below illustrates how permit activity is general spread across the historic core of Canal Street. Intense concentrations of activity can be seen at the foot of Canal Street, reflecting the recent improvements to Ceasar’s Casino, the Aquarium of the Americas, Spanish Plaza, and the new RTA ferry terminal.

Figure 11: 2018-2024 Building Permits Issued



Vehicular Crash Data

Louisiana State University's Center for Analytics & Research in Transportation Safety (CARTS) data over the ten-year period from 2013 to 2023 shows a total of 3,037 crashes along Canal Street between Claiborne Avenue and the River. Over the 10 year period, 2020 saw the lowest number of crashes with a total of 109, and 2016 saw the highest with 357. Crash counts are fairly consistent across months in each year, with some peaks in warmer months like May and October. In terms of days of the week, Fridays tend to see the most crashes, while Sundays have the fewest, reflecting traffic volumes and behavior patterns. While crashes occurred throughout the corridor, they are more frequent between Basin/Loyola and N. Peters. A heat map below shows the locations of crashes.

Of all the crashes, four were fatal injury crashes and 39 were serious injury crashes, while the rest were minor injuries and/or property damage crashes. The fatal and severe injury crashes range from zero in 2018 to 10 in 2023. The four fatal crashes all involved pedestrians and occurred at Canal Street's intersections with S. Liberty Street, Elk Place, Bourbon Street, and between Basin and Rampart Streets.

Figure 12: 2013-2023 LSU CARTS Crash Data

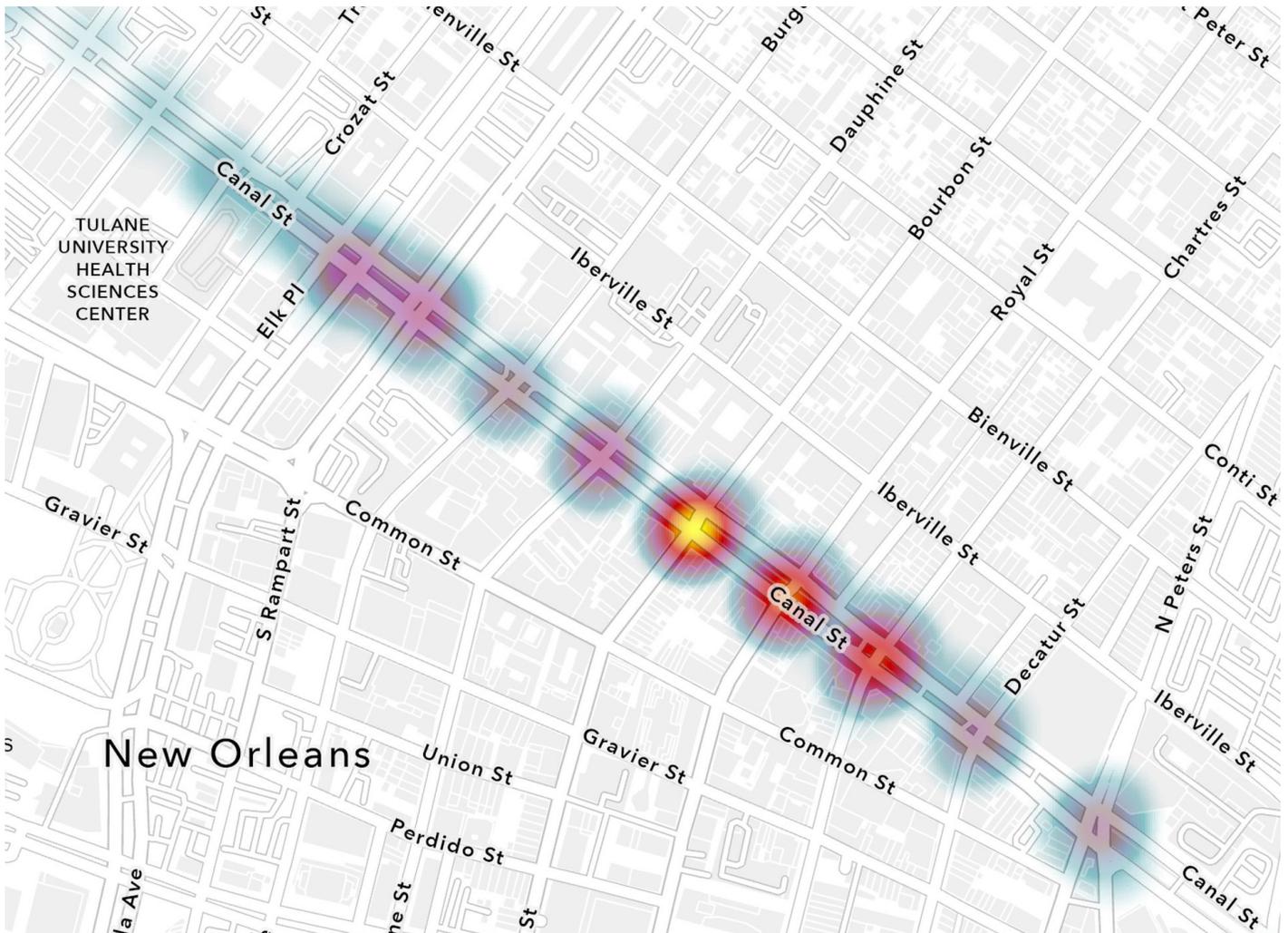


Pedestrian Involved Crash Data

LSU CARTS data provides an indicator of whether a pedestrian was involved in a crash. Canal Street has the highest pedestrian volumes in the city as people travel from the CBD to the French Quarter and transfer from the numerous transit routes that travel the corridor. Of the 3,037 crashes on the corridor between 2013 and 2023, 154 involved pedestrians. Over 80 per cent of these crashes resulted in some form of injury: 56 Possible Injuries, 52 Suspected Minor Injuries, 14 Suspected Serious Injuries, and 4 Fatal Injuries.

The heat map of pedestrian involved crashes essentially mirrors the intersections with the heaviest pedestrian loads. The intersection of Canal and Bourbon Streets pops out on this map as having the highest concentration of pedestrian involved crashes. Importantly, this data is prior to the terrorist attack which occurred in the early hours of January 1, 2026, which tragically killed 14 and injured 57. The safety of pedestrians, other vulnerable users, and this space in general has been top of mind for the City for years, but has taken on a greater sense of urgency given the events at the beginning of this year. The Transportation chapter of this report will provide a greater discussion of improvements to the public realm that can hopefully prevent the regular occurrence of significant injury to people traveling the street.

Figure 13: 2013-2023 LSU CARTS Pedestrian Involved Crash Data



CHAPTER #2

Retail

Canal Street, once a primarily residential and institutional street, began morphing into a center for commercial activity in the mid-19th Century. Royal and Chartres Streets featured buildings with narrow frontages and limited floor space, which could not accommodate the large dry goods stores emerging during this time. Canal Street presented an opportunity for these retailers to establish expansive footprints and display windows along the street.

As building techniques improved and evolved, so did the types of buildings constructed along Canal Street, from three- and four-story buildings to large office buildings and department stores.

The street ultimately succumbed to competition with suburban markets and the rise of auto-oriented shopping destinations, which were seen to be more convenient for shoppers, both in location and the ability to park their personal vehicles. The first major retailer to close was the iconic Maison Blanche department store in 1982, Godchaux's and Gus Meyer's followed in 1988, D.H. Holmes closed in 1989, and many of the smaller shops and retailers closed their doors as well, marking an end of an era for the street.

The 2018 Canal Street Study detailed the extent to which the City attempted to respond to rapid changes brought on by suburbanization and the rising popularity and availability of the private automobile. These proposals often called for the Central Business District and Canal Street to better accommodate increased vehicle uses and integrate similar suburban amenities to draw people downtown. Ideas included parking lots on the periphery of the CBD combined with shuttle or a shuttle service, elevated busways over Canal Street that doubled as weather protection for pedestrians, and marketing campaigns urging people to "Rediscover Downtown."

As the 1980s came to a close, writers at the Times Picayune were no longer commenting on the pleasures of a stroll along Canal Street. Instead the attention had turned to tales of violence, drugs and lawlessness along the street. The conversation now became, "How do we fix Canal Street?"

The most wide-ranging examination of Canal Street in the past two decades was the Canal Street

Vision and Development Strategy, published in 2004. At the time, Canal Street's status was characterized by tourist-oriented retail and clothing stores, with the bulk of the metro area's retail market served by suburban shopping malls, and the higher-end retail market served primarily by Canal Place and the Riverwalk. At the time, retail occupied 23 per cent of all occupied ground floor space on Canal Street and about 4 per cent of the total occupied inventory in the corridor. Hotels occupied 65 per cent of all occupied space and 23 per cent of ground floor space along the corridor was vacant.

Predictably, the 2004 study recommended that the retail mix on the street be enhanced. It was implied that the mix of retailers would improve based on improvements to the street and surrounding areas in the way of redeveloping the Iberville Housing Projects, renovating the upper floors of Canal Street buildings, and significant streetscape investment by the City. If more people lived in proximity to the street and felt comfortable walking along the corridor, the market would respond by providing a greater selection of goods and services.

The 2018 Study summarized all of these past efforts in detail and provided further details on the Downtown Development District's Canal Street retail strategy and a 2013 market analysis to determine the viability of a large format retailer between Basin Street and Claiborne Avenue. DDD's effort at the time were focused on providing retailers a package detailing the opportunities for doing business on Canal Street, including foot traffic data, available spaces, and potential incentives.

The 2018 Study recommended the DDD continue its recruiting efforts and update its retail strategy to reflect current occupancy, retail mix, and market conditions. The retail ecosystem has experienced dramatic changes since this time in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the further rise of online shopping, and has experienced a significant number of closures along the street as a result. This chapter will provide an updated snapshot of the retail mix along Canal Street and what has been done to implement the recommendations advanced in the 2018 study.

ACTION ITEM	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
Centralized Retail Management Program	1.1 Continue to recruit retailers by making contacts with local and national businesses, and through the development of promotional materials highlighting the street’s potential.	IN PROGRESS
	1.2 Develop a comprehensive update to the 2004 retail strategy that considers the current market on Canal Street.	NOT STARTED

Action Item 1 Centralized Retail Management Program

In 2018, CPC staff conducted a analysis of Canal Street land uses as a continuation of ongoing retail studies beginning in 2004. The study emphasized the role of DDD as integral in attracting retailers to Canal Street. Recommendations focused on continuing efforts to attract nationally recognized businesses to Canal Street while updating retail strategies to reflect current market conditions. In 2025, DDD representatives reported little change in attracting new businesses to the street as a result of several factors including impacts from COVID-19 and the prevalence of online shopping.

The DDD oversees services bounded by South Claiborne Avenue, the Pontchartrain Expressway, the Mississippi River, and Iberville Street. CPC staff met with DDD representatives to discuss overall conditions affecting existing businesses and the recruitment of potential retailers in 2025.

DDD representatives described their immediate short-term goal as a focus on well-maintained streetscape and landscaping. Recruitment of retailers has been challenging based on the dramatic changes in the market as well as issues with code enforcement and identifying business owners responsible for blighted property. Due to recent budget cuts the organization does not have a staff member dedicated to Canal Street, nor a Marketing and Economic Development position that has been crucial to retail recruitment in the past.

In recent years, there have been stakeholder meetings dedicated to Canal Street businesses comprised of a large group of property owners, and other interested parties with the subject of inquiries centered on street clean-up responsibilities and safer infrastructure. Meetings have been “ad hoc” and do

not occur with consistent frequency. The DDD has a new Board that is focused on determining critical priorities in a challenging financial environment since COVID-19. As the lead agency in fostering revitalization on Canal Street, the DDD “does not have a lot of authority in what we need to do now, including fixing sidewalks, moving the barriers, etc.” Representatives explained they have not yet met with the French Market District to determine roles, responsibilities, or overlap in relation to overseeing Canal Street.

Recruiting Retail and Investment

DDD representatives spoke about how the agency no longer has the resources to maintain such a large focus on retail tenant attraction, but continues to support the “retail ecosystem” with marketing, data, and promotional material for Downtown and Canal Street. Another obstacle is the recent dissolution of The New Orleans Business Alliance in early 2025 that has added strain on the ability to recruit businesses specifically to Canal Street. One suggestion was to support the white boxing of vacant spaces to provide seamless build-out for potential new tenants. One DDD representative added that consideration be given to remove prohibition on fast food uses as another potential solution to bring buildings back into commerce.

According to representatives, retailers have not shown interest in Canal Street because it is not marketable right now. Investors have been vocal about lack of quality-of-life enforcement as one of the biggest deterrents for new retail opportunities. Representatives suggested that an active code enforcement system of violations, adjudication, and liens could help ensure proper maintenance whether a

Façade Improvement Program

Since 2018, the following businesses have participated in DDD's Façade Improvement Program:

Retailer	Address	Type	Funding Awarded	Year
Denali	718 Canal	Storefront	\$6,000	2018
Culture	706 Canal	Signage, Storefront	\$6,000	2018
Palace Cafe	605 Canal	Awnings, Painting	\$20,000	2022
Zesty Creole Cafe	827 Canal	Full Façade Renovation	\$20,000	2024
Mayfair Hotel/Ruby Slipper	1001-1015 Canal	Full Façade Renovation	\$100,000	2024

business is operating or not. Another finding through the CPC staff's stakeholder meetings is that locals have expressed that existing retailers do not necessarily cater to their interests or needs.

DDD staff recommended that new potential business trends lean towards experiential stores like the M&M's Store, which is family-focused and interactive. These stores are located in major cities like Las Vegas, New York City, and London. Recent retail trends like showrooms are also more favorable to investors. When attending larger retail conferences, it's clear that there is more of a push for retail in suburban markets. For instance, the Live/Work/Play model is now visible on a smaller scale in suburban areas with ample parking, lower rents and a smaller footprint are factors driving retail to suburban areas.

Future Plans

DDD proposes a comprehensive strategy for the street involving all agencies with jurisdiction over its operation. Canal Street could benefit from more consistent follow-through on basic code enforcement for violations. This also includes sidewalk signs, tables, music, and quality of life enforcement. Representatives suggested a plan to provide readily available white box spaces that allow for quicker tenant build-out and marketing potential. A grant program could be offered for business owners incentivizing them to white-box their store fronts. Finally, removing the prohibition of fast-food restaurants along Canal Street was offered as a potential solution to vacant properties.

Conclusion

CPC staff believes that the DDD's retail attraction strategy should continue to be updated to reflect the current market in the New Orleans CBD and national retail trends as recommended in 2018. However, the 2004 Canal Street Retail Strategy has not been

updated to reflect today's market conditions. The DDD representatives believe "that retailers are most perceptive to newly redeveloped spaces with a white box ready for minimal tenant improvements or when they can be part of a larger, successful development project like a hotel or apartments." The agency representatives explained that local and regional competition means that Canal Street would need to look the most attractive to a business investor in comparison to other cities. Currently, given existing physical conditions, Canal Street is struggling to maintain basic services and is not competitive on the national level.

The DDD has created several development packets used when presenting to businesses interested in Canal Street that include an "Introduction to History of Canal Street," "Description of the Process," "Maps and Assessor's Records," "Architectural Renderings," "Pro Forma and Legal Structure" description. As part of DDD's Economic Development Strategy, there is a proposed initiative to develop a new asset map to market current opportunities for retail specifically upper floor redevelopment. In 2004, the DDD suggested dedicating a full-time staff member to manage and recruit businesses to Canal Street. In 2008, a full-time Retail Attraction Specialist was hired and traveled to cities like Los Angeles, New York, and Dallas to promote New Orleans' DDD as a premier location for retailers. CPC staff asked if the DDD would be interested in re-establishing a full-time staff member or, if not, what would be a more realistic approach given current market conditions. The response indicated that the best approach would be to allow all organizations including DDD, FQMD, NOPD, DPW, Code Enforcement, and RTA to coordinate efforts so that DDD may maintain its approach without limiting resources so that all available tools are used to advance the street's potential as a revitalized shopping corridor.

New Consideration

Experiential Retail

Conversations with Downtown Development District representatives about retail attraction efforts often led to a larger discussion about broader retail trends and how that impacts their work on Canal Street. The DDD was not optimistic that Canal Street would once again be lined with multi-level department stores. This format is not only fading across the country but would be difficult to accommodate floor plates of that size since most of the historic department stores have been converted to other uses. The DDD believes experiential retail provides the best opportunity for success on Canal Street. This retail format provides a more immersive and interactive experience than traditional retail outlets. The example provided several times by the DDD was the M&M's Store, which has seven locations across the globe at major destination cities including New York City, Shanghai, London, and Las Vegas. Store provide interactive exhibits, merchandise, and even personalized printing of M&Ms on-site.

C42 Citroën Showroom

The 2018 Canal Street study discussed at length the Champs Élysées in Paris as an aspirational standard for New Orleans' own ceremonial thoroughfare. The Champs Élysées stands in stark contrast to Canal Street in terms of perception, variety of retail establishments, and activity for the length of the street. It is a street people walk up and down, not just cross to visit another neighborhood. One example of experiential retail on the Champs Elysee that stood out to the CPC study team is the former C42 Citroën flagship automotive showroom located at 42 Champs Élysées. This example stands out partially due to its incredible modern design in the midst of a very historic corridor, and primarily because it provided the type of experience that draws people into a building. Even those not familiar with the brand or not interested in motorsports were drawn to the building and its contents. Its atrium presented seven platforms, one above the other, featuring the automaker's vehicles that were rotated seasonally. The building also had an enclosed slide spiraling to the ground floor. Though the establishment sold merchandise, the purpose was not to sell cars in high volumes, it was to draw people into the showroom and provide them a high-quality experience tied to the brand. This type of brand association is important for businesses

because it can leave visitors with a positive memory of the experience and the quality in which it was executed. Rotating and permanent installations provided the history of the brand, its corporate values, and the investment in people's experience at the showroom demonstrate its commitment to quality. It might be the case that few people casually strolling the Champs Élysée are shopping for cars, but the next time they are in the market, perhaps they will think about Citroën.

