

# Canal Street Study

## City of New Orleans



### City Planning Commission

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## A. Executive Summary

### **Introduction**

On May 24, 2018, the City Council passed Motion M-18-200 directing the City Planning Commission to conduct a public hearing and study to (1) compile and summarize previous studies and advisory reports on the improvement of Canal Street between Claiborne Avenue and the Mississippi River, and (2) analyze new aspects of such, including but not limited to:

- a. Identifying key recommendations and barriers that have prevented those recommendations from being implemented;
- b. Identifying gaps in knowledge, resources, and considerations relevant to restoring Canal Street as a key destination within the City;
- c. Identifying opportunity sites for commercial or residential use;
- d. Providing recommendations for incentivizing use of upper floors while discouraging demolition of historic structures;
- e. Examination of whether encouraging upper floor development for the purpose of operating short term rentals along this corridor could spur revitalization, such as attracting more diverse and upscale retail on the bottom floors; and
- f. Providing recommendations for regulatory or policy initiatives that could be implemented to best accomplish the goal of restoring Canal Street as a key destination within the City.

### **Study Goals**

#### *Key Destination*

The words “key destination” were repeated several times in the City Council motion that outlined the scope and purpose of the Canal Street study. This speaks to the importance of Canal Street as a place that has historically held an important role in the City’s history in cooperation, ceremony, and commerce. The motion states that the study should provide recommendations to *restore* Canal Street as a key destination, implying that it does not have this role currently. Canal Street is still a place for culture and ceremony, as most Mardi Gras parades roll on Canal Street, but no longer holds a position as a regional retail destination. A survey of residents during the Unified New Orleans Plan resulted in the general view that Canal Street was “little more than an unattractive border between downtown districts.” Many residents and visitors hold this opinion, and Canal Street has become a street that one must cross to get to the CBD or French Quarter, and not a street that people walk up and down for its attractions. This is what the staff focused on when thinking about Canal Street as a “key destination”: how can Canal Street provide an opportunity for residents and visitors to walk its blocks and patronize shops, see a show, and perhaps even live and work, or stay in the long-vacant upper floors of the historic structures lining the street?



## *Goals*

The staff developed a list of goals to help guide its research and to ensure that all research and recommendations help achieve the goal of returning Canal Street to a key destination in the City.

1. Compile and summarize past studies of Canal Street to determine trends and key recommendations
2. Determine barriers to implementation of key recommendations from past studies.
3. Identify opportunity sites for commercial or residential use.
4. Provide recommendations for incentivizing use of upper floors while discouraging demolition, including but not limited to the use of Short Term Rentals as a tool for their redevelopment.
5. Determine how to attract more diverse retail on the ground floors of Canal Street buildings.
6. Recommend regulatory or policy initiatives that could restore Canal Street as a key destination.

## **Key Findings**

The staff reviewed numerous past plans and identified five general key recommendations that should continue to be the focus of initiatives aimed at restoring Canal Street as a key destination. The following findings highlights the results of this research and analysis, and informed the Canal Street Study recommendations:

### *History of Canal Street and Summary of Past Planning Efforts*

- Historically, Canal Street served as the common ground between the French Quarter and Faubourg St. Marie. In the late 1800's, retailers began relocating from other retail corridors, such as Royal and Chartres Streets, to Canal Street because there was room to expand and accommodate the large dry goods stores emerging at the time.
- Canal Street was the retail destination for the region until the mid-1900s when the growth suburban communities and the development of large indoor shopping centers threatened the street's position as a major shopping destination.
- Beginning in the 1950s, most studies on Canal Street focused on maintaining the retail core, and usually focused on improving shoppers' experiences. Recommendations typically aimed to provide suburban conveniences in the heart of the CBD, including high capacity roadways, convenient parking, and protection from the weather.
- Despite efforts to maintain the strength of retail of Canal Street, by the 1980s shops and department stores were closing, and often moving to suburban retail centers. The upper floors of Canal Street became vacant in this time period too, as many upper floors contained offices, workshops and showrooms for ground floor retail spaces.
- In the 1990s, studies on Canal Street began focusing on upper floor occupancy along with retail recruitment. The Acres of Diamonds study created several project proposals for the combination of the upper floor space of multiple buildings to make occupancy feasible.

- The 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy is the most recent comprehensive study of Canal Street. Many of the study’s recommendations and opportunity sites are still relevant today. General topics addressed in the Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy include retail, upper floor occupancy, placemaking, transportation, and management. These topics provide the structure of the staff’s analysis and recommendations in this study.

### *Key Recommendations of Past Planning Efforts*

- The key recommendations that are the emphasis of this study were seen as common themes or trends from past studies and conversations with stakeholders. The five key recommendations are grouped under Retail, Upper Floor Occupancy, Placemaking, Transportation, and Organizational Structure categories, and are further divided into more specific Action Items. These Key Recommendations of Past Planning Efforts are listed in Section C. and explored in greater detail in Section G.

### *Current Conditions*

- The CPC staff conducted a land use survey of the study area, and counted a total of 122 ground floor uses including vacant spaces. Retail represents the largest group of uses with 35 percent of the total. The next highest use category is vacant, or no use, with 15 percent having no tenant or structure.
- The largest grouping of retail uses is clothing and apparel stores (33%), and the second largest group is convenience/souvenir stores (26%).
- The CPC staff also obtained information regarding building permits that were issued in the study area between 2010 and August 2018. There have been a total of 216 permits issued for significant work,<sup>1</sup> 85 percent of which are structural or non-structural renovations. Five of the 216 total permits were issued for new construction.
- The adoption of the current CZO provided place-specific zoning districts that reflect the character and vision of the different portion of Canal Street.
  - Upper Canal Street is located in a CBD-7 Bio-Science District intended to promote the expansion of bio-science campuses and supportive services.
  - The area around the theaters is in a CBD-3 Cultural Arts District to promote this area as a cultural destination.
  - Historic Lower Canal Street is in a CBD-2 Historic Commercial and Mixed-Use District to further promote the goals of pedestrian-oriented retail and services.
  - Canal Street near the riverfront is in a CBD-4 Exposition District which is intended for large destination uses such as One Canal Place, the Aquarium, and Harrah’s Casino.

### *Public Input*

- In accordance with Motion M-18-200, the City Planning Commission held a public hearing on the Canal Street Study on July 10, 2018. At this public hearing, the staff presented the

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<sup>1</sup> Significant work defined as a value greater than \$25,000.

scope of the study and opened the hearing to public comment. No one from the public spoke on the study.

- During the course of the study, the CPC staff had 18 stakeholder meeting with various offices, organizations, groups, and individuals.

### *Analysis of Key Recommendations*

#### Retail

- The Downtown Development District plays a major role in attracting retailers to Canal Street and the entire CBD. The DDD hired a full-time Retail Attraction Specialist in 2008 to promote the CBD.
- The DDD's current retail strategy is rooted in a study completed in 2004 that helped develop the retail recommendations for the Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy. The strategy divided Canal Street into four target areas which have different retail tenancing goals:
  - Mississippi River to St. Charles Avenue/Royal Street: upscale to high-end retail
  - St. Charles Avenue/Royal Street to Roosevelt Way/Burgundy Street: lifestyle shopping catering to residents.
  - Roosevelt Way/Burgundy Street to Saratoga Street/Crozat Street: Theater-arts district supportive uses
  - Saratoga Street/Crozat Street to Claiborne Avenue: convenience shopping for nearby residents
- The 2004 strategy has since been supplemented by a 2007 study of the 700 to 900 blocks of Canal Street. This study used the ground floor retail space inventory from the 2004 strategy and identified possible retailers that fit the upscale to high-end profile.
- The DDD's retail strategy was also expanded upon with a 2013 market analysis which studied the feasibility of a large-format retail store on Upper Canal Street. The study determined that the market existed for such a store in that location.

#### Upper Floor Occupancy

- Building code issues remain problematic for the rehabilitation and occupancy of the upper floor spaces on Canal Street. Past plans recommended pursuing building code amendments similar to the State of New Jersey which adopted a sub-code specifically to stimulate the rehabilitation of historic structures.
- The renovation of these structures often requires the installation of additional life-safety requirements, involving the provision of a second means of egress. The narrow building frontages, limited ground floor space, and lack of available egress from the rear of interior buildings provide a challenge meeting these requirements.
- The New Jersey sub-code essentially allows property owners to renovate historic structures without triggering additional life-safety requirements if the renovation does not result in the structure being less safe.

- The consolidation of upper floor spaces between multiple buildings appears to be the most feasible method for rehabilitating these spaces. This was a method explored in detail in the Acres of Diamonds report in 1994, and the DDD continues to work with property owners to explore possible combinations of buildings.
- Past studies also recommended a transfer of development rights mechanism to help incentivize the maintenance of historic structures and renovation of upper floor spaces. The owners of historic structures are often limited in their ability to expand their building footprint, even when allowed by the zoning code. A transfer of development rights system would allow property owners to sell unused development rights to a receiving site that needs them, and in return would be required to invest the earnings into the maintenance or renovation of the historic structure.
- Short term rentals also provide an opportunity for the renovation and occupancy of upper floor spaces along Canal Street. Several projects have already been completed or are under review by City agencies.
- The 2018 City Planning Commission Short Term Rental Study recommended that Canal Street from the Mississippi River to Rampart Street be exempt from the Commercial Short Term Rental limit of 25 percent of multiple-family building. The staff believed that short term rentals are a use that could incentivize the renovation of these long vacant spaces.

### Placemaking

- Planning efforts conducted for Canal Street over the decades have consistently emphasized the importance of the physical character of the public and private spaces on Canal Street.
- The staff analysis included case studies of the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris, France; Times Square in New York City, and Fayetteville Street in Raleigh, NC.
- All of the case studies analyzed for this study agree on a consistent set of overarching principles: encourage walkability, proliferate multi-modal forms of transit, create consistent landscaping, lighting, seating, and wayfinding strategies, and preserve the historic architecture and character of the districts.
- The Canal Street streetscape has been enhanced in recent years through new sidewalk treatments, street furniture, landscaping, and curb extensions to expand pedestrian space.
- A new zoning ordinance has been adopted, 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 façades have been restored with the assistance of the DDD's façade grant programs.
- The theater district has been mostly restored with the return of the Saenger, Joy, and Orpheum Theaters, and the Loew's State Palace Theater is currently in the process of being redeveloped.

## Transportation

- Past plans have consistently mentioned the curb use issues facing the corridor, including the misuse of freight and passenger zones, and the blocking of travel lanes by buses or delivery trucks.
- DPW and the DDD are finalizing a curb use study for the entire CBD, which will contain recommendations for the reallocation of curb spaces to add freight and passenger zones where they are needed. The study also focuses on the enforcement of passenger and freight zone violations, and citing vehicles that obstruct travel lanes.
- Other earlier studies, such as the 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy, recommended that Canal Street be reduced to two travel lanes and each direction, and the outer lane be a dedicated freight and passenger zone. The curbside spaces would serve as parking.
- The 2014 Pedestrian Safety Action Plan recommended a wide range of improvements to pedestrian comfort and safety along Canal Street, and many of these recommendations have been implemented. Pedestrian countdown signals, high-visibility crosswalks, and truncated domes have been installed throughout the study area.
- Bicycling has been promoted in the study area by a 90-day demonstration project called Connect the Crescent. This 3 month demonstration includes a connection to the ferry terminal along Canal Street in front of Harrah's Casino, and a number of crossings of Canal Street.
- Canal Street is served by numerous bus and streetcar lines, and the hub of the transit system is located just off of Canal Street along Elk Place. The 2017 RTA Strategic Mobility Plan recommends that a new downtown transit center be established by 2023 to 2027, and the construction of a new Canal Street ferry terminal is being considered now.

## Organizational Structure

- Multiple governmental entities are tasked with managing and improving Canal Street, including the City of New Orleans, Downtown Development District, French Quarter Management District, and the Regional Transit Authority. All of these entities have an important interest in Canal Street but none is focused exclusively on Canal Street.
- The DDD's 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy similarly identified the numerous public entities with an interest in Canal Street and saw the multiple overlapping interests as problematic.
- Past Plans and stakeholder meetings also recommended a stronger emphasis on quality of life issues such as cleanliness, vagrancy, and building maintenance. Many stakeholders believed that such quality of life issues are preventing Canal Street from being restored as a key destination in the city.

## **Recommendations**

### *Retail*

- The CPC staff recommends that retailers continue to be recruited through the development of promotional materials that highlight the potential on Canal Street and its success stories, inform them of available tenant spaces, and list incentives that are accessible and predictable.
- The CPC staff recommends a comprehensive update to the 2004 retail strategy that consider the current market on Canal Street and the significant changes in national retail trends.

### *Upper Floor Occupancy*

- Amendments to the building code that can benefit the rehabilitation of the upper floors of Canal Street should continue to be considered. Though this would require coordination at the local and state levels, it could be the best option for owners of buildings on the interior of blocks and those that do not want to combine the upper floors of their buildings with neighboring structures.
- The DDD has provided pre-development support to property owners to help develop a plan for the consolidation of upper floor. By developing floor plans, construction costs, and expected return on investment, this pre-development support can be very useful to assist property owners to commit to redeveloping their upper floors. The CPC staff recommends that this type of assistance continue.
- The CPC staff recommends the City adopt a transfer of development rights mechanism to allow property owners along the historic portion of Canal Street to sell unused development rights, if the earnings from these sales is invested into the maintenance and upper floor renovations of the historic structures. A more detailed look into a program like this would need to be completed, including the sites that are able to send and receive development rights, and the legal processes that effectuate these transfers.

### *Placemaking*

- The CPC staff recommends that the City build upon the 2004 streetscape improvements by adding more outdoor seating, promoting the installation of awnings and canopies where appropriate, and encouraging café seating for restaurants on Canal Street.
- The CPC staff also recommends that the existing zoning regulations in the Theater District be supplemented to promote live entertainment venues and other appropriate uses that support the theaters.
- Additional special events should be held on Canal Street to bring people to the street, similar to Art for Art's Sake, White Linen Night, or Dirty Linen Night.

### *Transportation*

- DPW and the DDD, in consultation with the CPC staff, have been developing a comprehensive study of the curb uses in the CBD, including both sides of Canal Street.

The CPC staff recommends that the recommendations of this study be implemented as a short-term solution to the issues along Canal Street, including greater enforcement of freight and passenger zones, and the reallocation of spaces to provide more opportunities for loading and drop-offs.

- If the implementation of the recommendations of the 2018 CBD Curb Use Study are not effective in solving Canal Street's problems, the staff recommends testing the use of a shared-use lane on Canal Street. This recommendation could be tested through a temporary demonstration project, and would keep two travel lanes in each direction, and the outer lane and curb area for freight and passenger activities.
- The CPC staff also recommends the continued implementation of the 2014 Pedestrian Safety Action Plan and the 2017 RTA Strategic Mobility Plan. Additionally, the staff supports the Connect the Crescent demonstration project currently active in the CBD. If this demonstration is successful, the staff support making these bicycle facilities permanent.

### *Organizational Structure*

- The CPC staff recommends that Canal Street be promoted by a single, consolidated entity through a "main street" approach as part of an existing public sector entity or a new, stand-alone organization.
- A stronger focus on quality of life issues is needed. Numerous stakeholders believed that vagrancy, lack of cleanliness or sidewalks, and building maintenance were issues holding back Canal Street from attracting investment. The staff recommends that the NOPD's Canal Street Enhancement Unit be re-established and that enforcement authority over sanitation violations be granted to the Department of Sanitation, the Health Department, or other City enforcement agencies to relieve the NOPD as the sole enforcer of the sanitation code.

### **Next Steps**

The Canal Street Study directed by City Council Motion M-18-200 will be presented to the City Planning Commission on October 23, 2018. Before it considers the Study, the CPC must first hold a public hearing. Taking the public input in mind, the CPC can choose to forward the Study to the City Council with or without changes to the staff recommendations. If the CPC chooses to modify the Study recommendations, the staff will incorporate those recommendations and forward the revised study to the City Council by the deadline of November 1, 2018. The City Council may choose to hold its own public hearing on the Study, though it is not required.

Most of the recommendations within this report would require enhanced prioritization of resources to Canal Street, and would not require further action by the City Planning Commission. Changes could also include amendments to the City Code or State legislation, processes in which the CPC would not be formally involved with. A couple recommendations were made for changes to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, which the City Council would need to direct the CPC to consider as a text amendment. If that is done, the CPC will docket the request and write a staff report with recommendations for specific zoning text changes. The zoning docket would request

an additional public hearing before the CPC, and the CPC may choose to recommend text changes to the City Council with or without modification of the staff recommendations, or they could recommend denial of the proposal. Next the City Council must hold a public hearing before considering adoption of zoning text changes. The Council may adopt, adopt with modifications, or deny the recommendations of the CPC.

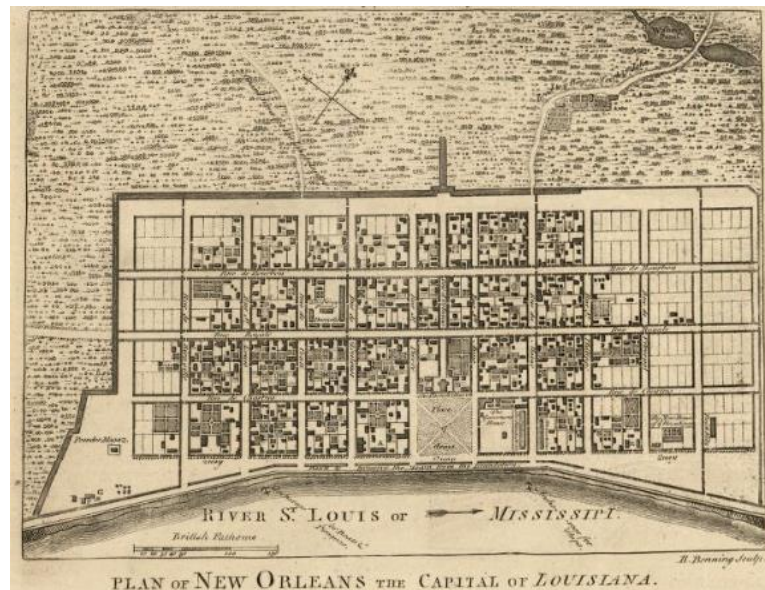


## B. History of Canal Street and Summaries of Past Planning Efforts

### Early Canal Street history

The establishment of Canal Street followed the plotting of the French Quarter street network by almost 90 years and the then-Faubourg Ste. Marie (now Central Business District) street network by about 20 years. During that two decade stretch from 1788 to 1807, the area that would become Canal Street was part of a common ground between the Quarter and Faubourg Ste. Marie, bounded by Iberville on one side and Common on the other. Within this area was the Spanish colonial wall extending from Fort San Luis near the river and Fort Burgundy at the rear of the city.<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 shows how the French Quarter's development radiated from present day Jackson Square, making Canal Street the upper edge of the city's original boundaries.

**Figure 1:** 1761 Plan of New Orleans the Capital of Louisiana (Library of Congress)



Fort San Luis diminished in importance after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, while Faubourg Ste. Marie grew. As part of a dispute between the City and the federal government over the ownership of the common areas that included the area between Iberville and Common, the U.S. Congress in 1807 required that a right-of-way be reserved for a waterway connecting the Carondelet Canal with the river, with sixty foot open spaces for a public highway extending alongside the waterway. In 1810, City surveyor Jacques Tannese plotted the street as 170', 6" in width and running parallel to Iberville Street.<sup>3</sup> The waterway was intended to connect the Mississippi River to the lake: it would extend from the river to what is now Basin Street, where it would meet the basin of the Carondelet Canal (later called the Old Basin Canal), which was built in the 1790s and led to Bayou

<sup>2</sup> Campanella, Richard. *Time and Place in New Orleans: Past Geographies in the Present Day*. Pelican Publishing, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Campanella, Richard. *Time and Place in New Orleans: Past Geographies in the Present Day*. Pelican Publishing, 2002.

Saint John, which in turn connected to Lake Pontchartrain. The Orleans Navigation Company was created to finance and construct the waterway, but it was ultimately never built<sup>4</sup>.

Campanella divides Canal Street's history as involving three transitions in its history. In its first two decades from about 1810 to 1830, the street's width and "axislike" position encouraged the construction of large institutional and residential buildings. These included a custom house at the river-side end that predated the current one, Charity Hospital at Canal and Baronne Streets, and churches. Fine residences lined the street, with commercial buildings mixed in as well. The street included two traffic lanes, a median, and sycamore trees<sup>3</sup>. In the 1830s, Canal Street to the river-side of Royal Street had a greater concentration of commercial uses, while it was progressively more residential to the lake-side of Rampart Street, where large townhouses were built beginning in the 1840s.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 2: Canal Street, 1857**



In the second era Campanella identifies—Canal Street's heyday, starting during the 1840s and 1850s and lasting for over a century, ending around 1964—Canal Street morphed from a residential and institutional street to a commercial center, replacing Royal and Chartres Streets as the city's primary shopping destination<sup>6</sup>. Royal and Chartres Streets had buildings with narrow frontages and limited floor space, which suited the small, specialized shops of the early 19th

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<sup>4</sup> Campanella, Richard. *Time and Place in New Orleans: Past Geographies in the Present Day*. Pelican Publishing, 2002. Pg. 111.

<sup>5</sup> Laborde, Peggy Scott. *Canal Street: New Orleans' Great Wide Way*. Pelican Publishing, 2006. Pg. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Campanella, Richard. *Time and Place in New Orleans: Past Geographies in the Present Day*. Pelican Publishing, 2002.

century but not the large, dry goods stores emerging at the time. Canal Street had plenty of space for these large retailers, which could have expansive footprints and display windows. In the mid-19th century, the street was developed with three- and four-story buildings.

Starting in the 1850s, with the adoption of elevators, multi-floor stores became more common. Cast-ironwork galleries became popular in the 1850s along Canal Street, protecting pedestrians from the sun and rain, but went out of fashion by the end of the 19th century and were removed from buildings.<sup>7</sup> A new building type emerged by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: the tall office building, such as the circa 1909 Maison Blanche Building, which is depicted in Figure 4.

When streetcars were removed from Canal Street in 1964, the boulevard was in competition with auto-oriented suburban shopping destinations. Canal Street would go on to lose this competition over the rest of the 20th century, with its department stores closing in the 1980s and 1990s. City Planning staff found numerous planning efforts focusing on Canal Street and the Central Business District in response to suburbanization. The next section will provide summaries of these plans beginning in the 1950s in an effort to understand how Canal Street got where it is today.

Figure 3 & Figure 4: Original Maison Blanche building (top) and its replacement (bottom)



<sup>7</sup> Laborde, Peggy Scott. *Canal Street: New Orleans' Great Wide Way*. Pelican Publishing, 2006. Pg. 43.



## 1950 – 1979 Plans and Studies

Canal Street in the late 1950s 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, which in many cases, meant adapting this area to provide suburban amenities. Mayor deLesseps Morrison and City Planning Commission Executive Director Louis Bisso favored a metaphor comparing the CBD and Canal Street to illnesses that plague the human body. Mayor Morrison stated that most American downtowns “are gravely ill with not one but three diseases: the cancer of the slums and obsolete facilities, hardening of the arteries brought on by an obsolete transportation network, and hypertensions, or high blood pressure, which had caused a weakening of the heart or central business district so that it was no longer able to keep pace with the demands being exerted on it.”<sup>8</sup> During this time of rapid suburbanization, City officials and planners still did not fully understand what long-term impacts decentralization would have on the city, and admitted that it was unknown if it was a permanent regional expansion or a temporary adjustment after World War II.<sup>9</sup> Bisso also stated the decentralization was “simply a new term for an old phenomena” in which retail corridors had moved from the French Quarter to Canal Street to Magazine Street and then into the suburban communities.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 5:** John C. Chase editorial cartoon about the growth of New Orleans’ suburban communities



These concerns about the CBD and Canal Street areas of New Orleans also came at the beginning of the discussions about a proposed riverfront expressway, which was proposed as a way for the urbanized areas of central New Orleans to accommodate the growing use of the private automobile.

<sup>8</sup> “Prescribes the Cure: Chep Diagnoses ‘Downtown’ Ills. State Item. October 8, 1958.

<sup>9</sup> Revitalization Prospectus. The Times Picayune. Sunday, November 24, 1957.

In 1957, the City Planning Commission requested that its Executive Director visit 12 Midwestern and Eastern cities to learn from their attempts to remedy the ills of their downtown area. The Executive Director published all of his findings in a document called “A Prospectus for Revitalizing New Orleans’ Central Business District.”

*A Prospectus for Revitalizing New Orleans’ Central Business District (1957)*

The Prospectus for Revitalizing New Orleans’ Central Business District (The Prospectus) focused on defining the problems of the Central Business District, and offered approaches to alleviating these problems, and listed items that needed further analysis. The Central Business District of New Orleans was defined in this document as the area bounded by the Mississippi River bridge approaches, Claiborne Avenue, Elysian Field Avenue, and the Mississippi River, or the area encompassed by the proposed “Outer Belt” of roadways.

Bisso believed that the 1957 version of the central area would not be able to withstand the growth of the private automobile and the demands for parking without some type of intervention. He also believe that land use and aging structures factored into the planning conversation and stated in the Prospectus that “traffic congestion...brings about a gradual deterioration of economic productivity, which together with a mixture of all kinds of land uses and a growing obsolescence of many structures in the Central Business District, IS THE PROBLEM!”<sup>11</sup> Bisso further offered that the CBD was the most important “room” in the “City Planning House” and that the projected increase in vehicular traffic was unsustainable for the CBD in its 1957 form.<sup>12</sup> The largest portion of the Prospectus was devoted to Bisso’s belief that a belt system was needed around the central area in order to meet traffic demands from suburban commuters.

Bisso believed that establishing a tiered roadway belt system, as had been done in other cities, and locating parking facilities on those loops would lessen the amount of traffic entering the densely developed CBD and would, in turn, free up the downtown streets for pedestrians and essential trips (e.g. deliveries, transit vehicles, etc.). Additionally, and to Bisso’s earlier point about the “obsolescence” of buildings in the central area, he believed that the construction of public facilities in these “obsolete” areas would stabilize property values and promote the further development of CBD-appropriate uses. This group of public buildings included the Union Passenger Terminal, Civic Center (“New” City Hall), Central Police Station on South Broad Street, Assembly Center Complex (to include the Municipal Auditorium), Federal Facilities on Poydras Street, and public buildings at the foot of Canal Street and around Jackson Square.<sup>13</sup>

Part of Bisso’s recommendation was to identify supporting land uses for the CBD, and it included what amounts to a future land use map (see Figure 6). Canal Street between Roosevelt Way/Burgundy Street and Magazine Street/Decatur Street was reserved as the Pedestrian-Transit Core, an area mainly used for retail and finance, and that would be designated for pedestrian use.

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<sup>11</sup> Bisso, Louis. A Prospectus for Revitalizing New Orleans’ Central Business District. New Orleans City Planning Commission, 1957. Pg 8.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 4.

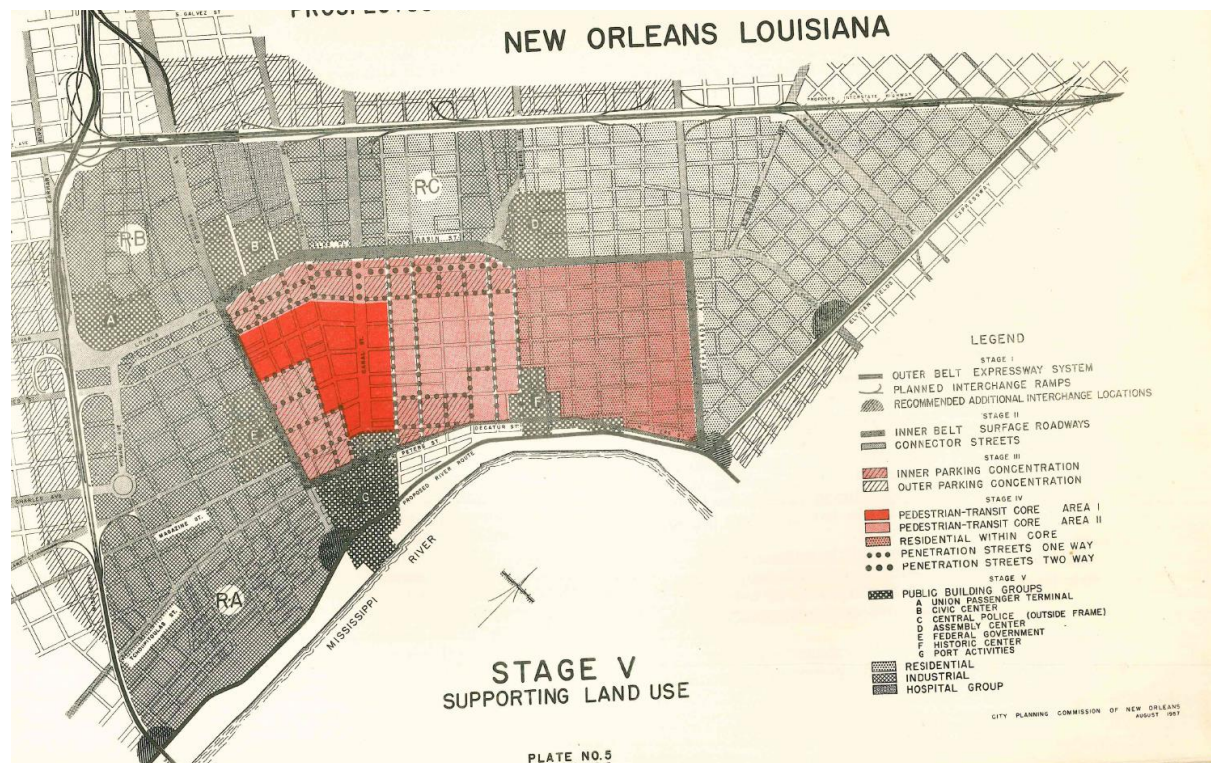
<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 53.

The two blocks up to Elks Place/Basin Street were designated Pedestrian-Transit Core Area II and as an inner parking concentration, which would provide the parking facilities for people accessing Area I. Canal Street lakeside of Elks Place/Basin Street to Claiborne was designated for Industrial Use and the area at the foot of Canal Street was included in the Public Building Groups.

Bisso believed that concentrating single use-types in areas would reduce the amount of traffic circulation.<sup>14</sup> This belief can be seen in the overall supporting land use map in The Prospectus. Most of the area was dedicated to industrial uses, including the present day Warehouse District, Superdome Area, and Upper Canal Street. Other types of uses like office and retail were to be concentrated mostly between Poydras Street and Canal Street and the upper half of the French Quarter. Bisso recognized that office jobs were becoming more common, stating “technological developments have developed a greater need for “pencil pushers” than has ever existed previously in history...It can easily be demonstrated that a preponderance of the recent construction within the Central Business District has been specifically designed to house these ‘pushers’.”

The lower half of the French Quarter was to remain residential, though Bisso did not believe residential was an appropriate CBD use.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 6:** Supporting Land Use from the Prospectus



To his credit, Bisso did believe in strong regional coordination when developing transportation systems. He believed that transit must be provided to the suburban developments, even before

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 34.