Dyson 5th Avenue

The Citroën example is not dissimilar to the Dyson showroom on 5th Avenue in New York City. It could be unexpected to see a brand that specializes in products such as vacuums and hairdryers to have a showroom alongside international luxury brands, but this example demonstrates that the execution is what truly matters. This Dyson showroom features a sleek storefront and floor, and provides visitors with a immersive experience into the brand's technology and components in addition to available product lines. Again, product lines are smartly displayed and available for demonstrations by knowledgeable staff, as opposed to high-volume retailers' stacked shelves of boxes. Similar to the M&M's Store example, the Dyson showroom offers instore-only products and specials, and instore product delivery and shipping, drawing local shoppers to the store.

Conclusion

The DDD's focus on experiential retail is well-grounded and seemingly a perfect fit for New Orleans. These types of showrooms do not necessarily depend on a high volume of retail sales, but trust that the brand exposure will lead to future sales. Offerings only provided at the physical store could encourage visitors to purchase in the moment, and locals to travel to the store for the item. New Orleans, and by extension Canal Street, draws in millions of visitors every year including events of national importance such as the NFL Super Bowl and Taylor Swift concerts. Canal Street is traveled by these visitors at some point during their stay, and major brands having a storefront on the street could be a significant and financially beneficial marketing tool. If a company can make a vacuum cleaner store attractive for casual passersby, then any business could be made attractive, interesting, and provide an experience that stays with people.

Figure 14: M&M's Store London



Figure 15: Citroën Vehicle Platforms



Figure 17: C42 Interior Photo



Figure 16: Former C42 Citroën Showroom



Figure 18: Dyson Store 5th Avenue New York City





CHAPTER #3

Upper Floor
Occupancy

One of the specific questions asked of the 2018 Canal Street Study was to explore how to promote the occupancy of the upper floor of Canal Street's historic buildings. These historic structures are concentrated between the 400 and 1000 blocks of Canal Street and mostly consist of three to five story structures with retail spaces on the ground floor.

Historically, many of the upper floors in the commercial buildings along Canal Street were used for storage or showrooms, and sometimes for the residential use of the shop owner. The 1970s Canal Street Development Strategy also noted that the structures constructed prior to 1850 were mostly residential rowhouses. The vacancy of the upper floors of Canal Street has been blamed on the national economic downturn of the 1980s and into the 1990s when retailers were closing their doors on Canal Street. Many of the offices that occupied some of these upper floors also relocated, perhaps to one of the many newer office towers constructed in the 1970s and 1980s.

One of the earliest explorations of how to put Canal Street's upper floors back into commerce was a study commissioned by the DDD in 1996 named *Acres of Diamonds*. This study analyzed the vacant upper floors of properties fronting Canal Street by meeting with real estate experts, surveying 2,241 downtown residents and workers (Vieux Carré, CBD, and the Warehouse District), conducting a rent-occupancy/facilities study of apartments in comparable markets, proposing architectural feasibility proposals, and exploring incentives and legal arrangements. These legal arrangements, such as covenants, include owners of smaller buildings keeping sole ownership of their ground floors and collaborate together to have part ownership, rendering the building codes and life safety regulations manageable.

The results of the study outlined the reasons for the vacancy of the upper floors, such as the economic downturn of the 1980s, which vacated once-used upper floors that were occupied with office space and some residential apartments. The plan's findings noted that smaller buildings presented a significant obstacle in terms of compliance with life safety and building code as they had challenges with

retrofitting for elevators, hallways, and lobbies as well as awkward column spacing, too few windows, and hard-to-use floor sizes. Yet since these buildings also presented attractive opportunities such as upper floors with high ceilings, safe and sound structures, and large windows, the barriers to the upper-floor renovations were ultimately economic barriers whose financial thresholds hadn't been met (i.e. the benefits did not outweigh the costs per individual structure). The plan posited that the barriers could be "surmountable" if the legal framework of providing part-ownership across owners (i.e. one property owner retains exclusive use of the ground floor but multiple owners "share" the upper floors) could be adopted, providing solutions together to alleviate these physical conditions. Renovating upper floors of multiple buildings together to create a system or network of buildings could ultimately provide a means for building to meet current life-safety and building code requirements. It also suggested an optimal deal structure between owners, rehabilitation developers, and corporate-citizen users. *Acres of Diamonds* was an excellent study done specifically to show property owners the benefits and possibilities of renovating the upper floors of their buildings. At the time residential use was proposed as it was determined to be the most economically feasible.

In 2018, staff observed the buildings between the 400 and 1000 blocks, and met with property owners to discuss how buildings' upper floors were being used. Many of the upper floors being used for storage or simply left vacant. Much of the upper floor activity was concentrated in the larger hotels and a handful of properties on this list have some form of residential unit in the upper floor of the structure. Others used space for dining rooms, special events spaces, and offices. Much of the past study involving the upper floor occupancy has involved exploring the consolidation of buildings and building code issues.

Much has changed since *Acres of Diamonds* and even the 2018 Canal Street Study. The growth of the Short Term Rental market citywide has also resulted in long-vacant spaces being renovated into lodging uses.

ACTION ITEM	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
Building Code Amendments	2.1.1 Begin conversations with building code officials and local architects to determine if amendment to fire safety code would benefit the rehabilitation of the upper floors of Canal Street and other areas in the city and state that have the same challenges.	IN PROGRESS
Examination of Upper Floor Suitability	2.1.2 Continue to provide pre-development support for Canal Street property owners which develop the vision for upper floor renovations and consolidation, and provides property owners with concrete paths towards upper floor occupancy.	COMPLETED
Commercial Short Term Rental	2.1.3 Allow Commercial Short Term Rentals in the upper floors of buildings with frontage on Canal Street between the Mississippi River and Rampart Street without a cap on the percentage of the structure they can occupy.	COMPLETED
Transfer of Development Rights	2.1.4 Develop a Transfer of Development Rights tool within the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance that allows Canal Street property owners to gain value from unused developable area in exchange for the renovation and	IN PROGRESS

Action Item 2.1

Building Code Amendments

Based on its review of past studies of Canal Street, the CPC staff recommended in the 2018 Canal Street Study to explore Building Code amendments that might alleviate issues with the reuse of the upper floor of the historic structure along the corridor. To further examine the issues these codes might present, staff researched appeal records of the Board of Building Standards and Appeals (BBSA). Along the Canal Street corridor between the years 2012 and 2024, 25 appeal applications, as it relates to general commercial requests, were received; in the context of appeals cross-referenced with properties that also referenced short-term rental use, the number of relevant properties drops to approximately 10 addresses. The BBSA dockets included in the dataset document a consistent pattern of appeals and waiver requests necessary to facilitate large-scale adaptive reuse projects.

These appeals seek to resolve conflicts between modern building codes and the physical realities of multi-story, century-old construction. The requests seek waivers primarily regarding insufficient base flood elevation, fire resistance ratings for existing structural elements, such as floor slabs, and variances on egress and exit requirements, including the retention of historically significant but non-compliant stair widths and configurations. The record detailing the appeal for the project at 1001-1015 Canal Street, which combined four buildings into one hotel, is an example of a developer needing BBSA approval to proceed with a project that could not strictly adhere to every letter of the code.

Only four (4) properties on the Canal Street corridor were identified to have BBSA requests and STR-related identifiers; these four properties are exclusively classified as hotels. There is not much overlap between the BBSA and STR related requests,

Action Item 2.2 Examination of Upper Floor Suitability

suggesting that most requests for BBSA are related to general construction and renovation projects without intention of short-term rental use. These findings could suggest that fire safety requirements have not been a significant barrier to renovating upper floor spaces for use. These data and findings could also be indicative of survivorship bias since many recent many upper floor projects have either been located in corner buildings or a combination of buildings, eliminating the need for waivers of fire safety codes.

The need for amendments to building code requirements might reveal itself for certain specific redevelopments along the corridor, but there does not appear to be a direct link between recent redevelopments and resolutions at the BBSA. Additional complicantions could arise from amending the buidng code because of its potential application to other cases around the city and state. Though this could ultimately be a path to follow in the future, there does not appear to be an immediate need to make this recommendation a priority.

In the 1990s through 2010s, the DDD provided redevelopment concepts for specific buildings along Canal Street to encourage property owners along the street to put these spaces back in commerce. Studies like Acres of Diamonds took several properties and developed plans for the structures' floor plates and strategies for dealing with combined buildings and other typical challenges present along the corridor. The CPC staff believe this work has paid off years later as the upper floors along historic Canal Street are experiencing a surge in renovation activity over the past decade. Recent examples such as the Mayfair Hotel, the Giani Building, and the Rubenstein Hotel are excellent examples of this success.

Proof of this concept is evident in the numerous examples along the corridor, leading the staff to believe that the work to be done moving forward is the continuation of incentive programs, such as the DDD's Facade Improvement Program, outreach to owners to encourage and inform them of opportuniéis with their buildings, and through the enforcement of existing property maintenace codes to ensure structures are well maintained.

Figure 19: DDD Acres of Diamonds Example Upper Floor Renovation Plan

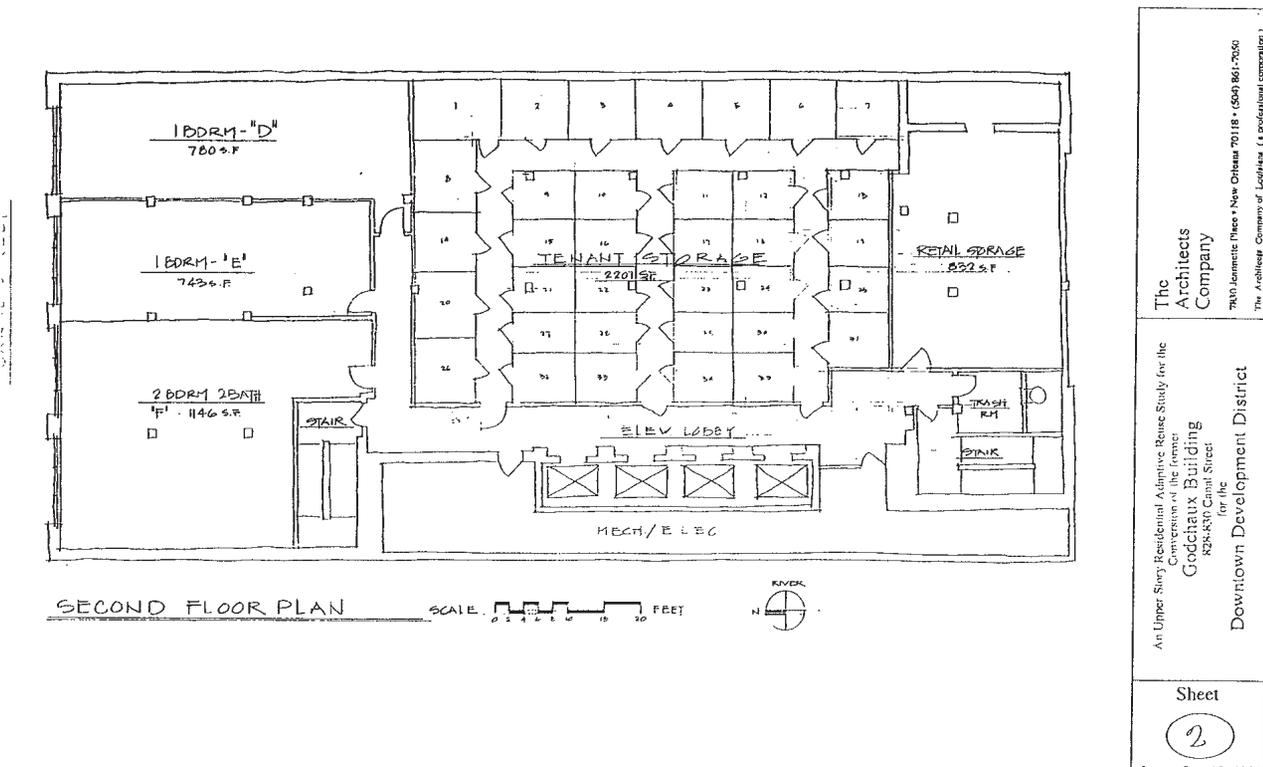


Figure 21: Recently completed Mayfair Upper Floor Renovation



Action Item 2.3

Commercial Short Term Rentals

The 2018 Canal Street Study recommended that Canal Street between the Mississippi River and Claiborne Avenue be exempt from limitation on Commercial Short Term Rentals that were applied on other non-residential properties across the city. The logic behind this suggestion was that the option to have Commercial Short Term Rentals in the study area would be an incentive for property owners to restore long vacant upper floor spaces that would be ideally located for lodging uses.

This recommendation was adopted by ordinance and the Canal Street exemption was honored in the recent Commercial Short Term Rental Interim Zoning District which prohibited the use citywide while the CPC develops new recommendations for the use.

During this study update process, the staff examined STR data along the corridor to determine the extent of Commercial Short Term Rentals in the area. Properties such as The Mayfair, the JW Marriott and

the Sheraton Hotel, along with the Saint Hotel, consistently appear in the data with active occupational licenses appropriate for their hotel classifications. The records demonstrate that these established hospitality entities are now actively engaging with the short-term rental economy, holding traditional business licenses but also featuring active listings on major short term rental platforms. Of the seventeen (17) hotels identified to have some form of a building permit record, thirteen (13) hotel properties were discovered to have active short term rental listings featured on online platforms; of which, only two (2) were shown to have valid CSTR licenses issued by the STR Administration at the time. Interestingly, two (2) properties with valid CSTR licenses did not have active listings at the time of data collection.

A number of addresses (1012, 1014, 1016, 623, 629, and 930 Canal Street) are repeatedly documented as sites for renovation and new construction permits

explicitly intended to create micro-units or multiple short term rental units, with descriptions specifying the outcome, such as “micro-unit apartments to be used for short term rentals .” For example, 1014 Canal Street lists individual CSTR license numbers for units ranging from 201 through 403, confirming a multi-story STR operation. Similarly, 600 Canal Street, an apartment building known as “The Gian Building”, shows a high number of CSTR and general STR identifiers consistent with a commercial operator managing over 35 individual units within that single address. The presence of “Certificate of Occupancy” or “Permit Issued” flags in LAMA for several of these projects confirms that this pathway from renovation to licensed commercial STR use has been successfully executed along the corridor.

The presence of management entities, such as Sonder and Roami, suggests that this sector is largely professionalized. The case of 600 Canal Street, where a large volume of STR identifiers are flagged as “Expired”, illustrates the challenge of operators ignoring the compliance of local licensing regulations.

The dataset highlights instances where properties or addresses involved in STR conversions are also associated with records mentioning “Healthy Homes “ and affordable multi-family occupational applications. Four (4) addresses (1014, 1113, 1201, and 1535 Canal Street) show this overlap, where permits to convert floors into multiple units or STR units appear concurrently with filings referencing programs intended to support affordable or long-term residential housing.

The CPC has marked this recommendation as “Complete” because the Canal Street exemption has been codified and appears to have been utilized in the manner intended. Upper floors have been renovated and occupied since, and whether classified as hotel or STR, the flexibility and stability in this use allowance is believed to be a positive for those investing in the corridor.

The CPC is in the process of completing its study of Commercial Short Term Rentals use allowances in addition to other lodging uses within the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. This study is due to be presented in late 2025 and will present recommended use standards and appropriate zoning districts citywide for Commercial Short Term Rentals, Hotels, Bed & Breakfasts, Motels, Hostels, and Timeshares. The staff expects to recommend the same Commercial Short Term Rental allowances for Canal Street as has been in place for the past seven years, and believe these to have been proven to be a successful incentive for redevelopment on the corridor.

Figure 22: The Gian Building



Action Item 2.4

Transfer of Development Rights

The New Orleans City Council passed Motion M-19-195 on May 9, 2019. Motion M-19-195 directs the City Planning Commission (CPC) to conduct a study providing recommendations for a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) mechanism in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO), as described in the 2018 Canal Street Study, to facilitate the renovation and maintenance of historic structures within the Central Business Districts (CBDs). Specifically, this motion targeted improvement of Canal Street between Claiborne Avenue and the Mississippi River.

The study has sat mostly complete since 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. A primary consideration for the delay was the economic recovery every city and industry were facing at the time. A topic with such a foundation in demand and development truly needed to understand the market shifts the city would face. With the renewed interest in pursuing the recommendations of the 2018 Canal Street Study, the time seems appropriate for a thoughtful consideration of this recommendation. This study will reintroduce the concept briefly with the expectation that a full study will be released soon.

Every lot of record has a zoning envelope: the maximum legal developable area of a structure on the lot. However, lots developed with historic structures such as those fronting Canal Street are often not developed to the limits of their zoning envelope. The difference between a parcel's actual building envelope and its allowable zoning envelope constitutes unused development rights.

A TDR program creates the infrastructure for unused development rights to be transferred from "sending sites" to "receiving sites." In this quid pro quo arrangement, the owner of the sending site relinquishes some development rights, and the owner of the receiving site gains these rights to develop beyond the receiving site's original zoning envelope. TDR is a market-based mechanism. However, by designating sending and receiving sites, jurisdictions can use TDR to direct growth according to principles that may not be considered by private parties.

Often, the development potential of historic structures is limited by regulations or structural considerations, rendering their development rights perpetually under-actualized. A TDR program that designates historic properties as sending sites can tap into those unused development rights and coordinate them with development demand of receiving

sites. Jurisdictions can require that all or some of the sending site's profits are reinvested into the historic structure. Conversely, the additional development rights purchased by receiving sites can sometimes make a development's pro forma viable.

TDR allows jurisdictions to manage conflicts between historic preservation and development pressure more efficiently. A TDR program could be instrumental in preserving historic structures on Canal Street by allowing property owners to monetize and sell their unused development rights while requiring that profits be reinvested back into the historic property. TDR may also uniquely appeal to developers because it is less political and unpredictable than other types of land use entitlement processes.

The Canal Street corridor suffers from numerous vacancies and underutilized space above ground floor commercial uses. These upper stories could be rehabilitated through the sale of development rights. Receiving sites in the CBDs could then develop more easily by making use of those rights to expand a site's building envelope beyond what is permitted by its base zoning district.

In 1972 the State of Louisiana adopted legislation that allowed for a TDR program to be created in the city of New Orleans. The statute was revised in 1975, 1991, and 2011. The state enabling legislation limits the location of a sending site to historic structures and those with "aesthetic interests" located within the CBDs. Receiving sites must also be located in the CBDs. The statute gives the City of New Orleans the right to put further limitations on the conditions of the transfer. The statute requires that regulations adopted by the municipality be uniform within each district, meaning that all properties within an individual zoning district must be regulated in the same way.

The staff did not find any evidence that the former TDR system had been used and the system was not adopted with the current CZO in 2015. It is unclear why the former system was never actualized, but one possible reason is the number of other bonus allowances available to developers in the CBD Districts under the 1970 CZO. Many developments received floor area bonuses for incorporating components like arcades and residential uses. Securing these bonuses would have been much easier, and possibly cheaper, than coordinating with a separate property owner to apply for a TDR.

TDR can be used as a tool to support historic and ecological preservation. However, TDR is not the only

Figure 23: Bird's Eye Visualization of current Canal Street structure with heights over (red) and under (green) the 120-foot height limit



method by which a property owner can be compensated for unused development rights associated with their historically significant property. Programs currently exist such as the DDD façade Grant Program, Conservation Easements, Historic Tax Credits, and Zoning Lot Mergers (ZLMs).

The CPC staff believe there is a path forward to adopt improved TDR recommendations that could

benefit potential developers, current property and business owners, and attract new investment to the corridor. In this market, it will not likely solve all gridlock in the development ecosystem on Canal Street, but it could provide an additional tool that useful and beneficial for those looking to do business on the street.



CHAPTER #4

Placemaking

Placemaking has been defined as efforts to reconceive and reinvent public spaces in a way that capitalizes on a place's assets and identity to create a space that is valuable and accessible to the community at large, including people of all ages, characteristics, and backgrounds. As part of these efforts, a community examines a place holistically, attending to its urban design, its land use patterns, and its cultural and social role in the community to achieve a positive transformation. The past planning efforts conducted for Canal Street have consistently emphasized the importance of the physical character of the public and private spaces along the street.

Though earlier planning initiatives such as The Prospectus for Revitalizing New Orleans' Central Business District (1957) did contemplate bringing certain amenities that might better define Canal Street as its own unique place, the main issue being solved in that study was the expansion of traffic capacity to stem the loss of businesses and people to suburban communities. The 1970 Canal Street Improvement Plan was the first study reviewed by the CPC that truly emphasized improvements to the Canal Street public realm that would create a better sense of place.

One of the main points of emphasis in the Improvement Project was the better sorting of items typically placed in the pedestrian realm at the time, including newspaper stands, mailboxes, and trash. These common features were suggested to be consolidated into predictable locations with standard designs specific to Canal Street. The plan also took exception to certain issues in the private realm, in particular signage: "It is almost as though some buildings exist solely to support the signs which adorn their facades and perch upon their roofs...While in some instances, the large signs mercifully obscure the shabbiness of obsolete buildings."

The 1980s brought significant changes to Canal Street in terms of placemaking. Streetscape improvements greatly enhanced the appearance of the street and pedestrian areas were improved, making Canal Street stand out even more as its own unique place. Canal Street was also designated as a local historic district in 1984, ensuring that its historic character would be protected from the further encroachment of large scale developments constructed in the decade prior.

The 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy provided the most comprehensive and modern set of recommendations for better establishing a unique sense of place along Canal Street. The plan recommended an expanded pedestrian area, enhanced lighting, landscaping, seating, and street art. The intersection of Canal and Bourbon Streets was highlighted as a priority for these interventions to underscore its importance as a destination. Recommendations for this intersection included shade structures, a change in paving, and information kiosks.

In addition to detailing the recommendations of past planning efforts, the 2018 Canal Street Study examined several other notable streets that are generally regarded as unique and of local and even global significance. The examples from that study included the Champs Élysées in Paris, Times Square in New York City, and a lesser known but practical example in Raleigh, North Carolina. All of these case studies agree on a consistent set of overarching principles: encourage walkability, support multi-modal forms of transit, create consistent landscaping, lighting, seating, and wayfinding strategies, and preserve the historic architecture and character of the districts.

In more recent years, Canal Street has experienced a number of similar improvements. The streetscape has been enhanced through new sidewalk treatments, street furniture, landscaping, and curb extensions to expand the pedestrian realm. Additionally, a new zoning ordinance was adopted in 2015, which includes regulations that seek to create an engaging, lively Canal Street by requiring active ground floor uses such as restaurants, retail stores, and cultural facilities. Building facades have been restored with the assistance of the DDD's facade grant programs. The theater node at Canal Street's intersections with Elk Place/Basin Street and Rampart Street has been restored with the post-Hurricane Katrina return of the Saenger, Joy, and Orpheum Theaters. Though all of these improvements have been made, the 2018 Study submitted detailed recommendations for improvements to pedestrian amenities and the theater district in particular to further establish and improve the sense of place along Canal Street.

ACTION ITEM	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
Pedestrian Amenities Improvements	<p>3.1.1 Demarcate outdoor seating and other uses that businesses can claim in the public ROW and create a set of design and use standards so they do not create congestion in pedestrian zones, but rather positive experiences.</p>	IN PROGRESS
	<p>3.1.2 Codify and demarcate specific areas for pop-up cafes and shops, galleries, and mobile vendors to activate more isolated parts of the retail corridor, especially in the short term.</p>	IN PROGRESS
	<p>3.1.3 Promote the installation of awnings, canopies, balconies, and galleries at locations where they are architecturally appropriate.</p>	NOT STARTED
	<p>3.1.4 Additional streetscape improvements including improved wayfinding, and additional lighting and public seating.</p>	NOT STARTED
	<p>3.1.5 Large planters and other landscaping interventions. Explore conversions of underutilized portions of ROW into green infrastructure or pocket parks.</p>	NOT STARTED
	<p>3.1.6 Infrastructure for potential festivals on the street (that work in tandem with parades).</p>	NOT STARTED
Theater District/ Entertainment Center	<p>3.2.1 Supplement existing zoning regulations to promote live entertainment venues and other appropriate uses the support an active Theater District.</p>	NOT STARTED
	<p>3.2.2 Create additional special events on Canal Street, which would be marketed and managed by a public entity or main street organization.</p>	IN PROGRESS

Action Item 1

Pedestrian Amenities Improvements

Significant changes have been made at the river side of Canal Street since 2018. The former World Trade Center, now named the Four Seasons Hotel and Private Residences, has been renovated and its grounds designed with a public park that allows access to the Riverwalk and Spanish Plaza. A newly constructed Ferry Terminal sits adjacent to The Audubon Aquarium and Insectarium that underwent renovations recently and added a mural that faces Canal Street. Another improvement is the former Harrah's, now Caesar's, Casino at the corner of Canal and S. Peter Streets. These improvements have revitalized the Riverfront as a major tourist destination.

Historically, the re-envisioning of Canal Street has primarily been overseen by the DDD which oversees landscaping of the neutral ground and manages the care of palm trees. The organization would like to pass those obligations to the City. However, placemaking recommendations fall under several agencies whose responsibilities need to be clearly delineated in terms of operational structure. Several recommendations have not been met since 2018 and include additional landscaping and improvements to the streetscape, many of the same challenges mentioned by stakeholders and City agencies. Future considerations related to the streetscape will be discussed in greater detail in the Transportation chapter of this report.

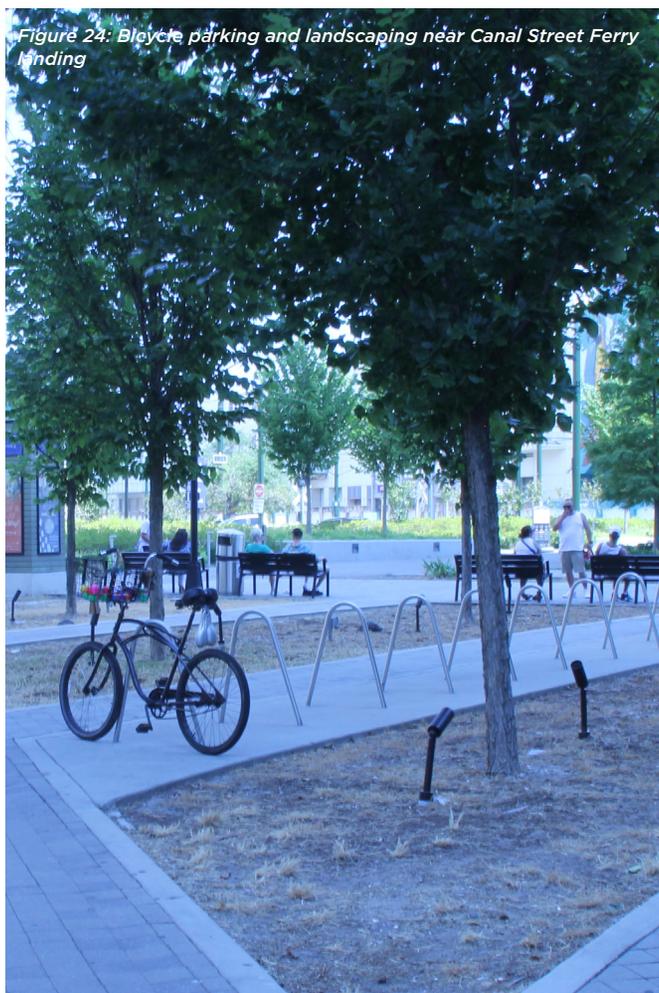


Figure 24: Bicycle parking and landscaping near Canal Street Ferry landing

Action Item 2

Theater District/Entertainment Center

In recent years, the restoration of the Saenger, Joy, and Orpheum theaters have revitalized the Theater District. One concern of stakeholders is to not oversaturate the area with additional theaters, but encourage family-oriented entertainment or retail destinations. Many of the recommendations can be linked to the preservation of the Saenger Theater which serves as an anchor to Canal Street. CPC proposes a specific signage and use amendments that aim to encourage businesses to use classic signs that reflect historic character of the street, and provide for a greater allowance of uses that might find underutilized theater or upper floor spaces ideal for their businesses. The following pages will provide details for these design and use recommendations. Additionally, an organization named Celebrate Canal! has mostly assumed the lead of organizing and hosting new special events on the corridor. Its special events work and other successes and vision will be discussed in the Organizational Structure chapter of this report.



Figure 25: The Saenger Theater

New Consideration #1 Enhanced Signage Allowances

The purpose of this analysis is to address current signage regulations that limit allowances for signs along Canal Street. The CPC staff is re-examining recommendations made for “Placemaking” which include improvements to the streetscape, urban design, and creating greater opportunities for visibility of entertainment in the Theater District. In the late 1970’s the City of New Orleans Business District Implementation Strategy, Program and Zoning Plan (1976) predicted a development surge and, as a result, initiated preventive measures to eliminate sign clutter on Canal Street and keep advertisements from spreading into adjacent areas of the city.

Canal Street has been developed with high rises towards the river side of Canal Street and between Rampart Street and Claiborne Avenue, while many of the historic properties in between still remain. The 1980’s saw a rise in companies not complying with various advertising regulations. In response, the City created strict sign regulations citywide. A “re-envisioning” of Canal Street along with progress made since the 2018 study suggests that sign regulations, which have remained relatively untouched for decades, be re-examined. Stakeholders and local residents consistently recall the look of Canal Street with neon lighting and classic signs as part of their experience of the street, and this is the staff’s inspiration when examining the current regulations.

This study aims to address how flexibility of sign regulations may have a positive impact on the pedestrian experience along Canal Street and better address the 2018 Canal Street recommendations for pedestrian-focused improvements. Bold, classic, and recognizable signage has historically represented the characteristic appeal of entertainment, retail, hotels, and restaurants along the Canal Street corridor. A visual identity is part of the historical significance of signage and lighting along Canal Street and dates to the 1880’s as a trademark of the street.

In 2018, CPC staff recommended enhancing the pedestrian experience specifically in the Theater District at the intersection of Canal and Rampart Streets. After the tragic collapse of the Hard Rock Hotel in 2019, along with abandoned redevelopment plans for the State Palace Theater, this intersection has been a challenge for re-development that would help this node realize its full potential. Since then, a lack of infrastructure and adequate lighting has had a

negative impact on local residents and visitors alike. Case studies show that a more pedestrian-focused space has been successful in other major cities.

For instance, findings indicate that as Times Square has evolved to become increasingly pedestrian-focused, the public perception has improved. The area underwent a vast redesign after the closure of car traffic on Broadway in 2009 that reclaimed 2.5 acres of pedestrian-only space, transforming a congested roadway into a world-class civic space once it was completed in 2016. Since its completion, there’s been a 20 per cent decrease in crime, 40 per cent decrease in pedestrian injuries, and a 60 per cent decrease in pollution. Reviews have revealed overwhelming positive marks, with over 80 per cent of visitors agreeing the pedestrian plaza makes Times Square feel safer, while 93 per cent saying it’s more pleasant civic space for the 330,000 people that pass through the area each day (mixture of 56% locals and 44% visitors).

Local stakeholders generally have a negative perception of Canal Street near the theaters due to safety and lighting concerns. Based on the 2018 study recommendations, CPC proposes to update signage regulations by granting greater allowances for historically appropriate signs reflective of the street’s history. The goal of this Canal Street proposal is to promote installation of awnings and canopies for weather protection, and to encourage sign programs which provide attractive combinations of styles, color, and materials. These efforts in combination with the DDD’s Façade Improvement Micro Grant Program will help to incentivize more businesses to improve facades with historically appropriate signs.

Amendments to current sign regulations should support the allowance of historically appropriate signage fronting Canal Street. The Canal Street corridor seeks to restore signage design characteristics of the mid-20th century which gave Canal Street an identity as a commercial and entertainment destination. The allowances should provide for larger scale signage in a variety of midcentury styles. Locals frequently recall this golden era of the streetscape which is evidenced in many signs like the Saenger Theater’s recognizable marquee sign which is a modern interpretation of the original sign of the 1920’s.

The following pages will discuss recent case studies on Canal Street and provide examples of notable signage in the area the could help to establish parameters for an updated package of sign regulations for Canal Street.

Figure 26: Canal Street in its neon glory, circa 1952



Photo Credit: Justin Locke, National Geographic Creative

Figure 27: Warehouse, The Coca Cola Company, 123 Canal Street



Photo Credit: Charles L. Franck Studio Collection at The Historic New Orleans Collection

Figure 28: 1955 "Du" Magazine cover featuring Canal Street

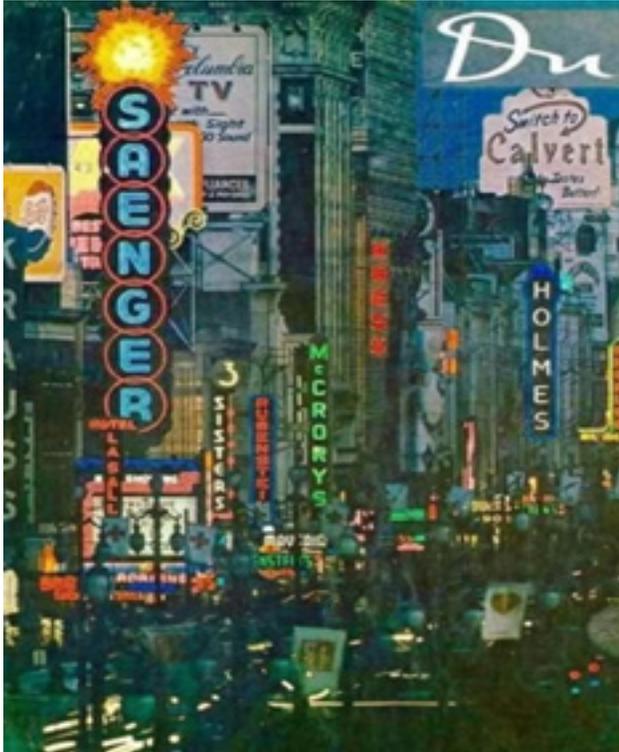


Figure 29: Brass Rail, 1316 Canal Street, Display Window, Night View



Photo Credit: Charles L. Franck Collection at The Historic new Orleans Collection