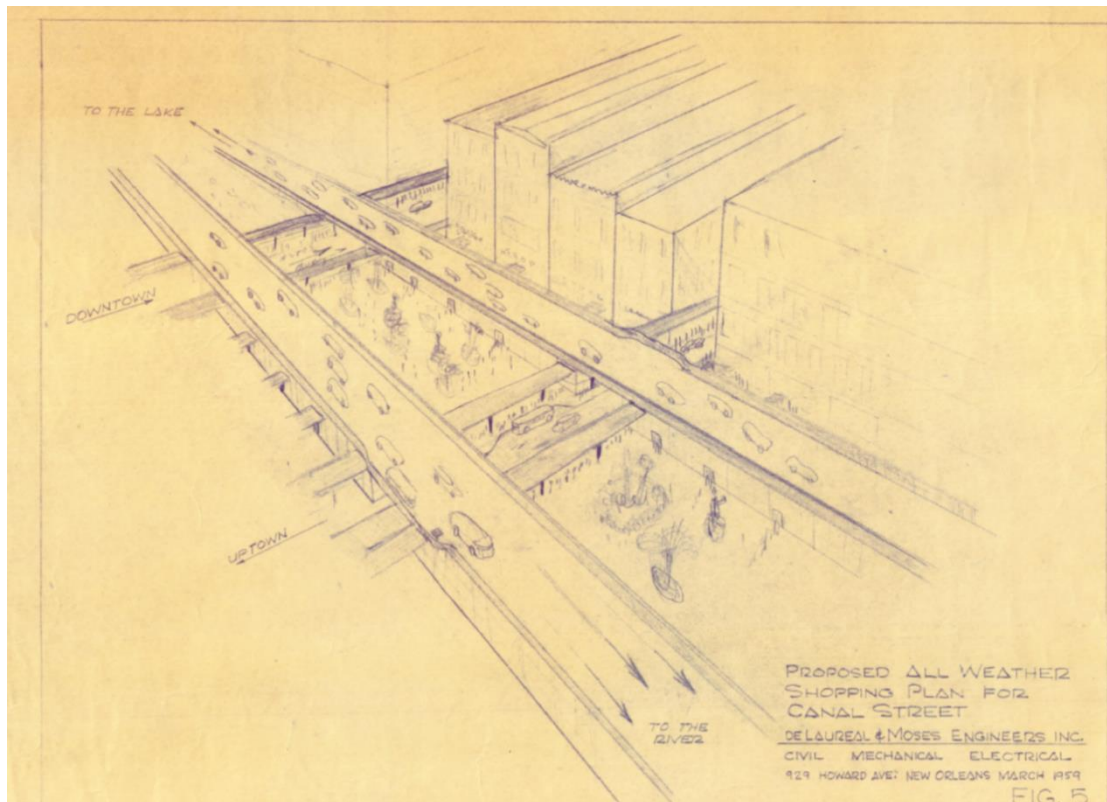
<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 51.



reaching a critical mass of households, in order to pre-empt total car dependency in these areas.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the Louisiana Legislature had just passed Act 239, which authorized the creation of an agency that would eventually be called the Regional Planning Commission. Perhaps Bisso said it best, that “steps taken now to prevent deterioration of the heart of the city will go far toward preventing major surgery later.”<sup>17</sup>

After the release of *The Prospectus*, Mayor Morrison and Executive Director Bisso discussed its recommendations with the media for the next year or so promoting its ideas and expressing concern over the changing nature of the CBD. The ideas in this plan did not promote the de-concentration of the CBD, but did promote projects that would make it easier for people not to live in or near the CBD. This, coupled with Bisso’s assertion that residential uses were incompatible with CBD functions, ensured that commuting convenience remained the top priority. These ideas, as outlined in *The Prospectus*, were not original and many cities were being modified to accommodate major roadways through very densely developed areas. The idea that cities had to replicate the suburbs permeated many of the ideas that surfaced during this time. Morrison even proposed imagining “a downtown with trees and flowers, monuments, and fountains...picture one or even several business district parks with benches and shady walks, an oasis of quiet in the center of...confusion...In effect, then, let’s start bringing some of the attraction of suburban living downtown.”<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 7:** All Weather Shopping Plan for Canal Street, 1959



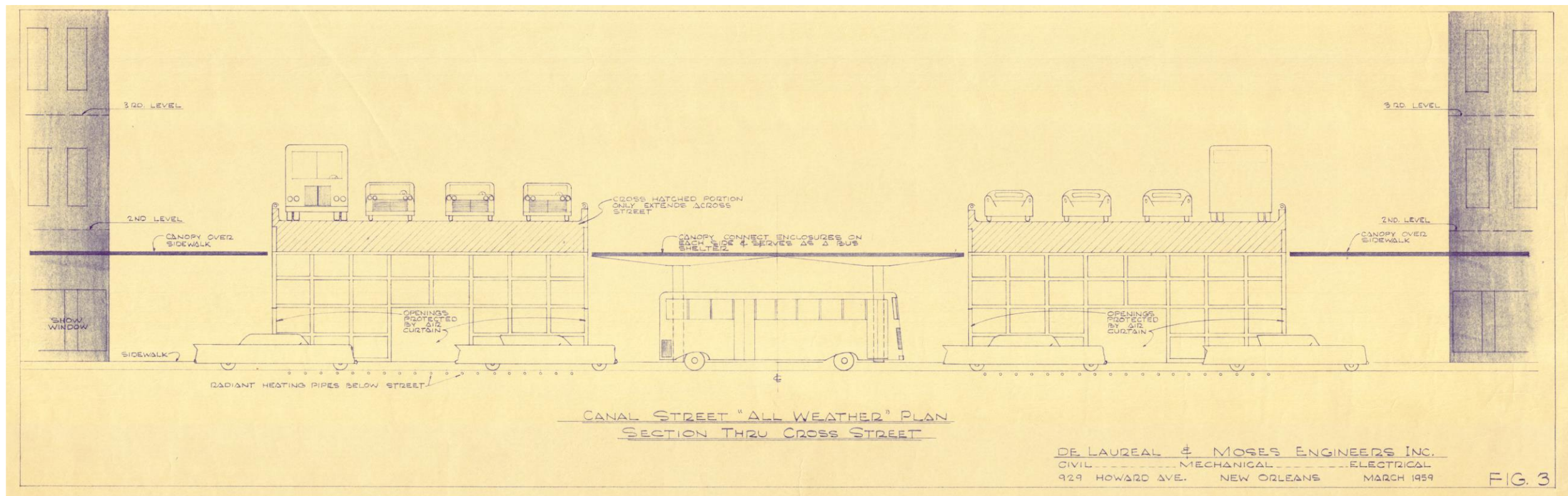
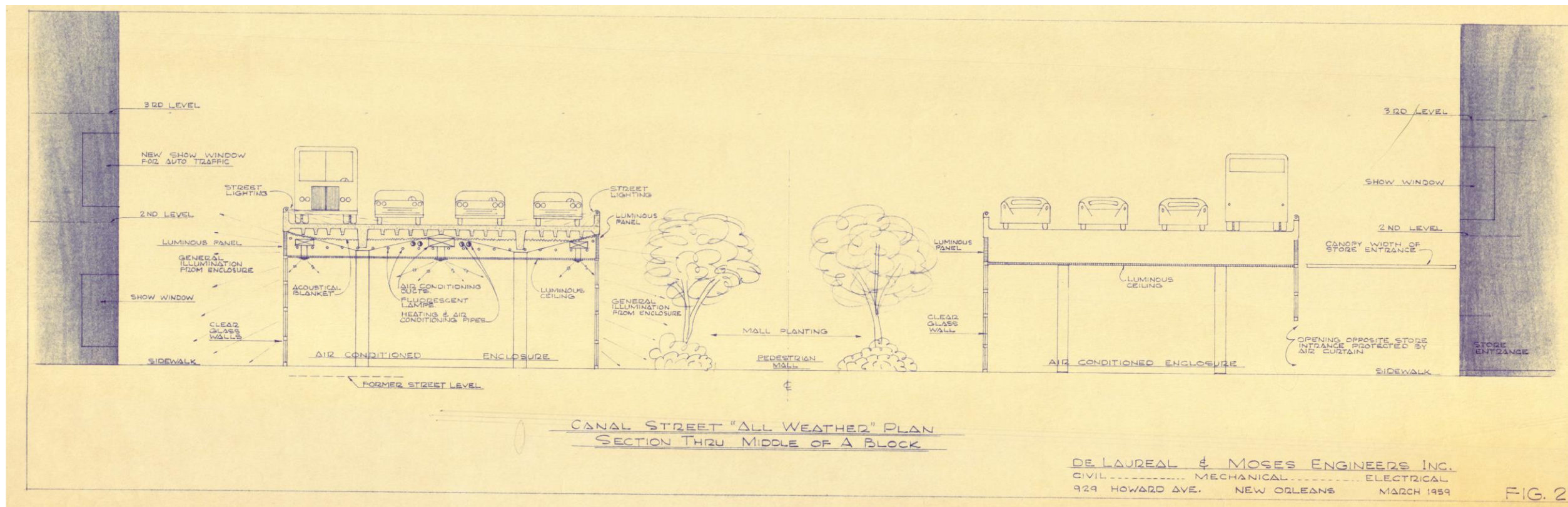
<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>17</sup> Central Business Region Revitalization Proposed.

<sup>18</sup> Ideas Discussed on ‘Downtown’. *The Times Picayune*. October 8, 1958.



Figure 8 & Figure 9: All Weather Shopping Plan for Canal Street





People did not argue about the need for trees and parks, but some soon began to wonder if the accommodation of the automobile would really “cure” the CBD. Some lay the blame for suburbanization on the generous federal housing policies of the time,<sup>19</sup> or the retail store executives who choose to move stores to suburban locations leading to the closure of downtown stores.<sup>20</sup> Either way, the strain on retail along Canal Street continued into the 1970s with no effective response.

### *Canal Street Improvement Project (1970)*

September 1970 marked the release of the Canal Street Improvement Project (Improvement Project), a plan developed by the Tulane University Department of Civil Engineering for the New Orleans Central Area Council Chamber of Commerce of the New Orleans Area. Unlike The Prospectus, this plan focused solely on Canal Street and mostly on environmental issues that hampered the further development of Canal Street.

From the beginning, the Improvement Project stated that in order for Canal Street to thrive, significant office, residential and hotel development needed to occur. This idea of residential uses being not only a compatible but necessary uses for the success of downtown retail is a sharp turn from the land use policies offered in The Prospectus. The sharp turn was, perhaps, a reaction to the emerging prevalence of office buildings in the area and a better understanding of the needs of their occupants. No matter the reason for the change in land use philosophy, the Improvement Project flatly stated that a mix of uses is critical to the health of the Canal Street retail center and promoted the development of mixed-use structures along Canal Street.<sup>21</sup>

### Retail

The Improvement Project believed there were several reasons that the retail along Canal Street was declining. One of these reasons was that Canal Street could not compete with the massive climate controlled shopping centers being developed in suburban communities.<sup>22</sup> At this time in history, few buildings had awnings or canopies to shield pedestrians from the elements. The plan offered recommendations to alleviate this problem. The first was that old buildings should provide awnings to the curb line of the street and that air conditioning and heating should be provided under the awnings.<sup>23</sup> The Improvement Project suggested that new developments be designed to provide arcades that could shelter pedestrians along the street. In addition to street level pedestrian cover, the plan believed that the second floors of structures could be opened up for business through the construction of a network of second level pedestrian bridges. This would provide the double benefit of providing conditioned space for pedestrians to access stores and would relieve pedestrian congestion at street-level.

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<sup>19</sup> Reasons for Downtown Programs’ Failing Told. The Times Picayune. September 29, 1961.

<sup>20</sup> Goehring, Maude. Why Blame Downtown Woes on Automobiles. States Item. October 3, 1961.

<sup>21</sup> John L. Niklaus and C. Blasé McCarthy. Canal Street Improvement Project. New Orleans Central Area Council Chamber of Commerce of the New Orleans Area. September 1970.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 23.

The Improvement Project also believed that many of the existing structures along Canal Street had outlived their useful life and should be replaced by modern structures.<sup>24</sup> Much of the development occurring during that time was happening on sites with few hurdles to developments,<sup>25</sup> such as green-field sites that were common in suburban communities at the time. The small lots and numerous property owners along Canal Street, in this context, would present an almost insurmountable task of assembling land for a major redevelopment project. The authors pointed to the lack of office construction activity on Canal Street as proof of this. At the time this document was published, three million square feet of office space was proposed or under construction and only 500,000 square feet was located on Canal Street.

### Transportation

Some of the transportation recommendations were discussed in the previous section, namely the second-level pedestrian crossings to improve the pedestrian experience and relieve sidewalk congestion. The Improvement Project recommended, like The Prospectus, that peripheral parking lots be established to divert vehicular traffic away from the CBD. The plan also recommended that Canal Street have no on-street parking, which would increase the capacity of the street by two travel lanes. This elimination of parking would be coupled with better coordination of deliveries to allow for greater vehicular capacity along the street.

In 1957, The Prospectus contemplated the declining use of transit into the CBD and generally believed that the number of people entering the CBD by transit vehicle would decline over the years, but stopped short of predicting extreme declines in ridership. With the benefit of an additional 13 years of ridership information, The Improvement Project noticed that the decline of transit ridership – from 63.4 percent of CBD workers in 1958 to 40.2 percent of CBD workers in 1967<sup>26</sup> - was sharp and deserved immediate attention and dedicated efforts to reverse the trend of the past decade. The plan proposed five options to improve the efficiency of transit vehicles along Canal Street<sup>27</sup>: (1) build a subterranean busway, (2) build an elevated busway above the sidewalk and next to the façade of Canal Street buildings, (3) continue neutral ground bus operations and create traffic arteries parallel to Canal Street to alleviate conflicts between passenger and transit vehicles, (4) overhead pedestrian ways and exclusive bus lanes, and (5) a low cost solution of continuing bus operations in the neutral ground and dedicate a bus lane on Canal Street for bus route that terminates on the street.

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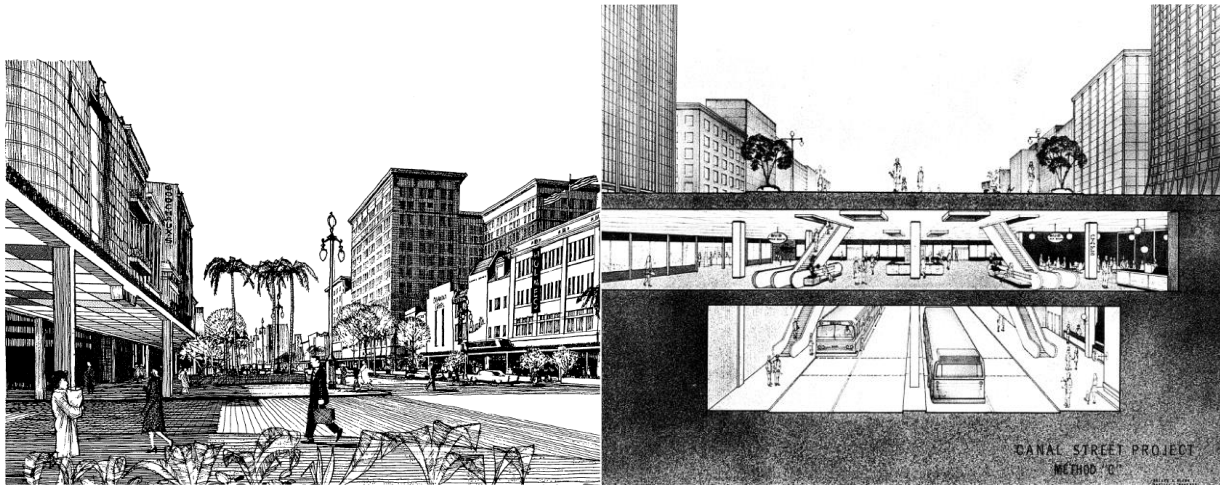
<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 12-15.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 29.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 35-39.

Figure 10 & Figure 11 : Elevated busways (left) and subterranean busways (right)



The Improvement Project seems to concede that the 5<sup>th</sup> alternative is the mostly likely to be implemented given the cost and aesthetic considerations of the others. For example, in reference to the elevated busway proposal, the authors note that the disadvantage of this proposal is that it “...would interpose a relatively bulky horizontal element across the façade of every building along both sides of Canal Street,”<sup>28</sup> a notion that might seem outrageous today, but Canal Street at the time was being considered for large-scale modern developments and did not have the protections of a local historic district against demolitions.

The Implementation Project also recommended regional coordination and planning to better define the purpose of Canal Street to the metropolitan area.<sup>29</sup> It argued that improvements to the street should be delayed until that vision is established.

### Design

The Improvement Project also offered a number of recommendations relating to the overall look and function of the pedestrian realm of Canal Street. In addition to recommendations for expanded sidewalks and greater use of canopies and arcades, the plan recommended better organization of items in the right-of-way and signage along the corridor. The Improvement Project suggested the better organization of the pedestrian environment including mailboxes and newspaper vending machines, and to not allow the accumulation of trash on the sidewalk. Simple management of these components of the right-of-way could provide a better experience for pedestrians, both aesthetically and functionally. The management of these items could include a better grouping and removal from pedestrian paths, as well as developing a standard design for common features for place-making specific to Canal Street.<sup>30</sup>

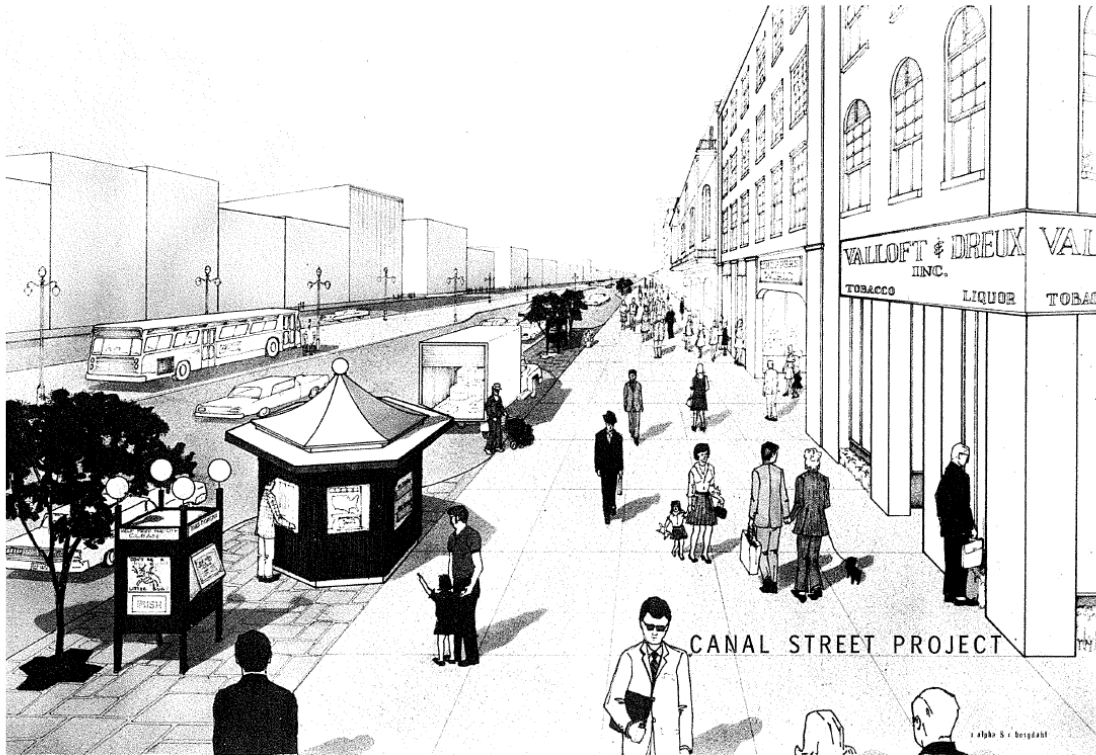
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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 24.

Figure 12: Canal Street Project organization of the public right of way



The Improvement Project took exception to the amount and condition of the signage in the area at that time: “It is almost as though some buildings exist solely to support the signs which adorn their façades and perch upon their roofs...While in some instances, the large signs mercifully obscure the shabbiness of obsolete buildings.”<sup>31</sup> The authors recommended a program to remove superfluous signage and other unnecessary items attached to building façades.<sup>32</sup>

Though some of the recommendations in the Canal Street Improvement Project are no longer desirable (e.g. elevated busways), the plan did recognize the connection between the pedestrian experiences and how it relates to the desirability of Canal Street as a retail corridor. The Improvement Project suggested that awnings be provided to shield pedestrians from the elements, and that basic cleanliness and organization of items in the right-of-way would all be a positive step towards improving the pedestrian experience.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 52.

**Figure 13:** 1972 Canal Street Mall rendering



*The Central New Orleans Growth Management Program 1975*

Beginning in 1973, the City and stakeholders in the central area of New Orleans engaged in a process to develop The Central New Orleans Growth Management Program (GMP). The City was experiencing a boom in construction of office and hotel buildings at the time, and projected the trend to continue into the 1990s. This report aimed to provide recommendations for the responsible and coordinated development of the central area of the city, including forecasts of retail, office, and residential demand in the area and recommendations for design, future land use, zoning, and public improvements.

The introduction of the plan lays out the vision for the central area after recommendations are implemented in a section titled “In The Year 2000.” The plan envisioned the year 2000 characterized by the accommodation of office buildings along the Poydras Street that have attracted national corporate headquarters, “glittering” hotels spread throughout the CBD which have also expanded the nightlife options from the Vieux Carré into the CBD, and the redevelopment of the riverfront to include residential, office, and retail uses.<sup>33</sup> The plan also envisioned that Skid Row along Julia Street would be eliminated through the treatment of its

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<sup>33</sup> The Central New Orleans Growth Management Program Technical Report. 1974. P1.

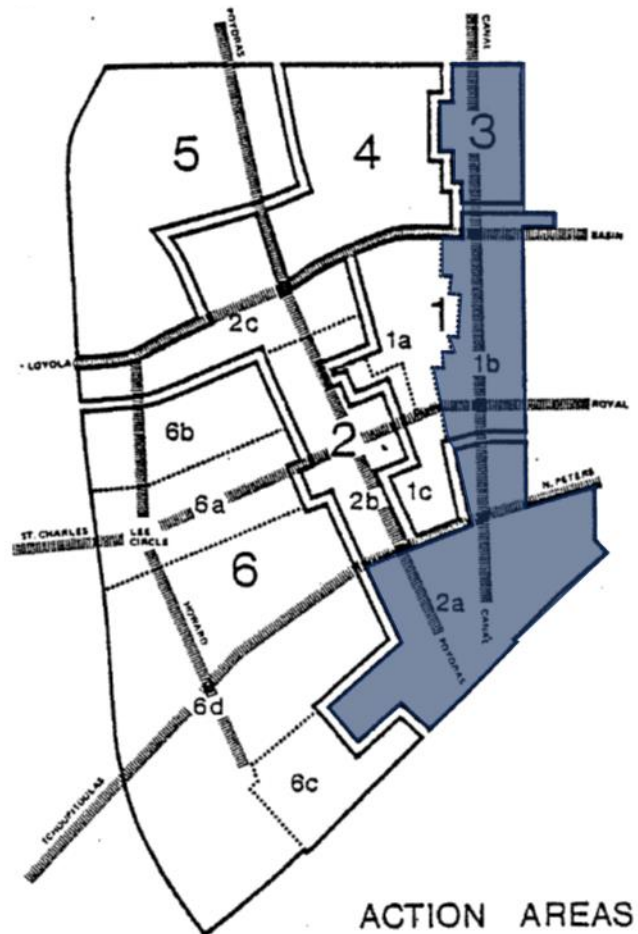
residents and the rehabilitation of the historic structures on the street. The GMP divided its study area into six action areas, three of which focused on or included portions of Canal Street. Area 1b focused on the center of retail activity on Canal Street, Area 2a included the riverfront area, and Area 3 included Upper Canal and the Iberville Housing Development area.

Many of the issues identified in this plan were similar to that of the Canal Street Improvement Project: declining retail, parking and traffic, design of new buildings, inadequate zoning controls, social issues that need to be addressed, and the demolition of old buildings in favor of large buildings that are out of scale with the historic nature of Canal Street.

The GMP outlined six objectives for the development of the Canal Street retail core (Area 1b). The first objective was simply to ensure the continuity of retail space and pedestrian activities along this stretch of Canal Street from Loyola Avenue to Chartres Street.<sup>34</sup> It also suggests that all new development have retail space that opens directly to the sidewalk.<sup>35</sup> The next, and related, recommendation is the overall improvement of the pedestrian realm of Canal Street. The GMP suggests that improvements include additional landscaping, lighting improvements, and the amortization of superfluous signage.

One point that was stressed for the preservation of the Canal Street retail core was that high rise development should not be allowed in that area. The GMP argued that the development of high rise hotels along Canal Street would produce traffic and environmental issues that would overwhelm the street, and preferred that this type of development be directed into the CBD which would be more appropriate in scale and would activate the street life in that area.<sup>36</sup> One of the threats to the preservation of this stretch of Canal Street, aside from the lack of local historic district protections, was the development rights allowed by the zoning of the area. Canal Street from the Mississippi River to Claiborne Avenue was located in a CBD-1 District in 1974, which allowed a

Figure 14: Growth Management Plan Action Areas



<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 100.

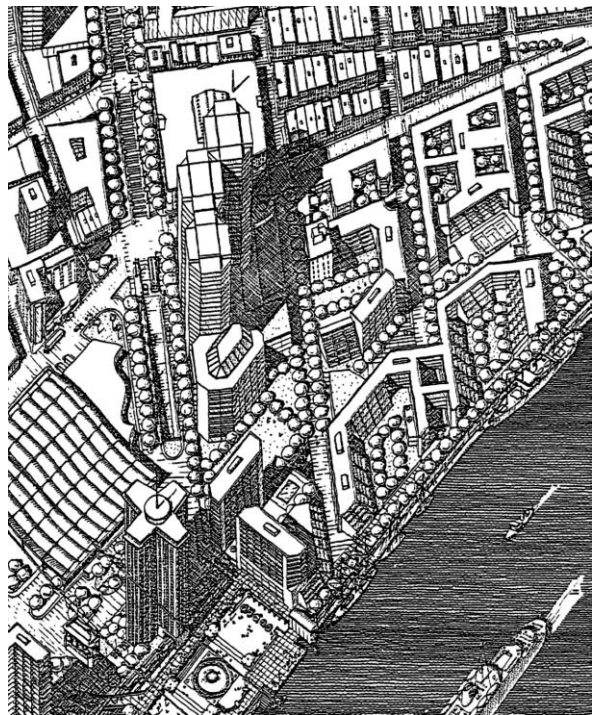
<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 47.



20 Floor Area Ratio.<sup>37</sup> The GMP suggested a 6 Floor Area Ratio be the maximum allowed in this segment of Canal Street. The GMP, similar to earlier plans that tried to address declining retail, also recommended shuttle buses be used to transport drivers from satellite lots around the CBD.

The GMP's recommendations for the Riverfront area of Canal Street (Area 2b) focused mostly on the movement of vehicles and people along for the anticipated newly developed area with new office, retail, and residential uses. The plan recommended a pedestrian pathway along the River and pedestrian connections to streets in the neighboring areas. The plan recommended that the Rivergate tunnel be used for parking and transit movement, that a River Boulevard be developed, and that a shuttle bus operate in a dedicated lane on the River Boulevard and connect to development along the Riverfront, Canal Street and the Superdome.<sup>38</sup> Aside from the transportation related recommendations for the Riverfront area, the plan recommend that the development intensity allowed be better controlled. The Riverfront was in the same CBD-1 District as Canal Street with a 20 FAR. The GMP proposed a 10 FAR.

**Figure 15:** The Riverfront at Canal Street in “The Year 2000”



The last Canal Street-specific action area addressed in the GMP was Area 3, or Upper Canal Street. The GMP recognized this area had significant potential for development due to its proximity to jobs in the CBD and Vieux Carré and it could be a natural extension of the continuous row of retail along Canal Street.<sup>39</sup> The GMP suggested that this area was ideal for hotel and residential development, and projected that 1.4 million square feet of development would be completed in this area by 2000. Due to this suggestion and projection, the GMP further recommended that the public realm be improved with landscaping and pedestrian facilities. The GMP also recommended a reduction in the allowable FAR from 20 to 14.

The GMP makes a number of other very specific recommendations for other action areas and a number of general recommendations for the area (e.g. the creation of a local historic district). One of the main points made throughout the GMP is that significant development was expected for the 25 years following the report, and that the City needed to be prepared to direct these pressures to appropriate locations, make improvements to ROWs to better accommodate greater pedestrian and

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 57.

vehicular traffic, and to generally preserve the overall quality of life for those living and visiting the central area of New Orleans.<sup>40</sup>

*City of New Orleans Business District Implementation Strategy, Program and Zoning Plan (1976)*

The Growth Management Plan in 1974 included a number of recommendations that needed further study or guidance to be implemented. One of these recommendations involved proposed amendments to the zoning of the CBD area, including Canal Street between the Mississippi River and Claiborne Avenue. The Implementation Strategy, Program and Zoning Plan (Implementation Strategy) was developed after the GMP to focus solely on the specifics of zoning allowances in the CBD area, and worked in parallel with the development of historic districts, creation of the DDD, and the public works improvements in the area.<sup>41</sup> All of the recommendations in this report proposed changes to the zoning districts in 1976, and those recommendations affecting Canal Street can be divided into four categories: Bulk and Area, Use, Signage, Design, Bonus Allowances.

Bulk and Area

The GMP stressed that the existing CBD-1 District allowed far too much developable area, via Floor Area Ratio, which would promote the construction of buildings out of scale with the historic character of this portion of Canal Street. The Implementation Strategy recommended that a zoning district be created for the Canal Street retail core that helped preserve the scale of these historic structures. A maximum 6 FAR was proposed along with a maximum buildings height at the street's edge of 75 feet, and 85 feet total<sup>42</sup>. This mirrored the FAR recommendation of the GMP, but added a maximum height for additional protection. The proposed zoning district along the remaining portions of Canal Street, CBD-2A and CBD-2B, allowed FAR's between 8 and 14 depending on the residential/non-residential composition of the building. Height was also strictly controlled by FAR, with no maximum building height. These areas were intended for hotel, office, and residential development and were envisioned to be a higher intensity than the historic retail center of Canal Street, and both bookend and support the retail present on the street.

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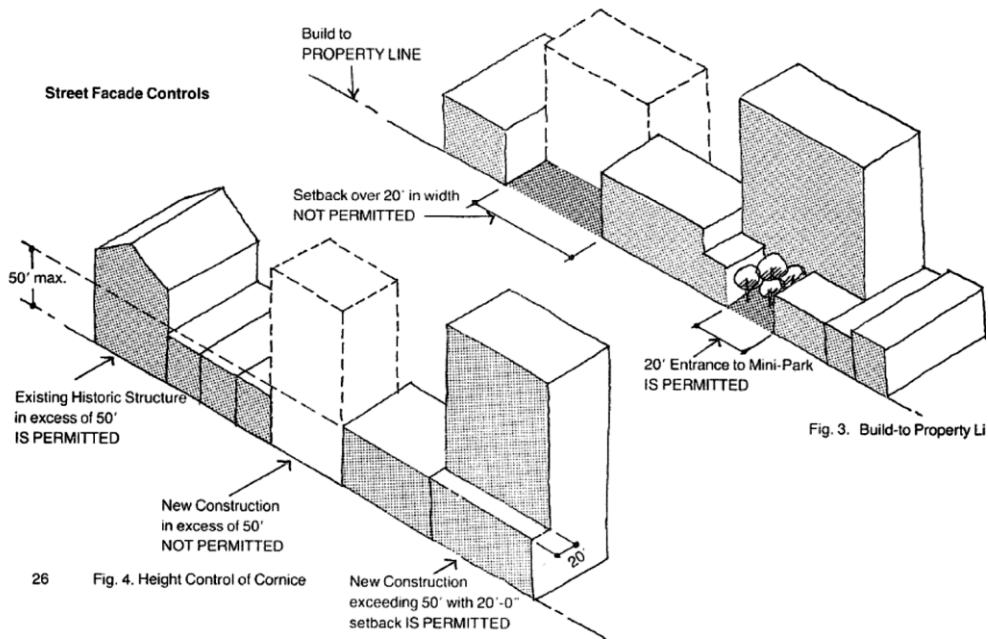
<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>41</sup> Haines Lundberg Waehler, Wallace, Mcharg, Roberts & Todd, and Planning Services Incorporated. City of New Orleans Business District Implementation Strategy, Implementation, Program and Zoning Plan. 1976. Page 2.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 58.