Figure 30: D.H. Holmes with Christmas Decorations

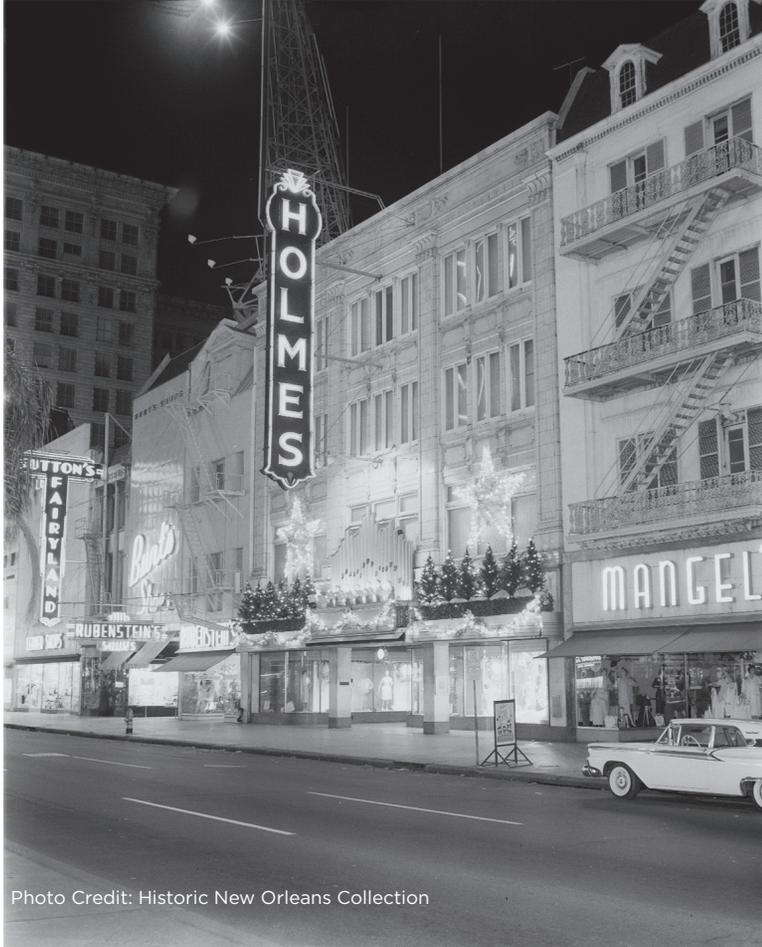


Photo Credit: Historic New Orleans Collection

Figure 31: Adam Sportswear, 1004 Canal Street

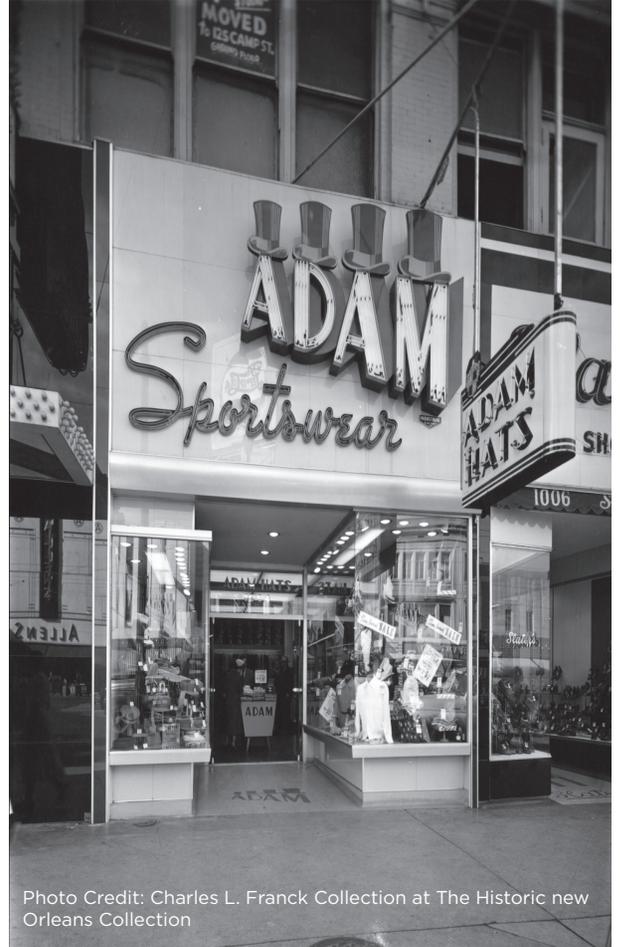


Photo Credit: Charles L. Franck Collection at The Historic new Orleans Collection

Projecting/Blade Signs

Article 24 of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance differentiates each type of sign by definition. All CBD Districts included in the proposed amendments permit the use of projecting signs or blade signs, defined as, “A sign attached to and projecting more than eighteen (18) inches from the face of a wall or building, but does not project above the parapet or eave line of the building.” One current example on Canal Street are two projecting signs, both located at 600 Canal Street at its intersection with Camp Street. The Giani sign (22.9 sf) located on 5th floor and Praline Sign (22.9 sf) located on the 7th floor were approved in 2016, and comply with zoning regulations for the CBD-2 District in accordance with Article 24, Section 24.11.D Projecting signs – Maximum Area 32 sf.

The building at 600 Canal Street is 95 feet in height. Each sign is 2 feet 4 inches in width and 9 feet 10 inches in height. The scale of each sign is approximately 11 per cent of the overall height of the building.

If both signs were the allowable maximum area of 32 square feet rather than 22.9 square feet, the size of the signs would not show a perceptible difference in proportion to the building’s height. Whereas the Athletes Foot and Krystal projecting signs are approximately 54% and 69% of the overall height of each business, respectively. The scale and proportion of each is representative of the character of stylized blade signs along Canal Street. The CPC staff recommend Article 24.11.D. Projecting Sign, be modified from Maximum Area of 32 sf to 30 per cent of the overall height of the building at its primary street facade.

Classic Signs

Designated Classic Signs can be found across the city. The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance does not explicitly define a “Classic Sign”; however, most classic signs have typical characteristics that include neon lighting, and design elements including traditional typography, fonts, and designs that generally stand the test of time and serve a remnant of the past or iconic symbol. Article 24.15.A Classic Signs states that a classic sign designation must “Be at least twenty-five (25) years old or an exact replica of an original sign where the combined age of the duplicate and original sign is at least twenty-five (25) years.”

The potential amendments propose that Classic Signs should be encouraged for all existing and new

developments, therefore, no minimum age would be required for a Classic Sign on any building including new construction. All applications for Classic Signs will be overseen by the HDLC and comply with all design guidelines and sign regulations.

Roof Signs

Past roof sign advertisements are one of the more recognizable attributes of Canal Street. Photos in the New Orleans City Archives & Special Collections show a proliferation of roof top signs from the 1910’s through the 1960’s. Starting with the City of New Orleans Business District Implementation Strategy, Program and Zoning Plan (1976) greater protections were recommended for historic structures along Canal Street. The strategy aimed at creating greater permissions for height and scale at the “anchors” of the corridor that were developed into the Audubon Aquarium, Canal Place, and Caesar’s Casino on one end and the Theater District on the other, bookending the historic retail in between.

The Implementation Strategy predicted a surge in downtown development that resulted in recommendations to reduce sign clutter on Canal Street. This included a blanket prohibition of roof signs flashing signs and projecting signs to appeal to more retail shoppers. However, retail shopping has changed dramatically in the last decade, particularly as a result of the convenience of online shopping. Although this section aims to focus on signage allowances, staff also recognize the ever-increasing demand for City regulations to reflect changes in market conditions and remain flexible. Sign prohibitions enacted in the 1970’s still exist today and draw attention to the need for a re-envisioning of Canal Street through a modern lens.

The Palace Café and Astor Hotel roof signs show advertisements for the respective businesses on site with designs similar in style to early 20th century signs. In order to incentivize new and existing businesses, the CPC staff recommends roof signs be permitted under strict guidelines. For instance, only historic buildings no greater than five stories would be considered for a roof sign. This is based on most historic buildings averaging four to five stories in height. Proposed roof signs should reflect the historical significance and architectural time period of the original structure.

Using the Palace Café sign dimensions as a reference, the building is roughly 54 feet in width by

65 feet in height with a façade totaling 3,510 sf. The sign is approximately 25 feet in width by 22 feet in height totaling approximately 550 sf of signage. That would calculate to roughly 16 per cent of signage based on the square footage of the façade fronting Canal Street. Using this metric, the total square footage of the Astor Hotel Façade is 5,985 sf and the roof sign is at 160 sf totaling roughly 3 per cent of the overall façade.

Existing roof signs on Canal Street can serve as examples for appropriate design, scale, dimension, and lighting of advertisements along with intentional quality and consistency representative of the history of Canal Street.

Digital Signs

The 2018 Canal Street Study evaluated case studies of Times Square as a way to show how bold alterations to a city's most famous street, can "illustrate exciting possibilities for corridor transformation at different scales: from being intentional about the quantity, quality, and consistency of seating and lighting schemes to the significant alterations of the public rights-of-way that resulted in more and better real estate for pedestrians and their experiences as well as less vehicular traffic congestion." The redevelopment of Times Square in comparison to a re-envisioning of Canal Street is radically different in terms of population density, more intense traffic demand, and its significantly different architecture and configuration. However, the case study provides compelling redesign lessons learned that can generate ideas on how to enhance Canal Street. Most significantly by introducing digital signs at the anchor sites of Canal Street.

For instance, both the Theater District and River side of Canal Street focus on entertainment and retail much like the visitor focused commerce in and retail in the Special Midtown District in Manhattan. Both corridors have had their land use and zoning oriented to these economic drivers. The zoning for The Special Midtown District regulates architectural elements that respect the historic context to maintain and encourage the unified character and appearance of the corridor, such as illuminated signs integrated into existing buildings' architecture. The staff would suggest that digital signage not obscure any significant architectural elements on buildings. Theaters often have a substantial amount of blank wall space, so this could provide an opportunity to utilize these now blank spaces to create something interesting and inventive.

The foot of Canal Street differs greatly with the

presence of modern architecture and larger high rise commercial developments. The Caesar's Casino and the Audubon Aquarium draw large numbers of visitors and families as major destination points in the city and could be an opportunity for digital signs that illuminate the surrounding area. Stakeholders have expressed concern about the enforcement of sign regulations, leading to many businesses having oversized signs or lacking sign permits. Although the study is recommending greater allowances for signage it is reasonable to require greater enforcement of these regulations if approved.

Figure 32: Former Palace Cafe building, 605 Canal Street



New Consideration #2 Expanded Use Allowances

The 2018 study explains the origins of how zoning designations came to reflect uses along Canal Street starting with its initial Industrial and High Building zoning designations in 1929. Industrial zones reflected the commerce along the Mississippi River and businesses that spanned from Lower Canal Street to Upper Canal Street. In the 1950's the Central Business Districts were established and had boundaries along Canal Street from South Claiborne to Magazine Street. The area near the riverfront maintained a light industrial district designation. Limitations of the 1929 and 1953 zoning designations are evident in that there was only a distinction between the industrial riverfront and other "tall buildings" that included commercial and industrial areas away from the river. The 1970's Growth Management Plan intended to support mixed uses along the riverfront with a concentration of offices, residential and commercial uses as the industrial uses moved out of the properties closest to the river.

In 1973, Upper Canal and Lower Canal became four Central Business Districts, CBD-2, CBD-3, CBD-4, and CBD-7. Although the configuration of the districts has changed over the decades, the four districts still define Canal Street zoning districts today. At the Claiborne Avenue end of Canal Street, the CBD-7 Bio-Science District supports the expansion of bio-science campuses that include lots between Saratoga and LaSalle Streets that are owned by Tulane University. The area encompassing the Saenger, Loews and Joy theaters is known as the CBD-3 Cultural Arts District and was created to promote this location as a cultural destination. The CBD-2 Historic Commercial and Mixed-Use District of Lower Canal Street was largely developed to maintain the historic scale and height of the buildings and encourage ground-floor retail uses for new developments. Lastly, the CBD-4 Exposition District is intended for large destination uses such as One Canal Place, Audubon Aquarium, Four Seasons Hotel and Residences, and Ceasars Hotel and Casino.

The Master Plan (2010) outlines the specific goals for each CBD District with the overall objective to focus on zoning that introduced redevelopment opportunities towards the riverfront and more restrictive zoning along the historic portions of Canal Street. One important consideration is the specific use restrictions intended to preserve the active ground floors of the historic portion of Lower Canal Street. For

instance, any lot that abuts Canal Street (within 100 feet) must utilize the frontage of ground floor businesses and have accessible public entrances. Many ground floors businesses on Canal Street are still occupied by retail uses; however, the retail market has changed quite dramatically since 2018. The vacancies found in the study area represent opportunities for changes in use. The Future Land Use descriptions for the study area are provided below:

MIXED-USE DOWNTOWN (CBD-2 & CBD-3)

The Mixed-Use Downtown category support a "live-work-play" environment which builds off of the concentration of office uses in the CBD and promotes residential and services that support a dense area with a mix of uses.

Goal: Support and encourage a vibrant, 24-hour live-work-play environment in the Central Business District and provide areas to support a high-density office corridor.

Range of Uses: High density office, multifamily residential, hotel, government, institutional entertainment, and retail uses. No new heavy or light industrial uses allowed. Agricultural, stormwater management, and supporting public recreational and community facilities are allowed. Transit and transportation facilities are allowed.

Development Character: The scale of new development will vary depending on location within the CBD and will be determined by appropriate height and massing, particularly near historic districts. Incorporate risk reduction and adaptation strategies in the built environment.

MIXED-USE HEALTH/LIFE SCIENCES NEIGHBORHOOD (CBD-7)

The Mixed-Use/Life Sciences Neighborhood category promotes the expansion of the hospital facilities and related uses with a mix of residential and other services for the convenience of workers and residents of this area.

Goal: Provide areas for hospitals, offices, supportive retail and residential uses to create a vibrant neighborhood center with job growth in the medical care and research sectors.

Range of Uses: Hospitals, offices, residential (single-family, two-family, and multifamily along major corridors), and supporting neighborhood retail/services. Agricultural, stormwater management, and supporting public recreational and community facilities are allowed.

Development Character: The scale of new development will vary depending on location and will be determined by the appropriate height and massing. Special attention needed to ensure appropriate transitions from higher density corridors (i.e., Tulane Avenue) to surrounding historic, low-density neighborhoods. Incorporate risk reduction and adaptation strategies in the built environment.

DOWNTOWN EXPOSITION (CBD-4)

The Downtown Exposition and Mixed-Use Downtown Future Land Use Categories both promote a vibrant, dense development

pattern. The Downtown Exposition category is tailored towards large visitor-oriented and event-based venues including the Riverwalk and Casino.

Goal: To provide areas of downtown that will house and support high-volume visitor traffic at major trade and spectator venues including the Convention Center and Superdome.

Range of Uses: Convention center, sports/entertainment arenas/complexes and supporting uses such as hotels, and office space within the CBD. Transit and transportation facilities are allowed. Residential, agricultural, and stormwater management uses are also allowed.

Development Character: The scale (height and massing) of new development will vary depending on location and proximity to historic districts. Incorporate risk reduction and adaptation strategies in the built environment. The Downtown Exposition and Mixed-Use Downtown Future Land Use Categories both promote a vibrant, dense development pattern. The Downtown Exposition category is tailored towards large visitor-oriented and event-based venues including the Convention Center and Harrah's Casino. The Mixed-Use Downtown category support a "live-work-play" environment which builds off of the concentration of office uses in the CBD and promotes residential and services that support a dense area with a mix of uses. The Mixed-Use/Life Sciences Neighborhood category promotes the expansion of the hospital facilities and related uses with a mix of residential and other services for the convenience of workers and residents of this area.

Staff recognizes that while the CZO regulations (2015) were intended to protect historic buildings and promote development near the river, regulations should also reflect changes in market conditions specifically the need for more residential units, flexible commercial development spaces, and alternative industrial uses like breweries that have been historically prohibited.

Generally, all four CBD Districts do allow for a fairly wide range of commercial uses. Some of those commercial uses already permitted by-right include Art Gallery, Grocery Store, Health Club, Hostel, Hotel/Motel, Office, and Medical Clinic. Staff recommends an expansion of permitted commercial uses that would include Amusement Facility, (Indoor), Live Performance Venue, Public Market, Wine Shop, along with Micro-Breweries and Micro-Distilleries.

Staff's recommendations for expanding allowable uses have been based on feedback from multiple agencies and stakeholders over the course of this study. Analysis of stakeholder comments have been used to inform what potential changes should be considered for Canal Street. For instance, DDD representatives suggested that further examination of Fast-Food Restaurants could be considered on the

street. The amendment to the Restaurant, Fast Food use allowances (highlighted) in the CBD Districts was suggested by DDD officials who believe it could provide an opportunity for national brands to establish a presence on Canal Street. The thought is that the typical "fast food" model has morphed from its traditional associations and many desirable national brands exist that could be attracted to the corridor if allowed. CPC has heard similar concerns on other corridors throughout the city, with many pointing to the rise of "fast casual" restaurants that would be classified as Restaurant, Fast Food by the City's CZO due to the lack of any distinction between how these establishments function. Staff also recognizes that, aside from general healthy food offering concerns, the primary impact of fast food establishments is due to the provisions of single or multiple drive through lanes, which have significant traffic and stormwater run-off impacts to consider. Drive through lanes would generally not be possible in the dense built environment under study in this report. Additionally, Drive-Through Facility is a separately defined use in the CZO which is not proposed for Canal Street. Staff believe the consideration of expanded Restaurant, Fast Food use permissions is reasonable and would be further evaluated should a text amendment request be submitted to the CPC.

The need for additional housing citywide and availability of upper floors along Canal Street has raised questions about how zoning regulations can be made more flexible to accommodate more housing. Currently, residential uses permitted include Dwellings Above the Ground Floor, Multi-Family Dwellings, and Bed and Breakfast (requires a conditional use). Staff finds that a Dormitory use should be permitted in all CBD Districts along Canal Street. This falls in line with the goals of the CBD-7 Bio-Science District that encourages growth and economic development within the biosciences sector.

Canal Street has a long history of industrial uses, many of which used to be based along the riverfront that is now a focal point for entertainment and shopping. Staff recommends adding Brewery and Distillery permitted uses to CBD-2 and CBD-3 Districts along with Artisan Manufacturing.

As mentioned before, the zoning designations and those associated land uses have changed over time to support growth in certain types of businesses to support economic trends. As the city moved away from industrial uses on Canal Street, the zoning regulations were modified to reflect new strategies for

Table 2: Recommended Use Amendments to zoning districts currently mapped along Canal Street

Zoning District	CBD-2	CBD-3	CBD-4	CBD-7
Amusement Facility, Indoor	P	P	P	C to P
Live Performance Venue	C	C to P	P	
Micro-Breweries	P	P		P
Micro-Distilleries	P	P		P
Public Market	C	C to P		C
Restaurant, Fast Food	C to P	P	C to P	C to P
Winery	P	P		P
Wine Shop	P	P	P	P
Brewery	P	P		P
Distillery	P	P		P
Manufacturing, Artisan	C to P	P		

development. The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance can be modified to allow for uses that could be in greater demand in the coming years. The description of the Master Plan's Future Land Use Map categories emphasize the long-term goals, range of uses, and character description of each respective CBD district mentioned in this study.



CHAPTER #5

Transportation

Canal Street serves as the crossroads of transportation service for the city of New Orleans. streetcar lines, crosstown bus service, the river ferry, Interstate 10 (I-10), airport shuttles and tour buses, and several arterial roadways all converge here. Canal Street is classified as a major thoroughfare, and per Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development's functional street classification, it is classified as a Principal Arterial, and has a total right-of-way width of 171 feet. The current roadway cross-section is a six-lane separated roadway that features three lanes in the lakebound direction and three lanes traveling towards the riverfront, each lane roughly 10 feet in width. The corridor is separated by an approximately 46-foot neutral ground that accommodates the Canal Streetcar line, including occasional U-turn lanes. Sidewalks on both sides of the street are 20 feet in width from property line to curb and adjacent to a 8 to 9-foot lane for metered parking, loading, and passenger uses.

Early studies of Canal Street focused heavily on solving transportation issues facing the corridor. In the 1950's this meant expanding the capacity of the roadway and those that connect to it to provide convenient access for suburban motorists. Extraordinary ideas were proposed during this time that would have involved elevated or subsurface roadways to accommodate transit and private vehicles. More recent plans were less focused on the vehicle capacity issues in favor of streetscape design, land use, quality of life, and pedestrian safety concerns. Curb use and pedestrian safety initiatives were discussed at length in the 2018 study, and recommendations were advanced to continue the implementation of those efforts. Additionally, the staff reported on the completed Regional Transit Authority's Strategic Mobility Plan and the agency's plans to construct a transfer station on the corridor and improve transit service citywide.

Canal Street's stature as the 'Main Street' or transportation 'crossroads' of New Orleans ensures that the street activity and curb usage along the corridor is one that is both lively and diverse. Canal

Street is a corridor that serves locals who are travelling to and from work, those who live in the CBD, French Quarter, and beyond, and millions of visitors who travel to New Orleans annually. On a typical day on Canal Street, it is not uncommon to find thousands of pedestrians navigating the sidewalks and crosswalks, shuttles ferrying passengers to and from Louis Armstrong International Airport or a swamp tour, taxis, ride sharing services, and pedicabs making trips between local restaurants, City buses picking up passengers, tourists hailing cabs, commercial delivery trucks dropping off supplies to businesses, cyclists navigating the busy streets, or 50-foot passenger tour buses loading or unloading in front of a hotel. While this sort of activity can be exciting and is an indicator of the vibrant activity along the corridor, it also means that there is considerable competition for curb access and that the functionality of curbside operations will have an undeniable effect on daily life along Canal.

Similarly, pedestrians, bicyclists, and other vulnerable users sometimes face significant conflicts with vehicles due to the number of intersections and the volume of pedestrians and vehicles traveling the street. The Introduction chapter of this report shows the considerable number of vehicular crashes that occur at nearly every intersection in the study area. Most concerning is the number of crashes resulting in injury, totaling four fatal and 39 causing serious injury between 2013 and 2023. There were also 154 pedestrian involved crashes during this timeframe, with 80 per cent resulting in suspected or confirmed injuries. These data do not even include the January 1, 2025 terrorist attack that tragically killed 14 and injured 57 people.

The way in which transportation is managed is inextricably linked to the perception of an area and its desirability as a destination or opportunity for investment. This update will provide suggestions for re-envisioning the Canal Street streetscape to create a safer, more attractive, and orderly environment for its users.

ACTION ITEM	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
CURB USE MODIFICATION	<p>4.1.1 Implement the enforcement and curb use re-allocation recommendations of the 2018 CBD Curb use Study to resolve issues with the misuse of freight and passenger zones and block of travel lanes</p>	NOT STARTED
	<p>4.1.2 If curb use issues persist after implementation of 4.1.1, perform a 90 day demonstration of shared use lanes between Decatur/Magaine and Rampart Street that dedicates two lanes to through travel and the current outer lane and curb space to shared passenger and freight activities.</p>	NOT STARTED
PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	<p>4.2.1 Neutral ground landscaping/buffers, such as planters or other installations, should be expanded to discourage pedestrians crossing midblock.</p>	NOT STARTED
	<p>4.2.2 Canal and Peters Intersection - The right turn lane from S. Peters St. onto Canal St. riverbound could be removed, eliminating the small pedestrian island and creating a larger pedestrian space in front of the heavily pedestrian trafficked Ceasar's casino.</p>	NOT STARTED
	<p>4.2.3 Prohibit right turns on red lights throughout the corridor.</p>	NOT STARTED
IMPROVEMENTS TO BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE	<p>4.3.1 Support initiatives like Connect the Crescent, and make temporary demonstration permanent if successful.</p>	COMPLETED
	<p>4.3.2 Install additional bicycle parking racks along Canal Street</p>	IN PROGRESS

ACTION ITEM	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS	
RTA STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN	4.4.1	Support the RTA in determining the appropriate location for a new downtown transit center after the Comprehensive Operations Assessment and Network Redesign have been completed.	COMPLETED
	4.4.2	wayfinding signage to improve long lines during boarding and confusion on how and/or where to board the streetcar.	IN PROGRESS
	4.4.3	Remove excess streetcar stops along Canal Street to avoid stops nearly every block, which could greatly increase headway along lower Canal Street.	NOT STARTED
	4.4.4	Explore options for a CBD circulator that would connect major destinations to Canal Street . The circulator would help visitors and residents travel between destinations around the CBD with greater ease and efficiency compared to a city bus or taxi service.	NOT STARTED

Action Item 1 Curb Use Modification

The Department of Public Works was developing its CBD Curb Use Study at the same time CPC staff were producing the 2018 Canal Street Study. This provided staff an opportunity to weigh in on certain recommendations formulated for that study and promote them in the CPC’s work. The CBD Curb Use Study did not recommend any changes to the curb uses along Canal Street, but recommended stricter enforcement of existing laws to resolve issues with the misuse of freight and passenger zones.

The CPC staff supported that recommendation and proposed an alternative shared use lane demonstration should the enforcement activity not curb issues on the street. The idea of a demon-

stration was ultimately supported by the Commission, but not without concerns about the resulting traffic and potential for a free-for-all situation that could exacerbate current issues.

Issues with loading and passenger zones continue to exist in the corridor and though there is still metered parking on the corridor, it is not plentiful. In order for the curb spaces to be used in a more orderly fashion that is beneficial to business, passersby, and safe for pedestrians, there needs to be a re-thinking of how curb uses are arranged, scheduled, and enforced.

The New Considerations section of this chapter will discuss how this could be achieved, along with benefits and potential negative outcomes.

Action Item 2

Pedestrian Safety Action Plan Implementation

The 2018 study submitted three recommendations related to the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan and its implementation. The status of these items as “Not Started” should not indicate that the citywide plan implementation is not underway. This status is simply for the purposes of the Canal Street Study area. There has not been much movement towards significant new installations of landscaping in the neutral grounds of Canal Street. This recommendation compliments many found in the Placemaking recommendations, though this particular item aims to better direct pedestrian movements to crosswalks by creating buffers through planters and significant plantings.

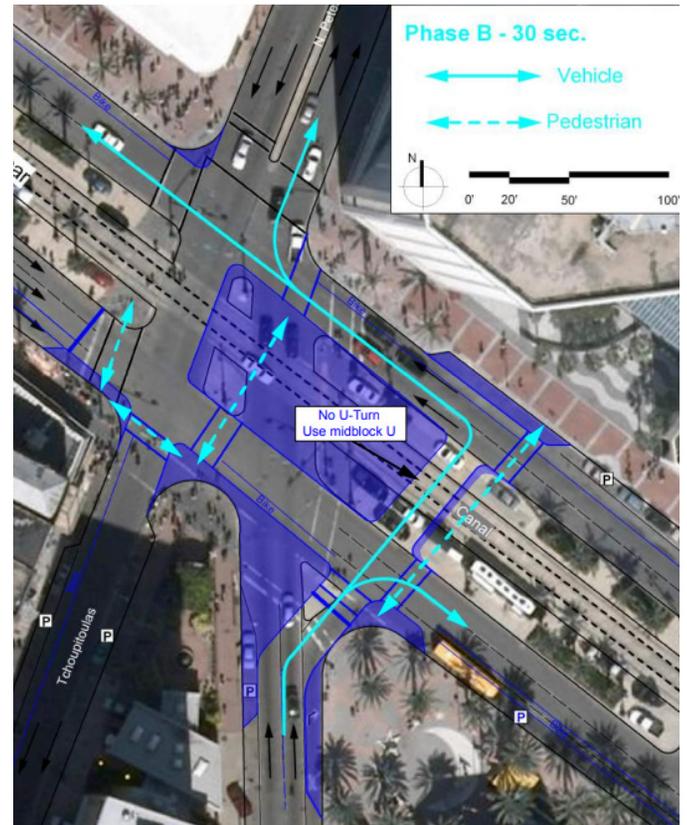
The second recommendation was to implement a concept for Canal Street’s intersection with Decatur and S. Peters Streets. This concept was first introduced in the City’s 2009 Mobility and Parking Study, and further recommended in the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan. This concept would require a significant expansion of the neutral ground and re-routing of downbound traffic onto Canal Street and a u-turn movement to continue onto N. Peters Street. Recent conversations with DPW staff suggest that this arrangement is no longer desirable because an appropriate signal timing could not be achieved to facilitate these movements in an efficient manner.

Action Item 3

Improvement to Bicycle Infrastructure

Action Item #3 aimed to promote a safer environment for cyclists traveling the corridor. The number of crashes and disorderly use of curb spaces have been well emphasized in this report and its predecessor. Facing these conditions as a bicyclist can be incredibly hazardous. Connect the Crescent was a three-month demonstration project for temporary bike lanes concentrated in the French Quarter, CBD, and a small portion of Uptown. This included a temporary protected lane on Canal Street from Tchoupitoulas Street to the Ferry Terminal, named the “Ferry Connector.” The demonstration as a whole was a success and proved what could be possible along these corridors. The Canal Street portion was mostly in front of Caesar’s Casino, which was ideal for this type of project because it provide a lane connecting to the ferry that was uninterrupted by curb cuts or parking. Applying the same treatment to other seg-

Figure 33: 2009 Proposed Reconfiguration of Canal, Peters, and Tchoupitoulas Streets



ments, particularly the 400-1000 blocks, would present much more of a challenge to design and to secure support, and would require additional study to determine appropriate locations.

Action Item #3 also recommends providing for additional bicycle parking throughout the corridor. The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance currently requires bicycle parking of most uses allowed in the study area and, as businesses open, those additional spaces would be installed at appropriate locations. Bicycle parking is an important component of this streetscape, no matter who provides it, because people will bike to Canal Street for work or leisure, and if there are not convenient available spaces to park, bicycles will often be locked against street signs or posts not designed for this purpose. This could result in bicycles blocking pedestrian ways, loading paths, and any number of unintended consequences.

Action Item 4

RTA Strategic Mobility Plan

Transportation recommendations made in 2018 were borne from a longstanding need for updated infrastructure that improves safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit passengers and local and visiting motorists. The objectives include multiple deliverables under four areas of focus: Curb Use Modification, Pedestrian Safety Action Plan Implementation, Improvements to Bicycle Infrastructure, and the RTA Strategic Mobility Plan. CPC staff met with RTA representatives to provide a progress report that identified strategies for improvement and recognized organizational constraints.

RTA representatives explained that The New Orleans Downtown Transit Center Alternatives Analysis Study (2020) focused on a proposed transfer point on or near Canal and Rampart Streetcar lines as the most trafficked lines in the region. The study recommends several locations for a transfer center, one at the corner of S. Rampart and Canal Streets adjacent to the Saenger Theater, or along Basin Street in the neutral ground from Canal Street to Conti Street. Proposed designs for a transfer center range from fully covered off-street structures to on-street open air facilities. RTA aims to coordinate efforts with DDD to integrate a retail component near the transfer center that would act as a hub providing amenities to the area.

Earlier this year RTA released of an RFP for upgrades to waiting stations/shelters that include beautification efforts, maintenance, and management of advertisements and a separate RFP was released for the designing of the Downtown Transit Center. RTA continues to seek a range of options to improve transit service including the planned BRT route, which would be routed from Algiers to New Orleans East, with service starting in 2029.

In August, RTA will finalize a contract for a consultant that will oversee the Streetcar Modernization Study that includes efforts to raise boarding platforms for easier accessibility, improve travel times, and update transit signals. The study will also examine fare payment solutions with a recommendation for an off-board collection program.

The principal constraint on additional service is the size of the bus fleet. By 2027, RTA should have an expanded fleet that would allow for service expansions. One of the greatest challenges for the agency is the lack of a Chief Traffic Engineer that oversees interagency communications and traffic flow management impacting citywide operations.

Figure 34: Proposed Transit Center configuration from the 2020 Downtown Transit Center Alternatives Analysis Study (2020)



New Consideration

A Re-Envisioned Canal Street Streetscape

In the process of reviewing and updating the 2018 Canal Street Study, CPC staff began to discuss the overlap of recommendations within each section, and how consolidating certain initiatives would make practical sense in order to achieve the overall goals. One example that became most apparent was how much the Placemaking and Transportation sections overlap in their goals for a high quality streetscape that enhances the surrounding historic built environment and provides more order to the movements of pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles, and loading activity throughout the corridor. To this end, the staff began sketching out ways these two focus points could be accomplished together in a comprehensive re-envisioning of the Canal Street streetscape.



Photo Credit: Tupungato, Shutterstock

The aspirational examples provided in the 2018 Study laid the groundwork for many of the ideas established in this section. More specifically, the often mentioned Champs Élysées in Paris required CPC staff to think more critically about what this streetscape provides that makes it feel safe and energetic for people traveling the street. The main difference that cannot be accounted for on Canal Street is right-of-way width: Champs Élysées is 230 feet wide compared to Canal Street's 171 feet width. Additionally, 46 feet of Canal Street's right-of-way is dedicated to streetcar service in the neutral ground. The right-of-way width on Canal Street will never be expanded. The vast majority of buildings are built to their property lines and could not be moved back without wide-scale demolition. The streetcar tracks will likely not be moved to another position on the street any time soon, and it is customary for streetcars to be in the neutral ground, or at least the inner lane, of roadways in New Orleans. The real changes that can be made (with varying degrees difficulty and cost) are to the sidewalks, curb uses, and travel lanes.

Sidewalks

The sidewalks in the study area of Canal Street are 20 feet wide, and have curb extensions of roughly 8 feet at corners and various points midblock throughout the corridor. There are many differences in the Champs Élysées sidewalk treatments and Canal Streets. Most noticeably from the photograph above is the presence of significant trees on the inner and outer edges. Canal Street does have palm trees planted along the street, but these are very tall, do not provide any shade, and do not contribute to a perception of a buffer from adjacent traffic. The Champs Élysées sidewalk is also 30 feet wide, 10 feet wider than the Canal Street sidewalk but approximately the same width including curb extensions. The last major difference between the two sidewalks is that the Champs Élysées has permanent pavilions constructed between the street trees and main pedestrian walkway. The pavilions have seating for outdoor dining, and are covered with a retractable roof to account for weather. Dining on Canal Street is limited to that right-of-way space adjacent to the establishment and the depth of the dining area available restricted necessarily because of the width of the sidewalk. The CPC staff believe that expanding the sidewalk to align with the existing curb extensions would provide significant additional space for landscaping, art, outdoor dining, and for better organization of the various compents installed in the right-of-way.

Curb Use

The competition for curb space along Canal Street has been well documented for decades, with most recommendations pointing to better enforcement for bad actors. Enforcement will be critical to the success of any curb use plan moving forward, but the CPC staff believe additional changes should be considered in addition. The staff believe if the sidewalks are extended to match the curb extensions, some disorder will be resolved on certain blocks because the curb will be fully aligned and not interrupted by midblock curb extensions. In the 2018 Canal Street Study the staff proposed a shared curb use lane encompassing the existing parking lane and outer travel lane. This was not met favorably amongst all Commissioners due to concerns of traffic congestion and a potential increase in loading and passenger zone issues. The shared use curb concept was untested in New Orleans, and does not appear to have movement to implementation at the moment.

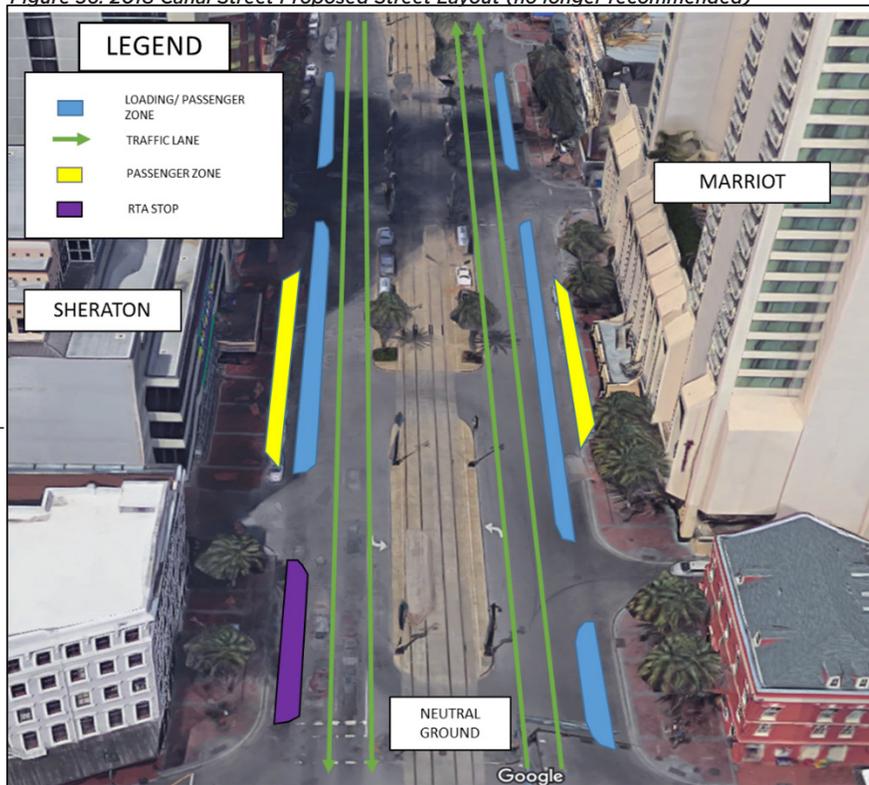
Staff's proposal in this report would potentially add curb space for businesses fronting the street and add additional useable right-of-way for enhanced amenities. The staff suggest considering eliminating metered parking spaces in favor of designated passenger, valet, and loading zones. Existing passenger zone conditions could be improved by shortening the timeframe for stopping from 10 minutes to 2 minutes, so it reflects the time it actually takes to unload a passenger. This will assist with enforcement as well, since enforcement officers will not be required to stand in place for ten minutes to monitor the movement of a vehicle. Valet services could also utilize passenger zones for their businesses, which could be particularly helpful for some of the long-standing business along the corridor.