**Figure 16 : Street façade controls in the 1976 Implementation Strategy**



The Implementation Strategy also recommended amending a setback requirement in the CBD that required buildings to be set back a minimum of 30 feet from the centerline of a narrow street. The report believed this requirement did not support the GMP’s vision of promoting a walkable urban environment and would result in disjointed street walls.<sup>43</sup> The Implementation Plan, instead, recommended a build-to line with allowances for setbacks of no more than 20 feet in width for entrances and mini-parks.<sup>44</sup>

Land Use

The two major use-related recommendations from the GMP and, subsequently, the Implementation Strategy were related to the proliferation of parking facilities and the stabilization of retail along Canal Street. Planners believed that parking was key to the survival of retail along Canal Street, but also understood that the proliferation of surface parking lots destroyed the historic character of these areas. The solution at the time was to locate parking lots on the fringe of downtown and provide shuttle service to the central area of the city. In order to prevent further demolitions of historic structures, the Implementation Strategy proposed that new accessory or principal parking areas not be allowed along the retail core section Canal Street<sup>45</sup>. In the other proposed districts covering Canal Street, CBD-2A and CBD-2B, parking was recommended to be allowed, but with restrictions. The CBD-2A District, covering Canal Street between Camp/Chartres Streets and Tchoupitoulas/N. Peters Streets, would not be required parking and only allow minimal accessory parking. The rest of Canal Street, in the CBD-2B District, would generally be allowed accessory parking at a level the use demands and would only allow non-accessory parking as a conditional

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 49.

use. Again, these recommendations show the Implementation Strategy's desire to preserve historic areas, allow limited opportunities for parking in new developments adjacent to the historic retail area, and permit only the parking needed for new developments closer to Claiborne Avenue.

The second major use recommendation was also proposed in general terms in the GMP, which was the requirement of retail uses on the first floor. The Implementation Strategy recommended that buildings in the Canal Street retail core be required to dedicate 70 percent of the floor area of the ground floor for retail uses.<sup>46</sup>

### Signage

The Implementation Strategy made a number of recommendations to help reduce sign clutter on Canal Street. Recommendations include a prohibition on roof signs, flashing signs, and projecting signs in the CBD.<sup>47</sup> The Implementation Plan also proposed amortizing projecting signs in the Canal Street retail core within a year of the adoption of the amended zoning districts. The amortization of projecting sign in the retail core was tied in with the overall effort to beautify this section of the Canal Street to make it more inviting to shoppers. Presumably, the blanket prohibition of roof signs, flashing signs, and projecting signs throughout the CBD was to preempt the development surge forecasted for the following decades and prevent sign clutter from spreading into these areas.

### Bonus Allowances

The Implementation Strategy introduces a number of recommendations for elective elements that private developers could opt into. One element recommended was the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). This idea was contemplated in the GMP, but the state law at the time did not allow such a transfer of rights. The Implementation Strategy believed the state enabling legislation for the CBD special taxing district would allow that agency to utilize this tool. The report specifically mentions the use of façade easements to assist with the rehabilitation of historic structures, which is a program currently managed by the Downtown Development District.<sup>48</sup> TDR can be a strong tool to discourage the demolition of historic structures, not only because of façade preservation programs, but also if unused development rights can be sold to other private developers that need additional development rights. The Implementation Strategy did not directly address the concerns of the GMP about the legality of TDR in Louisiana and New Orleans, but it recommended TDR as a tool for development in the CBD.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 38.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 59.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 43.

## 1980s Plans and Studies

The State of Louisiana and City of New Orleans emerged from the 1970s riding high on the wave of the unprecedented oil prices resulting from the preceding Oil Boom. While much of the nation suffered from high gas prices, Louisiana, a state that in 1982 derived 42% of its revenue from oil and gas, benefited from high oil prices.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, Americans were cutting back on spending and travelling less. Tourism in New Orleans plummeted in the early 1980s and, by some estimates, numbers were down by 50 percent.<sup>50</sup> People were optimistic that the 1984 World's Fair would cure the city's steep decline in tourism. As these unique economic conditions swirled around New Orleans and the nation, Canal Street continued struggling to compete with suburban retailers as the effects of suburbanization and urban decline began to show on the street. Canal Street's status as the regional center for retail further declined as prominent retailers and businesses were opening stores in Metairie and other nearby suburban locations.

The 1984 New Orleans World's Fair was originally touted as a way to garner sufficient state funds to build a world class convention center in a historically industrial part of the city along the Mississippi River. This new convention center was envisioned as a necessary catalyst for future tourism that would be attracted to the city via the lucrative convention circuit. Additionally, the fair would revitalize a deteriorating neighborhood near the Port of New Orleans and parts of the Warehouse District, and would expose millions of visitors to the numerous charms and attractions of the Crescent City.<sup>51</sup> In the end, the fair would lose \$100 million dollars and attracted only around 35,000 visitors per day compared to the predicted 70,000.

Despite these disappointments, the fair resulted in lasting changes for the city and the neighborhoods immediately surrounding Canal Street. Legacies of the fair include the convention center, a cruise ship terminal, and a riverfront shopping mall. The fair was the impetus for the construction of new high rise hotels along and near Canal Street including the 49-story Sheraton at 500 Canal Street (which was originally designed and approved as a two-tower complex; while the second tower was never built, the zoning entitlement remains in place) and the 23-story La

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<sup>49</sup> New York Times, "Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana Make Slow Comeback from '86 Oil Bust," November 18, 1980. P.9.

<sup>50</sup> Will the World's Fair be the Cure for those Basin Street Blues?" Business Week, 7 May 1984.

<sup>51</sup> Cotter, Bill. The 1984 New Orleans World's Fair. Arcadia Publishing. p7-13.

Meridian, in addition to the numerous shops and restaurants that opened as a result of the increased convention business. The fair also resulted in the first phase of the revitalization of the Warehouse District and the Julia Street Arts District. In preparation for the fair, Canal Street received an approximately \$2 million renovation in 1983 as part of the Downtown Development District's Sidewalk Improvement Project. The improvements, which were the first major capital improvement project of the Downtown Development District, included new paving, street trees, lighting, curbs and ramps. The improvements were considered long overdue and welcomed by business owners and visitors alike who felt that a more beautified and pedestrian friendly Canal Street would be a direct contributor to the street's success.<sup>52</sup>

Figure 17: Rendering from 1981 approval of the Sheraton Hotel



The trends that had signaled the slow decline of Canal Street as the premier regional shopping destination that surfaced in the 1970s, would continue into the 1980s. The oil boom of the 1970s and the investment that accompanied the 1984 World's Fair briefly offered hope that the decline would be curtailed, but after the fair shut its gates and the oil boom turned to bust, reality returned once again. The economic downturn in the region's economy associated with the 1985 oil bust certainly took a toll on the numerous retailers along Canal Street as locals and tourists alike became more frugal. By the mid-1980s one in eight Louisianan workers was unemployed as the state claimed the highest unemployment rate in the nation and, as the Times Picayune described, "by 1986, shops on Canal Street were closed and windows were boarded up and colorfully painted. Just a decade earlier, the street was full of shoppers and the CBD was still the primary shopping area in the region."<sup>53</sup> It was during these bust times of the 1980s that upper floor office uses moved to the more attractive high-rises of the Poydras Street corridor. Bank, savings, and loan institutions shrank their real estate portfolios, and the prominent multi-floor retail uses "became a particular

<sup>52</sup> "Canal Street renovation gets New Orleanians' OK." *The Times Picayune*, Friday, March 25, 1983. Pg. 9.

<sup>53</sup> The Times-Picayune. "1985: The oil bust hits the New Orleans economy," 28 December 2011.

[https://www.nola.com/175years/index.ssf/2011/12/1985\\_the\\_oil\\_bust\\_hits\\_the\\_new.html](https://www.nola.com/175years/index.ssf/2011/12/1985_the_oil_bust_hits_the_new.html)

victim of the times” as they “closed, down-sized, merged or moved to the suburbs.” The upper story spaces on many of the structures on Canal Street became vacant and other uses that could occupy the upper floors seemed to be impractical.<sup>54</sup>

Other factors that contributed to the decline of the street as the region’s shopping destination included the consistent migration of jobs and residents to suburban centers such as Metairie, Kenner and the Gretna and the rise of regional shopping malls that challenged Canal Street’s dominance with a well-organized approach that included sophisticated merchandizing and management strategies. Additionally, traditional retailers along Canal Street were threatened by competition that was much closer to home as two new indoor shopping malls opened at the foot of Canal Street. A new shopping mall that featured a Saks Fifth Avenue opened at One Canal Place in 1983 and the expansive Riverwalk mall opened shortly after the World’s Fair where the Julia Street and Poydras Street wharves once stood.

In response to numerous threats to the dominance, and even survival, of Canal Street as a regional shopping destination, an aggressive marketing campaign branded “Rediscover Downtown” urged shoppers to return to the shopping destinations along Canal Street by touting such amenities as improved transit options, parking availability, historic charm and the unrivaled service offered at its host of distinguished retailers. The first major retailer to close was the iconic Maison Blanche department store in 1982, Godchaux’s and Gus Mayer’s followed in 1988, D.H. Holmes closed in 1989, and many of the smaller shops and retailers closed their doors as well. As the 1980s came to a close, writers at the Times Picayune were no longer writing on the pleasures of a stroll along Canal Street but instead the attention had turned to tales of violence, drugs and lawlessness along the street.<sup>55</sup> The conversation now became, “How do we fix Canal Street?”<sup>56</sup>

Figure 18: Rediscover Downtown ad in The Times Picayune, 1982

Rediscover Downtown  
with **TRANSIT**  
only \$1.20 round trip



That’s just about the cost of one gallon of gas and when you consider parking, too, it’s really a good buy. So why not take a bus or street car every time you go Downtown—for shopping, for entertainment or for work. It’s the easy way to get there.

<sup>54</sup> “Acres of Diamonds: Opportunities on Canal Street” *Hebert/Smolkin Associates*, March 15, 1996. Pg. 6-1.

<sup>55</sup> The Times Picayune. “Canal: The Heart of Saturday Night,” Christopher Rose, 16 August 1987. Pg. 2.

<sup>56</sup> The Times Picayune. “Students have big plans for upper Canal Street,” Marjoerie Roehl, 3 May 1996.

*New Orleans Growth Management Plan Update – 1986*

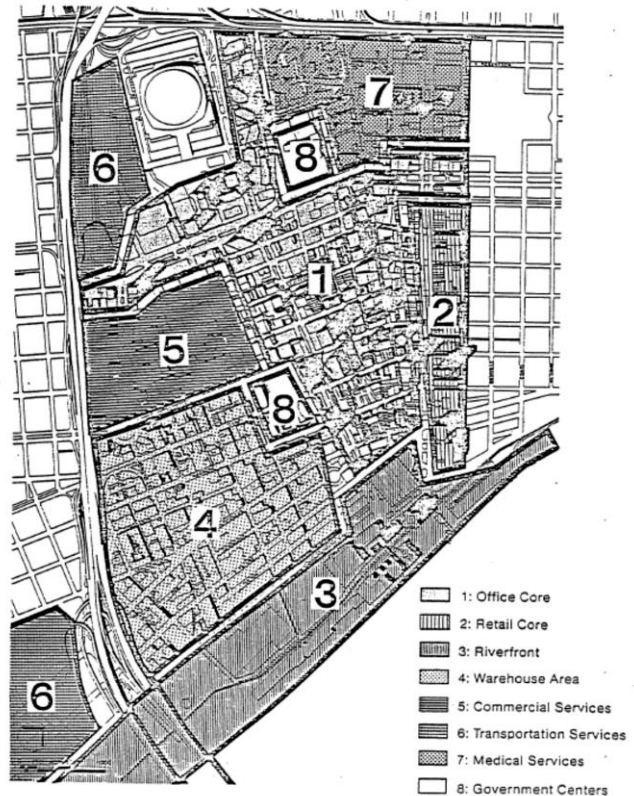
In 1975, the City of New Orleans and the Central Area Council of the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce, in joint venture, completed a Growth Management Plan for the New Orleans Central Business District. However, major events occurring throughout the 1980s prompted the team to produce a Growth Management Plan Update in 1986. Major events such as the 1984 World’s Fair, reduced federal spending, and redefined growth expectations in light of the recent collapse of the oil industry influenced the decision to update the 1975 plan. A key focus of the updated plan is the lack of growth of a “stable downtown residential community,” which the plan saw as a strategic objective in the maintenance of a strong retail core on Canal Street.”<sup>57</sup> The closing of several large department stores and the exclusively office and hotel based development is cause for concern of the Canal Street and the CBD becoming a “sterile 9 to 5 center if residential objectives are not soon achieved.”<sup>58</sup>

Like the original 1975 plan, the plan update divided the study area into nine districts that span the area from the Riverfront to the Superdome and back to Canal Street. The Canal Street corridor into two sections: Upper Canal extends from Saratoga to the Claiborne Expressway, the Canal Retail Corridor runs from Saratoga to Tchoupitoulas Streets.

Land Use – Upper and Lower Canal Street

Lower Canal Street had recently expanded its retail offerings by adding the new Canal Place development, and Upper Canal Street had seen new development in the form of the new 200,000 square foot ODECO office building and the renovation of the of the Clarion Hotel and Fisk office building. Upper Canal Street was seen as the point where continuous retail development gives way to a more scattered development pattern that includes surface parking lots and office buildings. The Retail Corridor had seen 2.5 million square feet of new development since 1975 in the form of office and hotel development below St. Charles Avenue. This new development was largely a result of the 1984 World’s Fair and was seen to have stabilized lower Canal Street while having little effect on the continued decline of retail uses above Carondelet Street.

Figure 19: GMP Update Land Use Plan



<sup>57</sup> Growth Management Plan Update, 1986, Pg. 6.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 6.

The plan update recommended building on the character of the “Grand Retailing Boulevard” established in existing design controls and streetscape improvements and reinforced by the recommended retail management program and the encouragement of an anchoring node of high intensity, mixed-use development at the upper end, between Rampart and Saratoga Streets.

This zoning corresponded to the traditional Canal Street retail core. The purpose of this district was to preserve and enhance the retail center by requiring lower floor retail and service uses. New development was required to be sympathetic in scale and design to the existing fabric, and the transition and connection to the adjacent Vieux Carré was to be enhanced. The boundaries of this district corresponded to the boundaries of the Canal Street Historic District.

The plan update recommended:

- Extending the CDB-2 provisions to Iberville Street west of Loyola, raising minimum FAR’s from 11 to 16.
- Creating a new zoning district CDB-1B with an unlimited FAR to encourage a high density mixed-use development to anchor the intersection of Elk Place/Basin and Canal Street with a unique mix of retail and entertainment functions at the street level and high density office or hotel/residential uses above.
- Revising the existing sign ordinance for Canal Street and implement a sign amortization program along the street (similar to the 1975 recommendation).

#### Urban Design – Upper and Lower Canal Street

A main success touted by the plan update was the streetscape improvements conducted along Canal Street in the early 1980s. Canal Street’s special character is said to be a result of the careful protection of its historic scale, architectural character of the street facades and the excellent landscape improvement that had been made. Additional strategies were still needed to stabilize and intensify its retail function. The recently constructed Canal Place development was seen to have anchored development along lower Canal and it was recommended that a similarly high intensity development should anchor the upper end around North Rampart or Basin Streets. This new anchor would allow upper Canal to be clearly defined as a separate district and develop an identity of its own. It was also determined that public and open space amenities were very limited in the CBD and Canal Street corridor in general and the plan recommends that a potential for gateway opportunities to the Vieux Carré and public gathering spaces for Canal Street be pursued.

Additional design considerations included:

- Design details in paving, lighting, and signage should be selected to enhance pedestrian safety and comfort.
- Planting should be dense and protective with trees shading the sidewalks and low shrubs or hedges protecting the pedestrians from traffic lanes.
- Pedestrian crossing of the street should be encouraged in frequent, clearly marked, well-lit crosswalks.

### Market Conditions – Upper and Lower Canal Street

Expanded conventions and growing convention business due to the new convention center resulted in positive outcomes for hotel businesses. Canal Street had experienced some growth in retail space in the year leading up to the plan update with the opening of the Canal Place and Riverwalk shopping centers at the foot of Canal Street. However, fears were growing that Canal Street was facing a decline as a retail center as several of the large department stores began closing along the street. It was unknown whether these closings represented a trend or unique cases.

The GMP Update recommended undertaking a detailed, retail market analysis to determine existing and potential retail market for Canal Street to identify gaps in retail merchandizing. It also recommended that the study include a structural examination of buildings with unoccupied or poorly utilized upper floors to determine their suitability for conversion to more active uses. The GMP Update further recommended that a comprehensive centralized retail management program for Canal Street be developed to increase its competitiveness and share of the regional retail market. Similar in approach to the management of an enclosed shopping mall, centralized retail management entails the creation of an entity to coordinate six programmatic functions: transportation/parking, maintenance, security, promotions, streetscape improvements, and tenant mix/leasing.

### Transportation – Upper and Lower Canal Street

Parking related issues along the Canal Street corridor was the main transportation topic discussed by the plan as the various retail establishments looked to provide a convenient and safe commuting experience to regional customers. Similar to the original plan, peripheral parking lots are recommended as a solution to expected increased parking demand. Exploring the potential for park and ride shuttle services are encouraged to ferry visitors to and from Canal Street. The plan recommends that a parking control entity be created with coordination and oversight authority for downtown parking strategies.

Throughout the 1980s, the CBD Shuttle ferried visitors to and from various parking facilities around the CBD and Canal Street. This service was considered to be underperforming and the improvement of the performance of the CBD Shuttle was recommended through better publicity of the service, increased visibility of the vehicles through creative paint schemes and decorations, route adjustments to connect more major activity centers, reduced headways and fares and allowing transfers.

The GMP Update's Functional Area C included the portion of the riverfront along Canal Street from Tchoupitoulas Street to the Mississippi River.

### Land Use - Riverfront

The area that was largely working docks and railyards in the mid-1970s was transformed by the 1984 World's Fair and the construction of 3.4 million square feet of hotel, exhibition and convention space, an 180,000 square foot mall and a condominium tower. It was during this era



that the riverfront became a prime destination for visitors and locals alike and the proposed riverfront trolley and large concentration of City owned land made the riverfront area prime for future development. The GMP Update predicted that public entertainment, exhibition, convention and hotel uses would continue to expand along riverfront. The plan recommended that tourist oriented functions should be balanced with residential development wherever feasible and noted that the potential redevelopment of the Rivergate Exhibition Hall as a mixed-use development was a possibility as well.

The CBD-2 District provided for a similar variety of uses as the CBD-1, but at lower intensities than in the central core. Mixed-use developments were encouraged and off-street parking was required at levels approaching demand. The base FAR was 10, 7 for residential uses and a maximum of 16 for mixed-use projects with bonus additions.

The plan update recommended that incentives should be offered to developers that include a substantial increase in residential bonuses, as well as a mandatory requirement for residential components in proposed riverfront developments.

#### Urban Design - Riverfront

The plan update referred to the need to monitor the development trends along the riverfront and allow for intensifying existing functions, special activity locations and changes in development character. The plan also highlighted the need for future development to relate strongly back to the City, as well as the river.

Additional design considerations included:

- Design details in paving, lighting, and signage should be selected to enhance pedestrian safety and comfort.
- Planting should be dense and protective with trees shading the sidewalks and low shrubs or hedges protecting the pedestrians from traffic lanes.
- Pedestrian crossing of the street should be encouraged in frequent, clearly marked, well-lit crosswalks.
- The riverfront promenade should be extended and improved with 50 percent matching contribution from existing or proposed private developments fronting on each section. Improvements should include landscaping, pedestrian amenities and small, sheltered park areas that will enhance the attractions of the area or residential developments.

#### Market Conditions - Riverfront

The possibility of state legislation legalizing casino gambling had been discussed around the time of this plan. The plan update explored various options for such a project and determined that the Rivergate Exhibition Center to be a prime location due to its proximity to the Convention Center, riverfront activities, Canal Street and the Vieux Carré.

### *Canal Street Local Historic District (1984)*

In 1984, the New Orleans City Council designated a portion of Canal Street as the Canal Street Local Historic District under the jurisdiction of the Central Business District Historic District Landmarks Commission. The commission regulates construction, demolition, exterior alterations and demolition by neglect in designated historic districts. The Canal Street Historic District extends from S. Saratoga/Crozat Street on the lake side, down the center of Iberville Street to N. Peters/ Tchoupitoulas Street on the river side, and includes all lots fronting on the downriver and uptown sides of Canal Street except for the uptown side lots between Camp and Magazine Streets, which is occupied by the Sheraton Hotel and the Sazerac House.

There was a heated debate over the potential effects of the designation in the months leading up to the Council vote. Those against the proposed designation argued that property values would decrease and that additional regulations would stifle potential development within the historic district. Those in favor of the proposed designation cited the importance of controlling demolitions in order to preserve valuable structures, the ability to ensure architectural quality of new construction through design review, the ability to prevent the deterioration of structures by citing owners for demolition by neglect, and tax advantages and incentives that would be available to owners who wish to rehabilitate historic buildings within the new district. In the years leading up to the historic district designation, Canal Street had seen several large modern structures developed in the footprint of demolished historic buildings, examples include the Marriot (1972) and Sheraton (1982) hotels.

While the CBD-3 zoning district that went into effect in 1978 limited the height of structures to 70 feet<sup>59</sup>, the new historic district would be especially effective in preventing the demolition of historic structures (unless the Commission ruled that economic benefits were deemed to outweigh the perceived negatives of demolition). Twelve historic structures were demolished along Canal Street (Mississippi River to Claiborne Avenue) 1969 and 1979.<sup>60</sup> The new designation was cheered by many property owners who saw the move as vital in the effort to maintain the historic character of the district, which in turn would help keep Canal Street a viable retail district.<sup>61</sup> In January of 1986, The Times Picayune reported on the plans to restore the original façade of McCrory's at 1005 Canal Street through the utilization of historic tax credits and incentives, a project that was touted by HDLC Director as "exactly the type of project that we hope the creation of the Canal Street Historic District would bring about."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Sheraton was permitted before advent of new zoning district

<sup>60</sup> City of New Orleans. Impact Analysis Group – Final Report. 14 December 1979.

<sup>61</sup> Stuart, Lettice. "Forces ready for battle over Canal Street plan." *The Times Picayune*, Saturday, 13 October 1984.

<sup>62</sup> Stuart, Lettice. "McCrory's to restore Canal Street neighbor to original façade." *The Times Picayune*, Saturday, 11 January 1986.

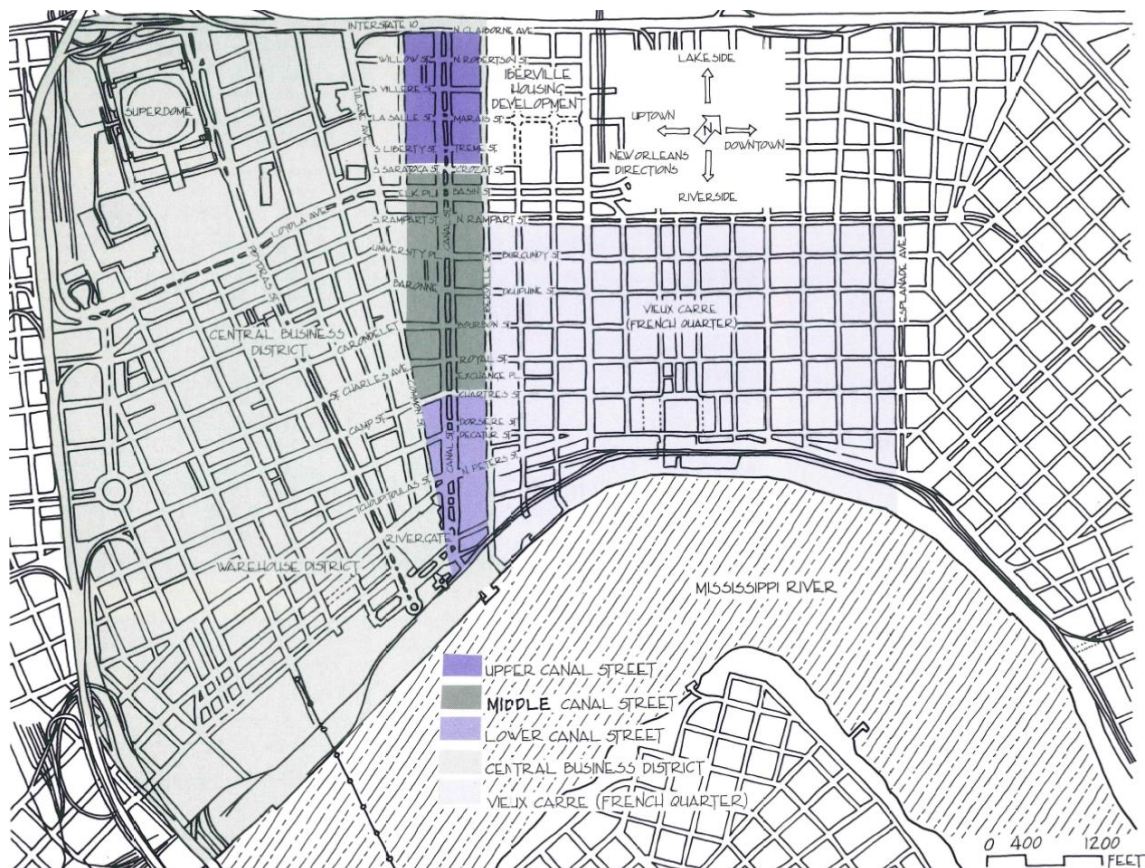
## Urban Land Institute Canal Street Study - 1989

The 1989 Canal Street Study produced by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) paints a picture of Canal Street as space that was in decline similar to downtowns of many of the older cities. The study points to the following factors as the primary reasons for that decline:

- The outward movement of jobs and residents away from the central city and into the suburbs
- Regional shopping malls, with a sophisticated merchandising and management approach, reducing downtown's percentage share of retail sales
- Competition with national retailers expanding into New Orleans market
- The recent downturn in the region's economy

The ULI panel was tasked with identifying the forces changing and shaping the face of Canal Street and developing effective and aggressive strategies for the revitalization of Canal Street. The study divides Canal Street into three distinct geographic areas.

**Figure 20:** ULI's three areas of Canal Street



Lower Canal Street is described as being the area between the river and Chartres Street, Middle Canal Street is described as being the area between Chartres and South Saratoga Street, and Upper Canal Street is the area between South Saratoga and Interstate 10.

## Development Potential

The ULI panel sees Middle and Upper Canal Street as the portions of the street that were strongest in retail and with the most future potential to succeed. The study noted a number of potential strengths of Canal Street, including the sense of tradition that make it unique among other regional shopping destinations, the position of the street as a transit hub, the street's proximity to the French Quarter, CBD and the Convention Center, the existing critical mass of retail, and the ability to appeal to a broad range of income levels. Perceived deficiencies include a deteriorating image, a decaying physical quality, and a declining share of the regional retail market. The panel stressed that perceived high crime rates and racial tensions were deficiencies having an especially negative effect on the deteriorating perception of Canal Street. Additionally, the lack of convenient parking and effective marketing of the street were noted as additional deficiencies.

The development of vacant upper floors in the form of renovated housing and convenience-type retail serving local residents on upper Canal Street were noted as short-term development opportunities. The panel recommended pursuing the establishment of biomedical facilities close to the hospital complex and mentioned the Science Center in Philadelphia as an example. The potential for utilizing the abandoned theatres at Canal and Rampart Streets was stressed as an opportunity to revitalize this portion of Canal and restore important cultural facilities that could act as a transitional area into Upper Canal Street. The plan acknowledged that the market was not ripe for development in the late 1980s, and recommended the following activities to promote immediate development and to set the stage for future development:

- Increased police presence
- Increased sign control
- A storefront beautification program
- Improved physical links to the French Quarter
- The establishment of a Canal Street shuttle
- Property tax incentives to stimulate development
- Create a sign amortization program
- Increased programming and decorative features

## Transportation

At the time of the drafting of the study, buses operated in the neutral ground along Canal Street and the only operating streetcar line in the city was the St. Charles line. The panel recommended replacing the neutral ground bus operations with streetcars similar to those on St. Charles Avenue. The Canal Street streetcar line could then connect to a greatly expanded streetcar system connecting Canal Street to destinations throughout the French Quarter, CBD, and the Warehouse District. The general idea was that Canal Street was disconnected from destinations such as the Convention Center, Superdome, and Poydras Street and a streetcar network would be able to reconnect the street to destinations around the city. The panel also recommended that bus service be removed from Canal Street. The plan suggested that a supply of convenient and competitively

priced parking should be available and well publicized, and that a cooperative valet parking program be established to serve Canal Street retail.

### Organization

The study envisioned a Canal Street that served as the visual and transportation link connecting the French Quarter to the CBD and under the organizational jurisdiction of the DDD. The panel was concerned about the number of overlapping agencies, organizations, task forces, and committees that oversaw the downtown area and Canal Street. The panel recommended three strategies to improve the organization of the downtown area to bolster Canal Street:

- Create a Downtown Economic Development Oversight Board to reflect the interests of the CBD and the French Quarter. The creation of the new Oversight Board would provide the opportunity for the city to deal in a comprehensive and coordinated fashion with the many organizations involved and concerned with the downtown.
- Create a Business Retention Committee made up of the chairs of the Business Council, the Chamber of Commerce, and the banking industry. This committee would be responsible for retaining the current businesses located in the downtown area and keeping the city abreast of the plans businesses may have to shut down or move out of town.
- The Oversight Board should carry out an aggressive regional marketing campaign promoting all of the downtown attractions, utilizing its own funds along with matching share from the businesses that will benefit.

### Centralized Retail Management

The panel acknowledged the economic competition Canal Street was facing from suburban retail centers that benefited from coordinated management systems, recommended that Canal employ an approach similar to other “main streets” around the United States. The centralized retail management of Canal Street would serve to accomplish the following goals:

- Coordinate physical design efforts – Canal Street should not be treated as just another part of downtown but should have a coordinated design effort that includes streetscape projects, façade improvements, signage, etc.
- The improvement of retail operations – oversight of retail elements such as cleanliness of storefronts, treatment of window displays, common hours, joint marketing and promotion, employee training, business counseling, business recruitment and retention, influencing tenant mix.



## 1990s Plans and Studies

Figure 21 & Figure 22: Downtown riverfront 1977 (left)<sup>63</sup> and 2018 (right)<sup>64</sup>



The decade opened with a sense of optimism with the grand opening of the Aquarium of the Americas in 1990 and Woldenberg Riverfront Park just before in 1989, adding to the major development of One Canal Place in the previous decade. These developments were visible, modern developments that anchor the river end of Canal Street and signaled the “opening up the riverfront” to the New Orleans’ citizens on property formerly occupied by warehouses.<sup>65</sup>

Figure 23 & Figure 24: Historic structures at foot of Canal Street (left)<sup>66</sup> and Rivergate Exhibition Hall (right)<sup>67</sup>



<sup>63</sup> Andor, Derzsi Elekes. “The International Trade Mart Towers over the New Orleans Riverfront.” 1977. *GoNOLA.com*, New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation, 14 July 2014, [gonola.com/things-to-do-in-new-orleans/history/nola-history-the-warehouse-district](http://gonola.com/things-to-do-in-new-orleans/history/nola-history-the-warehouse-district).

<sup>64</sup> *NEWORLEANS.COM*, © TripAdvisor, New Orleans, 2018, [www.neworleans.com/listing/woldenberg-park/32771/](http://www.neworleans.com/listing/woldenberg-park/32771/).

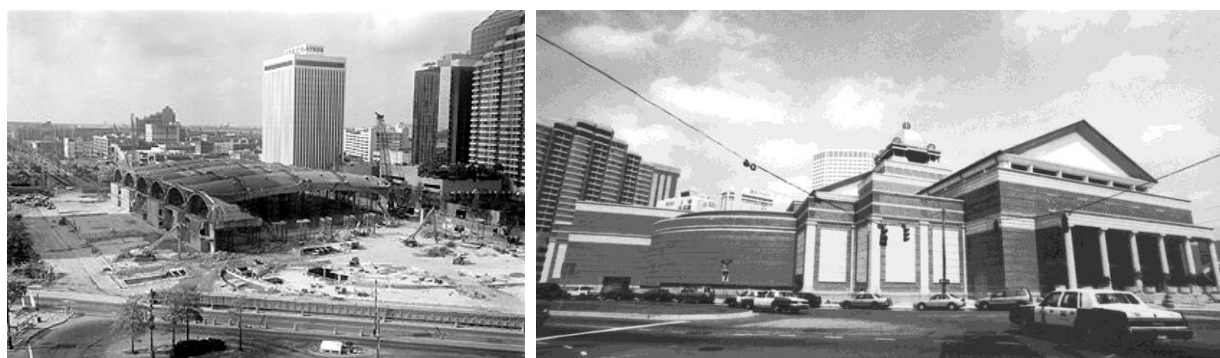
<sup>65</sup> “Audubon Nature Institute History.” *Audubonnatureinstitute.org*, Audubon Nature Institute, 2017, [audubonnatureinstitute.org/audubon-nature-institute-history-6](http://audubonnatureinstitute.org/audubon-nature-institute-history-6).

<sup>66</sup> Brantley, Robert S. “streetcar turn, Liberty Monument at the Foot of Canal Street, and buildings being torn down for the Rivergate.” 1964, *Historic New Orleans Collection*, <http://www.curtis.uno.edu/rivergate/html/images/bldg7.html>

<sup>67</sup> Gorin, Abbye A. “Exterior view of the new Rivergate, entrance No. 5, from Poydras Street showing the dramatic lighting design.” 1968, *The Rivergate*, Tulane University Library, New Orleans, 26 Mar. 2002.

One of the major development events that occurred in the 1990's was the demolition of the Rivergate Exhibition Hall for the construction of Harrah's Casino. Completed in 1968, the Rivergate was said to have added a "stunning new vista to [the] city's premier intersection" and "nurtured [the burgeoning] convention trade and fostered development of skyscraper hotels on lower Canal Street in the early 1970s."<sup>68</sup> Potential developers and nearby hoteliers and business owners complained of "everything about the Rivergate, from its concrete walls to its dirty roof." Nearby hoteliers and business owners advocated for the demolition of the Rivergate, and the Friends of Rivergate advocated for its adaptive reuse. The City Council ultimately approved the structure's demolition in 1995, and Harrah's Casino opened in its new building in 1999.<sup>69</sup> The construction of the casino, aquarium, and development of the riverfront park was indicative of the changing patterns of land and economic uses, such as the decline of industrial uses to gaming, convention, tourism, and recreational uses.

**Figure 25 & Figure 26:** 1995 Demolition of the Rivergate Exhibition Hall (left) & 1999 Photo of Harrah's Casino



The worst of the recession caused by the Oil Bust had passed by the mid-1990's and resulted in a shift towards a tourist, service-oriented economy, and a renewed interest in making public improvements in the corridor.<sup>70</sup> Improvements to Canal Street were made in preparation for the 1997 Superbowl including additional planters, removal of water fountains, upgraded lighting standards, and a crackdown on storefront security grilles<sup>71</sup>. These building design choices and public rights-of-way improvements reflect another effort by the City to improve the overall appearance of Canal Street be "cleaning it up."

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<sup>68</sup> Campanella, Richard. *Bienville's Dilemma: a Historical Geography of New Orleans*. Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 2008.

<sup>69</sup> Rouchell, Michael. "Demolition of the Rivergate and Early Construction of the Casino." *The Rivergate*, Tulane University Library, 2002. (<http://www.curtis.uno.edu/rivergate/html/default.htm>)

<sup>70</sup> Campanella, Richard. *Bienville's Dilemma: a Historical Geography of New Orleans*. Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 2008.

<sup>71</sup> Downtown Development District. (1996, October 10). *Letter from the Downtown Development District*. Louisiana Division/City Archives & Special Collections, New Orleans, LA.

*Lower CBD National Historic District Report (1991)*<sup>72</sup>

This study was submitted to the National Register of Historic Places and catalogued the physical and historic context and conditions of the proposed district, much of which covered the upriver side of Canal Street up to the intersection at Basin Street. The analysis examined “contributing resources,” which includes buildings constructed from the periods of 1830–1859 (constituting 47% of the resources), 1860–1899 (12%), and 1900–1941 (30%). The earliest period is where nearly half of the three to four story Greek Revival and Italianate, antebellum structures were constructed, which the report finds “remarkable” that such a collection is still intact. In contrast, the latter periods result in slightly taller structures, with the report noting the “unrivaled collection of skyscrapers. The noncontributing resources are buildings less than 50 years in age and constitute an intrusion rate of 11 percent, a rate significantly lower than the average rate of 20 percent – 30 percent. The proposed district is a “toute ensemble” of many styles, periods, and building types.

**Figure 27:** Survey of Historic Assets in Lower CBD



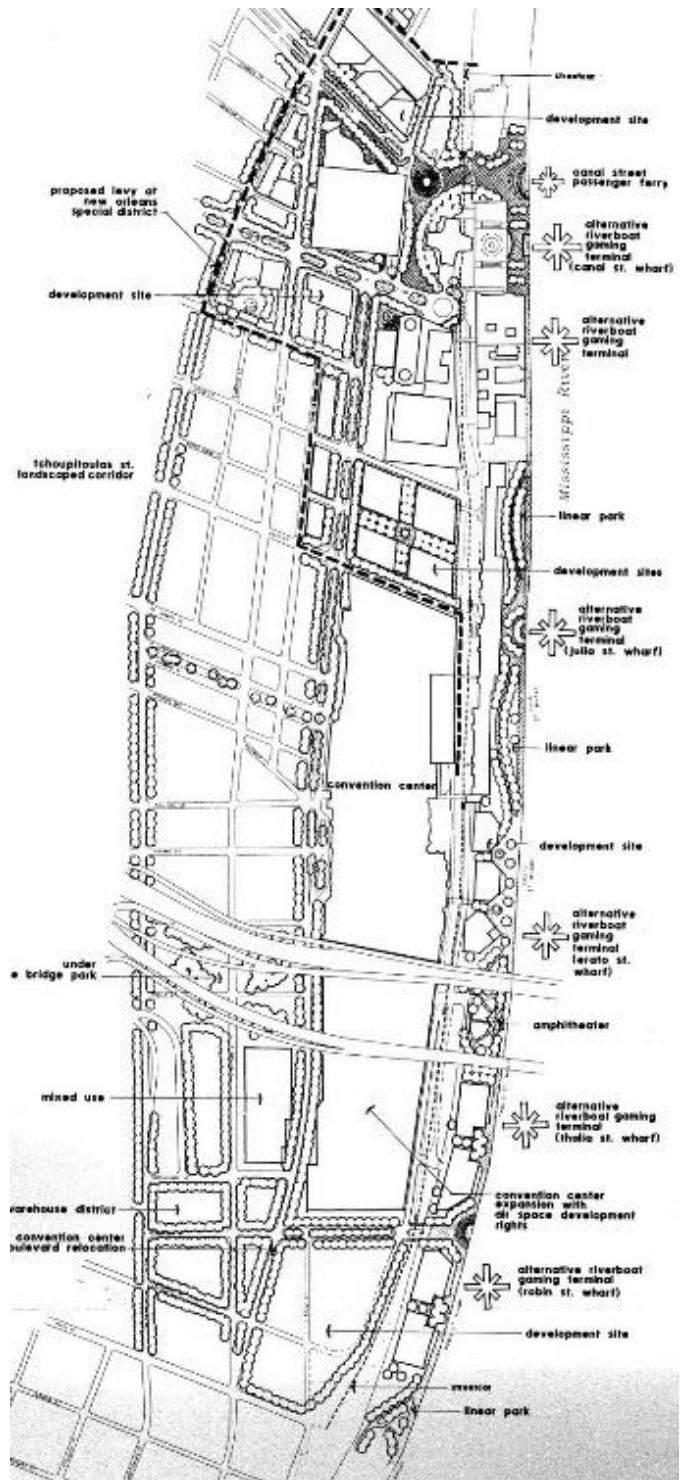
<sup>72</sup> 1991 report prepared by the National Register of Historic, administered by the National Park Service (NPS), an agency within the United States Department of the Interior



The 1992 Riverfront Evaluation focused on what the City of New Orleans could do to ensure the best use of the riverfront to benefit to the city, encourage quality redevelopment and detailed what conflicts exist among riverfront interests that would require the City’s resolution and leadership. The study area included the eastbank riverfront from Jackson Avenue to Press Street. The report noted that there was no comprehensive planning process for the entire riverfront and that one was needed for both the landside and riverside. The evaluation noted the World Trade Center, at the foot of Canal Street kicked off an era of planning and development that rolled into Louisiana World Exposition in 1984. One of the goals was that the Fair would stimulate economic development of the riverfront and initiate a comprehensive redevelopment of marginal uses – the Riverwalk being an example of this.

The evaluation noted that the river end of Canal and Poydras Streets were the center of the riverfront and the areas with the greatest concentration of potential future uses. Canal Place, Hilton Hotel, the International River Center, the Aquarium of the Americas, and the New Orleans Convention Center were all identified as being considered for redevelopment, further expansion, and renovation. Redevelopment of wharves had been occurring in the area since the 1960s as the land use of wharf properties and the land-side of the railroad changed from wharves and port-related uses to mixed-use,

**Figure 28: Riverfront Evaluation Development Plan**



<sup>73</sup> 1992 Study prepared by Frederic R. Harris, Inc. initiated by the City of New Orleans under the Bartholomey Administration.

commercial, and public redevelopment, in addition to warehouse buildings being adapted for residential and retail uses. Even the Canal Street Wharf (Ferry), was identified as a favorable gaming boat location; the relocation would also “eliminate vehicular congestion at the foot of canal and improve access to the ferry” with the riverfront and Canal streetcars serving as distribution for residents and tourists.

At the time, pedestrian and other links were not well established, as Woldenberg Park and the Aquarium did not have strong connections to other notable developments, such as Spanish Plaza. Signage, direction, and landscaping were cited as tools that could help. The aquarium, however, was identified as a “successful downtown anchor” as a quasi-public property, and recommended that a “unifying landmark or monument of significant importance” should be located at the foot of Canal Street to further establish its identity in the foot of Canal Street.

The plan recommended the establishment of a more formal joint private/public planning process for urban design and development functions of the riverfront. The plan also offered several strategies related to development along the riverfront, since much of the existing developments were under-utilized, such as surface-area parking lots along the river. Since New Orleans and the riverfront were transitioning from an industrial-based economy to tourism-based economy, the plan advised a holistic strategy that incentivized a diverse mix of uses with improved quality. Some of the specific recommendations related to sections of the riverfront near the Lower Garden District and the French Quarter. The plan also recommended the extension of the Riverfront Streetcar to Press Street, the development of a riverfront performance facility, and the extension of a riverfront park linked to the Moonwalk and Woldenberg Park.

#### *Acres of Diamonds (1996)*<sup>74</sup>

The Acres of Diamonds study analyzed the vacant upper floors of properties fronting Canal Street by meeting with real estate experts, surveying 2,241 residents and workers downtown (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 GMP Update in 1986 proposed that a study like this be prepared in conjunction with a retail market analysis.

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

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<sup>74</sup> 1996 Study prepared by Hebert/Smolkin Associates and commissioned by the Downtown Development District

spacing, too few windows, and hard-to-use floor sizes. Yet since these buildings also presented attractive opportunities such as the 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 cooperate-citizen users.

The plan additionally asserted that residential use, at that time, was the most economically productive use of upper floors, despite the higher pro-formas that retail, hotels, offices, and time-sharing would result in because of the market conditions. The plan recommended that developers institute an optimal unit mix and price points, which were advised and enumerated at a market competitive rent of \$1.10<sup>75</sup> per square foot, an optimal rent of \$500-\$1,000,<sup>76</sup> a “stronger than expected” condo market priced at in between the \$80,000– \$120,000<sup>77</sup> price points, and the optimal unit mix would be around 10 percent studios at 450 square feet, 5 percent one-bedrooms at 600 square feet, and 40 percent two-bedrooms at 1,000 square feet.

Other results included resident and worker surveys, with the main finding that residents of the Vieux Carré and Warehouse district thought favorably of Canal Street living (81% to 19%), while downtown employees did not (24% to 76% against) – which the study cited as a strong showing since the expected favorability rate was between 5 percent to 10 percent. Additionally, a majority of downtown residents (90%) and employees (51%) cite walkability to work, dining, and entertainment as the principal reason in favor of living on Canal Street. Downtown residents (19%) and employees (76%) however cited inadequate security and crime as the principal reason in opposition of living on Canal Street.

Financially, the plan encouraged the procurement, research, and disbursement of Historic Tax Credits, tax-exempt bonds and/or mortgage financing. Stewardship-wise, the plan foresaw the DDD as a catalytic information resource and facilitator between investors and regulators as well as the steward for maintenance and manager of a façade restoration program. Civically, The City would direct its agencies to foster cleaner, safer, and attractive environment on Canal Street, by encouraging the establishment of qualified tax-exempt entities to receive historic façade easements, upgrading the appearance of the street, coordinating with NOPD to achieve cost-effective security, showing owners and architects the best ways and means to achieve life safety, considering loadings zones (for residents to have grocery- and household-items drop-offs), and creating a guide for successful mixed-use developments.

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<sup>75</sup> ~\$1.77 in 2018 dollars

<sup>76</sup> ~\$800 to \$1,600 in 2018 dollars

<sup>77</sup> ~\$128,000 to \$192,000 in 2018 dollars

### *New Orleans Land Use Plan (1999)*

The 1999 New Orleans Land Use Plan was developed as the first element in the City's Master Plan that remained unfinished prior to Hurricane Katrina. In 2010, it was replaced by the new Master Plan with a Land Use Plan chapter. In the 1999 Plan, Canal Street was located in Planning District One, sub-district 1A. It gave a brief overview of the history of the CBD (also known as Faubourg St. Marie) and planning efforts affecting the district, summarized the neighborhood as a "vibrant synergy of commercial, residential, and cultural activity." The plan noted that the whole District contained the largest population decline across the Districts, with a 37% decline in the African-American population between 1980 and 1990, but the population overall increased from 1990 to 1997, indicating a trend towards more downtown living; the African-American population of the District remained consistent at 10 percent (compared to 55% overall). The composition of land uses in the District was 55.6% commercial, 17.3% institutional, 12.3% parkland, 9% residential, and 5% industrial uses. The plan noted that a number of uses have replaced industrial facilities including parks, retail, and high-density residential.

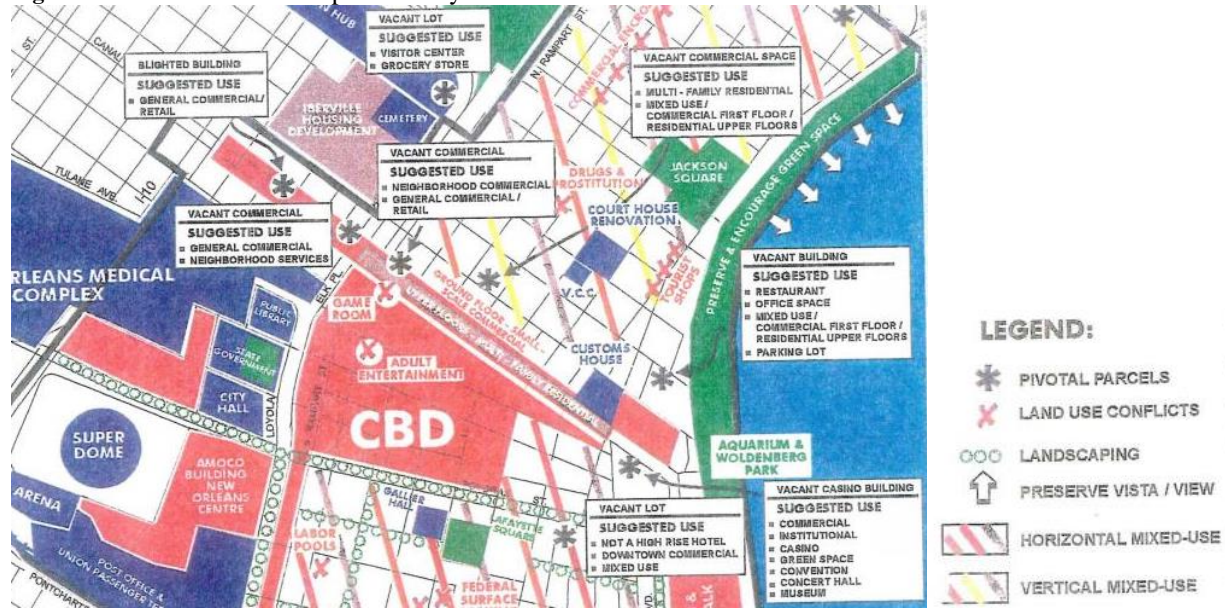
The plan additionally observed that a concentration of historic sites and tourism activity contributed to the location of a number of public and semi-public land uses in District One, with investments in the extensions of the streetcar line, the Customs House, the Aquarium of the Americas, and Woldenberg Riverfront Park as prime examples on Canal Street. The plan cites Harrah's Casino as the only entertainment venue in this district, but mentions the proliferation of venues throughout the French Quarter and Warehouse District.

The plan highlights that the City and the DDD jointly sponsored a panel of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to recommend strategies for revitalizing retail uses on Canal Street. The panel found that there were several underserved markets that would frequent retail stores on Canal Street. They believed that, though there was high concentration of retail activity on Canal Street, there was a shortage of retail shops which serve the everyday needs of residents<sup>78</sup>. The group recommended investment at the corner of Canal and Basin/Rampart as an entertainment center, as well as marketing strategies and maintenance standards for the street. The ULI's recommendations of a cohesive and realistic vision for redevelopment were incorporated in the proposed land use map for District One.

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<sup>78</sup> Such as grocery stores, hardware stores, and dry cleaning establishments

**Figure 29: Land Use Workshop: Summary Schematic**



The plan also included a community participation section, with input from residents saying they were “strongly in favor of vertical zoning” believing “mixed-use designation[s] would encourage more residents to move back to the neighborhood and re-establish the district not solely as a tourist attraction, but as a place to live and work.” Workshop participants specifically supported bringing residents to the upper floors, keeping new construction in scale with the adjacent Vieux Carré, and encouraging the small, local retail businesses to the ground floor uses. They also advised that residential areas be maintained, to limit the future development of hotels, and direct entertainment businesses to Loyola Avenue, Canal Street, and Rampart Street.

The plan identified “pivotal parcels” as large vacant buildings on Canal Street: the former Krauss Department Store, the former Woolworth’s store, former Maison Blanche store, as well as the Claiborne corridor underneath the interstate highway.<sup>79</sup> The plan believed that larger, commercial retailers such as discount variety department stores or a grocery store on properties above Rampart Street should be encouraged, but that lower Canal should be treated as the Vieux Carré, with requirements of ground-level retail with pedestrian access to the street. The proposal also identified surface parking lots as opportune development sites and recommended having a “sunset provision” ordinance that would eventually require parking lot owners to develop the land. The plan suggested that having farmer’s markets on the parking lots would be a good interim use. The plan additionally summarized that “almost every study of Canal Street ends with a ringing call for restoring it to its former retail prominence” and that the recommendations in the “1999 Land Use plan will work to bring about a future that citizens agree they would like to see, but only if these recommendations are reliably carried out by officials whose elected or appointed office gives them the requisite authority.”

<sup>79</sup> All the sites mentioned have either been demolished and developed

## **2000-present Plans and Studies**

The myriad planning efforts undertaken since 2000 have consistently arrived at similar conclusions about the challenges facing Canal Street and the initiatives required to confront them. These initiatives can be grouped into three classes. The first group includes interventions to be taken by the public sector: revised zoning regulations to promote the appropriate types and scale of development, streetscape improvements, and efforts to facilitate parking and ease traffic flow along the street. The second group includes interventions focused at specific opportunity sites, usually with a public sector component, such as the redevelopment of the Iberville public housing site and the revitalization of the node of theaters on Canal Street at Rampart Street and Elk Place/Basin Street. The third group includes efforts to spur private sector investment along the corridor. This includes the renovation of upper floors, as well as the development of large-scale retail destinations.

*Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy, Downtown Development District, City of New Orleans Canal Street Development Corporation, May 2004*

The most wide-ranging examination of Canal Street performed since 2000 was the Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy. The was published in 2004 as a collaboration between the Downtown Development District, the City of New Orleans, and the Canal Street Development Corporation. The strategy had two objectives of articulating a vision for Canal Street and prescribing a path to reaching it. In creating this vision for Canal Street, the study addressed all of the various opportunities and challenges confronting Canal Street at the time: the physical condition of the corridor, including the streetscape, landscaping, public art, and lighting; security; traffic and parking; the theater node at the intersections of Canal Street with Elk Place/Basin Street and Rampart Street; the use of Canal Street buildings' upper floors; the possible redevelopment of the Iberville public housing site; the agglomeration of Charity Hospital and other medical institutions near Canal Street; zoning and regulatory processes; and the management of Canal Street.

The study was performed immediately prior to Hurricane Katrina and confronted the depressed state of Canal Street at the time. By 2004, Canal Street's status was characterized by low-end, tourist-oriented retailing and clothing stores, with the bulk of the metro area's retail market served by suburban shopping malls, and the higher-end, tourist-oriented retail market served primarily by Canal Place and the Riverwalk. At the time, retail occupied 23% of all occupied ground floor space on Canal Street and about 4% of the total occupied inventory in the corridor. Hotels occupied 65% of all occupied space in the corridor. Ground floor hotel space including public-serving amenities (restaurants, retail), and the like was about 10% of total hotel space. Twenty-three percent of the ground floor space in the corridor was vacant. Vacant upper floor space represented about 25% of entire upper story floor area upper floors were generally vacant except for key hotels and legacy retailers such as Rubenstein's, Adler's).

Despite this disinvestment, the study saw an opportunity to turn Canal Street around. The ability to successfully do so was based on a number of factors: broader market forces derived from

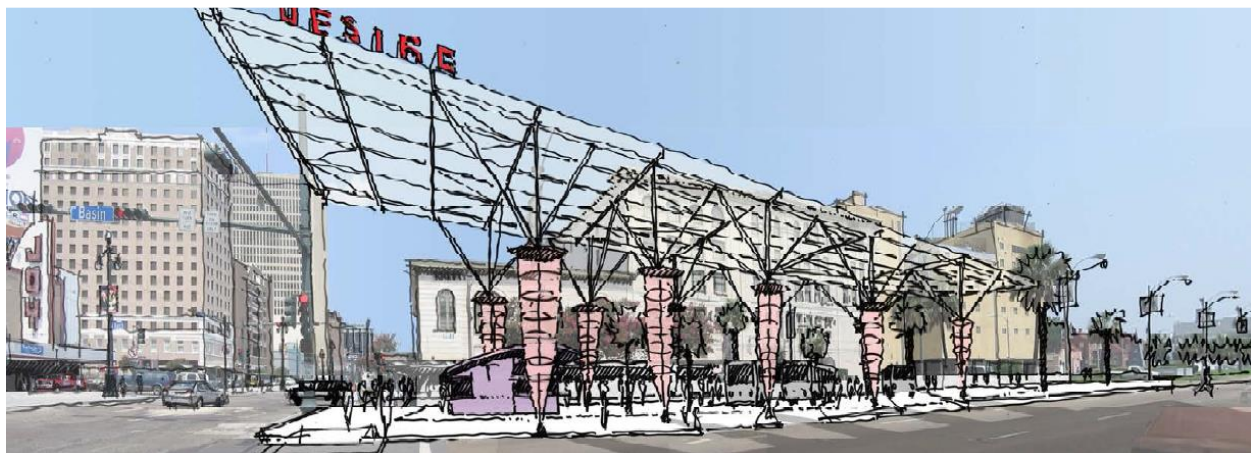


demographic, employment, and tourism trends; quality of public sector intervention particularly in streetscape, cleanliness, and security improvements; public transportation; traffic and parking; upgraded retail mix; the then-undetermined future of Iberville; entertainment concentration along Rampart and Basin, reusing upper vacant floors; and enhanced connections to the riverfront. The study outlined public sector strategies to address these factors.

### Placemaking

The public sector was obligated to improve the physical character of Canal Street, creating a safer, more active, welcoming environment to residents and tourists alike. The *Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy* articulated the plan of improving the pedestrian streetscape by creating additional pedestrian areas through the use wider sidewalks with durable paving, as well curb extensions into parking lanes at intersections and some mid-block locations. These enhanced pedestrian areas would be complemented by the addition of landscaping, lighting, and street art. Particular locations where these interventions would be most important included the Canal Street and Bourbon Street intersection, where a change in paving, shade structures, street furniture, lighting, and/or information kiosks would define the entry to Bourbon Street and underscore its importance as a destination.

**Figure 30:** Public art sketch on Canal Street between Rampart and Basin Streets



Other suggested location-specific interventions included the prominent intersections with Rampart Street and Elk Place/Basin Street, where monumental pieces of public art could be installed, and the intersection of Canal Street with Claiborne Avenue, which could be improved by interesting lighting that could be programmed for special events.

These streetscape improvements were recommended to be complimented with other placemaking efforts. Additional lighting and sidewalk cafes were needed to provide activity, the study advised. Entertainment uses were desirable, particularly jazz or blues venues that appeal to large audiences of mixed ages and incomes. DDD rangers were recommended to contribute to an increased sense of safety along Canal Street.

## Zoning

In addition to making infrastructure improvements along Canal Street, the public sector also had the opportunity to improve Canal Street through its regulatory role. The study recommended that the City adopt new zoning regulations that best position Canal Street for new development, while ensuring that the development respects the character, scale, and quality of the historic corridor. This zoning that existed at the time, created through the 1970 zoning ordinance and its later amendments, split the corridor between the CBD-2, CBD-2B, and CBD-3 Central Business District zoning designations. The majority of the corridor was within the CBD-3 district, which was created exclusively for Canal Street. The district limited building height to 85 feet, except in certain locations where the height limit was 70 feet. The district limited buildings' floor area ratios (the proportion of a building's floor area to the size of its site) to 6.0 for commercial and mixed-use buildings and 4.5 for solely residential buildings. The segment of Canal Street to the lake-side of South Saratoga/Crozat Street was included in CBD-2 and CBD-2B districts, which limited floor area ratio to 10.0 for commercial and 7.0 for residential developments, allowing larger, more massive structures. The document critiqued the zoning ordinance as confusing and inflexible, with regulations that did not adequately relate to the purposes of the districts to encourage commercial development compatible with the historic character of Canal Street between the river and Elk Place/Basin Street, or which facilitated the expansion of medical center along the lake-side end of the corridor. The strategy encouraged these regulations be revisited based on the effort occurring at the time to develop a city-wide Master Plan. It advised that the Master Plan should articulate an urban design plan for Canal Street, which should be implemented through new zoning regulations which would include design review procedures coordinated with HDLC review processes.

## Building code

The study also viewed changes to the building code as necessary to facilitate the use of the upper floors of Canal Street buildings. The occupancy of upper floors had been discouraged by a number of issues. First, there was simply reluctance among property owners to reuse upper floors, combined with the cost of doing so. Second, the use of these floors was dependent upon the need to combine them, which involved the physical complexities of connecting narrow and deep row structures with minimal natural light aside from front and rear windows and floor plates that are uneven between neighboring structures. Third, there was the regulatory obstacle of building codes that require significant improvements to buildings. The *Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy* recommended that these building code barriers be resolved through the adoption of new regulations based on the New Jersey's rehabilitation subcode, which was adopted in 1998.

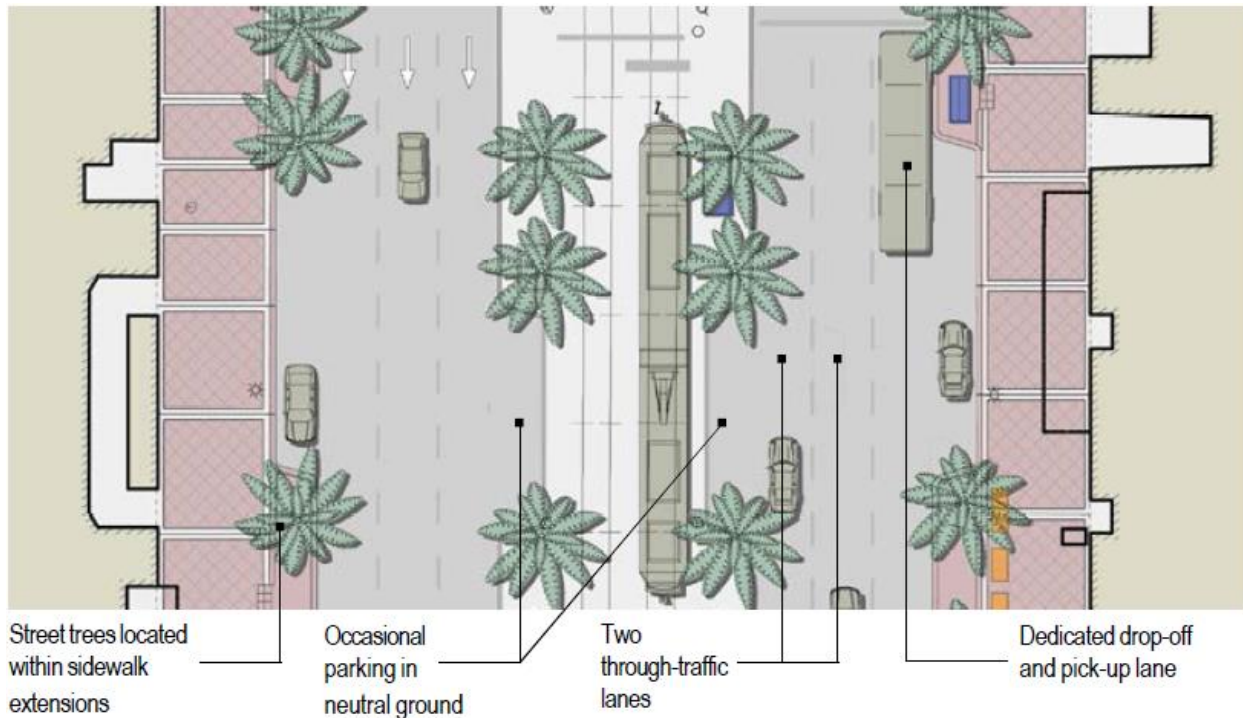
## Transportation

The study recommended a number of efforts to facilitate traveling and parking along Canal Street, making it a convenient shopping alternative to suburban malls for locals and easily navigable for tourists. The study recommended that the Canal Street roadway be improved through better management of curbside use and the creation of additional street parking. Such improvements might require the reduction of travel lanes, with the preservation of at least two travel lanes in each direction. Aside from the creation of more on-street parking, the study recommended that a public



parking authority be used to expand the inventory and distribution of paid parking while reducing its pricing.

**Figure 31:** Illustration of transportation recommendations



The strategy also recommended changes to the public transportation network to relocating the bus facilities from Canal Street to cross streets. Bus-to-bus transfers were recommended replaced with routes that cross Canal Street, as well as the relocation of transfer areas to side streets. The study recommended the relocation of transit shelters to reduce bus idling of buses in front of Canal St. businesses. These changes would minimize potential conflict between pedestrians and people waiting for buses (and resulting sidewalk congestion), while promoting sidewalk restaurants.

### Sub-area recommendations

The study also made a number of recommendations affecting sub-areas of Canal Street, including the theater node, the areas along and just off of Canal Street occupied by university medical facilities, and the Iberville public housing site. The node of the Saenger, Joy, State Palace, and Orpheum theaters could be transformed into a “jazz corridor”.

**Figure 32:** Theater node placemaking recommendations



This area could be identified through the installation of iconic structures at the intersections of Canal Street with Elk Place/Basin Street and Rampart Street. Regarding medical uses along and near Canal Street, the study urged designs that used Canal Street as a “front door”. Active medical facilities were recommended to locate there, as opposed to parking structures or passive facilities with few windows and minimal staffing. The study called for the Iberville public housing site to be redeveloped in a manner similar to what ultimately happened about a decade later. It proposed that the 1940s, barracks-style structures be replaced with a new urbanism-influenced development featuring a restored street grid, units for a mix of income levels, and structures having vernacular architecture. Also proposed was the expansion of the development’s footprint through the addition of new structures on Canal Street and Basin Street.