Travel Lanes

The sidewalk expansion would require that all parking, loading, and passenger activity occur in what is now the outer travel lane of the street, limiting through travel to two lanes instead of three. Reducing a lane of travel on Canal Street will require a traffic analysis to determine capacity, signal timing, and potential reductions in the street's level of service. The travel lanes on Canal Street are wider than typical in New Orleans, between 10 and 11 feet, in the study area. If the traffic analysis proves that eliminating one lane of travel could not be supported, there would likely be a scenario in which the sidewalks could be extended by 4 or 5 feet on each side instead of 8 or 9, in order to provide enough width to maintain three lanes of traffic. Reducing the possible sidewalk expansion to 24 feet instead of 20 feet, and reducing travel lane widths to 9 feet would maintain three travel lanes in each direction.

Other considerations for eliminating the third travel lane is its impact on travel speeds and safety. Travel speeds will be reduced, which is a negative for calculated level of service, but slower speeds would be a positive improvement for pedestrians. The sidewalk expansion could also shorten crossing distances if corner curb extensions are provided.

Figure 36: 2018 Canal Street Proposed Street Layout (no longer recommended)

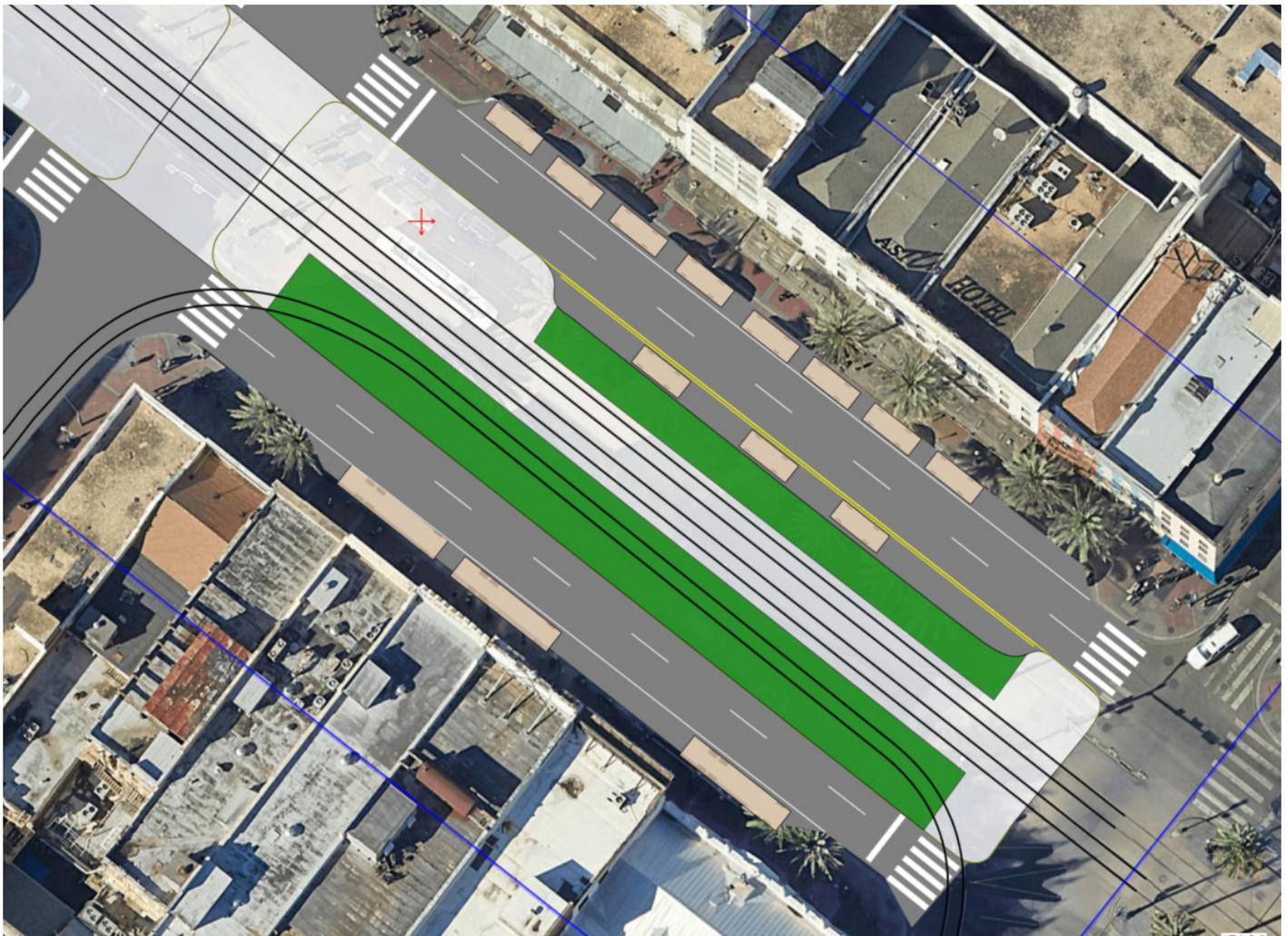


Alternate Streetscape Proposals

The other consideration that should be made when thinking of a re-envisioned streetscape are the pedestrian spaces in the neutral ground. The existing provisions are fairly narrow and should be expanded to accommodate the heavy pedestrian traffic the corridor experiences. This could involve multiple separate or combined alterations. First, the pedestrian crossing areas in the neutral ground should be better defined and, at some intersections, expanded toward the intersection where space exists. Second, instead of expanding the sidewalk, the neutral ground could be expanded to include the current inner travel lane. This would positively impact the pedestrian crossing movements and would provide additional space for landscaping and the buffering to discourage midblock crossing discussed previously in this chapter. This arrangement would be in conflict with the potential sidewalk expansion, so the enhanced amenities on the sidewalk-side of the street and curb use proposals, would need to be designed to fit within the existing 20-foot space. Additionally, there are utility vaults and possibly a Sewerage and Water Board pipe running under one side of the neutral ground.

The image below shows what this concept could look like between Carondelet Street and St. Charles Avenue. This graphic show how green space could be added to the neutral ground as well as parking on one side for emergency vehicles. The additional plantings would enhance the aesthetics of the street, but would not provide the same benefits to pedestrians like shielding from weather and a buffer from traffic.

Figure 37: Potential expansion of Canal Street neutral ground to accommodate safer pedestrian movements across the street





CHAPTER #6

Organizational Structure

Canal Street is governed by a number of governmental entities, often with overlapping boundaries and responsibilities. These include the City of New Orleans, the Downtown Development District, and the French Quarter Management District. To some extent, the responsibilities that overlap result in beneficial outcomes for the corridor, as the groups have reinforcing interests in the quality of the corridor. They can also be problematic, however, as they obscure what entity has ultimate responsibility over matters of public safety, maintenance and cleaning, and quality of life concerns.

There are no fewer than eight departments/agencies with some responsibility along Canal Street. Some of these agencies have jurisdiction citywide, such as the Department of Sanitation, Department of Public Works, the New Orleans Police Department, and the Regional Transit Authority. The somewhat unique aspect to the organizational structure in the study area is the number of additional special taxing districts whose boundaries include the corridor, including the Downtown Development District, French Quarter Management District, a public benefit corporation called the New Orleans Building Corporation (formerly the Canal Street Development Corporation). Each have similar goals to enhance baseline services within their jurisdiction by utilizing a millage on property in their service area. Each are different and, more importantly for this report, have different roles with regards to Canal Street.

Downtown Development District

The DDD's work is incredibly important to the success of Canal Street and the CBD in general. Many of the modern planning initiatives for the corridor have been commissioned by the DDD, and the organization is seen to have "ownership" of Canal Street in terms of supplementing City services and promoting it as a destination and as an attractive place to do business.

The Downtown Development District of New Orleans (DDD) was created by state legislation in 1974. It was the nation's first assessment-based business improvement district (BID) to provide enhanced services in economic development, cleaning and safety. The DDD services the area bounded by Iberville Street, the Pontchartrain Expressway, Claiborne Avenue and the Mississippi River. The DDD is governed by an eleven-member Board of Commissioners. Originally, the District was authorized by referendum to raise funds through a 6.5 mills property tax. In 1979, another referendum authorized

the DDD to issue bonds for capital improvement projects. After a 2001 referendum, the DDD used its bonding authority for the first time, selling \$7.3 million of bonds to fund its CBD-wide capital improvement program, including \$5 million for Canal Street streetscape improvements¹.

Its economic development efforts include programs to promote the CBD overall, as well as promotions focused specifically on Canal Street. It works to promote business retention and recruitment. It promotes the improvement of the CBD's building stock through its façade matching grant program, which has been used at many locations along Canal Street. The Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program, established in 2007, provides a matching grant of up to 50% of eligible project costs, up to \$20,000, to fund the improvement of building facades in a manner that is consistent with the original design and materials of the building's original design².

French Quarter Management District

The state legislature created the French Quarter Management District in 2007 to help revitalize the French Quarter following Hurricane Katrina and address systemic issues affecting the neighborhood. The French Quarter Management serves similar roles for the French Quarter as the DDD does for the Central Business District. It is tasked with providing supplementary public safety and sanitation services, providing supplementary enforcement of quality-of-life laws, engaging in strategic planning and commercial development activities, promoting the improvement of public infrastructure, and enhancing commercial, civic, and cultural activity within the French Quarter.

While the FQMD does have this wide-ranging authority to fund improvements to sidewalks, provide façade improvement grants, and incentivize the use of vacant buildings and upper floors, the bulk of the FQMD's efforts are toward public safety. Most notably, the FQMD provides public safety patrols through its French Quarter Task Force.

The 2018 Canal Street Study suggested promoting a recommendation that had been made in past studies, including the 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy, to establish a singular management entity to concentrate its efforts on Canal Street. This recommendation was seen to be important because the significance of the street and its complexity. The study suggested this be done as a stand-alone organization or a function embedded in the DDD, as recommended in 2004.

ACTION ITEM	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
Establish a Management Entity Specifically for Canal Street	5.1 Consolidate management of public-sector efforts into a single entity and promote Canal Street through a “main street” organization as part of an existing public sector entity or a new, stand-alone organization.	IN PROGRESS
Strong Focus on Quality of Life Issues	5.2 Re-establish NOPD’s Canal Street Enhancement Unit, full security camera coverage along Canal Street, and stronger focus on issues impacting quality of life on Canal Street including panhandling, cleanliness of sidewalks, and property maintenance.	IN PROGRESS

Action Item 1

Establish a Management Entity Specifically for Canal Street

Past studies have listed and detailed the distinct entities with interest in the Canal Street corridor, which include City departments, state entities, and various other organizations. Since no major changes have been made to the functions of those entities over the past six years, staff has not updated those sections.

The recommendations that followed were consistent in promoting a single entity exclusively focused on the day-to-day and long-term management of Canal Street. At present, CPC staff are not aware of any organization with full time staff dedicated to the corridor. In the 2004 Vision and Development Strategy, the DDD recommended that it should retain a Canal Street Development Director to oversee the implementation of the strategy on a daily basis³. The need for this position and leadership on the corridor has increased over the decades. Planning staff reiterated the need for this role, or entity, in the 2018 Canal Street Study, and echoes the same today.

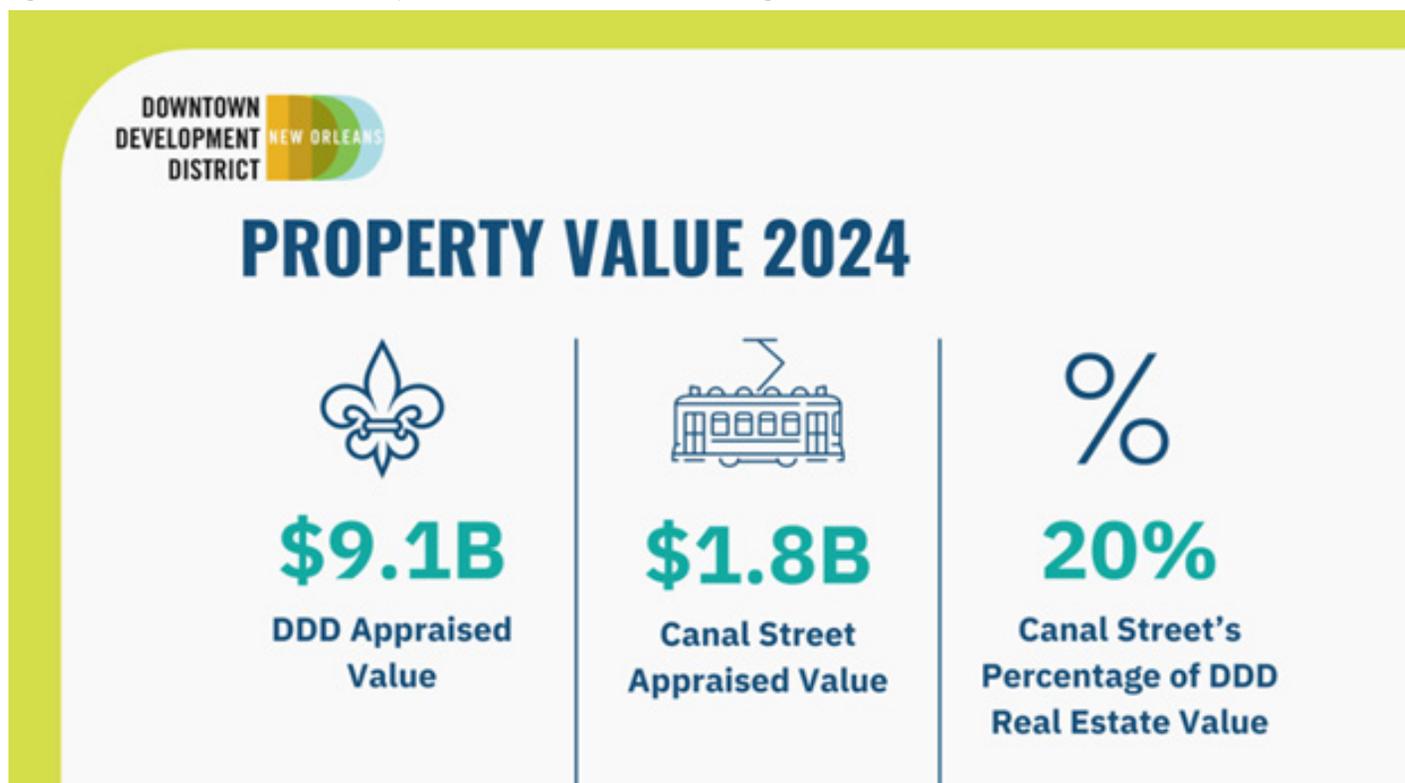
To further clarify the need for an entity dedicated to Canal Street, data provided by the DDD shows the importance of economic development on the corridor. It comes as no surprise that the real estate on Canal is very valuable and the corridor is incredibly important to the city as a whole.

The DDD has had challenges in recent years due to recent budget cuts at the agency that have resulted in fewer staff members and less capacity to market and dedicate a full-time staff member to Canal

Street. This challenge has been especially amplified by the recent dissolution of the New Orleans Business Alliance in early 2025. An additional challenge for the DDD is that the agency has stated that they do not have much authority to do tasks like repairing sidewalks, moving barriers, and other items that impact the right-of-way. With its reduction in budget, DDD representatives have voiced their desire to focus on a well-maintained streetscape and landscaping by enhancing baseline services provided by City agencies.

Another perennial recommendation is a standing task force of City agencies with oversight of Canal Street. This idea is so common during governance conversations that it was discussed during a recent mayoral candidate forum hosted by the DDD⁴. However, it is still absent among the numerous task forces assembled at City Hall. Recent meetings have been called to discuss activities on the street, including one led by the DDD in December of 2024, but there is no regular convening of City departments, outside entities, businesses, and other stakeholders who have an interest in Canal Street. Not only should there be reliable check-ins with this community, but the City should also be coordinating internally monthly (or at least quarterly) to review actions along the corridor. This is a missed opportunity for collaboration that could produce significant benefits if done with intentionality. Again, this need for a City task force underscores the needs for entity with

Figure 38: Slide from DDD's December 16, 2024 Canal Street Stakeholder Meeting



dedicated oversight of Canal Street.

During stakeholder meetings over the course of this study, a shared sentiment frequently arose: the City and community are never going to achieve their shared goals for Canal Street until someone is accountable for them.

Since the 2018 Canal Street Study, an organization named Celebrate Canal! has injected quite a bit of excitement around all the possibilities on Canal Street. This organization has been organizing quarterly meetings to discuss how property owners, businesses, and the City and State can collaborate to bring success to the street. Celebrate Canal! and its work will be discussed in the New Considerations section of this Chapter.

Action Item 2

Strong Focus on Quality of Life Issues

Quality of life issues have been the central complaint when discussing the problems plaguing Canal Street both in 2018 and in preparing the updated report. The DDD has stated that it has been incredibly difficult for them to attract quality businesses to the corridor because of its condition, no matter the numbers showing the millions of potential customers the businesses could reach. Again the DDD's

task is to supplement City services, and if the baseline is a public realm in disrepair, the agency is forced to assume a role it was not necessarily designed to take on.

The Introduction chapter of this report illustrates the extent to which repair requests to public assets have been submitted since 2018, as well as Code Enforcement violations issued by the City. These maintenance and enforcement activities are happening, but the staff is unaware of a coherent strategy for addressing these issues. In conversations with DDD representatives, they suggested conducting a comprehensive plan for the street showing which agencies oversee operation and maintenance of each component of the street. Canal Street could benefit from more consistent follow-through on basic code enforcement for violations. This also includes sidewalk signs, tables, music, and quality of life enforcement. Representatives suggested a plan to provide readily available white box spaces that allow for quick tenant build-out and marketability. A grant program could be offered for business owners incentivizing them to white-box their store fronts.

CPC staff fully supports the DDD's analysis and delineation of responsibilities on Canal Street and believe it would help bring more predictability and accountability to the services provided on the street.

New Consideration 1 Celebrate Canal!