*Unified New Orleans Plan (2007), City of New Orleans*

Shortly after the release of the Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy in 2004, the city experienced the unprecedented disaster of Hurricane Katrina. Myriad planning efforts occurred in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, including important citywide recovery plans. The first of these, the *Unified New Orleans Plan*, was adopted by the City Council in 2007, divided the city into districts. Canal Street was part of District 1. The language in the District 1 plan specific to Canal Street in some respects built on the work of the 2004 DDD Canal St Vision and Development Strategy. The UNOP plan identifies the same problems facing Canal Street as were identified in

that and other plans of the recent past: loss of status as the region's main retail street, with marquee department stores and other retailers replaced by low-end retail; code-related cost premiums combined with soft demand resulting in upper floors being vacant; limited financial ability of small, individual building owners to renovate and convert upper floors.

Similar to the 2004 DDD plan, the UNOP made an effort to articulate a strategy addressing the array of factors affecting the street. It argued for an identification of Canal Street's "new economic mission" and an understanding of how the street's "rich historic heritage can inspire [an] urban design strategy that supports that mission." While much of the UNOP report looked at the entire planning district, it also has some sub-district specific recommendations relative to the Canal Street corridor and the medical district adjacent to Canal Street. These recommendations echo some of those in the 2004 DDD plan. They include an urge that the downtown residential population be increased; that there be a large, destination retailer; that there be a promotion of "cultural tourism" in order to improve the character of the street, including cultural exhibits in vacant storefronts; that the Canal Street theater node be restored; and that there be a coordinated parking program to encourage the reuse of upper floors, which could be done by creating a validated parking program to attract shoppers to Canal Street and shared parking with nearby office buildings for residents of upper floors. To create the accomplish these objectives, the plan urged the establishment of a management entity working to a greater extent on retail recruitment, marketing, events; the development of a high-quality, in-depth market study; and the use tax increment financing or other incentives to encourage reuse of upper floors.

The UNOP plan made a number of recommendations relative to the development of a medical district along Canal Street between Rampart Street and Claiborne Avenue. This medical district would create jobs and activate Canal Street. Its development would require public investment in streetscape improvements to create an urban, walkable development character, as well as the installation of fiber optic services and expanded public transit. It would require organizational support to facilitate a consolidated University and Veterans Administration hospital, coordination between medical institutions, and to increase access to venture capital.

*Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: New Orleans 2030 (2010), City of New Orleans*

Just as the UNOP plan was developed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina as part of the post-disaster recovery efforts, so too was the city's master plan, the Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: New Orleans 2030. Hurricane Katrina produced a number of governmental reforms in New Orleans, including, in 2008, an amendment to the City Charter to require a master plan to guide the physical development of the city. This master plan was adopted in 2010 and has been amended twice since then. It has the "force of law" as it relates to the plan's land use element, meaning that all "land use actions," such as zoning amendments, development approvals, subdivision approvals, and capital improvement plans must be consistent with the master plan's future land use element. Through this force of law, the master plan is intended to create predictability in land use decision-making.

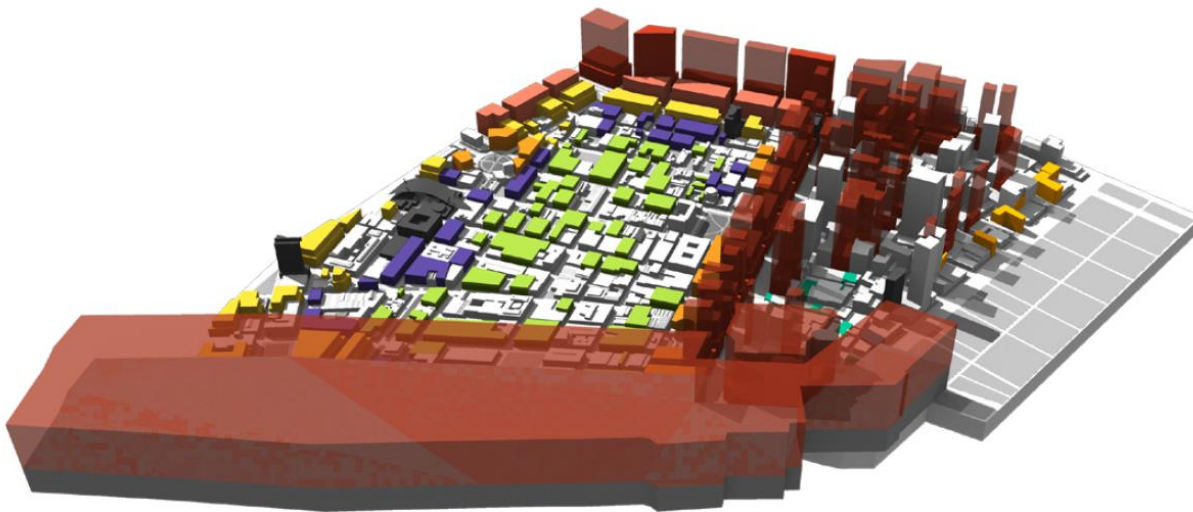


The master plan's future land use element encompasses the entire city, setting forth objectives about the allowable use and development character for all properties. The majority of Canal Street between the river and Claiborne Avenue (with the exception of the Harrah's casino site and the riverfront) is designated as "Mixed-Use Downtown," which seeks to create a mix of residential, commercial, entertainment, and institutional uses, and which intends for the scale of development to vary based on its context, with new development in historic areas compatible in height and massing with its historic surroundings. The exceptions to this "Mixed-Use Downtown" designation, Harrah's Casino and the riverfront, are designated as "Downtown Exposition" reflecting their roles as tourist destinations. These designations allow for high-intensity entertainment facilities, consistent with their orientation toward intense, visitor-focused use. The master plan is the basis for the city's zoning ordinance, which was rewritten beginning in 2010 after the adoption of the master plan. The new zoning ordinance was adopted and went into effect in 2015.

*Refined Height Plan (2017), Downtown Development District*

The master plan is the foundation for the City's zoning ordinance but it is not the only planning document that influenced the zoning ordinance. When the efforts to develop a master plan and implement it through a new zoning ordinance were resumed following Hurricane Katrina, the efforts included the recalibrating of height limits throughout the CBD. The DDD developed the Lafayette Square/Upper CBD Height Study of 2007, which was amended in 2009 to ensure that recommendations were made on a block-by-block basis for consideration by the City Planning Commission as the new Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance was drafted. This height study did not address the Canal Street corridor, instead focusing on Lafayette Square and the surrounding portions of the CBD between Poydras Street and the Pontchartrain Expressway.

**Figure 33:** Potential building envelopes in study area of updated height study



In 2017, this height study was revisited and expanded, with Canal Street included in the expanded study area. This study addressed the area from the centerline of Canal Street to the Pontchartrain Expressway and from the Convention Center to Loyola Avenue. The study's intent was to integrate the original study area, along with the expanded area not included in previous versions, into a larger, cohesive district, and refining the height regulations for this larger study area. The study noted that most of the 2009 version's policy and design recommendations were incorporated into the new Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, adopted in 2015. However, refining was necessary; there was not an across-the-board need for increased height throughout the area but there were specific areas where additional height might be appropriate.

The Canal Street corridor is one such area where changes were proposed. The study recommended that areas limited to 50-foot in height be increased to a 65-foot/5-story limit. The areas now subject to a 70-foot limit and those subject to a 120-foot limit be increased to a 125-foot/10-story limit. These changes would result in all of Canal Street between North/South Peters and South Saratoga/Crozat being subject to the 125-foot/10-story limit. The other areas (to the river-side of Peters and to the lake-side of South Saratoga/Crozat) would remain controlled by only by the applicable FAR limit, rather than a specific height cap.

#### *New Orleans Mobility and Parking Study (2009), Downtown Development District*

While the plans included above touched on Canal Street either as part of a planning effort for a substantial geographic area—be it citywide (the 2007 *Unified New Orleans Plan* and 2010 *Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: New Orleans 2030*), focused on the Central Business District (the 2017 *Refined Height Plan*), or a corridor-wide initiative (the 2004 *Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy*)—other planning efforts have been topic-specific and addressed Canal Street in the context of that topic. One such study is the *New Orleans Mobility and Parking Study*, published by the Downtown Development District in January, 2009

These recommendations made in earlier planning efforts, such as the 2004 *Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy* were echoed in the *New Orleans Mobility and Parking Study*. The study's broad themes include enhancing the pedestrian environment through improved signalization, crosswalks, sidewalks, curbing, and wayfinding signage. Among other locations in the larger study area, the document identifies place-based improvement locations on Canal Street at Tchoupitoulas/North and South Peters and Canal Street's intersections with Basin Street/Elk Place, North Rampart Street/South Rampart Street. Also echoing the 2004 plan's recommendation about the use of a parking authority to expand the inventory and distribution of parking facilities, this study recommended the creation of a public or quasi-public organization to manage publicly-owned parking facilities, possibly including metered on-street spaces. The parking management entity could provide a public valet service or use a circulator transit service to connect remote parking locations with destination areas of downtown, encouraging drivers to park once at a single location and walk throughout downtown rather than driving from destination to destination.

*Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (2014), City of New Orleans*

Another topical study that touched on Canal Street was the City of New Orleans *Pedestrian Safety Action Plan*, released in July, 2014. While other Canal Street plans discussed streetscape improvements for their role in placemaking, urban design, and economic development, this plan addressed streetscape improvements with a specific focus on safety considerations. The report addressed locations across the city where pedestrians were killed or severely injured. It identified three problem locations on Canal Street and made specific, technical recommendations for them. These locations were Canal Street at Bourbon Street/Carondelet Street, the block of Canal Street between Royal Street/Saint Charles Avenue and Camp Street/Chartres Street, and Canal Street at Peters Street.

Addressing the problematic intersection of Canal Street and Bourbon/Carondelet, the study recommended closing Bourbon St. to vehicles, designating turning lanes on Carondelet Street, having high-visibility crosswalks, using truncated domes to distinguish between pedestrian and streetcar areas in the neutral ground. The plan also recommended installing planters or other structures to prevent mid-block crossing, having countdown pedestrian signals, and eliminating right turns at red lights.

For the segment of Canal between Royal Street/Saint Charles Avenue and Camp Street/Chartres Street, the alignment of the crosswalks makes wayfinding difficult, crosswalks are poorly marked, pedestrian signals do not work properly, pedestrian holding areas in neutral ground create awkward interactions with streetcars, and no-turn and yield signs are in posted locations that are not visible enough. The study recommended addressing this through pedestrian islands in the neutral ground on the lake-side of Canal Street to create a conflict-free situation between vehicles U-turning, truncated domes on neutral grounds to distinguish between pedestrian/streetcar areas, more visible crosswalks, delineated turn lanes, countdown pedestrian signals, eliminate right turns on red.

Figure 34: Conditions of Canal St. at Peters St. in 2014



At the intersection of Canal and Peters Streets, the signal timing across Canal St. is problematic and crosswalks direct pedestrians into awkward spaces in the neutral ground. A U-turn at the intersection creates a hazardous situation for pedestrians crossing Canal Street. The right turn lane from South Peters Street onto Canal Street going toward the river could be removed, eliminating the small pedestrian island and creating a larger pedestrian space in front of the heavily pedestrian trafficked Harrah's Casino. Other improvements to the intersection could include prohibiting turns on red lights, visible crosswalk striping, realigning crosswalks to straighten them, countdown crosswalks, and expanded pedestrian islands in neutral grounds to provide a conflict-free situation between vehicles that are U-turning.

*Riverfront Master Plan (2017), New Orleans Building Corporation*

The New Orleans Building Corporation's *Riverfront Master Plan*, prepared by Dana Brown & Associates, Inc. and published in October, 2017, is a plan that is specific to the Mississippi Riverfront. While it does not directly address Canal Street, it does make redevelopment recommendations for the riverfront area, which includes the area at the foot of Canal Street, between Canal Street and the Mississippi River. Because of the interconnected nature of the riverfront and foot of Canal Street, the plan's conclusions are important for the foot of Canal Street.

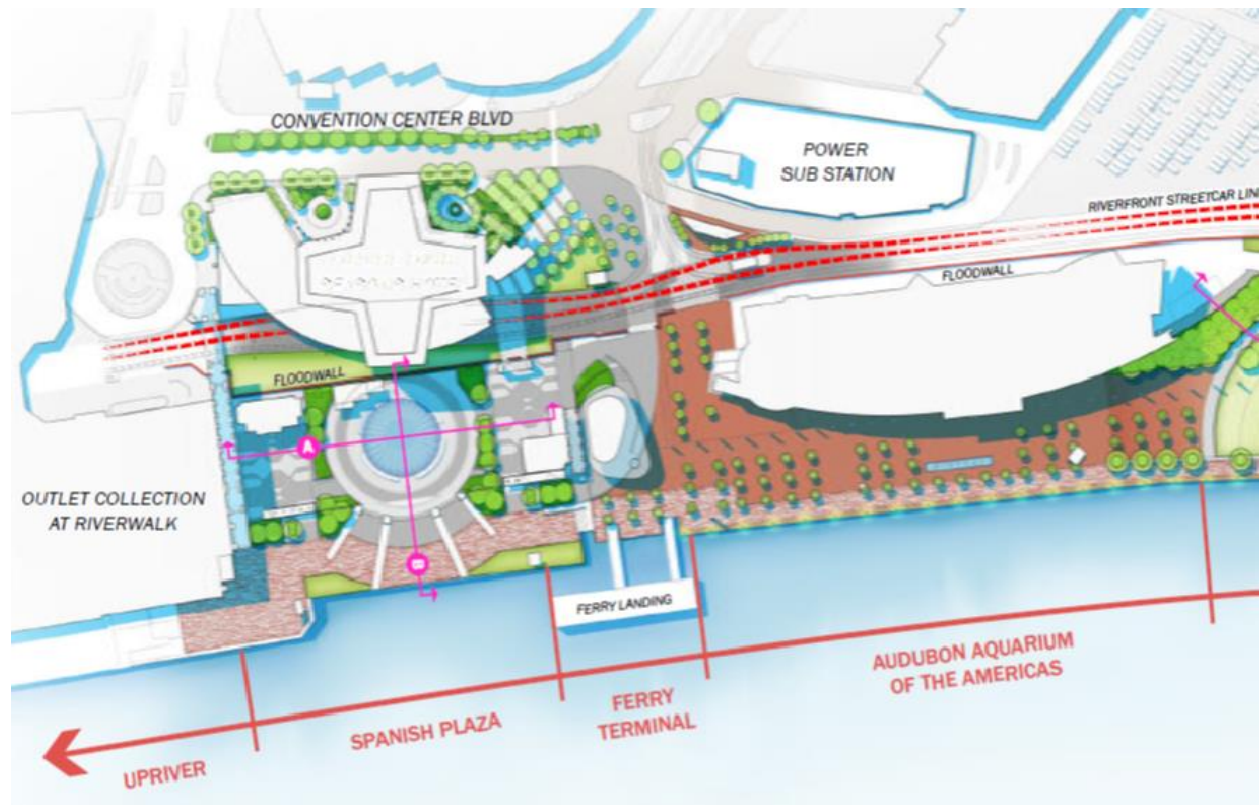
The plan was developed to guide the future development of the public spaces along the Mississippi Riverfront between the Howard Hughes Corporation's Outlet Collection at Riverwalk to the upriver side and the Governor Nicholls Street wharf to the downriver side. It includes Spanish



Plaza, the Canal Street ferry terminal, Woldenberg Park, and the Moonwalk and to ensure the riverfront because a seamless, cohesive public space. The plan intends for the riverfront to be enhanced as a destination, with a great amount of usable space created. The plan was created in the context of several redevelopment projects along the riverfront, including Spanish Plaza renovations, the construction of a new Canal Street ferry terminal, the redevelopment of the World Trade Center as the Four Seasons Hotel and Residences.

The plan identified deficiencies with the existing design of the Mississippi Rivefront and recommended new designs. In assessing existing conditions, it concluded that existing pedestrian circulation was disjointed, the circuitous existing pathway system causes visual confusion for pedestrian, and safety was compromised because pedestrian spaces haphazardly overlap vehicular areas. To rectify that, it recommended the use of distinct paving types/color to delineate pedestrian versus vehicular zones, improving circulation issues, enhances safety, and facilitate wayfinding.

**Figure 35:** Portion of Riverfront Master Plan near foot of Canal Street



The plan suggested two design options for consideration by the City and stakeholders. The first option included a continuous pedestrian promenade along the river's edge, with consistent pavers linking and connecting each part of the riverfront. The plan extended Spanish Plaza's paving and lighting design onto refurbished Canal St. wharf. It called for the regarding of Woldenberg Park lawn to maximize amount of usable space. The section option employed the geometric form of an arc throughout the riverfront, with the shape being used differently in different parts of the



riverfront. Similar to the first option, this second option employed consistent design details like lighting standards and tree plantings, although they were used in different ways.

*Canal Street Retail Market Analysis (2013), Downtown Development District*

Other work done in the period since 2000 has not been focused on specific geographic areas, such as the entirety of Canal Street, the riverfront, or specific intersections. Rather, they have sought to demonstrate the financial viability of specific types of development projects, with the idea that these demonstrations could spur development at multiple locations. The *Canal Street Retail Market Analysis*, released by the DDD in December, 2013, evaluated the potential for a 250,000 square foot retail development along six block long portion of Canal Street between Elk Place/Basin Street and Claiborne Avenue. The study envisioned a large scale retail development, anchored by a national general merchandise tenant such as Target, with the retaining tenant mix including local and national retailers.

The study described a number of factors setting the stage for a large retail development in Canal Street. The first is market demand. The study noted that in New Orleans, \$1.9 billion is spent by residents on retail goods outside of the city, and a development along Canal Street could capture some of this retail spending. The second is that a downtown location would be consistent with both national and local development trends. Locating the development on Canal Street in the Central Business District, rather than in a more outlying part of the city, would follow nationwide trends toward urban living and the returning of investment to downtowns. It would build upon recent local examples of downtown reinvestment, such as the reintroduction of streetcars on Canal Street in 2004 and Loyola Avenue in 2013, as well as the increased hotel presence along Canal Street in recent years. Finally, it noted that a Canal Street location would be well served by the transportation network, as the street is located near Interstate 10, along streetcar and bus lines, street conditions support pedestrian activity and there are currently high pedestrian counts, and there is increased residential development in the Central Business District, citing the redevelopment of the Iberville public housing site, the residential conversion of the former Texaco building, and the development of the South Market District.

The study's methodology included examining retail supply (existing sales) and retail demand (consumer expenditures) within four market areas. The four market areas were within a one mile of the project site, within three miles of the site, within a 30 minute drive of the site, and within a 60 min drive of the site. These four market areas (classified as "neighborhood center," "community center," "regional center," and "super-regional center") were intended to account for "the unique nature of the site and the potential for a mix of retail types ranging from local to regional draw". The study concluded that there was strong demand for additional large-scale retail of this type along Canal Street. The retail would be focused on meeting the needs of the one-mile and three-mile market areas, while also presenting additional retail options to residents living more distantly, as well as tourists, and that the retail development should offer national and local brands that are missing from the current retail mix and are appealing to a wide range of customers.

*Upper Floor Development: 800-810-814 Canal Street (2014), Downtown Development District*

Just as the DDD worked in the *Canal Street Retail Market Analysis* to document the market potential for a large-scale retail development, it has also worked to outline the feasibility of reoccupying the upper floors of historic Canal Street buildings. In 2014, the DDD presented a case study of 800, 810, and 814 Canal Street, as an example of how upper floor renovations could be financed, designed, and constructed. The work built upon the DDD's *Acres of Diamonds* study from 1996, and noted that changing market conditions favoring downtown residential development made the study worth revisiting. The presentation contained architectural plans showing how the three buildings could be combined, as well as a pro forma to demonstrate the profitability of such a venture. Through this work, the DDD sought to show that times have changed along Canal Street.

### C. Key Recommendations from Past Planning Efforts

Topic		Action Item		Status	Plan Recommended
1	Retail	1.1	Centralized Retail Management Program	In Progress	Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy – 2004
					ULI Canal Street Study – 1989
					Growth Management Plan Update – 1986
2	Upper Floor Occupancy	2.1	Building Code Amendments	Not Started	Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy – 2004
		2.2	Examination of Upper Floor Suitability	In Progress	Acres of Diamonds – 1994
					Growth Management Plan Update – 1986
		2.3	Commercial Short Term Rentals	In Progress	CPC Short Term Rental Study – 2018
2.4	Transfer of Development Rights	Not Started	Implementation Strategy, Program and Zoning Plan – 1976		
3	Placemaking	3.1	Pedestrian Amenities Improvements	Ongoing	Pedestrian Safety Action Plan – 2014
					New Orleans Mobility and Parking Study – 2009
					Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy – 2004
					Growth Management Plan Update – 1986
					Canal Street Improvement Project – 1970
		3.2	Theater District/ Entertainment Center	In Progress	Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy – 2004
New Orleans Land Use Plan – 1999					
4	Transportation	4.1	Curb Use Modification	Not Started	Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy – 2004
					Canal Street Improvement Project – 1970
		4.2	Pedestrian Safety Action Plan Implementation	In Progress	Pedestrian Safety Action Plan – 2014

Topic		Action Item	Status	Plan Recommended	
4	Transportation	4.3	Improvements to Bicycle Infrastructure	In Progress	New Orleans Mobility and Parking Study – 2009
		4.4	RTA Strategic Mobility Plan Implementation	In Progress	RTA Strategic Mobility Plan – 2017
5	Organizational Structure	5.1	Establish Management Entity Specifically for Canal Street	Not Started	Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy – 2004
		5.2	Strong Focus on Quality of Life Issues	Ongoing	Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy – 2004

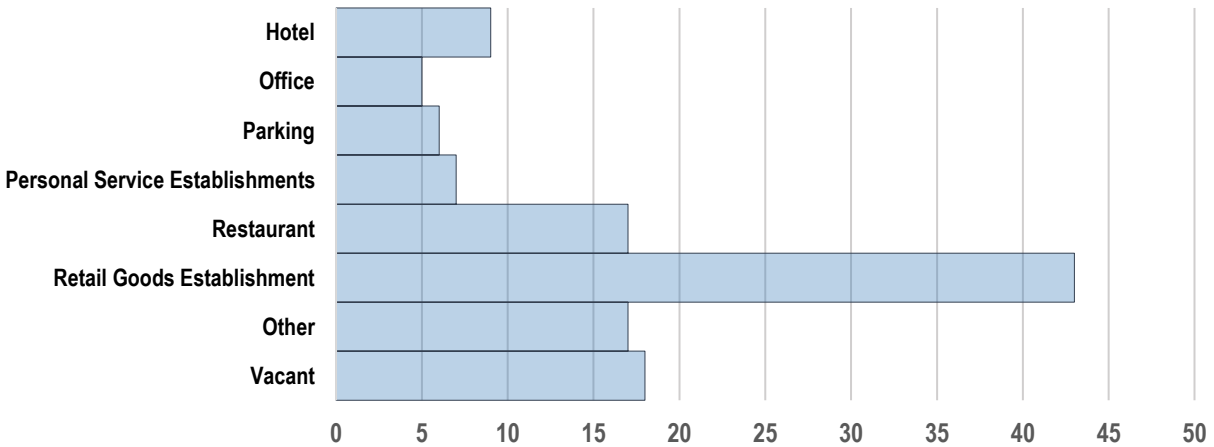
## D. Current Conditions

### Land Use Survey

City Planning staff conducted field surveys from June 27, 2018 through June 29, 2018 to inventory first floor land-use, building characteristics, curb use, and to take general observations from the study area. The staff also obtained records for all significant building permits and violations issued in the past five years to provide an idea of the current activity and issues in the study area. This section will provide a summary of this information.

The staff counted a total of 122 uses, including vacant spaces, along Canal Street between the Mississippi River and Claiborne Avenue. Retail uses represent the largest group of use in this stretch of Canal Street with 35 percent of the total. The next highest use category is vacant, or no use occupying the structure, with 15 percent of having no tenant or structure. The third largest group of land uses is restaurants, with 14 percent of uses in the study area. Most restaurants are split between Standard Restaurants (47%) and Fast Food Restaurants (41%). Uses designated as “Other” in Table 1 include uses such as Casino, Social Club, Cigar Bar, and Motor Vehicle Rental Establishment. These use are not common in the study area and are generally found only once between the River and Claiborne.

**Figure 36:** Land Uses in Study Area by Number



Historically, Canal Street has served as the city’s main street for retail shopping. Many of the large department stores had large stores on the street and smaller retail frontages were typically occupied. It is hard to determine exactly what the use mix was in the height of Canal Street’s reign as the retail center of the city, but most people assume that the numbers are lower than they were in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. Currently, 35 percent of uses in the study area are retail goods establishments. When only accounting for the historic portion of Canal Street between the 400 and 1000 block, this number is significantly higher (52%). Retail establishments in the study area vary, but the largest category (33%) is clothing stores. The next largest category is convenience items and souvenirs catering to the high volume of tourist traffic along Canal Street.

**Table 1 :** Retail Uses in the Canal Street Study Area

<b>Retail Use</b>	<b>Number of Uses</b>	<b>Percentage of Total</b>
Pharmacy	3	7%
Jewelry Store	4	9%
Convenience/Souvenirs	11	26%
Clothing	14	33%
Beauty	3	7%
Other	8	19%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100%</b>

The results of the land use survey are not surprising, as retail has always been what Canal Street has been known for, but perhaps that majority share is less than it was in previously decades. The number of vacancies in the study area is concerning. Many of the vacancies found in the study area are undeveloped sites that should be prime sites for development opportunities, particularly the large lots on upper Canal Street. One previously vacant site, Canal Crossing, is now being developed into a multi-family housing building. Other vacancies are within existing buildings and pose different problems than undeveloped sites. Some of these existing buildings face issues with building codes, small floor plates, and many have suggested that the perception of Canal Street might hurt the attraction of retailers. This study will provide a more in-depth discussion on retail on Canal Street in Section G.

### **Building Permits**

City Planning staff also obtained information regarding building permits that were issued in the study area between 2010 and August 2018. The staff focused on permits for significant work, or amounts greater than \$25,000, and included permits for Change of Use, Interior Demolition, Non-Structural and Structural Renovations, and New Construction.

**Table 2 :** Significant Building Permits Issued in the Canal Street Study Area

<b>Permit Type</b>	<b>Number of Permits</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Change of Use	17	8%
Interior Demolition	10	5%
Renovation - Non Structural	158	73%
Renovation - Structural	26	12%
New Construction	5	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>100%</b>

There have been a total of 216 such permits issued since 2010. Renovations constituted 85 percent of the building permit activity, an expected result in an area that mostly developed. The 216 permits represents a significant amount of activity in this area. This is especially true since 80 unique



addresses were issued permits for significant work during this time. To put this into perspective, the above land use survey counted 122 ground floor land uses. Assuming this more or less represents the total number of addresses in the study area (excluding apartment and suite numbers), 65 percent of the addresses in the study area performed significant work on their property.

## Notable Recent Projects

### *The Governor's House*



The long-vacant former Canal Street Hotel is in the process of being renovated and put back into use as a hotel. The 6-story hotel will have 224 rooms, parking garage, and new rooftop addition.

### *Canal Crossing*



Located at 1535 Canal Street, Canal Crossing is a 7-story, 329 unit apartment building with associated amenities such as a fitness center and lounge for its residents. The apartments and amenities wrap around an interior courtyard and 510 space parking garage fronting on Iberville Street

### *Jung Hotel*



The Jung Hotel recently reopened after not being in operation since Hurricane Katrina. First opening in 1907, the Jung Hotel at one point in time was the largest convention hotel in the South. The hotel opened with a mix of guest rooms, residential units, and commercial space.

### *Hostelling International*



One of the several historic upper-floor

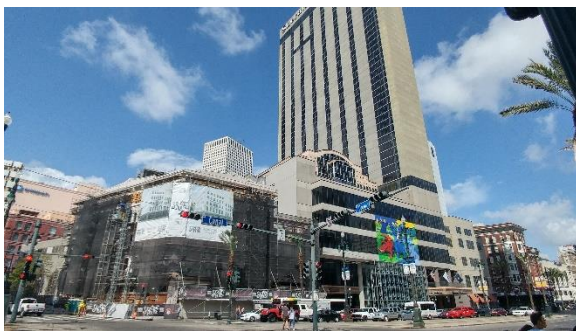
renovation projects in progress on Canal Street, located at Canal Street’s intersection with South Rampart Street and home to Fischer’s Jewelers. This hostel will have approximately 150 beds and various communal spaces for guests.

*Hard Rock Hotel and Residences*



The Hard Rock Hotel and Residences is currently under construction at the corner of Canal Street and North Rampart Street. The building will have 17 floors that will provide a mix of hotel rooms, apartments, and lower floor commercial space.

*Sazerac Museum*



The Sazerac Co. is renovating two buildings adjacent to the Sheraton on Canal Street – one three story and one five story building. The buildings are located only 300 yards or so from Sazerac’s original location in the French Quarter. Once completed, the

structures will house the Sazerac Museum, offices, and conference space.

*Four Seasons*



The Four Seasons is currently renovating the 34-story former World Trade Center building. When completed, the building will have 6 floors of amenities and mechanical, 13 floors of guestrooms, 13 floors of residential, and the two top floors will be reserved as attractions.

*State Palace Theatre*



The State Palace Theatre has been closed since 2007 after being closed by the Fire Marshall. The current owners are exploring ways of renovating the building – including the preservation of the historic structure and construction of a new hotel above it.



## Canal Street Zoning History

Figure 37: Map of Canal Street Zoning History



Canal Street has experienced a number of zoning designation changes since the City’s first Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1929. The first zoning districts applied to the street were generally reflective of the uses at the time: Industrial along the riverfront and a “high building” industrial district for the rest of the study area. This was during the heyday of retail shopping and department stores on Canal Street, and these commercial uses were permitted in the “K” District along with certain industrial uses. When the 1953 CZO was adopted, the “high building” area became a Central Business District zone, which is more reflective of the expansion of the core of the city and larger structures being planned and constructed at that time. The riverfront remained an industrial zone to promote its active industrial use.

The 1973 CZO created a series of nine CBD Districts that were applied between Iberville Street, Claiborne Avenue, the Pontchartrain Expressway, and the Mississippi River. The CBD-2 District was intended to provide for business and mixed-use growth at lower intensities than the core of the CBD, and was applied to Upper Canal Street and areas closest to the riverfront. As outlined in the 1970’s Growth Management Plan, the riverfront was being considered for a relatively dense

concentration of new office, residential, and commercial uses as industrial uses began vacating properties closest to the foot of Canal Street. The two squares between Liberty/Tremé Streets and Saratoga/Crozat Streets were located in a CBD-2B District which was intended to be similar to the core CBD District (CBD-1), but at slightly lower densities. This was the only area in the CBD designated with this zoning district. The CBD-3 District was applied to the historic portion of Canal Street, between Saratoga/Crozat Streets and North Peters/Tchoupitoulas Streets. The CBD-3 District was developed to maintain the historic scale and height of the existing development, and enhance the pedestrian environment and retail continuity by requiring ground floor retail uses for new developments. The Sheraton hotel site was carved out of this continuous CBD-3 District and included in the CBD-4 District which was slightly more permissive than the CBD-3 District, and was intended for uses adjacent to the more intensive development in the core of the Central Business District.

The adoption of the Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, commonly referred to as the Master plan, in 2010 established the foundation for the creation of new zoning districts citywide. The current CZO became effective in the August 2015 and provided a new set of seven CBD Districts that are more tailored to the places in the CBD. As evidenced in Figure 37, the zoning of Canal Street has shifted over its history to reflect shifts in the character of the area. The 1929 and 1953 zoning only made the distinction between the industrial riverfront and other “tall building” commercial and industrial areas away from the river. The 1973 zoning along Canal Street included five different districts of varying densities and use allowances that was more reflective of specific goals for certain types of development in certain areas. This also introduced zoning for a redeveloped riverfront and more restrictive zoning for the historic portions of Lower Canal Street. The current CZO further refines this idea, by providing place-specific zoning districts that reflect the character and vision of very specific areas. Upper Canal Street is located in a CBD-7 Bio-Science District intended to promote the expansion of bio-science campuses and supportive services. The area around the theaters is located in a CBD-3 Cultural Arts District to promote this area as a cultural destination. Historic Lower Canal Street is in a CBD-2 Historic Commercial and Mixed-Use District to further promote the goals of pedestrian-oriented retail and services. Lastly, the foot of Canal Street is in a CBD-4 Exposition District which is intended for large destination uses such as One Canal Place, the Aquarium, and Harrah’s Casino.