Figure 39: Celebrate Canal! Logo



Celebrate Canal! is a nonprofit organization led by the New Orleans Entertainment Coalition that aims to revitalize Canal Street. The organization has created a Vision and Action Plan based on gathering local, state, and federal resources to incentivize businesses to invest in development opportunities. Since the launch of Celebrate Canal! in 2024, the organization has hosted a series of events including a Champagne Stroll with the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Development District, an art installation called Windows on Canal, two Children’s Scavenger Hunts, an Art & Architecture Tour, and several other events focused on encouraging ideas to improve Canal Street and welcoming collaboration with the community.

The Vision and Action Plan for Canal Street focuses on the following objectives:

1. Emphasize Canal Street as an economic driver central to development opportunities.
2. Engage local, state, and federal stakeholders to invest in family-oriented and high-end retail businesses with lasting community impacts.
3. Pursue multiple funding sources with long-term equity.
4. Oversee communication of multiple agencies that manage the streetscape, street/sidewalk repair, landscaping, lighting, and overall maintenance of the street.

Celebrate Canal! representatives have met with New Orleans City Council members, business owners, and residents to formulate an action-based strategy moving forward. The emphasis of the action plan is to gain traction by engaging in multiple projects at a time to build development momentum rather than using a piecemeal approach that could potentially take years to accomplish. The

strategy outlines ideas for bringing vacant buildings back into commerce like the Loews Theater. For instance, one idea is to create a Children’s Theater by partnering with Disney and establishing a family-oriented entertainment destination. Another idea is to revive stores reminiscent of the Woolworth’s or Krauss department stores by recruiting high-end luxury retailers. Other ideas include a Saints and Pelican’s merchandise store, and recruiting well-known brands like Apple, and ZARA to the street.

The Vision and Action Plan includes conceptual drawings that detail “car parks” or parking garages with architectural features that mimic surrounding buildings in order to enhance the pedestrian experience. Particular emphasis is given to a well-designed streetscape that includes plantings of trees along the neutral ground and both sides of the right of way spanning the length of Canal Street to Claiborne Avenue. In order to finance a revitalization of Canal Street the organization seeks to request several funding sources that include bonds, City and State loans, HUD funding, and various tax credit programs.

The momentum created by Celebrate Canal! cannot be overstated. The organization, in roughly a year’s time, has hosted nine events on Canal

Figure 40: Conceptual rendering of “Windows on Canal” art installation



Street, held quarterly stakeholders meetings, and has played a critically important role in outreach to business operators, property owners, retailers, and the development community who currently have interest in the street or might in the future.

Many of the recommendations highlighted in this report mirror those discussed by Celebrate Canal!, including enhanced landscaping and the redevelopment of key opportunity sites in the corridor. The CPC staff appreciate the effort this organization has put in to bring Canal Street to the front of mind for leaders in the City and are excited to collaborate in the future to seek solutions to the long-standing issues facing Canal Street. The staff would like to highlight that much of the organizational, outreach, and visioning work done by Celebrate Canal! fulfills, in part, the spirit of the recommendation submitted in past reports to have a singular entity focused entirely on revitalization and promotion of Canal Street. In partnership with the DDD and close coordination with City agencies, staff believe that significant improvements can be made to this incredibly important corridor.

Figure 41: Celebrate Canal event flyer



CHAPTER #7

Opportunity Sites

400 Block, Sanlin Building

Each subsequent Canal Street Study has identified key redevelopment sites along the corridor, many of them reappearing year after year. City Council Motion M-24-500 directed planning staff to analyze and update aspects of the recommendations from the 2018 Study, including the identification of opportunity sites. In the previous study, staff completed a review of 15 sites that had been identified in the 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy. Although there has been progress on some blocks and some upper floors since 2018, two essential sites continue to stand out because of their vast potential and severe underutilization. Each serves as an anchor and potential catalyst for either end of the Street. Both have faced significant, but vastly different, challenges to redevelopment and can serve as examples of the problems facing numerous other sites.

A key barrier to the overall revitalization of Canal Street has been the unwillingness of key property owners to bring forward proposals that consider past community input alongside economic development. By failing to act on or take advantage of recommendations from past studies and other existing incentives, Canal Street property owners miss opportunities for mutual benefit. In reviewing these two case studies, the goal was to find elements that make a project most successful for developers, community members, and the City as a whole.

400 Block, Sanlin Building

Of the twenty-three buildings that existed on the 400 block of Canal Street in the 1840s, fourteen remain. Five of these remaining buildings are connected to Black clothing entrepreneurs Julien Colvis and Joseph Dumas, who owned and operated businesses in the now-historic structures.⁵ Each property was inherited by their families, and most were sold off by the 1880s. A report submitted by historian William Reeves, PhD during the HDLC consideration of permit 14-05395-DEMO noted that,

“the square is significant initially because a variety of racial and ethnic groups developed the square in the space of a year after it came on

the market... the City auctioned the lots and a remarkable variety of individuals purchased them. They included one single woman, several Anglo merchants, a French merchant, two African-American businessmen, a prominent Jewish merchant, and an Irish merchant... The history of these buildings demonstrates an important aspect of the history of New Orleans in the ante-bellum era. Their history established that their solid, timeless masonry construction is suitable to many uses.”⁶

A grouping of those historic buildings in the center of the block was demolished in the 1960s, and the square has since been marred by a vacant lot, which now serves as surface parking. The Sanlin complex is a prominent series of buildings fronting both Canal Street and Magazine Street, covered by a 1953 metal façade. It was part of the original 1840s development, with Julien Colvis having purchased one of the properties in the 1850s from the estate of another merchant tailor.⁷ It was expanded and redesigned by James Freret in the 1880s, bringing added significance to the site.

Project History

The current ownership of the majority of the square (under separate, but related entities) began purchasing these properties in the late 1990s. Since the mid-1990s, there have been at least three significant proposals for demolition and new construction. Over the course of two decades, the proposals fluctuated in both height and intensity. The first iteration of this proposal was in 1996 and included the Gottesman family, who had owned most of the block for over 50 years at the time, and the Marriott Hotel Group. They insisted that a complete demolition of eleven historic buildings was necessary. Architects working with the Preservation Resource Center published a rendering of a redevelopment plan that they considered sensitive to the design of the existing structures and appropriate in size and massing, while also providing 312 rooms.⁸ At that time, developers took an all-or-none stance, arguing that, “design changes could make it less profitable and harder to sell to investors.” When District B Councilmember Oliver Thomas proposed a compromise to maintain some of the Greek Revival

Figure 42: June 1996 edition of *Preservation in Print* offering a redevelopment solution for the 400 block of Canal Street



Figure 43: 2015 hotel proposal for the 400 block of Canal Street that was rejected by the New Orleans City Council



Image Credit: Zoning Development Bank, Inc. Casefile

In the wake of the failed hotel tower, the current owner purchased the Sanlin buildings in 2000. Although proposals were floated that year, no application was formally submitted. Preservationists again brought attention to the significance of the buildings and called for a redevelopment plan that maintained the historic structures.

The 2015 hotel proposal was well detailed in the 2018 Canal Street Study. In short, demolition plans were denied at the March 19, 2014 HDLC meeting, then appealed to City Council, but were never heard because the applicant withdrew at the May 22, 2014 Council meeting. The City Planning Commission also recommended denial for Zoning Docket 020-15, as it was deemed by staff and Commissioners to be out of scale and inconsistent with the Master Plan. The Master Plan also emphasizes the importance of maintaining the character of the city, and Canal Street in particular, by preserving its historic structures. The applicant ultimately withdrew this proposal at City Council as well.

Notably, this proposal called for what is colloquially referred to as a façade-ectomy, or the demolition of all parts of the structure save the front wall. Both the HDLC and local preservationists described how this treatment was antithetical to the principles of preservation. They called for the incorporation of historic structures into a design that fit in with the character of Canal Street. The proposed modern spiral tower, they said, could be in any city, but didn't fit in New Orleans.⁹ During the course of review, the demolitions of the insignificant 20th century buildings at 103 Tchoupitoulas and 408 Canal were approved by the HDLC.

In the years since the 2018 Canal Street Study, at least five violations have been associated with the historic property at 422 Canal Street, including minimum property maintenance, working without a permit, demolition by neglect (twice), and zoning violations. Among the other structures on this block, this one is notable for its association with architect James Freret, who reimagined the antebellum building in 1880.¹⁰

Although it was reported in both a 2018 Times-Picayune article¹¹ and the following year in the PRC's Preservation in Print¹², the short-term rental company Sonder never transformed the upper floors into 80 transient lodging units with a \$35 million investment. The 1950s metal sheathing still covers the 1840s façade, but in recent years, panels were removed to assess the integrity of the historic materials beneath. An HDLC permit was obtained (19-13402-DEMO), and it noted the potential use of historic rehabilitation tax credits. As with the 1990s proposals, this seems to

underscore an interest in utilizing the original series of facades rather than the more modern, singular Sanlin frontage.

Challenges, Vision, & Recommendation

Aside from the failure of past proposals, this block has suffered from perception problems. The vacant lot calls out the underutilization of such a significant location. Vacancies are rare on Canal Street, and this high-traffic location is a surprising example of underdevelopment. It is also a rare opportunity to add something novel to an iconic stretch. Past visions have rendered both traditional interpretations of the corridor and modern proposals like the 2015 design. A successful proposal would likely be predominantly historic in style, but a new addition should reflect the era in which it is constructed. Canal Street deserves the highest quality design. The mid-century wrap on the Sanlin building also stands out for its aesthetic juxtaposition with the predominantly 19th century facades at its level. Although it has gained some significance as an example of mid-century style, most discussions still call for its removal in favor of the historic façades underneath.

As detailed in the development history section, the proposals that have come before the public were received poorly because of their intensity. Although development tactics often call for a larger proposal so that a less intense compromise reflects the original goal, if a proposal is too massive, it can't even get off the ground.

No additional zoning permissions exist at this site. The height limit remains at 70 feet (down from 85 at the time of the first Marriott proposal), and while development standards remain in place, it is still possible that future proposals will request waivers and zoning entitlements. The consolidated ownership continues to suggest a larger development envelope. Like past proposals at other significant sites, a mix of uses is appropriate. Recent success at the Sazerac House across Magazine Street makes it clear that not only hotels are viable in this area. In discussions with CPC staff, representatives from the DDD noted that "experiential" retail is the next wave of development on high-traffic downtown corridors. Representatives from Celebrate Canal! have even suggested a grouping of local retail – like those shops found along popular Magazine Street – at the ground floor along the 400 block. This area near Canal Place, the Aquarium and Insectarium, and the ferry are already a magnet for local and regional shoppers. The addition of condos or STRs to the upper floors would further bring customers to the block, which was historically a marketplace.

Figure 44: 400 block of Canal Street Opportunity Site Aerial



Previous Proposals	Height	Stories	Rooms	Demolition Extent
1996 Marriott (ZD020-96)	340 ft.	28	416	11 buildings
2001 Marriott			~500	
2015 Marriott (ZD020-15)	255 ft. w/350 ft. spire	21	373	4 buildings
Existing Entitlement Package				
Zoning: CBD-2 Historic Commercial and Mixed-Use District				
Permitted Uses	61			
Conditional Uses	16			
Bulk Regulations				
Minimum Lot Area	None			
Minimum Building Height	36 ft. & 3 Stories			
Maximum Building Height	70 ft.			
Yard Requirements				
Front Yard	None, but 5 ft. maximum unless granted by Conditional Use			
Minimum interior Side Yard	None			
Minimum Corner Side Yard	None			
Minimum Rear Yard	None			

1031 Canal Street

The development of the former Woolworth Department Store site was a sign of both progress and contention as of the 2018 Canal Street Study. In either case, the Hard Rock Hotel and Residences project signaled interest in the area and represented significant investment in the real estate and hospitality sectors. Tragically, the building collapsed while under construction in October of 2019, killing Jose Ponce Arreola, Anthony Magrette, and Quinnyon Wimberly, who were working on the structure at the time.

Historic Significance

This site was first developed by 1842 with a “three story brick house,” with the well-known F.W. Woolworth’s building constructed on four lots in 1939 and extensively renovated in 1967.¹³ The department store was a retail and social fixture during Canal Street’s heyday as the city’s premier shopping thoroughfare. Woolworth’s was also at the front lines of the battle to desegregate New Orleans as seven members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) staged the first locally organized sit-in at the department store’s lunch counter in September of 1960.¹⁴ The significance of this site during the Civil Rights Era has been well documented and discussed in the past decade, up to and including the demolition of the Woolworth’s Building in 2015 to make way for a new Hard Rock Hotel and Residences. The subsequent collapse of the partially-build complex led to months of difficult deliberation on how to take down the damaged structure. Ultimately, the demolition was deemed to require the complete destruction of three adjacent historic buildings. The tragedy also highlighted deficiencies in City permitting and oversight, leading to investigations and systemic changes.

Project History

After Woolworth’s closed in 1997, the building sat vacant for years. The 2011 approval of the Hard Rock Hotel and Residences was contentious throughout the land use entitlements process. The hotel was to encompass the entirety of the over 40,000 square foot site. It proposed 350 Hard Rock Hotel rooms, 62 residential units, 12,000 square feet of event space, a rooftop bar, and lounges on first and eighth floors.¹⁵ In order to accomplish that, significant waivers were

required as part of the Conditional Use. The height limit at the time was 70 feet, so the requested 193 foot tower was almost three times the maximum. However, proposed updates to the CZO were set to raise the height limit in that area to 120 feet. City Planning Commission staff recommended the approval of a 50-foot waiver, while the Commission itself approved a 190-foot tower in a split vote. When the zoning docket reached City Council, Councilmember Palmer, who represented District C where the project was located, began making compromises on the proposal. Her motion limited the building height nearest Canal Street to 147 feet and 70 feet at the portion closest to Iberville, with those heights extending back 25 and 30 feet, respectively. Preservationists still called for a 120-foot limit, which two Councilmembers supported. Developer Praveen Kailas stated that, “the project would not be economically viable,” if he did not get the requested height variance.¹⁶ During the Council meeting, CM Palmer said that the site is the largest available footprint for redevelopment anywhere on Canal Street. Upon the demolition of an additional three historic buildings during the clearing of the site in 2020, this observation became even more apt.

After the tragic collapse of the building during construction, the willingness to grant such significant waivers disappeared. In July of 2021, City Council rescinded the ordinance that granted the waivers (see ZD029-21). Again, CM Palmer led the legislative effort.

Most recently, in July of 2025, the CBD-HDLC ensconced the site as a local historic landmark. This designation serves as a reminder of two significant events: the 1960 Woolworth lunch counter civil rights sit-ins and the tragic 2019 Hard Rock Hotel collapse. The CBD-HDLC must approve the exterior design for any structure proposed for the site per existing regulations.

Upon the landmarking of the site, Council President Helena Moreno noted that “the decision by the Commission marks a powerful step forward in honoring the layered history of this location — a place that remembers both the undeniable courage of the Civil Rights Movement and the sorrow of lives lost too soon.” “We owe it to both the past and the future to make sure that whatever rises here next reflects our values, our memories, and our hope for a more just and accountable future. For the families

Figure 45: F.W. Woolworth Company (circa 1964-1974)



Photo Credit: Historic New Orleans Collection

Figure 46: Photograph of 1031 Canal Street take from Iberville Street



of the victims, for civil rights champions, and for every New Orleanian, this site deserves our respect and remembrance.”

Challenges, Vision, & Recommendation

As of January 2024, roughly 135 lawsuits regarding the collapse had been filed, with only a handful having been settled.¹⁷ Recently, the owners of the site, 1031 Canal Development, and its insurers reached a partial settlement with victims of the collapse, but scores of suits remain unresolved. For the families of the victims, focus remains on erecting a plaque or other form of memorial on the property. But vacant land along this dense corridor is a severe detriment to the economic vitality of the whole. The rarity of open land on Canal Street makes these sites stand out even more.

As far back as the 1999 Land Use Study, this site has been noted as a “pivotal parcel” in the redevelopment of Canal Street. Standing at the corner of the Vieux Carré, 1031 Canal meets the CBD, the BiInnovation District that extends to Mid-City, and Treme’s historic Storyville at a crucial juncture. The DDD has consistently called for the quality development of an anchor destination with regional appeal. Past suggestions have included big box retail as well as mixed-use hospitality and entertainment. Especially now, the design of the structure is pivotal. As with the 400 block of Canal, well-known local architects have been called upon to imagine successful and appropriate development. The proposed curved façade is a reference to the existing corner drugstores on Canal at Baronne and at Carondelet, as well as the 1930s Woolworth building that stood on the site before being razed in 2015.

Recent ideas proposed for the site by Canal Street development experts have included up to three stories of signature retail, reestablishing that anchor at the entrance to the Canal Street retail corridor. Most proposals, as was the case with the Hard Rock complex, are mixed-use and include everything from office space to residential, transient lodging, and parking. The trend towards experiential retail has also focused on this area. Since the 2004 Canal Street Development Strategy, suggestions have included a new museum or cultural facility to anchor the district as a tourist destination. Again, the Celebrate Canal! Coalition has submitted novel concepts for the area and promotes the creation of a “Family District” to complement the existing theatre uses as well as the BiInnovation District.

The vacant site at 1031 Canal now stands in stark contrast to the successful development just next door. The river side of this block has been reinvigorated

with the establishment of the Mayfair Hotel, which includes the former McCrory’s department store and Ruby Slipper.¹⁸

Height Considerations

While CPC did recommend the initial height waiver at 1031 Canal, it is important to note that the final compromise from former CM Palmer included consideration of varied height limits from Canal Street into the French Quarter. It is that kind of consideration that French Quarter neighborhood groups say is important. While not in support of any height waivers, resident groups note the detailed process that created the CBD/French Quarter height limits. There is a step-down from the 120-foot maximum on Canal to 70 feet on Iberville and finally 50 feet throughout the rest of the French Quarter.

There is a significant distinction about height limits that is separate from aesthetic consideration. Excessive height adjacent to existing structures creates an overshadowing, and thus deadening, effect that makes areas both less attractive to merchants and pedestrians and less safe for everyone. Tall buildings, as well as uses directed exclusively towards Canal Street, have created a back-alley effect on Iberville Street, the dividing line between the Canal Street and Vieux Carré historic districts. Uses are limited to service entries and little else just around the block from one of the most bustling streets in the city. It is clear from the height limits that the intent is a gradual slope, so that one side isn’t completely prioritized at the cost of another.