Furthermore the CBD Districts have specific use restrictions intended to preserve the active ground floors of the historic portions of Lower Canal Street:

### **17.3.B.2 REQUIRED USES FOR PROPERTIES ABUTTING CANAL STREET**

- a. In all CBD Districts, where a lot abuts Canal Street, at least seventy percent (70%) of the Canal Street frontage of the ground floor of any structure on the lot shall be allocated for occupancy by one (1) or more of the uses listed above in Section 17.3.B.1.a. Such uses shall have a minimum depth of ten (10) feet from the wall of the structure that faces Canal Street. Only the frontage of those uses, not including corridors or other spaces used in common with other uses, is counted in determining the amount of frontage allocated.

- b. For any hotel/motel located in a structure on a lot that abuts Canal Street in any CBD District, the lobby of the hotel/motel may count toward meeting one-half (1/2) of the seventy percent (70%) frontage requirement.
- c. For the purpose of meeting these space requirements, space will qualify only if it is at street level and if it is directly accessible to the public from a sidewalk or other public pedestrian way.
- d. The following uses are prohibited in properties that abut Canal Street in any CBD Districts:
  - i. Restaurant, Fast Food
    - a. Except when the unit has a primary entrance on a street intersecting Canal Street and that entrance is at least 100 feet from Canal Street, and no part of the Fast Food use has frontage along Canal Street.
  - ii. T-shirt shop<sup>80</sup>

The required uses in **Section 17.3.B.1** include art galleries, art studios, cultural facilities, health clubs, personal service establishments, standard and specialty restaurants, and retail good establishments. The zoning of Canal Street has changed as the nature of the street has changed. The adoption of the current CZO established zoning districts that are better aligned with the vision and goals of the Master Plan.

## Master Plan

Squares fronting on Canal Street between Claiborne Avenue and the River are predominantly within the Mixed Use Downtown Future Land Use Map designation with the following exceptions:

- The squares including Harrah’s Casino, the Four Seasons, Spanish Plaza and the Ferry Terminal are within the Downtown Exposition Future Land Use Map designation.
- Lots between Saratoga and LaSalle Streets that are owned by Tulane University are within the Mixed-Use Health/Life Sciences Neighborhood.

The descriptions of the Master Plan’s Future Land Use Map categories are copied below:

### MIXED-USE DOWNTOWN

**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.

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<sup>80</sup> **T-Shirt Shop.** Any premises in which the retail sale of t-shirts and souvenirs is the principal use of the premises or is the major attraction to the premises. For the purposes of this Ordinance, souvenir means items, exclusive of books, magazines or maps that serve as a token of remembrance of New Orleans and bear the name of the City or geographic areas or streets thereof or of events associated with New Orleans including, but not limited to, events such as Mardi Gras, Super Bowl, or the Sugar Bowl.



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**

**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**

**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.

## E. Public Input

### **Public Hearings and Written Comments**

In accordance with Motion M-18-200, the City Planning Commission held a public hearing on the Canal Street Study on July 10, 2018. At this public hearing, the staff presented the scope of the study and opened the hearing to public comment. No one from the public spoke on the study.

All written comments received during the study period are attached to this document.

### **Stakeholder Meetings**

During the course of the Canal Street Study, the City Planning Commission staff met with the following offices, organizations, groups, and individuals:

- Adler's and Rubensteins
- Downtown Development District
- French Quarter Business Association
- Greater New Orleans Hotel & Lodging Association and New Orleans & Co.
- Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance
- Historic District Landmarks Commission
- HRI Properties
- JECohen Holdings, LLC
- Managers of The Ritz Carlton, Marriott, J.W. Marriott, The Jung Hotel
- Mathes Brierre Architects
- New Orleans Building Corporation and Dan Real
- New Orleans Police Department – 8<sup>th</sup> District
- New Orleans Regional Transit Authority
- Sazerac House
- Sonder and Aaron Motwani
- Tulane University Medical School
- Vieux Carre Property Owners and Residents Association, French Quarter Citizens, Lafayette Square Association

## F. Analysis of Key Recommendations

### Retail

The Early History section of this report outlines both the historical development of Canal Street and its role as the region's premier shopping destination. Canal Street was the fashion center of the South and was known for its luxury offerings. Its importance also extended into the documentation of families' histories, as most families had their photographs taken at department stores on Canal Street.<sup>81</sup> Retail grew to the extent it did on Canal Street due to a growing trend at the time for retailers to have shop floors and frontages larger than the buildings on Chartres and Royals Streets could accommodate.<sup>82</sup> Laborde and Magill point out that around this time, amenities such as electrification of the city and large-paned glass show windows made shopping as much about the experience as necessity. Retailers like D.H. Holmes, Maison Blanche, and Krauss were able to establish their stores on Canal Street and expand over time by occupying adjacent structures, building larger new structures, and even expanding across street ROWs in the case of Krauss. Retailers believed that location and the ability to expand were the keys to their success, and Canal Street afforded them the room to do this on a scale not possible on the old French Quarter shopping corridors. Laborde and Magill give the example of the Godchaux's moving from a location close to Chartres Street a few block over closer to Baronne Street, because the block near Chartres was no longer seen as desirable.<sup>83</sup>

This trend of retailers relocating and expanding continued until Canal Street itself fell out of favor as a retail destination. Suburban shopping malls provided a climate controlled shopping experience that provided convenient parking for patrons that fled the city for suburban communities. As noted in the past plans section of this report, City officials went to great lengths to make Canal Street as pleasant as an indoor shopping mall, and even proposed climate controlled enclosures over the sidewalk. Of course, this would not have worked, as most interventions did not or would not have persuaded suburban residents to travel to Canal Street to shop, when many of the same retailers had stores in those suburban communities or the shopping malls were simply closer to the shoppers.

Today, most of Canal Street's upscale stores are concentrated in a suburban-style shopping mall near the Mississippi River-end of the street. Several of the retailers from the street's heyday remain, such as Rubenstein's and Adler's, but most have moved their operations or completely closed their doors altogether. The ground floors of Canal Street are still occupied by retail uses, most of which provide apparel or souvenirs and convenience items. In most stakeholder meetings with City Planning staff, nearly all were optimistic that the street could handle additional retail tenants, even those offering mid- to upper-tier items. In this section, the staff will provide details about the Downtown Development District's retail strategy and updates on its recent effort to attract new retailers and the promotion of Canal Street in general.

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<sup>81</sup> Peggy Scott Laborde and John Magill. *Canal Street: New Orleans' Great Wide Way*. Pelican Publishing. Gretna, Louisiana: 2006. P. 57-58.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

*Market Potential and Tenanting Strategy: Retail and Restaurant Reconfiguration of Canal Street New Orleans, LA – 2004*

The retail portion of the 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy was informed by the more detailed Market Potential and Tenanting Strategy (Tenanting Strategy). Generally, the Tenanting Strategy analyzed the spending potential of residents and visitors, and examined in detail the existing inventory of ground floor space with recommendations for potential tenants. The three major goals of this strategy were as follows:<sup>84</sup>

- Identify uses that could be successful in the retail spaces that were already occupied at the time in 2004
- Upgrade the quality of tenants occupying the ground floor space on Canal Street
- Utilize vacant space to accommodate new tenants until leases expire on spaces currently occupied by tenants that do not fit the profile of the retail strategy

The Tenanting Strategy discussed the significant purchasing power of residents in the neighborhoods adjacent to Canal Street (Warehouse District and French Quarter) and believed that these neighborhoods together could support 34,000 square feet of retail space on Canal Street. Other residents of New Orleans were expected to be able to support an additional 162,000 square feet of retail space, and visitors were expected to be able to support 395,000 square feet. In total, the Tenanting Strategy believed that 845,000 square feet of retail could be supported when factoring in visitors, the day time working population, and residents from New Orleans and the greater metropolitan area.<sup>85</sup>

A total of 680,000 of the 1.1 million square feet of ground floor space on Canal Street was occupied on Canal Street at that time. The report believed that an additional 25 percent could be supported, but this would still be short of the total inventory. To put these totals into perspective, the report stated that the 1.1 million square feet of ground floor space on Canal Street and the 300,000 square feet of space in Canal Place together equal the size of a super-regional shopping mall.<sup>86</sup>

The report suggested that certain tiers of retail be targeted for specific areas of Canal Street:

- Below St. Charles Avenue/Royal Street: upscale to high-end retail
- St. Charles Avenue/Royal Street to University Place/Burgundy Street: lifestyle shopping catering to residents
- University Place/Burgundy to Saratoga Street/Crozat Street: theater-arts district supportive uses
- Above Saratoga Street/Crozat Street: convenience shopping for nearby residents

The DDD provided staff with a visualization of the retail strategy areas and other overlapping initiatives and investments made in the corridor.

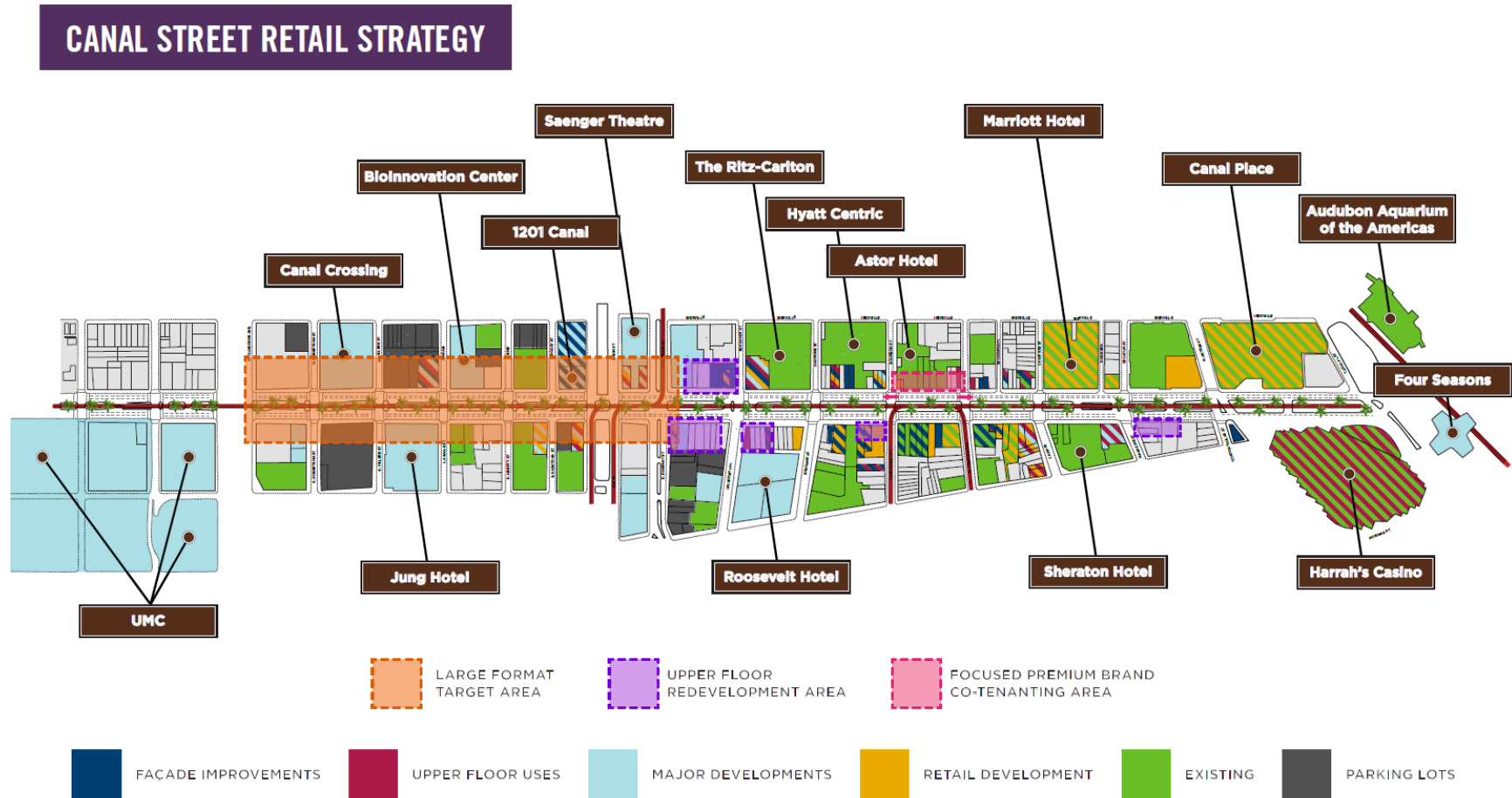
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<sup>84</sup> Market Potential and Tenanting Strategy: Retail and Restaurant Reconfiguration of Canal Street New Orleans, Louisiana. Downtown Development District and The City of New Orleans. January 2004.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 5.

Figure 38: Map of Canal Street Retail Strategy Areas and Other DDD-Sponsored Investments



Since this report, the DDD has built upon the general retail strategies recommended in these four areas. The updated strategies include a re-tenanting strategy for the 700, 800, and 900 blocks of Canal Street and a market analysis for a large format retail store. The DDD has also produced promotional materials for the CBD and Canal Street to attract tenants.

*Re-Tenanting Three Blocks from Eyesore to Eye Candy: An Updated Strategy for Canal Street Retailing - 2007*

In 2007, the DDD sponsored an update to the Tenanting Strategy to focus specifically on re-tenanting the 700, 800, and 900 blocks of Canal Street (between St. Charles Avenue/Royal Street and Baronne Street/Dauphine Street).<sup>87</sup> This updated strategy provided a number of general recommendations including that the DDD have a Centralized Retail Management Program with a full-time manager dedicated to these efforts, which was also a recommendation of the 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy.

The updated retail strategy provided detail about what packages of materials are recommended when trying to convince retailers to locate on Canal Street including demographic information, pedestrian counts, and a list of available incentives.<sup>88</sup> The strategy then lists the existing tenants and size of retail spaces, and suggests “A” list and “B” list retailers that would fit the profile for the upscale to high-end vision of this area. Each suggested retailer also lists the typical size of spaces it requires. This is similar to the detail that was provided in the Market Potential and Tenanting Strategy in 2004, but provided a larger list of retailers, and more of those that better fit the size requirements that can be accommodated by the relatively small spaces on the ground floor of Canal Street buildings.

The “A” list of retailers includes high-end retailers such as Polo Ralph Lauren, Gucci, and Cole Haan, and the “B” list includes retailers like Fossil, American Eagle, and Samsonite. Though only one retailer on the “A” and “B” lists, Starbucks, is now operating on this segment of Canal Street, other stores have opened that would also fit this profile, including True Religion and MAC, in addition to stores like LIVE and Nouveau which are also new retailers in this area. Canal Place continues to attract high-end upscale tenants, and has recently drawn Tiffany, Tory Burch, and G Star Raw. The proximity of Canal Place and the Riverwalk undoubtedly have an impact on the ability for these ground floor spaces to attract high-end tenants.

The DDD has also developed promotional materials to attract potential tenants to the 700 – 900 blocks of Canal Street. The Retail Development Opportunities Downtown New Orleans package includes a list of opportunities throughout the DDD’s jurisdiction, and highlights seven properties on those three blocks of Canal Street that are good candidates for retailers.

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<sup>87</sup> Re-Tenanting Three Blocks, from Eyesore to Eye Candy: An Updated Strategy for Canal Street Retailing. Downtown Development District. Prepared by Steven A. Gibson. December 2007.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 3.



Figure 39: Example of 700 – 900 Canal Street Promotional Materials



**841 Canal Street**  
New Orleans

**LOCATION**  
Canal Street between St. Charles Avenue and Carondelet Street

**SPACE**  
Ground Floor 2,662 SF  
Total Building 7,986 SF

**TERM**  
Long Term

**SITE STATUS**  
Immediately Available

**NEARBY RETAIL**  
Upscale Co-Tenancy: True Religion Flagship, Starbucks, Rubenstein's Mens (93 years in business, carries Armani, Brioni, Ralph Lauren, Canali, etc.), MAC Cosmetics (opening February 16th), Vin Carre (an upscale wine and spirits retailer), The Art of Shaving, Adler's Jewelers (4 generations, over 100 years in business carries Rolex, Patek Philippe, Paloma Picasso, Cartier, Waterford Crystal, Herand China), Saks Fifth Avenue (#5 in sales in chain), Anthropologie, and more.

**PEDESTRIAN COUNTS**  
Typical Weekday, 12,631 persons  
Saturday Average, 23,568 persons

**CONTACTS**  
Ownership, Valerie Besthoff/Property Management Group  
Representation, Brian Faust, PMG Leasing

As shown in Figure 39, the DDD provides potential retailers with information about the size and location of the space, its availability, ownership, and pedestrian counts. Similar information is provided for CBD properties such as the new South Market buildings, The Garage and Two Saints projects on Carondelet Street, and ground floor space of the Dave and Buster's on Poydras Street, to name a few.

### *Canal Street Market Analysis - 2013*

The 2004 Market Potential and Tenanting Strategy identified the Upper Canal Street area as a location for convenience shopping for residents in the nearby neighborhoods, and the Vision and Development Strategy specifically recommended the consideration of large format retail in this area. The number of large, vacant development sites in Upper Canal Street and its ease of access by all modes of transportation make it appealing for a large format store. The 2013 Canal Street Market Analysis was performed to determine if a 250,000 square foot "big box" retail development would be feasible on Canal Street between Basin Street and Claiborne Avenue. The plan provides a detailed picture of the retail market area and the potential for additional retail in the area.

The 2004 Vision and Development Strategy document believed that if "big box" retailers began to establish stores outside of the greater New Orleans downtown area, then the retailers on Canal Street would face additional competition for discount goods and would likely upgrade their

offerings. It’s not entirely clear how far “big box” stores would need to be from the smaller shops on Canal Street to effect this change, but the 2013 market analysis concluded that there could be enough demand for this type of retail in the Upper Canal Street area to support a “big box” store.

*Conclusions and Recommendations*

The DDD plays a major role in attracting retailers to Canal Street and the entire CBD. It hired a full-time Retail Attraction Specialist in 2008 to promote the CBD, which was one of the specific recommendations of the updated retail strategy. The organization has traveled across the country to cities like Los Angeles, New York, and Dallas to promote New Orleans’ DDD as a premier location for retailers. To an extent the program has worked, with notable new tenants like Tory Burch, Neiman Marcus, H&M (though in the French Quarter), Tiffany, and True Religion. However, the success has not translated to a fully transformed Canal Street. Challenges with building size and ownership have an impact on the ability to attract major tenants that meet the profile the retail strategy promotes. Additionally, numerous studies, including the updated retail strategy, express concerns over quality of life issues and the perception that Canal Street is not safe. The updated retail strategy also stated that high-end or upscale retailers do not necessarily want to open locations near lower-end stores. It is possible that the attraction of new upscale tenants and others like them, will provide a stronger retail context for high-end retailers to be more comfortable investing in space on Canal Street. Additionally, the renovation of upper floors of these buildings should increase the pedestrian count on the street and make the ground floor even more desirable for retailers.

The 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. The last strategy provides a comprehensive list of ground floor spaces, which probably has not changed much over the last 14 years and provides a baseline for the strategy. The retail market, though, has changed significantly in that time period with online shopping commanding a significant portion of the market. Additionally, New Orleans’ is attracting record numbers of visitors and has a much greater residential population in the CBD than it had in the recent past. The CPC staff supports the DDD continuing to update their retail strategy documents, with particular emphasis on Canal Street and the strategy areas identified in 2004.

**Table 3:** Retail Recommendations

Topic		Action Item		Recommendations	
1	Retail	1.1	Centralized Retail Management Program	1.1.1	Continue to recruit retailers by making contacts with local and national businesses, and through the development of promotional materials that highlight the potential on Canal Street and its success stories, inform them of available tenant spaces, and a list incentives that are accessible and predictable.

Topic		Action Item		Recommendations	
1	Retail	1.1	Centralized Retail Management Program	1.1.2	Develop a comprehensive update to the 2004 retail strategy that considers the current market on Canal Street and the significant changes in national retail trends.

## Upper Floor Occupancy

One of the specific questions M-18-200 directs the City Planning Commission to explore is 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.

**Figure 40:** 1000 Block of Canal Street



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.<sup>89</sup> The 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.<sup>90</sup> 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.

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<sup>89</sup> 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy. P57.

<sup>90</sup> Acres of Diamonds. P6-2.

**Table 4: Upper Floors In-Use, 400 – 1000 Canal Street**

<b>Address</b>	<b>Business/Building Name</b>	<b>Upper Floor Use</b>
442 - 444 Canal Street	Sanlin Buildings	Upper floor offices
500 - 510 Canal Street	Sazerac Museum	Exhibit space, offices
509 Canal Street	Creole House Restaurant	Second floor dining room, third floor timeshare
600 - 604 Canal Street	The Giani	44 dwelling units on upper floors
605 Canal Street	Palace Café	Second and third floor dining, fourth floor office
619 Canal Street	Popeye's	Upper three floors have residential units
634 Canal Street	Rubenstein's	Additional retail and special event space
637 Canal Street	Musson Buildings	Three residential apartment under construction in upper floors
700 Canal Street	The Pickwick Club	Second floor private club
701 Canal Street	The Touro Buildings	Several residential dwellings
722 Canal Street	Adler's Jewelers	Second floor crystal galleries and special collections, Third floor offices
739 Canal Street	The Astor	Hotel
814 Canal Street	Nouveau	Office and photo studio on second floor
819 Canal Street	Hyatt French Quarter	Hotel
824 Canal Street	Mercer Residence	Boston Club social organizations
833 Canal Street	IHOP Restaurant	Second floor office; third floor three residential units
901 Canal Street	Ritz-Carlton New Orleans	Hotel
924 Canal Street	Levi's	New second entrance recently created to lead to upper floors
931 Canal Street	The Saint Hotel	Hotel
940 Canal Street	Former Freedman's Savings and Trust Co.	Timeshare on upper three floors

Today, many of the upper floors continue to be used for storage or are simply left vacant. Table 4 summarizes a list of occupied upper floor uses between the 400 and 1000 block of Canal Street.<sup>91</sup> Many of the larger structures are currently in use as hotels, and six of the properties on this list have some form of residential unit in the upper floor of the structure. Other upper floor uses include dining rooms, special events spaces, and offices. Much of the study involving the upper

<sup>91</sup> Information provided by the Downtown Development District

floor occupancy has involved exploring the consolidation of buildings and building code issues. This section will discuss these issues as they stand today, and further consider Short Term Rentals as a possible means for spurring the revitalization of the upper floors in this area.

### *Building Code Issues*

One of the main challenges surrounding the occupancy of the upper floors of Canal Street is the requirements of the building code for life safety measures. The building code requires that structures with occupancy above ground floors have two means of egress. This egress could be provided by adding a second stairwell to an exit located on the ground floor. The problem property owners face is that any additional means of egress through the front of the building will reduce the retail square footage on ground floors that are already relatively limited. Additionally, egress to the rear of the building is often not possible for interior lots because structures may occupy most of the property and are landlocked. Some interior properties do have their second means of egress through adjacent buildings fronting streets perpendicular to Canal Street, and some have access to alleyways to adjacent streets. These instances are not typical though, and many property owners are faced with limited options for upper floor renovations.

One idea that has been proposed in past plans is an amendment to the building code that would allow for more flexibility in the life safety requirements for the renovation of historic structures. The example that has been cited most often is a sub-code of the New Jersey Building Code. The State of New Jersey identified problems with their building code that prevented many historic structures from being rehabilitated because property owners would often be required to renovate to the same specifications of new construction. The State adopted a subcode to its building code specifically for the rehabilitation of older structures that recognized that the percentage cost of renovation to property value did not make sense for older structures. Older buildings often face challenges of space and unexpected findings which can result in costly rehabilitations and simply not enough space to meet modern requirements. Instead of a value-based formula, the State of New Jersey created a system whereby projects are categorized by Requirements (Products, Materials and Methods, New Building Elements, Basic Requirements, Supplemental Requirements) and Categories of Work (Repair, Renovation, Alteration, and Reconstruction). Alteration appears to be the category many historic Canal Street buildings fit into, which involves the rearrangement of interior space. The key to the requirements of projects in the Alteration category is that they do not create any new building code nonconformities or worsen those that previously existed. It is unclear how this might relate to egress requirements and the current upper floor layouts in the buildings on Canal Street.

Many of the current success stories for the renovation and occupancy of upper floor space involves corner buildings and the consolidation of the upper floors of multiple buildings. This method is currently available to property owners and does not require a change to the building code, but it does present its own challenges such as fragmented ownership and buildings with floor heights that do not align. The following section will revisit some of the proposals from the Acres of



Diamonds report, and provide updates on these properties as well as additional examples of upper floor consolidation.

### *Consolidation of Buildings' Upper Floors*

As noted in the Past Planning Efforts section, the Acres of Diamonds report analyzed five potential upper floor development scenarios on Canal Street on or near the 700 to 900 blocks of Canal Street. This section will provide updates for the four sites located on Canal Street.

**801 Canal Street** was formerly occupied by Foot Locker, and was believed to be a candidate for the renovation of its third and four floors into four units. The architect who explored this possibility did express concerns about the lack of rentable residential space this conversion would provide, but believed that the space could command a higher price if sold as condos, which could make the project possible. This site was renovated in 2014 by combining 801 Canal Street with neighboring 803 and 805 Canal Street. The renovation established a single ground-floor retail tenant space for Walgreens, and office, storage, and training space on the second floors. The third and fourth floors remain unoccupied space, though a new elevator has been constructed to assist with access, alleviating one of the primary concerns of the Acres of Diamonds evaluation<sup>92</sup>. The third and fourth floor spaces still do not appear ready for occupancy, but with the installation of an elevator and with stairwells to these floors, a future renovation could be possible.

**Figure 41:** 807/805/801 Canal Street (left), Third Floor Plan (center), Fourth Floor Plan (right)



**828 – 830 Canal Street** was originally occupied by the Godchaux department store in 1924,<sup>93</sup> which closed its doors on Canal Street in the 1980s. Pelican Mutual Life renovated the building in 1990 for office use and made numerous life safety upgrades, including sprinklers, fire escapes and fireman's elevator. The redevelopment proposal recommended a total of 35 residential units,

<sup>92</sup> Acres of Diamonds. P5-30

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 5-7.

mostly one- and two-bedroom units, spread throughout the upper six floors of the structures. Aside from an interior renovation to create the residential units, only a secondary means of egress would be needed.<sup>94</sup> The proposal suggested that this egress be provided via an alley that leads from the rear of the building to Baronne Street. This would require a reduction in area for the retail space on the ground floor. The architect who explored this redevelopment opportunity believed that the reduction in space on the ground floor would be justified by the increased in leasable space on the upper floors.

**Figure 42:** 826 Canal Street (left), 120 Baronne Street (right)



Additionally, there is a building located at 120 Baronne Street that is under the same ownership and accessible from the alley at the rear of the 826 Canal Street. The Acres of Diamonds proposal suggested that the building on Baronne Street could make up some of the lost storage and operations space from the residential conversion and access requirements. The staff spoke briefly with a representative of the building that confirmed that the upper floors are still vacant because of the current office space layout.

**800/810/814 Canal Street** is a collection of three four-story buildings near the corner of St. Charles Avenue and Canal Street on the same block as the Godchaux building discussed in the previous paragraph. The redevelopment proposal in Acres of Diamonds envisioned a total of 49 apartments (39 1BR, 9 2BR, 1 PH) with the current varying floor heights maintained for cost purposes. This collection of buildings benefit from secondary access provided through 800 Canal Street from its St. Charles Avenue frontage. 800 Canal Street has now been renovated and is occupied by CVS Pharmacy, and 810 and 814 Canal Street are occupied by two retail establishments LIVE and Nouveau, respectively.

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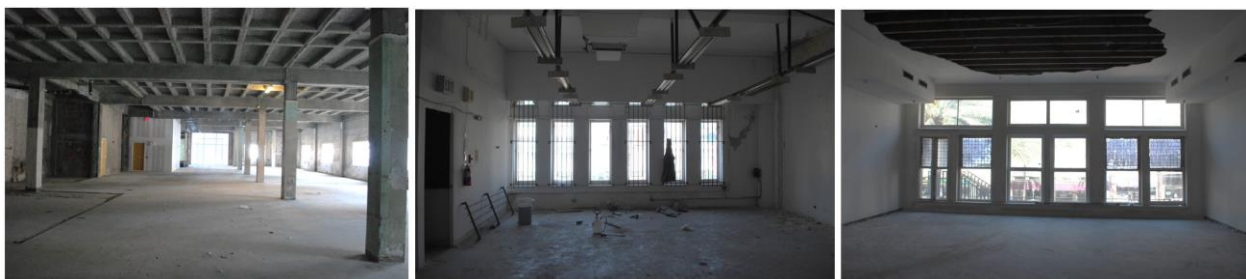
<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 5-11.

Figure 43 : 800 – 814 Canal Street



In 2013, the DDD re-evaluated the Acres of Diamonds report’s recommendation for these three buildings. The re-evaluation was spurred by the surge of residential renovations and construction in the CBD. The growing popularity of downtown residential space and increasing rents in the CBD could lend itself to a higher return on investment and therefore could be an opportune time to promote the renovation of upper floor space. The DDD’s updated proposal was for 45 units, down from 49, and a greater proportion of two-bedroom units than originally proposed (60% vs 18.4%).

Figure 44: Interior upper floor photos of CVS (left), LIVE (center), and Nouveau (right)

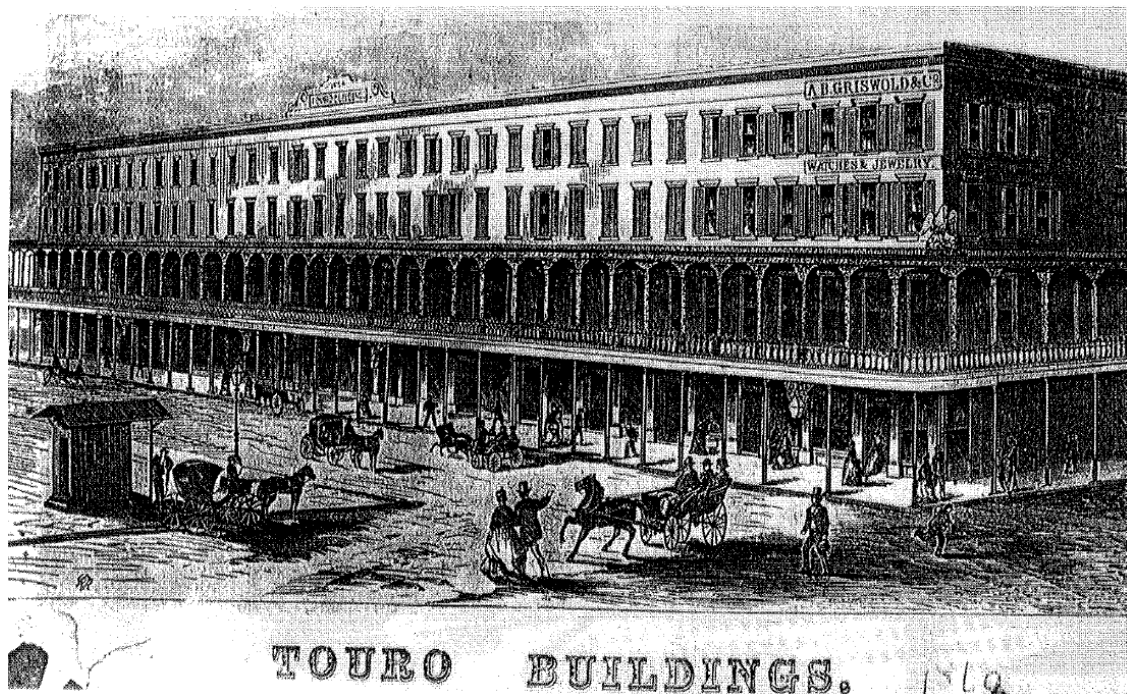


The report also considered a substantial increase in rent prices for one-bedroom units from \$825/month to \$1,688.96/month and two-bedroom units from \$1,100/month to \$3,200.69/month. The average square footage decreased in the updated proposal for one-bedrooms from 750 square feet to 614 square feet, and increased for two-bedrooms from 1,000 square feet to 1,164 square feet. The 2013 evaluation found that the residential conversion could be profitable under the proposal, and after factoring debt service and operating costs, the property owner could potentially realize a cash flow over \$300,000 per year. CPC staff is not aware of current plans to occupy these spaces.