Heights also have implications at the ground floor. The shift on Canal Street is now to devise creative ways to use the ground floors while preserving access to the upper floors.

Figure 47: DDD Facade Improvement Campaign for Canal Street, 1000 Block Canal Street Concept Perspective



1000 BLOCK CANAL ST. - CONCEPT PERSPECTIVE

MANNINGARCHITECTS
ARCHITECTURE & INTERIORS & PLANNING

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
FACADE IMPROVEMENT CAMPAIGN FOR CANAL STREET**
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

UMA PROJECT N10-001 00
AUGUST 4, 2010

Existing Entitlement Package

Zoning: CBD-3 Cultural Arts District

Permitted Uses	53
Conditional Uses	13

Bulk Regulations

Minimum Lot Area	None
Minimum Building Height	36 ft. & 3 Stories
Maximum Building Height	120 ft.

Yard Requirements

Front Yard	None, but 5 ft. maximum unless granted by Conditional Use
Minimum interior Side Yard	None
Minimum Corner Side Yard	None
Minimum Rear Yard	None



Recommendations & Implementation



City Planning Commission staff continue to support the majority of its recommendations from the 2018 Canal Street Study and are pleased to report that the majority of these recommendations are either completed or in progress. This chapter will provide an updated version of the Canal Street Study recommendation table and will be further supplemented by an implementation table proposing a path forward for those recommendations not started.

ACTION ITEM	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS & AGENCY RESPONSIBLE
Centralized Retail Management Program	1.1	IN PROGRESS DDD, OED
	1.2	NOT STARTED DDD, OED
Building Code Amendments	2.1.1	IN PROGRESS DDD, S&P
	2.1.2	COMPLETED
Examination of Upper Floor suitability	2.1.2	COMPLETED
Commercial Short Term Rentals	2.1.3	COMPLETED
	2.1.4	IN PROGRESS CPC, City Council
Transfer of Development Rights	2.1.4	IN PROGRESS CPC, City Council

ACTION ITEM	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
Pedestrian Amenities Improvements	3.1.1 Demarcate outdoor seating and other uses that businesses can claim in the public ROW and create a set of design and use standards so they do not create congestion in pedestrian zones, but rather positive experiences.	<p style="text-align: center;">IN PROGRESS</p> DDD, DPW, CPC, City Council, RER, HDLC, ONE
	3.1.2 Codify and demarcate specific areas for pop-up cafes and shops, galleries, and mobile vendors to activate more isolated parts of the retail corridor, especially in the short term.	<p style="text-align: center;">IN PROGRESS</p> DDD, DPW, CPC, City Council, RER, HDLC, ONE
	3.1.3 Promote the installation of awnings, canopies, balconies, and galleries at locations where they are architecturally appropriate.	<p style="text-align: center;">NOT STARTED</p> DDD, RER, HDLC
	3.1.4 Additional streetscape improvements including improved wayfinding, and additional lighting and public seating.	<p style="text-align: center;">NOT STARTED</p> DDD, DPW, PPW
	3.1.5 Large planters and other landscaping interventions. Explore conversions of underutilized portions of ROW into green infrastructure or pocket parks.	<p style="text-align: center;">NOT STARTED</p> DDD, DPW, PPW
	3.1.6 Infrastructure for potential festivals on the street (that work in tandem with parades).	<p style="text-align: center;">NOT STARTED</p> DDD, DPW, PPW
Theater District/ Entertainment Center	3.2.1 Supplement existing zoning regulations to promote live entertainment venues and other appropriate uses the support an active Theater District.	<p style="text-align: center;">NOT STARTED</p> CPC, City Council
	3.2.2 Create additional special events on Canal Street, which would be marketed and managed by a public entity or main street organization.	<p style="text-align: center;">IN PROGRESS</p> DDD

ACTION ITEM	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
Curb Use Modification	4.1.1 Implement the enforcement and curb use re-allocation recommendations of the 2018 CBD Curb use Study to resolve issues with the misuse of freight and passenger zones and block of travel lanes	NOT STARTED DPW
	4.1.2 If curb use issues persist after implementation of 4.1.1, perform a 90-day demonstration of shared use lanes between Decatur/Magaine and Rampart Street that dedicates two lanes to through travel and the current outer lane and curb space to shared passenger and freight activities.	NO LONGER RECOMMENDED
Pedestrian Safety Action Plan Implementation	4.2.1 Neutral ground landscaping/buffers, such as planters or other installations, should be expanded to discourage pedestrians crossing midblock.	NOT STARTED DPW, PPW, RTA
	4.2.2 Canal and Peters Intersection – The right turn lane from S. Peters St. onto Canal St. riverbound could be removed, eliminating the small pedestrian island and creating a larger pedestrian space in front of the heavily pedestrian trafficked Caesar’s casino.	NO LONGER RECOMMENDED
	4.2.3 Prohibit right turns on red lights throughout the corridor.	NOT STARTED DPW
Improvements to Bicycle Infrastructure	4.3.1 Support initiatives like Connect the Crescent, and make temporary demonstration permanent if successful.	COMPLETED
	4.3.2 Install additional bicycle parking racks along Canal Street	IN PROGRESS DPW, CPC

ACTION ITEM	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
RTA Strategic Mobility Plan	4.4.1 Support the RTA in determining the appropriate location for a new downtown transit center after the Comprehensive Operations Assessment and Network Redesign have been completed.	COMPLETED
	4.4.2 Off-board fare collection for all Canal Street streetcar stops and informational/wayfinding signage to improve long lines during boarding and confusion on how and/or where to board the streetcar.	IN PROGRESS RTA
	4.4.3 Remove excess streetcar stops along Canal Street to avoid stops nearly every block, which could greatly increase headway along lower Canal Street.	NOT STARTED RTA
	4.4.4 Explore options for a CBD circulator that would connect major destinations to Canal Street . The circulator would help visitors and residents travel between destinations around the CBD with greater ease and efficiency compared to a city bus or taxi service.	NOT STARTED RTA, DPW
Establish a Management Entity Specifically for Canal Street	5.1 Consolidate management of public-sector efforts into a single entity and promote Canal Street through a “main street” organization as part of an existing public sector entity or a new, stand-alone organization.	IN PROGRESS DDD,
Strong Focus on Quality of Life Issues	5.2 Re-establish NOPD's Canal Street Enhancement Unit, full security camera coverage along Canal Street, and stronger focus on issues impacting quality of life on Canal Street including panhandling, cleanliness of sidewalks, and property maintenance.	IN PROGRESS DDD, FQMD, NOPD, OCE, HDLC, S&P, City Council, PPW, DPW, Sanitation

Implementation

Of the 27 total recommendations presented in the 2018 Canal Street Study, four have been completed, ten are in progress, 11 not started, and two are no longer desirable or feasible. Though having only 52 per cent of recommendations from 2018 completed or in progress might not seem like a triumph, the CPC staff believe that a few steps can be made towards accomplishing the remainder of the Action Items in relatively short order. The following table details those Action Items and steps needed to be take to implement these recommendations.

1. Transfer of Development Rights	
Action Item	2.1.4
Goal	Develop a Transfer of Development Rights tool within the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance that allows Canal Street property owners to gain value from unused developable area in exchange for the renovation and maintenance of the historic structures.
Cost	CPC and City Council staff time
Timeline	Study adopted 1st Quarter 2025
Process	Study requires City Planning Commission adoption. Text amendment of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance would require a City Council Motion to initiate, then adoption of an ordinance to implement.

2. Theater District/Entertainment Center	
Action Item	3.2.1
Goal	Consider expanding the allowable uses in the CBD Districts to reflect changes in market conditions, and to provide for more flexible commercial development spaces and alternative industrial uses like breweries that have historically prohibited.
Cost	CPC and City Council staff time
Timeline	4-6 months from City Council Motion
Process	Initial CPC recommended use permission amendments listed on page 43 of this report. Additional flexibility for added uses or restrictions during the CPC evaluation period would be advised. Text amendment of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance would require a City Council Motion to initiate, then adoption of an ordinance to implement.

3. Amendments to Signage Regulations

Action Item	3.2.1
Goal	Create signage regulations that provide a greater sense of place and that is respectful of signs that once lined Canal Street.
Cost	CPC and City Council staff time
Timeline	4-6 months from City Council Motion
Process	CPC recommended concepts listed on page 36 of this report. CPC recommends a working group composed of architects, HDLC representatives, sign manufacturers, and corridor stakeholders to refine concepts prior to introduction of legislation. Text amendment of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance would require a City Council Motion to initiate, then adoption of an ordinance to implement.

4. Re-Envisioned Canal Street Right-of-Way

Action Items	3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.4, 3.1.5, 3.1.6, 4.1.1, 4.2.1, 4.2.3
Goal	<p>Develop a comprehensive traffic engineering and design study of the Canal Street corridor. Study to include feasibility of numerous factors including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of travel lanes from three to two and potential impacts • Narrowing of existing travel lanes to accommodate expanded sidewalks and/or neutral ground. • Crash reduction measures to include eliminating certain vehicular crossings and/or u-turns and other various design elements to reduce travels speed and conflicts between users. • Explore expansion of sidewalks and demarcation of active spaces to be utilized by businesses in an orderly well-designed manner. • Alternatively, explore expansion of neutral ground to facilitate safer crossings for pedestrians and enhanced landscaping. • Provide solutions to curb use zones throughout the corridor in response to a potential redesign of the right-of-way and historic issues experienced on the street. • Provide an enhanced landscaping plan for the right-of-way that considers plantings that provide shade for pedestrians along the sidewalk and channel people in the neutral ground towards striped crossings.
Cost	-\$500,000 for study
Timeline	One year
Process	The City would need to enter into a professional services agreement with a consultant (and various sub-consultants) to provide expertise in traffic engineering, landscape architecture, and other potential specialized fields. The consultant should be expected to seek guidance from numerous City agencies, the DDD, corridor stakeholders, and the community for their expertise and daily experiences along the street. Any improvements made to the street would then require capital funds to implement, which could be roughly \$10-\$30 million depending on the extent of the improvements proposed.

The implementation actions listed in this table could complete or jump-start ten addition recommendations that are either stuck in-progress or not started. The Transfer of Development Rights Study has been near completion in the City Planning Commission office for several years, in part because it is a market-driven concept and was being developed immediately prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic downturn. With a better picture of the market in New Orleans, the CPC staff should be able to issue a recommendation it feels confident with advancing. Furthermore, this report has given the CPC staff the opportunity to explore additional possibilities for expanded use allowances in the CBD Zoning Districts and for placemaking opportunities in Theater District and other parts of the corridors. Text amendments of this nature present lower barriers to implementation, since City leadership have the ability to submit legislation to implement these measures. The final implementation step submitted in this report is for a comprehensive traffic and landscaping study of the Canal Street corriodr to consider changes to the right-of-way's use by vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and commercial vehicles. The current arrangement is not only a consistent complaint of stakeholders, but also presents safety issues for users along the street. A redesign presents an opportunity to provide additional safety measures as well as create a better, more orderly right-of-way for all users that would then certainly benefit those operating on the street and be more inviting for residents across the city of New Orleans.

Endnotes

- 1 "Downtown Development District". New Orleans Satellite Government. <http://nolasatellitegovernment.tulane.edu/organization.php?oID=21>. Accessed September 23, 2018.
- 2 "Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program". Downtown Development District. http://downtownnola.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/2012_Facade_Program_Policies_and_Procedures_Public_Doc_Final_Rev_May_21_2012-1337724114.pdf.
- 3 <https://downtownnola.com/uploads/CanalStreetDevelopmentStrategy2004.pdf>, page 64.
- 4 The 2025 Downtown NOLA Mayoral Forum can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xN5AcBkj9yA>
- 5 A deeper look at the diverse history of this block can be found in the online archives of Preservation in Print, in the April 2001 issue. <https://cloud.3dissue.com/193333/193749/226507/April2001/index.html#>
- 6 As quoted on page 8 of the November 2014 issue of Preservation in Print, along with more details on the significance of the 400 block of Canal Street. <https://cloud.3dissue.com/193333/193749/226507/November2014/index.html#>
- 7 William D. Reeves, PhD, "A Monument to Diversity: 400 block of Canal Street" page 24 <https://cloud.3dissue.com/193333/193749/226507/April2001/index.html#>
- 8 More information on this effort can be found in the Times Picayune archives from May of 1996 and at NewsBank using the link <https://tinyurl.com/ynmrrur7a>
- 9 See pages 10-15 of the March 2015 Preservation in Print <https://cloud.3dissue.com/193333/193749/226507/March2015/index.html>
- 10 UPDATE: Cantrell asks developer to withdraw controversial hotel project; 22 May 2014 https://www.nola.com/gambit/news/the_latest/update-cantrell-asks-developer-to-withdraw-controversial-hotel-project/article_a20e720d-0b8f-5a51-9913-70da96db3ddf.html
- 11 Fire-damaged Canal Street building to be converted to short-term rentals on upper floors; 15 October 2018 https://www.nola.com/news/business/fire-damaged-canal-street-building-to-be-converted-to-short-term-rentals-on-upper-floors/article_5a8a40c7-92bf-5714-8f56-08f7041dd71e.html
- 12 Coming Soon on Canal Street, 9 October 2019 <https://prcno.org/coming-soon-on-canal-street/>
- 13 Vieux Carré Digital Survey https://vcs.hnoc.org/property_info.php?lot=11509
- 14 Woolworth's store in New Orleans is demolished, site of the 1960 first locally organized lunch counter sit-in; David Grunfeld; 27 February 2015 https://www.nola.com/news/politics/woolworths-store-in-new-orleans-is-demolished-site-of-the-1960-first-locally-organized-lunch/article_3994e989-69f4-5c18-9671-4f839bf10f65.html
- 15 Hard Rock International announces plans to build hotel and residences in the CBD; Eric Craig; 16 February 2018 <https://nola.curbed.com/2018/2/16/17019906/new-orleans-hard-rock-international-announce-plans-hotel-residences>
- 16 Woolworth; Bruce Egler; 23 September 2011; https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info%3Aasid/infoweb.newsbank.com&svc_dat=AMNEWS&req_dat=0D1CD317F8F22780&rft_val_format=info%3Aofi/fmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=document_id%3Aimage%252Fv2%253A1223BCE5B718A166%2540EANX-NB-1729862C92A1EE46%25402455828-17294D6A4064A355%25408-17294D6A4064A355%2540/hlterms%3Awoolworth%2520c%2520orleans
- 17 Hard Rock Hotel owners reach partial settlement with victims of building collapse; Stephanie Riegel; 18 September 2025; https://www.nola.com/news/business/hard-rock-hotel-collapse-new-orleans-lawsuit/article_6e5980f3-1633-4011-9db6-7fb-900c31aa3.html
- 18 New apartment style hotel, The Mayfair, opening this fall on historic block of Canal Street; Stephanie Riegel; 17 August 2024; https://www.nola.com/news/business/new-apartment-style-hotel-the-mayfair-opening-this-fall-on-historic-block-of-canal-street/article_deb6d128-5c0f-11ef-97a1-2b2c6bb72fea.html



CHAPTER #9

City Planning Commission Consideration

October 14, 2025 Public Hearing

CPC staff summarized the study report explaining that the study was comprised of meetings with multiple City departments, local organizations, business owners, representatives of the Celebrate Canal organization, and members of the public to get a fresh view of what issues or challenges should be addressed and what opportunities can be implemented moving forward. Staff also presented a brief overview of each chapter of the study highlighting key focus areas that will be presented in more detail at the October 28th CPC meeting.

Four speaker cards were submitted in support of the study, three ceded time to Mrs. Sandra Herman who spoke on behalf of the Celebrate Canal! organization. There were no constituents that spoke in opposition of the study.

Commissioner Stewart asked what role the DDD has now in overseeing retail recruitment. Staff explained that the DDD no longer has a dedicated full-time staff member overseeing Canal Street and that the organizational structure component of the study addresses implementation and oversight possibilities for improved management and communications of all agencies moving forward.

Commissioner Stewart made a motion to defer the application as recommended by the staff. Commissioner Kepper seconded the motion, which was adopted.

MOTION:

BE IT MOVED BY THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION THAT CANAL STREET STUDY IS HEREBY RECOMMENDED FOR DEFERRAL TO THE OCTOBER 28 CPC MEETING.

YEAS: Brown, Kepper, Steeg, Stewart, Witry

NAYS:

ABSENT: Flick, Jordan, Joshi-Gupta

October 28, 2025 Public Hearing

The staff presented the results and recommendations of the 2024 Canal Street Study with a slideshow outlining each chapter. CPC staff summarized past reports and other revitalization efforts while providing insights into the progress of existing action items. Upon the conclusion of Final Recommendations and Implementation, staff recommended approval of the study and transmission to City Council for next steps. The Commission received public comment from representatives of the Celebrate Canal! organization, speaking in support of the study. They also outlined their own ideas and plans, describing how their efforts could complement the recommendations made in the study. A Canal Street resident spoke in favor of the plan as a whole, but opposed some of the details regarding Commercial Short Term Rentals, and also asked that more be done to address housing and homelessness issues.

The Commission thanked staff for the long-term efforts towards the revitalization of Canal Street, and noted the engagement by civic groups, emphasizing the opportunities that come with this level of involvement. Commissioner Poché raised technical questions about what the approval of the study means moving forward. Staff explained that a CPC motion in favor of the study would be an endorsement of the staff's recommendations and the study would be transmitted to the City Council as presented. Council would then review the study and decide on any actions they or other departments may be able to take. Commissioner Poché further expressed concerns about Commercial Short Term Rentals on Canal Street and their current allowances throughout the study area.

Commissioner Steeg made a motion to adopt the study as recommended by the staff. Commissioner Joshi-Gupta seconded the motion, which was adopted unanimously.

MOTION:

BE IT MOVED BY THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION THAT THE CANAL STREET STUDY PROGRESS REPORT & ANALYSIS OF CURRENT CONDITIONS IS HEREBY ADOPTED. BE IT FURTHER MOVED THAT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO FORWARD THE STUDY TO THE CITY COUNCIL.

YEAS: Joshi-Gupta, Kepper, Poché, Steeg, Stewart

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Flick, Jordan