The final evaluation made in the Acres of Diamonds report for a property on Canal Street was for **717-719/711-713 Canal Street and 101-15/121-125 Royal Street**. This collection of buildings make up the interior of the 700 block of Canal Street and the buildings at the corner of its intersection with Royal Street and two buildings fronting the first block of Royal Street, including the former Royal Cosmopolitan. The buildings on Canal Street benefitted from being built as a series of buildings in 1856 called the Touro Buildings, after Judah Touro.<sup>95</sup>

**Figure 45:** Drawing of the Touro Building on the 700 block of Canal Street



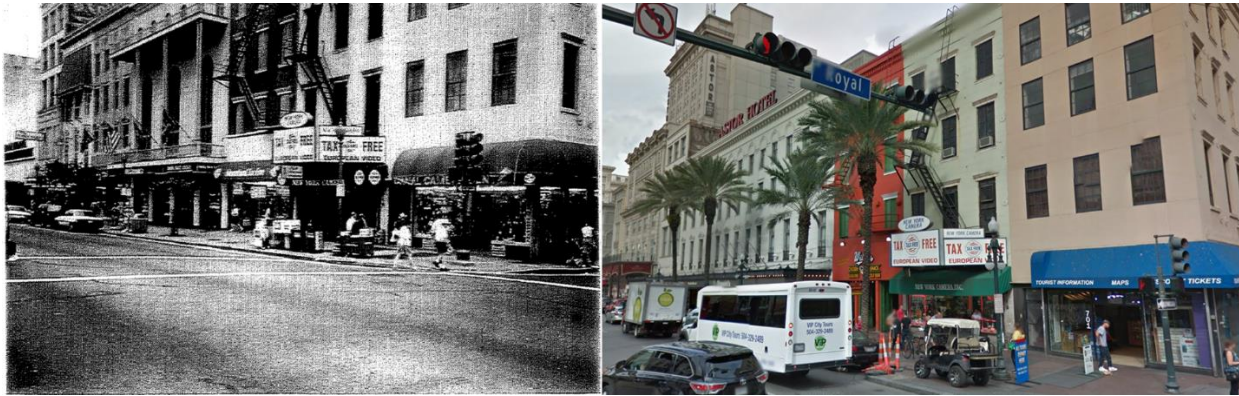
All of the buildings in this row have the same floor height, making them prime candidates for upper floor consolidation. The Acres of Diamonds evaluation considered two of the buildings in the middle of the block and the corner building, perhaps skipping two buildings do to a lack of interest from property owners. Architects proposed a total of 64 residential units when limited to renovations of the existing structures, and 74 units with new construction of an addition on the development site.

Many of the subject buildings have undergone renovations since the Acres of Diamonds was published in 1995. The Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel renovated three of the Touro Buildings and 119 Royal Street, and incorporated these structures into their hotel compound in the early 2000's.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 5-16.

**Figure 46:** 700 Block of Canal Street in 1994 (left) and 2017 (right)



The three Touro Buildings closest to Royal Street remain in separate ownership and one has been renovated recently. The former Royal Cosmopolitan at 121 Royal Street was the subject of a text change<sup>96</sup> that extended a 120-foot height allowance for the property, where it had originally been subject to a 70-foot maximum. CPC staff is not aware of any recent development activity on the site.

## Results

The Acres of Diamonds evaluations found that projects leveraged by conventional mortgage loans would result in cash on cash return between 3.92 percent and 21.19 percent. The CVS proposal was recently updated with figures better representing the current residential market in New Orleans, and determined it would yield 7.3 percent cash on cash return. This type of pre-development work can be an effective way to entice property owners to consider upper consolidation and use. By showing property owners how these projects are feasible and what kind of return to expect, the property owner can be more confident about an investment and possibly realize the value of the unused space above the ground floor.

Some property owners have begun to invest in their upper floors in recent years. City Planning staff met with a commercial short term rental operator, Sonder, and a major property owner of buildings on Canal Street to discuss these recent projects and plans, and how short term rentals have provided them an opportunity for renovations on Canal Street. The following section will outline how Short Term Rentals are currently regulated on Canal Street and provide the City Planning Commission's recommendation that was recently adopted in the 2018 Short Term Rental Study.

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<sup>96</sup> Zoning Docket 106-17

## *Short Term Rentals on Canal Street*

### Current Regulations

Commercial Short Term Rentals are classified as permitted uses in all seven CBD Districts. They are subject to four use standards:

- A short term rental license shall be secured prior to operation; and short term rental operators shall comply with all applicable license requirements provided in the Code of the City of New Orleans.
- The license shall be prominently displayed on the front facade of the property in a location clearly visible from the street during all period of occupancy and contain the license number, the contact information for the owner or in-town property manager, the license type (Temporary, Accessory, or Commercial) and the bedroom and occupancy limit.
- Up to five (5) bedrooms may be rented to guests and occupancy shall be limited to two (2) guests per bedroom with a maximum ten (10) guests.
- No signs are allowed for a Commercial Short Term Rental.

On May 24, 2018, the City Council adopted Motion M-18-195 to create an Interim Zoning District to limit short term rentals in specific areas of the city, including the CBD. Under this IZD, Commercial Short Term Rentals cannot be located on the first floor of a building that has or could have residential dwellings on the upper floors. The IZD did not impact the properties in the study area because the existing zoning regulations in the CBD-2 District require 70 percent of the street frontage to be dedicated to specific commercial uses. The list does not include short term rentals.

### Number of Current Licenses

The staff reviewed data from the recently completed City Planning Commission Short Term Rental Study to determine the current extent of legal short term rental operations along Canal Street. The data used in this study was obtained from the Department of Safety and Permits and included all licenses active on May 24, 2018. According to this dataset, there are 34 total active Short Term Rental licenses between the 400 and 1000 block of Canal Street, nearly all of which (33) are for units located in the upper floors of 600 Canal Street. This address is named the Giani Building which, in combination with 113-117 Camp Street and 604 Canal Street, were recently renovated. The only other active license at this time was for a single unit at 922 Canal Street above a ground floor massage parlor.



## Proposed Projects

**Figure 47 & Figure 48:** 1016 Canal Street after fire (left) & Elevation of Proposed Construction (right)



A six alarm fire in January 2016 almost completely destroyed 1016 Canal Street, leaving only the structure's façade. Two years later, the property owner plans to build a structure behind the salvaged historic façade that will include retail spaces on the ground floor and short term rentals in the upper floors.

**Figure 49:** 623 Canal Street Renderings



Under the same ownership of 1016 Canal Street, 623 Canal Street will be another upper-floor renovation of a historic structure on Canal Street. The four story structure is planned to have a total of 19 two-bedroom short term rental units when completed. This renovation proposal includes an adjacent five-story historic structure on Exchange Place.

**Figure 50:** Sanlin Building currently and rendering without metal facade



A representative of the short term rental platform Sonder presented to the City Council at its October 4, 2018 meeting to discuss the company’s efforts to renovate the upper floors of several buildings on Canal Street. The two renovations already discussed in this section and the proposed renovation of the Sanlin Building were discussed during this presentation. Plans have been submitted to the City for the renovation of the two previous projects, and the Sanlin was said to be in the planning stages and plans have not been submitted yet.

### Proposed Regulations

The City Planning Commission adopted the Short Term Rental study at its October 2, 2018 Special Public Hearing. This study outlined recommendations for various types of short term rentals, most relevant to the Canal Street corridor being the Commercial STR type. The staff expressed concern in its report about large multi-family residential structures becoming entirely short term rentals, but also recognized the value short term rentals can provide to help finance certain projects that might not pencil-out otherwise. The staff believed the best way to address this concern was to institute a cap on Commercial STR licenses in buildings at 25 percent. The limit on the percentage of units that can be Commercial STRs ensures that dwelling units will be preserved for long term rentals and entire multi-family structures not converted to commercial uses. Below is the Commercial STR recommendation from the Short Term Rental Study staff report:

#### **20.3.LLL.2 SHORT TERM RENTAL, COMMERCIAL STANDARDS**

- a. A short term rental license shall be secured prior to operation; and short term rental operators shall comply with all applicable license requirements provided in the Code of the City of New Orleans.

- b. The license shall be prominently displayed on the front facade of the property in a location clearly visible from the street during all period of occupancy and contain the license number, the contact information for the owner or in-town property manager, the license type (Temporary, Accessory, or Commercial) and the guest bedroom and occupancy limit.
- c. Up to five (5) guest bedrooms may be rented to guests and occupancy shall be limited to two (2) guests per guest bedroom with a maximum ten (10) guests.
- d. No signs are allowed for a Commercial Short Term Rental.
- e. No more than 1 unit or 25%, whichever is greater, of total units on a lot or single building constructed across lot lines shall be permitted as a Commercial Short Term Rental. This cap shall not apply to the VCE and VCE-1 Vieux Carré Entertainment Districts, to structures which front on Canal Street between the Mississippi River and Rampart Street, nor to the EC Educational Campus, MC Medical Campus, and LS Life Science Districts nor the MI Maritime Industrial Commercial and Recreational Subdistrict.
- f. Commercial Short Term Rentals shall be prohibited on the first floor of a multi-story structure that contains or can contain residential uses on subsequent floors, but (1) does not apply to buildings that are single or two-family dwellings; (2) does not apply to single-story structures; (3) does not apply to the CBD Central Business Districts, EC Educational Campus, MC Medical Campus, LS Life Science, and M-MU Maritime Mixed Use Districts, nor the MI Maritime Industrial Commercial and Recreational Subdistrict.

The staff also recognized that there would be instances in which property owners would want to exceed the cap, and that certain benefits could be leveraged by allowing this in specific cases. One suggestion was to allow the property owner to exceed the cap if affordable housing is provided in return. The other was directed to certain areas with long-vacant upper floors that have presented challenges for redevelopment. This includes the VCE Vieux Carre Entertainment District along Bourbon Street, the small VCE-1 District along the first few blocks of Decatur Street, and the buildings with frontage on Canal Street between the Mississippi River and Rampart Street.

#### STR as a tool for the Revitalization of Upper Floors

This report outlines a fairly long history of efforts and initiatives to promote the renovation and occupancy of the historic upper floors of Canal Street. Historically, barriers such as fire safety codes have not been so easily resolved without cooperation between property owners or an expectation that the reduction in leasable ground floor space for an additional exit will be profitable. Short Term Rentals appear to be making financial sense for the renovation of these spaces as significant properties have been completed (600 – 604 Canal Street) or are in review or design (444, 623, and 1016 Canal Street). The proposal for there to be no cap on the number of STR units in the buildings on Canal Street leverages the attractiveness of these units and their profitability to effect a change that has been desired for many decades. In addition, the increased

occupancy of the upper floors is expected to stimulate other investments in the buildings along Canal Street including added pedestrian traffic which will attract more retailers.

### *Transfer of Development Rights*

Numerous past studies have discussed the City's establishing a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) process to allow property owners to sell unused development rights for use on other properties. This idea was considered in the 1970's in the Implementation Strategy, Program and Zoning Plan and included in the former CZO, and most recently resurfaced in the DDD updated height study as a tool to help projects gain additional developable area and relieve demolition pressures on historic structures. In 2007 the American Planning Association published an informational brief on typical uses for TDR, some success stories, and relevant case law. The basic premise of TDR is the allowance of a property with a limitation that would not allow it to be developed to the maximum allowances of the zoning ordinance to sell, or transfer, those rights to a site that desires and is appropriate for additional development rights. This tool is commonly used for certain properties with environmental or historic preservation restrictions. The reason this tool can be useful for certain historic structures is because the alteration of these structures is often limited, and sometimes the only way for a property owner to take advantage of the full zoning code allowances is for the structure to be demolished and a new building erected in its place.

The Canal Street Local Historic District includes all structures fronting Canal Street between Tchoupitoulas and South Saratoga Streets, with the exception of the Sheraton property. All of the Canal Street properties in this historic district have a height limit of 120 feet, but given the typical structure is only three to four stories, most properties are well below the maximum height. Figure 51 shows that many of the structures in this area are between 50 and 70 feet. The CBD-2 District regulates building mass with the 120-foot height maximum, not a Floor Area Ratio as is the case with other CBD Districts. This means that these structures would generally have 50 to 70 feet of height of unused development rights. If a mechanism was available to the property owners to sell these rights, it is possible that the proceeds could be reinvested into the maintenance or renovation of the historic structure.

### Transfer of Development Rights in the Former Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance

The former Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance included a process to permit the transfer of development rights:

#### **Section 16.8. Permit for Transfer of Development Rights.**

##### *16.82. Applicability – Transfer and Receiving Districts*

The City Council may permit development rights to be transferred from lots occupied by buildings or structures worthy of preservation and having special historical, community or aesthetic interest located in any CBD District (transfer districts) to lots located in a CBD-1, CBD-2, or CBD-2B District (receiving

districts)...Such buildings or structures shall not include any landmarks owned by the City, State, or federal Government. From time to time, the City Council may designate other zoning districts as transfer and receiving districts pursuant to procedures for zoning amendments in Section 16.2.

The process for a TDR was the same as a Conditional Use; it required a staff report and recommendation, CPC hearing and recommendation, and City Council approval. The application required the same materials as a conditional use, plus a report from the Central Business District Historic District Landmarks Commission and a program for the continuing maintenance of the transfer site. The TDR request was also required to meet the same approval criteria as conditional uses, and additional criteria ensuring that the transfer of rights would not negatively impact the area surrounding the receiving site, and that the transfer site would be kept in good maintenance.

The majority of the Canal Street Local Historic District, between Roosevelt Way/Burgundy to Peters Street, was located in a CBD-3 District, which was authorized by the section above to transfer development rights to a CBD-1, CBD-2, or CBD-2B District, which included Upper Canal Street, the medical center area, and much of the CBD between Canal and Poydras Streets. The vision for development in these areas has not changed much with the adoption of the current CZO, and the areas mentioned remain areas where density of development is planned to be concentrated. The portion of Upper Canal and the area between Canal Street and Charity Hospital are significant opportunities for development, as will be discuss in the Opportunity Site section of this report.

The TDR allowances in the former CZO were never used and were not carried over into the current CZO, but it is unclear as to why this tool was never used. Specifically looking at the historic blocks of Canal Street, the height restriction for this area in the former CZO was 70 feet, compared to the current 120-foot height limit. Additionally, the TDR section seems to only provide for a 10 percent increase in floor area, something that might not have appealed to developers and property owners at that time. Another thing that could have impeded the use of the TDR is the granting of variances through the Conditional Use process. Many of the larger structures along Canal Street were granted variances through the Central Business Planned Community Development (CBPCD) process. One example of this is the Sheraton, which provided a number of public benefit features in its design to obtain its developable area. Since the Council allowed additional height through this process, developers had no incentive to purchase rights because they could gamble with a variance request and potentially get them for free.

Figure 51 shows structures under the 120 height limit in green and those above it in red. The structures exceeding the height limit include the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels, otherwise all of the Canal Street properties are well under the height limit. As the map shows, the majority of the historic buildings are between 55 and 70 plus feet in height. Many properties were just over or under the former height limit, which could explain why the TDR was never utilized by Canal Street property owners. Additionally, the FAR in the former CBD-3 District was 6, which also would not allow many rights to transfer. For example, if the typical building is 4 stories and is built property line to property line, the property would have 2 additional floors of square footage to sell, but given the small footprints of most of these buildings, that total square footage might not be enough to attract a purchaser. The current CBD-2 District's 120-foot height limit and no FAR

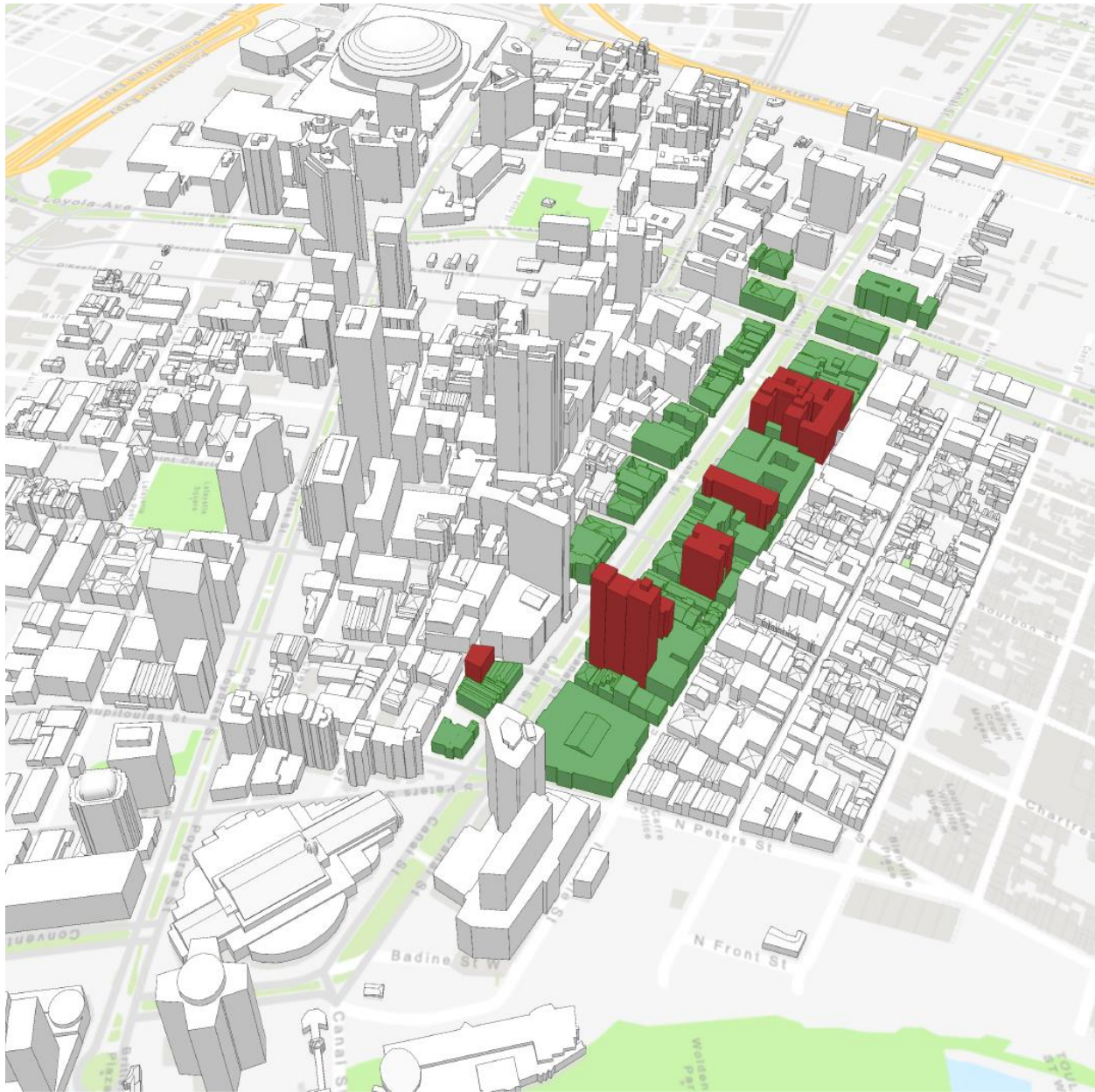
changes the considerations for unused development right by providing a significant amount of unused development rights in that area. Combine this with a market that seems to have improved over previous decades, and these development rights could be valuable to projects that want to get off the ground.



Figure 51: Building Height in Canal Street Local Historic District



**Figure 52:** Bird's Eye Visualization of current Canal Street structures with heights over (red) and under (green) the 120' height limit



The staff believes that changes in development allowances and the market warrant a reconsideration of adopting a TDR mechanism in the CZO. Since the previous TDR system was never used and was adopted in the 1970s, the staff surveyed best practices in New York City to understand how this city regulates its transfer of development rights program for ideas of how to improve New Orleans' former program.



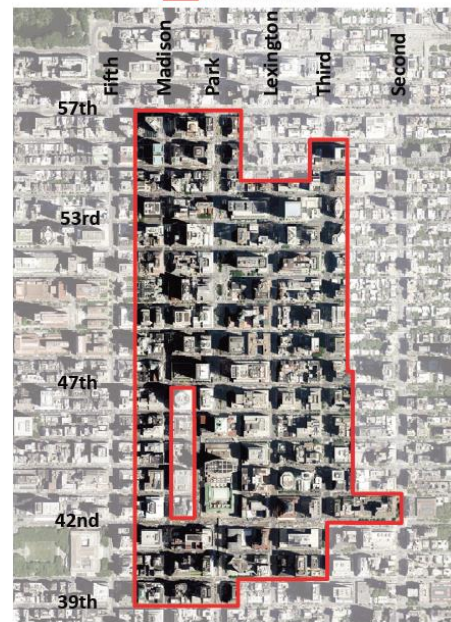
## East Midtown Rezoning Proposal – New York City

The New York City Department of City Planning (NYDCP) is currently developing a rezoning and text amendment proposal for the East Midtown area of Manhattan. This proposal was initiated due to the NYDCP’s concern over the age of East Midtown’s office building stock, needs for transportation improvements in the area, and zoning limitations that are restricting property owners’ ability to renovate existing buildings or construct new, modern office buildings. This case study was reviewed by City Planning staff, not because of the similarities in development pattern of New Orleans’ Canal Street and Midtown Manhattan, but to show best practices in other cities that determine an unmet demand in a specific area that could be unlocked and the potential to provide needed public benefits from special zoning allowances.

The East Midtown study area covers approximately 78 blocks of Manhattan in one of the most densely developed and heavily trafficked areas in the city.<sup>97</sup> The NYDCP discovered that 63% of buildings in the study area are more than 50 years old. More specifically, the study found that the average age of office buildings in the study area is 75 years. The NYDCP was concerned that the older stock of office buildings do not meet the needs of modern employers, specifically low ceiling height and internal support beams that interfere with open floor plans demanded by many modern offices. The NYDCP envisions this area as a “premier central business district” that can compete with business districts of other global cities and newer office developments in New York City. The study voiced concern that if office needs could not be met with the current stock of buildings, they could potentially be renovated into residential or hotel uses, neither of which fulfill the vision of this area.

The City also has a policy of concentrating density along major transit routes. The East Midtown study area includes Grand Central Terminal, second only to nearby Penn Station in terms of number of transit riders that pass through on a daily basis. High usage of public transportation and the high levels of street level and subsurface pedestrian activity have led to crowding, long dwell times for subway trains, and bottlenecks at stations in the area. In 2015, a proposed office building near Grand Central was granted a Floor Area Ratio bonus up to 30 FAR in exchange for transit improvements in the area.<sup>98</sup> These improvements include new public space along Vanderbilt Avenue and an “on-site transit hall with connections to commuter rail lines” at Grand Central. These improvements have been valued at approximately \$225 million.

**Figure 53: East Midtown Study Area**  
Rezoning Boundary



<sup>97</sup> Greater East Midtown Rezoning, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Executive Summary: S-1.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., S-3.

With these infrastructure needs and recent zoning actions in mind, the NYDCP developed a recommendation with the following goals in mind:

- Protect and strengthen Greater East Midtown as a regional job center and premier central business district by seeding the area with new modern and sustainable office buildings;
- Help preserve and maintain landmarked buildings by permitting their unused development rights to transfer within the district's boundary;
- Permit overbuilt buildings to retain their non-complying floor area as part of a new development;
- Upgrade the area's public realm through improvements that create pedestrian friendly public spaces and that facilitate safer, more pleasant pedestrian circulation within the transit station and the street network; and
- Maintain and enhance key characteristics of the area's built environment such as access to light and air, active retail corridors, and the iconic street wall character in the area surrounding Grand Central Terminal.

The East Midtown study area currently allowed a FAR between 12.0 and 15.0. The NYDCP worked under the assumption that the increment between an existing building's FAR and that which zoning allows is one of the main determinants of the feasibility of new construction. In many cases, existing buildings already exceed the allowed FAR, providing no incentive for new construction, and instead incentivizes piecemeal renovations or changes of use. The NYDCP found that the appropriate bonus FAR for this neighborhood could range between 18.0 and 27.0 depending on the geography. Under this proposal, the bonus FAR could be achieved through a number of by-right mechanisms:

- Purchase of unused development rights from landmarked sites
- Rebuilding of nonconforming floor area
- Completion of a pre-selected transit improvement capital project

The option to purchase development rights from landmarked sites recognizes that these structures are going to be preserved in perpetuity, but that there is value in their unused portion of the sites' building envelope. The transfer of development rights can relieve the demolition pressures from these sites, and the contributions for development rights can assist in the continued maintenance of the historic structures. As stated above, one of the challenges faced by current property owners in the study area face is that the current zoning does not promote the construction of new buildings. Many of the existing buildings predate the current FAR requirements, and thus exceed these requirements. The demolition of a building to construct a more modern facility would result in less floor space. The NYDCP proposal would allow these properties to construct new building at the existing nonconforming FAR and could bundle this allowance with the other bonuses allowed within this area for additional FAR. The difference in the permitted FAR and the nonconforming FAR would require a contribution calculated at \$78.61 per square foot of bonus area to the district's improvement fund. The third by-right allowance allows a property owner to complete a capital project from a list of needed transit improvements in the area. The NYDCP proposes three tiers of capital projects that depend on the size of the bonus desired. Transit improvement projects

include improvements to accessibility, circulation within stations, and access to stations from ground level. The bonus contributions are proposed to be managed by committee of nine members, five of which would be appointed by the City's Mayor.<sup>99</sup> That managing group would be responsible for developing and adopting a plan that would prioritize improvements in the area.

New York City's East Midtown district is very different from New Orleans' Canal Street in density, predominant use, and vision. The important conclusions from this example is that New York City determined that the value of unused development rights for historic properties could relieve the demolition pressures and assist with the maintenance of these structures. Similarly, New Orleans' Canal Street has many privately owned structures with significant amounts of development rights that they cannot take advantage of because of the historic protections of these structures. The Custom's House is also a good example of a publicly owned structure that could benefit from the unused development value that could be dedicated towards its maintenance. If this value could be unlocked for property owners on Canal Street it could potentially offer greater opportunities for the reinvestment in historic properties and their continued maintenance.

### *Conclusions and Recommendations*

The barriers preventing the renovation of upper floors are similar today as they were in previous decades including, building code challenges, fragmented ownership, and the lack of a economic incentive for property owners to take the risk of a renovation. Though building code requirements have not changed, there have been significant changes in the housing and tourism markets that are expected to make these projects a reality. A number of projects outlined in this report have proposed upper floor occupancy for Commercial Short Term Rental use. Given the amount of time these spaces have been vacant, if short term rental use can promote their renovation, CPC staff believes this provides a great benefit to the historic Lower Canal Street corridor. The staff proposed in its Short Term Rental Study that buildings fronting Canal Street no be subject to the cap on Commercial STR licenses as other properties, and the City Planning Commission adopted this recommendation. The added occupancy of these structures should ensure that they are maintained in good condition and should result in a greater mix of retail with the added pedestrian traffic.

The current upper floor STR renovation projects are nearly all corner buildings, which present less of a challenge when meeting life safety codes. Once all of the corner buildings have been renovated, the interior buildings will present a more significant challenge. Several past studies have recommended a detailed exploration of potential amendments that could be made to the life safety code to promote rehabilitations of structures with issues like Lower Canal Street. The staff recommends that this continue to be explored as a possibility. Also, related to this idea is pre-development work that the DDD has done for property owners (e.g. 800 – 814 Canal Street) in order to show the feasibility and profitability of renovating and combining upper floors of multiple buildings. This type of work could be very helpful to help property owners understand the

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<sup>99</sup> Greater East Midtown Rezoning, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Executive Summary: S-13.

possibilities and value of their property, and would strategically combine buildings to lessen the impact of providing the additional life safety code requirements.

The final tool the CPC staff recommends is adopting a Transfer of Development Rights mechanism in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to allow property owners on Canal Street to receive value for their unused development rights and require that it be re-invested in the property.

**Table 5:** Upper Floor Occupancy Recommendations

Topic		Action Item		Recommendations	
2	Upper Floor Occupancy	2.1	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.
		2.2	Examination of Upper Floor Suitability	2.2.1	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.
		2.3	Commercial Short Term Rentals	2.3.1	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.
		2.4	Transfer of Development Rights	2.4.1	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.



## Placemaking

The planning efforts conducted for Canal Street over the decades have consistently emphasized the importance of the physical character of the public and private spaces on Canal Street. While the term is not always used, this emphasis on the built environment, and particularly the relationship between public and private space, can be viewed as a component of “placemaking”. “Placemaking” has been defined as efforts to reconceive and reinvent public spaces in a way that capitalizes on the place’s assets and identify 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, in order to achieve positive transformation<sup>100</sup>. Placemaking was a guiding principle in developing the City’s Master Plan and Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance

Placemaking is based on an understanding that each space is unique: Canal Street has a relationship with the rest of New Orleans that is unlike that of any other street in the city. Placemaking efforts that have been successful in other cities and countries may not be appropriate for Canal Street. However, the lessons can be drawn from the experiences of other places which can inform placemaking efforts for Canal Street. This section includes case studies of efforts targeted toward the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris, France; Times Square in New York City; and Fayetteville Street, Raleigh. Each of these examples can be considered relevant to Canal Street in one respect or another. Champs-Élysées Paris is similar to Canal Street in terms of its width and cultural significance, although the market conditions affecting the two streets are very different. Times Square in New York City provides an example of how a public space known for being seedy and disinvested can be transformed. Fayetteville Street in Raleigh is comparable to Canal Street as another main street in a mid-sized Southern city.

### *Avenue des Champs-Élysées, Paris, Île-de-France (France)*

Referenced in meetings with stakeholders, the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris, France is an example of a grand boulevard that is famous for its beauty and for its role as a retail destination. While very much a different street in a different context, recent planning efforts for the street can serve as an inspiration for Canal Street. The street was originally were laid out with a prominent promenade by André Le Nôtre as an extension of the Tuileries Garden, the boulevard was called the "Grand Cours", or "Grand Promenade" before taking the name of Champs-Élysées until 1709<sup>101</sup>. The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the establishment of many famous landmarks, such as Place de la Concorde and the Arc de Triomphe. The Avenue was renovated mostly with landscaping treatments during Haussmann's renovation of Paris, but did include further network conditions and

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<sup>100</sup> See the conception of “placemaking” set forth by the organization Project for Public Spaces. “What is Placemaking: What if We Built Our Communities Around Places?” Project for Public Spaces. <https://www.pps.org/category/placemaking>. Accessed October 4, 2018.

<sup>101</sup> Jarrassé, Dominique, *Grammaire des jardins Parisiens*, p. 51-55

public amenities thanks to his city architect Gabriel Davioud, such as a chalets de nécessité<sup>102</sup>. Thanks to these improvements, the 1860s saw the Champs-Élysées rising as a center of cafes, hotels and luxury homes. Into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, the character of the street began to decline. By the 1960s however, the Avenue attracted airline companies, car dealerships, fast-food restaurants, panhandlers and chaotically-parked cars, which caused rents to plummet and commercial spaces to empty. Thus in 1990, the mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, led a \$45 million campaign to redevelop the historic zones and public spaces.

**Figure 54:** Avenue des Champs-Élysées



These renovations to the Avenue in the 1990s removed curbside car-parking (and accommodated parking by creating a new 850-space underground car park), widened the sidewalks, planted a second row of trees, reduced and realigned the street furniture (such as streetlamps and bus stops), upgraded the shop frontages by new regulations governing publicity, signs and terrace, changed the zoning (plan d'occupation des sols) to encourage the return and development of such functions as hotels and cinemas that generate active ground-floor uses and street interaction. This resulted in tangible effects such as the large sidewalks providing adequate space for cafes and vending, trees and lighting scaling down the feeling of the expanse of the sidewalk, the alley of trees along the curb buffering pedestrians from the automobile traffic, lack of seating via benches compensated by the many restaurants and cafes providing outdoor seating, plantings, coverings and shade enhancing those outdoor seating experiences, and sidewalk amenities including colorful banners, cast-iron kiosks with displays, ornate street lamps which create interesting sidewalk

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<sup>102</sup> Defeuilleux, Christophe. *L'entrepreneur Et Le Prince: La création Du Service Public De L'eau*. Presses De La Fondation Nationale Des Sciences Politiques, 2017.

patterns. All this has resulted in a corridor in which most people walk on the sunny northside, where there are more cafes, theaters, chain stores and boutiques and the activity continues into the night, though in a different ambiance of nightlife, since the street is well-lit.<sup>103</sup>

Placemaking efforts directed at the public realm are complemented by regulatory efforts directed at private spaces. Efforts to Current regulations, effective August 2016, for the Avenue des Champs-Élysées is governed by the Urbaine Générale (general urban area, see Figure 55) zone, which is “aimed at ensuring the diversity of urban functions, developing the social diversity of the built environment, preserving urban structures and the historical Parisian urban heritage while allowing contemporary architectural expression.” Considering the historic architecture, guidelines include recommending that gables, balconies, and loggias be landscaped; permitting the projection of balconies and awnings by the width of the road; basing building design on the “efficiency principle,” such as choosing energy-efficient equipment and renewable energy; and regulations regarding ground floor usage (such as prohibiting warehouse uses) and building design. Regulations unique to Champs-Élysées include permitted projections, such as fabric awnings mounted on hoops and awning with lambrequin sides only on the ground-floor, and requiring garden fences bordering roads must conform with their original fixtures.

The mixité sociale et protections du commerce et de l’artisanat (social mix and protections of trade and crafts, see Figure 55) zone can be thought of as an overlay that specifically limits uses besides commerce and artisanal uses; Champs-Élysées is covered by one protection of retail businesses and craft trades zone west of Arc de Triomphe (orange line) and a reinforced protection of retail businesses and craft trades zone (purple line); the social mix aspect of the zone requires a minimum allocation of 30 percent social rental housing units (pink shading in Figure 56).<sup>104</sup>

**Figure 55:** Champs-Élysées dans Urbaine Générale



**Figure 56:** Champs-Élysées dans Urbaine Générale



In addition to public efforts to create a beautiful physical environment, there is an organizational effort to promote the Champs-Élysées. The Comité Champs-Élysées, founded in 1860 as the Syndicat d’Initiative et de Défense des Champs-Élysées is a merchant organization that promotes public projects which enhance the Avenue’s unique atmosphere and lobbies regulatory agencies

<sup>103</sup> “Avenue des Champs-Élysées: Background.” *Re:Streets*, Re:Streets Initiative, [www.restreets.org/case-studies/the-avenue-des-champs-elysees](http://www.restreets.org/case-studies/the-avenue-des-champs-elysees).

<sup>104</sup> France, Paris, Direction de l’Urbanisme. “Paris Land Use Plan.” *Mairie De Paris*, 27 Aug. 2016. [api-site-cdn.paris.fr/images/102657](http://api-site-cdn.paris.fr/images/102657). English Language Translation



for extended business hours and to organizing special events. The committee has developed, in coordinating with other professional organizations and the Parisian administration, the power to review new businesses whose floor area would exceed 10,763 square feet on the Avenue.<sup>105</sup>

How do Avenue des Champs-Élysées and Canal Street compare? Though their respective host cities vary drastically in age, they both share a French origin and follow a similar timeline of formalization as an urban thoroughfare. Champs-Élysées is 230 feet wide featuring eight total lanes of vehicular traffic, with underground vehicular parking access on the side of its curbed tree plantings, metro stations underground, and 30-foot wide sidewalks while Canal Street is 170 feet wide featuring six lanes of vehicular traffic, a parking lane between curbed bump-outs, 20-foot wide sidewalks, and a prominent streetcar line with two tracks in its median - Champs-Élysées is however looking to reduce its vehicular travel lanes for further sidewalk widening, pedestrian access, and a new tram.<sup>106</sup> Champs-Élysées attracts about 300,000 persons per day<sup>107</sup> while Canal Street attracts up to 29,000 persons per day.<sup>108</sup>

Both have histories as centers of commerce and retail, though Champs-Élysées has an robust luxury retail market, adverse to global chains while Canal Street has a wider range of retail classifications. There is a planning effort, led by the Apur, that is being explored to expand encouraged uses as “only 25% [of visitors] go shopping;” architects envision bars, art galleries, cinemas and theaters in upper floors and even restaurants on the roofs.<sup>109</sup> On both streets, there is the constant challenge of maintaining a safe and clean corridor, which necessitates police officers and street cleaners keeping eyes on the street to make it safe for its visitors and compensate for a lack of trash cans, the extent of the crossing the wide, heavy trafficked roads, the lack of visual, and often physical, protection from the traffic, and the blocking of the pedestrian flow by outdoor dining and kiosks.

### *Times Square, New York City, New York (USA)*

While considerably larger than our modest city, New York City provides helpful zoning features and qualities that can direct us by focusing on one of its most famous public spaces: Times Square, located at Broadway and Seventh Avenue between West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and West 47<sup>th</sup> Street. The area was by 1872 the center of the horse carriage industry for the city,<sup>110</sup> eventually attracting more profitable commerce and industrialization. With the move of the New York Times to the area on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and the opening of a subway stop in 1904 did this part of Midtown gain its famous

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<sup>105</sup> “Champs-Élysées.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 29 Sept. 2018, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Champs-%C3%89lys%C3%A9es.

<sup>106</sup> “The Bluetram Will Paradise on the Champs-Elysees.” *Le Parisien*, Le Parisien, 27 Oct. 2015, www.leparisien.fr/paris-75/paris-75008/le-bluetram-va-parader-sur-les-champs-elysees-27-10-2015-5223853.php.

<sup>107</sup> “Champs-Elysees in Paris Goes Car-Free on Sunday.” *Phys.org - News and Articles on Science and Technology*, Phys.org, 6 May 2016, phys.org/news/2016-05-champs-elysees-paris-car-free-sunday.html.

<sup>108</sup> *Downtown New Orleans Retail and Development Update*. Downtown Development District. Presentation by Kurt M. Weigle at the Jung Hotel and Residences on September 6, 2018.

<sup>109</sup> “Urbanism: Here Are the Champs-Elysées of 2025.” *Le Parisien*, Le Parisien, 30 Oct. 2015, www.leparisien.fr/paris-75/urbanisme-voici-les-champs-elysees-de-2025-30-10-2015-5231615.php.

<sup>110</sup> Kelly, Frank Bergen. *Historical Guide to the City of New York* New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1909

moniker “Times Square,”<sup>111</sup> growing in its advertising fame in the 1920s and expanding dramatically after World War II.<sup>112</sup> The District gave way to a seedier culture in the 1970s that left many New Yorkers feeling unsafe to even venture to the area, showing X-rated movie houses, peep shows, and so-called grind houses<sup>113</sup>. The response to this was a long-term development plan developed by mayors in the late 1980s, the “Save the Theatres” campaign in the 1980s, the New 42nd Street non-profit organization that was appointed to oversee their restoration and maintenance.<sup>114</sup>

In 1992, the Times Square Alliance, formerly the Times Square Business Improvement District (BID), which was a coalition of city government and local businesses dedicated to improving the quality of commerce and cleanliness in the district<sup>115</sup>. It publicizes local businesses, supporting economic development and public improvements, hosting numerous major events in Times Square, including the annual New Year's Eve and Solstice in Times Square celebrations, curating and presenting public art projects throughout the district via Times Square Arts, and advocating on behalf of its constituents in the realms of public policy, planning and quality-of-life issues. The Alliance is a not-for-profit organization that accepts tax-deductible contributions and is governed by a large, voluntary Board of Directors.<sup>116</sup> As a result of these efforts by the Times Square Alliance and others, Times Square's identity changed dramatically in recent decades, becoming a family-friendly tourist destination.

Times Square continues to evolve, particularly as it becomes an increasingly pedestrian-focused public space. The area underwent a vast redesign after the closure of car traffic on Broadway in 2009, which began in 2012 that reclaimed 2.5 acres of pedestrian-only space, transforming a congested vehicular district into a world-class civic space<sup>117</sup> once it was completed in 2016. Since its completion, there's been a 20 percent decrease in crime, 40 percent decrease in pedestrian injuries and a 60 percent decrease in pollution. Reviews have revealed overwhelming positive marks, with over 80 percent of visitors agreeing the pedestrian plaza makes Times Square feel safer, while 93 percent saying it's more pleasant place civic space for the 330,000 people that pass through the area each day (mixture of 56% locals and 44% out-of-towners).<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Barron, James. "100 Years Ago, an Intersection's New Name: Times Square", *The New York Times*, April 8, 2004.

<sup>112</sup> Leach, William R. *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*, p. 339, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011, ISBN 9780307761149.

<sup>113</sup> Berman, Eleanor (2013). *Top 10 New York City*. Penguin.

<sup>114</sup> David W. Dunlap (January 7, 2015). "With a Friendlier 42nd Street, Mario Cuomo Left His Mark on Times Square". *The New York Times*.

<sup>115</sup> "About the Alliance." *Times Square NYC*, Times Square District Management Association, Inc., 21 Mar. 2017, www.timessquarenyc.org/about-the-alliance.

<sup>116</sup> "About the Alliance." *Times Square NYC*, Times Square District Management Association, Inc., 21 Mar. 2017, www.timessquarenyc.org/about-the-alliance.

<sup>117</sup> "Times Square Redesign." *Landezine*, Landezine, 19 Apr. 2017, www.landezine.com/index.php/2017/04/times-square-redesign-by-snohetta-opens-today/.

<sup>118</sup> Katz, Evan Ross. "Times Square's 8-Year Redesign Is a Blueprint for the City of the Future." *Mic*, Mic Network Inc., 2 June 2017, mic.com/articles/177463/times-squares-8-year-redesign-is-a-blueprint-for-the-city-of-the-future#.p2mFjR0Vs.

Figure 57: Before and After of Times Square Redesign 2016



The Special Midtown District, which contains Times Square, has been regulated under the Special Midtown District, since it was created in 1982. The purpose of the Midtown District has three main goals: growth, stabilization and preservation. Signage requirements help keep and augment the character of the area in the Fifth Avenue, Penn Center and Theater Subdistricts. Large illuminated signs, for example, must be incorporated into the facades of new buildings to ensure the continued brilliance of the celebrated Great White Way in Times Square.<sup>119</sup>

The redesign of the Times Square pedestrian plaza incorporated ten 50-foot long granite benches that allow pedestrians to move through the area more comfortably and complement the energy of the lights and signs above, power and broadcast infrastructure embedded in the benches to eliminate the need for diesel generators, temporary power cables, and broadcast equipment, enabling swift and efficient set-up and break-down of the public events that occur in the Square annually, and clear and simple ground surface made of pre-cast concrete pavers which creates a

<sup>119</sup> N.Y.C. Department of Planning, and Marisa Lago. “Special Purpose Districts.” *Special Purpose Districts*, Chapter 1 ed., Article VIII, City of New York, 2017. *Special Midtown District*. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/zoning/zoning-text/art08c01.pdf>



strong anchor for the space, allowing the excitement of Times Square’s commercial components to shine more brightly above.<sup>120</sup>

What lessons from Times Square can be applied to Canal Street? The answer lies in the evidence of how bold alterations to a city’s most famous street, with such proposals rife with plenty of trepidation and skepticism, can radically transform all visitors’ experiences for the better. While the Times Square has a density radically different, a vastly more intense traffic demand, and its configuration lent it to such a compelling redesign that doesn’t exist on Canal Street, the lessons learned can generate ideas on how to enhance Canal Street.

As the epicenter of visitor-focused commerce and retail, both corridors have had their land use and zoning oriented to these economic drivers. The zoning for The Special Midtown District regulates measures that encourage similar architectural elements that respect the historic context to ultimately maintain and encourage the unified character and appearance of the corridor, such as illuminated signs integrated into existing buildings’ architecture, planning tools that have immediate value and pertinence to Canal Street. The Snøhetta-designed redevelopment of Times Squares illustrates 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.

#### *Fayetteville Street, Raleigh, North Carolina*

A heavily traveled street in a city comparable to New Orleans can be found in Raleigh, North Carolina. Fayetteville Street is a main thoroughfare that connects the State Capitol to the Raleigh Convention Center and the Progress Energy Center for the Performing Arts, and serves as the city’s civic heart, hosting special events, parades, and ceremonial celebrations. Fayetteville Street is one of the city’s earliest streets, as it was constructed during the city’s founding in 1792.<sup>121</sup> Increasing in significance as the city grew, the Street eventually declined in importance as other thoroughfares opened in the suburbanization era of the 1950s. The street was converted into a pedestrian-only outdoor promenade with the opening of the first Raleigh Convention Center in 1977 but ultimately was deemed a lack of success in spurring economic development and cultural life. The Livable Streets downtown plan, involving a partnership of more than 400 persons participating in six monthly topic-oriented work sessions, was completed in 2003. Following the recommendations of the plan, the Street was re-opened to vehicular traffic in 2007 and achieved a designation on the list of the National Register of Historic Places in 2008 within the Fayetteville Street Historic District.<sup>122</sup> The City of Raleigh adopted its Comprehensive Plan in 2009 with further recommendations, design guidelines, and principles that governed the street and in 2015,

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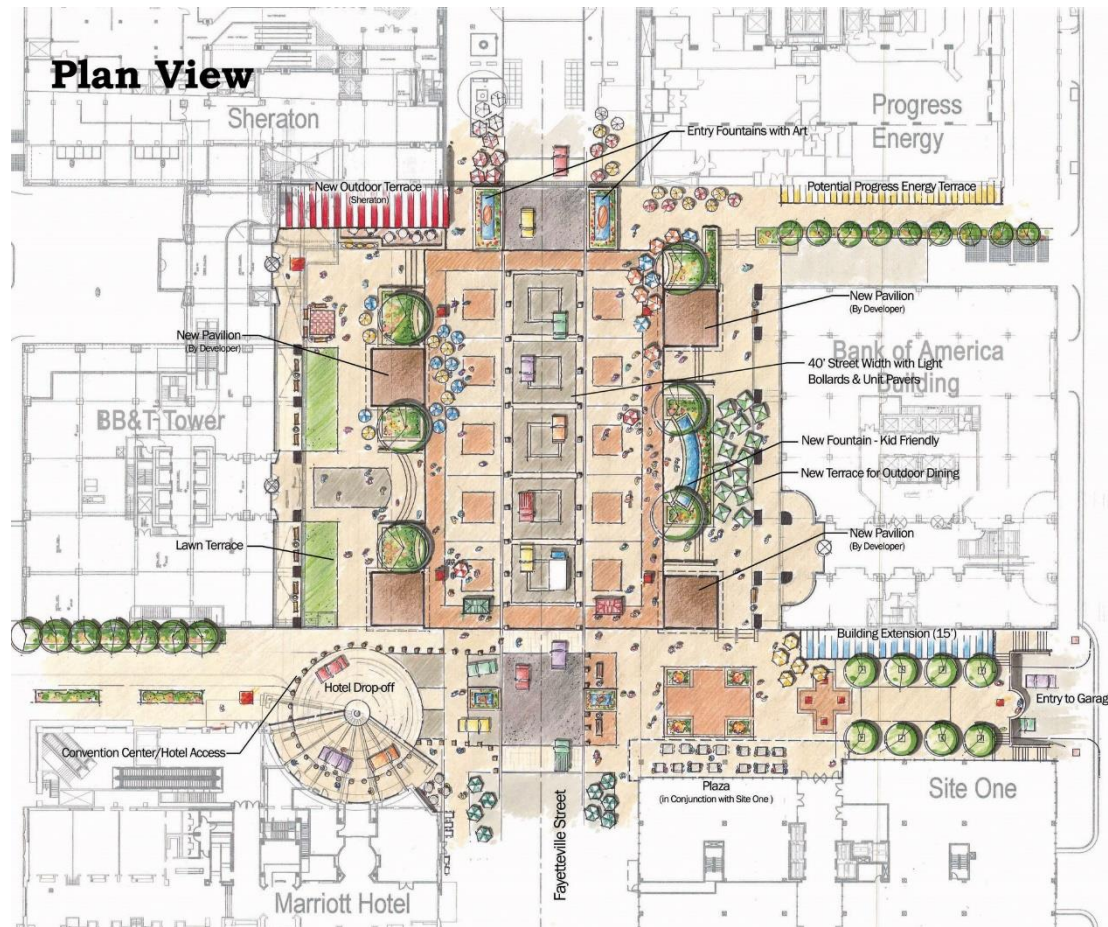
<sup>120</sup> “Times Square Redesign.” *Landezine*, Landezine, 19 Apr. 2017, [www.landezine.com/index.php/2017/04/times-square-redesign-by-snohetta-opens-today/](http://www.landezine.com/index.php/2017/04/times-square-redesign-by-snohetta-opens-today/).

<sup>121</sup> “Raleigh History.” *Friends of the COR Museum*, COR Museum, 2018, [cityofraleighmuseum.org/history/](http://cityofraleighmuseum.org/history/).

<sup>122</sup> "[City of Raleigh Years \(1966 - 1990\)](#)". City of Raleigh.

the Downtown Raleigh Alliance released its “Downtown Plan” report for the master planning and visioning for Raleigh’s Downtown.<sup>123</sup>

**Figure 58:** Proposed Plaza and Street Improvements at the South End of Fayetteville Street



The prioritized actions the plan recommended was making active uses mandatory for ground floors fronting Fayetteville Street, and providing incentives to encourage them. The land use policies in the Comprehensive Plan of 2009 accomplishes this by requiring 60 percent of the linear frontage of buildings facing primary retail streets to be available for retail uses, which include restaurants, galleries, entertainment, and museums; “enlivening the pedestrian experience” by having multiple entrances, pedestrian-scaled lighting, protection from the elements, and encouraging upper-level balconies, terraces, and gathering spaces; activating the street-level architecture to avoid “monolithic edges” and transparent, dynamic façades; and prohibiting service elements, such as loading docks, mechanical equipment, and driveways from the primary street. It also recommended opening available blocks to vehicular activity in phases but also recommended developing outdoor festival and performance space. The plan noted that the “reintroduction of traffic positions these blocks to build off the existing retail activity and augment animated ground

<sup>123</sup> *Downtown Plan: The Next 10 Years*. Final ed., City of Raleigh, 2015.

level uses to provide the life of the street, targeting the blocks with the most intact historic fabric and the strongest pedestrian activity,<sup>124</sup> as observers corroborate that it was done to alleviate traffic or generate parking revenue, but to add bus transit lines to the corridor. Even with the return of vehicular traffic, the plan devoted over half of the width of the corridor to sidewalks, with 15 foot unobstructed sidewalks next to the storefront and 15 foot active aisle for cafes, lighting, seating, public art etc. on the curb side of the street. After its completion in 2007, the recommendations were successfully enacted with wide sidewalks, extensive streetscaping, additional lighting, uniform newsstands, wayfaring signage, and large planters as a means restricting parking evident in the final urban product.<sup>125</sup> By 2011, an average of 28,000 pedestrians a day visited Fayetteville Street.<sup>126</sup>

The Comprehensive Plan of 2009 additionally recommended designing building facades with storefront windows, attractive signage and lighting to create visual interest and avoid monolithic or box-like façades, maintaining façade lines and ensuring new construction complements the established rhythm, preserving that architectural continuity and design integrity of historic districts and other areas of strong architectural character and noting that new development does not need to replicate prevailing architectural styles (but should be complementary in form, height, and bulk), and establishing comprehensive tree planting program to protect and preserve existing trees and install new ones.<sup>127</sup>

The 2015 Downtown Plan recommended many district and citywide action items, but relevant ones for Canal Street could be: exploring the conversion of traffic islands and other underutilized portions of right-of-way into green infrastructure or pocket park amenities, install additional bike corrals in downtown as demand for bike parking grows, partner with local artist groups to brand districts with significant public art in the public realm, encourage pop-up cafes and shops, galleries, and mobile vendors to activate more isolated parts of the retail corridors.

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<sup>124</sup> The Livable Streets Partnership. "LIVABLE STREETS: Raleigh Downtown Plan." City of Raleigh, 2003.

<https://www.godowntownraleigh.com/files/pdfs/livablestreets.pdf>

<sup>125</sup> "Learning from Raleigh, NC: Fayetteville Street Renaissance." *Metro Jacksonville*, Metro Jacksonville, 2 May 2007, [www.metrojacksonville.com/article/2007-may-learning-from-raleigh-nc-fayetteville-street-renaissance](http://www.metrojacksonville.com/article/2007-may-learning-from-raleigh-nc-fayetteville-street-renaissance).

<sup>126</sup> Alta Planning + Design, and Greene Transportation Solutions. *Downtown Raleigh Alliance Pedestrian Count Study*. Downtown Raleigh Alliance and the City of Raleigh, 2011. file:///C:/Users/jcolo/Downloads/DTRaleighPedReportFINAL.pdf.

<sup>127</sup> Raleigh Planning Commission. "The 2030 Comprehensive Plan." City of Raleigh, 2009.

<https://www.raleighnc.gov/content/extra/Books/PlanDev/2030CompPlan/>



**Figure 59:** Fayetteville Street Looking towards the State Capitol Building<sup>128</sup>



As with the other cases described here, the placemaking efforts are achieved in part through planning and urban design efforts, and also through the support of a public or non-profit entity focused on the area. Fayetteville Street is serviced by the Downtown Raleigh Alliance, founded in 1996, which is a non-profit whose mission is to continue the revitalization of Raleigh’s downtown by enhancing its quality of life and contributing to its economic success. The Alliance accomplishes this by providing six core services to support its primary stakeholders (property owners, government officials, business owners, which are training and hiring safety and hospitality ambassadors, providing strategic branding and community communications, producing special events, attracting retail and promoting merchants, strategizing partnerships and engaging stakeholder, and coordinating strategic planning. The Alliance also provides a Municipal Services District (MSD), which is a defined area where property owners fund the safety ambassador program and also are leveraged by the organization in a variety of other ways, such as marketing and advertising campaigns and merchant programs.<sup>129</sup>

Examining the characteristics, history, and planning actions of Fayetteville Street presents a number of demonstrable lessons for Canal Street. Fayetteville Street is 99 feet wide featuring two total lanes of vehicular traffic, on-street curbside vehicular parking, and 30-foot wide sidewalks while Canal Street is 170 feet wide featuring six lanes of vehicular traffic, a parking lane between

<sup>128</sup> Dickinson, Bill. “Fayetteville Street Raleigh North Carolina.” *Flickr*, SmugMug, 24 Nov. 2015.

<sup>129</sup> “About.” *Go Downtown Raleigh*, Downtown Raleigh Alliance, 2018, [www.godowntownraleigh.com/about](http://www.godowntownraleigh.com/about).

curb extensions, 20 foot wide sidewalks, and a prominent streetcar line with two tracks in its neutral ground. Fayetteville Street is about half a mile, covering 14 blocks, and attracts about 28,000 persons per day while Canal Street is about one mile, covering 35 blocks, and attracts up to 29,000 persons per day.<sup>130</sup>

**Figure 60:** Sidewalks of Fayetteville Street<sup>131</sup>



Both streets have histories as centrally-located corridors of commerce and retail. Fayetteville Street has the distinction of being located in the state capitol and serving as the city’s (and by extension, the state’s) civic heart for centuries while Canal Street was New Orleans’ retail destination. The lessons from Fayetteville Street that can be applied to Canal Street are to be learned is by looking at the design of public spaces. Fayetteville Street has a wider sidewalks that distribute the pedestrian experiences in a manner differently than Canal Street, with a clear pedestrian travel “zone” and café /seating “zone.” In the same vein of better distribution of public space, many recommendations throughout the aforementioned plans recommend increasing bike parking and access, converting traffic islands and other underutilized portions of right-of-way into green infrastructure or pocket park amenities, and reducing the demand for on-street vehicular parking. These recommendations have consistently been complemented with building design standards that guarantee pedestrian-level interaction and activation (especially with the demand of awnings and similar projections), respect of historic structures while encouraging contemporary design, and set of public rights-of-way improvements that include but are not limited to widening the sidewalks,

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<sup>130</sup> *Downtown New Orleans Retail and Development Update*. Downtown Development District. Presentation by Kurt M. Weigle at the Jung Hotel and Residences on September 6, 2018.

<sup>131</sup> City of Raleigh. “Wide Sidewalks, Ample Seating, Street Trees, and Other Amenities Make Fayetteville Street a Bustling Corridor Day and Night.” *American Planning Association*, APA, [www.planning.org/greatplaces/streets/2018/fayetteville/](http://www.planning.org/greatplaces/streets/2018/fayetteville/).



extensive streetscaping, adding and upgrading municipal lighting, uniform newsstands and wayfinding signage, and further landscaping through planters and similar interventions. While Canal Street has been through its rounds of both recommendations and installation of these kind of recommendations, it is helpful to see how other cities have successfully enacted them and continually sought to improve and update their streetscapes through the years.

### *Conclusions and Recommendations*

Over the years, numerous iterations of plans and studies made clear the recommendation to improve Canal Street by “cleaning it up.” Various recommendations to fix the streetscape were implemented across the decades, some of which resulted in lasting positive public rights-of-way improvements while others either were removed or resulted in negative externalities. The most recent include the installation of curb extensions, benches and palm trees along Canal Street. Taking into account the recommendations and comments from various stakeholders, there is a desire to improve the condition of the public realm. Suggestions from conditions analysis of street lights, landscaping, and pedestrian amenities including additional canopies and other weather protection devices.

Notable corridors in other cities, from Paris to New York City to Raleigh, particularly those in historic districts, also inform us on practical policy and zoning proposals to pursue. All of the analyzed case studies agree on a consistent set of overarching principles: encourage walkability, proliferate multi-modal forms of transit, create consistent landscaping, lighting, seating, and wayfinding strategies, and preserve the historic architecture and character of the districts. Building design standards should be enacted that, as Raleigh advises, doesn’t replicate prevailing architectural styles, but are consistent with them and uses that support active ground-level street interaction, such as cafés, are often recommended. Especially as it relates to these uses in the public realm, such as outdoor dining, many examples have shown the efficacy of creating specific zones that protected by planters and other pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, as well as incorporating more weather protection and projections over the sidewalk – coordinating these efforts across all city agencies is critical. The redesigned Times Square in the Special Midtown District displays the effectiveness of reclaiming well-designed pedestrian space from the roadway and how to regulate signage to augment the goals of the neighborhood. The Downtown Plan for Raleigh has specific actions that are relevant to our New Orleans, such as permitting and localizing street vendors and pop-ups, and finding ways to encourage a mix-of entrepreneurship and business ownership opportunities, especially as it relates to disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs) and diverse populations.

These case studies identify a number of ways cities have worked to make their public spaces more attractive, inviting, and accommodating of different land uses, activities, and modes of transportation. In recent years, Canal Street has made a number of similar improvements. The streetscape has been enhanced in recent years through new sidewalk treatments, street furniture landscaping, and curb extensions to expand pedestrian space. A new zoning ordinance has been adopted, 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

façades have been restored with the assistance of the DDD’s façade grant programs. The theater node at Canal Street’s intersections with Elk Place/Basin Street and Rampart Street has been restored with the return of the Saenger Theater, Joy Theater, and Orpheum Theater in recent years. Another, the Loew’s State Palace Theatre, is currently in the process of being redeveloped. There are still opportunities to build upon these recent successes through the following recommendations for placemaking, which relate to land use, streetscape improvements, and urban design.

**Table 6:** Placemaking Recommendations

Topic		Action Item		Recommendations	
3	Placemaking	3.1	Pedestrian Amenities Improvements	3.1.1	Demarcate outdoor seating and other uses that businesses can claim in the public right-of-way and create a set of design and use standards (such as planter barriers, exterior lighting, maintenance agreements, etc.) around them so that they do not create further congestion in pedestrian zones but rather create positive experiences
				3.1.2	Codify and demarcate specific areas for pop-up cafés and shops, galleries, and mobile vendors to activate more isolated parts of the retail corridor, especially in the short-term.
				3.1.3	Promote the installation of awnings, canopies, balconies, and galleries at locations where they are architecturally appropriate. These weather protection devices enhance the pedestrian experience by providing protection from the sun and rain. They also break up the expansiveness the Canal Street right-of-way, making it feel like a more compact and walkable environment. Balconies and galleries benefit the property owner by creating additional usable space, which could incentivize the use and renovation of upper floors.

Topic		Action Item		Recommendations	
3	Placemaking	3.1	Pedestrian Amenities Improvements	3.1.4	Additional streetscape improvements that build upon existing improvements and further enhance the public realm, including improved wayfinding, and additional lighting and public seating. Installations should complement the historic character of the buildings and the energy of the lights, signs, and street life. Seating can have power charging and broadcast infrastructure embedded to improve pedestrian and worker experience.
				3.1.5	Large planters and other landscaping interventions. Explore conversion of underutilized portions of right-of-way into green infrastructure or pocket park amenities
				3.1.6	Infrastructure for potential festivals on the street (that work in tandem with parades)
		3.2	Theater District/ Entertainment Center	3.2.1	Supplement existing zoning regulations to promote live entertainment venues and other appropriate uses that support an active Theater District. This could be done through changes to base zoning district regulations or through the adoption of an arts and culture overlay zoning district similar to ones that exist in other historic corridors
				3.2.2	Create additional special events on Canal Street, which would be marketed and managed by a public entity or main street organization, and analyze infrastructure needs to support festivals, and civic events on the street.

## 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. The current roadway cross-section is a six-lane separated roadway that features three lanes in the lakebound direction and three lanes travelling towards the riverfront. The corridor is separated by an approximately 46 foot neutral ground that accommodates the Canal Streetcar line.

### *Curb Use*

Immediately adjacent to the lakebound and riverbound travel lanes along Canal Street are curbside on-street parking spaces that feature a combination of metered and unmetered parking spaces, cab stands, enforcement zones, freight zones, and passenger zones. Generally, the curbside on-street parking spaces are bookended by curb extensions (bumpouts) at each block intersection, with the exceptions being the riverside portion of the Chartres/Canal St. intersection and the blockface between Chartres St. and Exchange Place, which have block-wide curb extensions.

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-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.

Plans that have studied Canal Street in the past have consistently mentioned the curb use issues facing the corridor and have provided recommendations for possible solutions. The 2016 Downtown Traffic Conditions Analysis found that a significant number of loading zones and passenger zones were used improperly by private vehicles that parked for long periods of time. The illegal use of these spaces then pushed loading operations and passenger pick-up and drop-offs into the nearest travel lane, which become de facto staging areas for these activities.<sup>132</sup> This practice is commonplace along Canal Street as commercial trucks, shuttles, tour busses, and taxi

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<sup>132</sup> City of New Orleans department of Public Works, the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission, the Port of New Orleans, the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority, and the New Orleans Downtown Development District. Downtown Traffic Conditions Analysis, 2018. pp. 221, 243.

services often block travel lanes as they unload to supply local businesses and drop-off and pick-up passengers. These practices are generally due to the lack of available dedicated curbside loading and passenger zones, lack of rear loading access to businesses, and passenger zones that are not dimensioned to accommodate larger vehicles such as private tour buses and shuttles.<sup>133</sup>

**Figure 61:** Commercial Loading Activities Occurring in Travel Lane



The 2018 Curb Use Study sponsored by the Downtown Development District is an in-depth analysis of curb use issues in the CBD and along Canal Street, and builds on the research and findings of the 2016 Downtown Traffic Conditions Analysis.

<sup>133</sup> The average curbside parking space is approximately 20 feet long, while the average tour bus is 45 feet in length and average the hotel shuttle is around 20 feet in length.



**Figure 62:** Freight, Passenger, Cab Stand, and Enforcement Zones in the CBD (DRAFT 2018 CBD Curb Use Study)

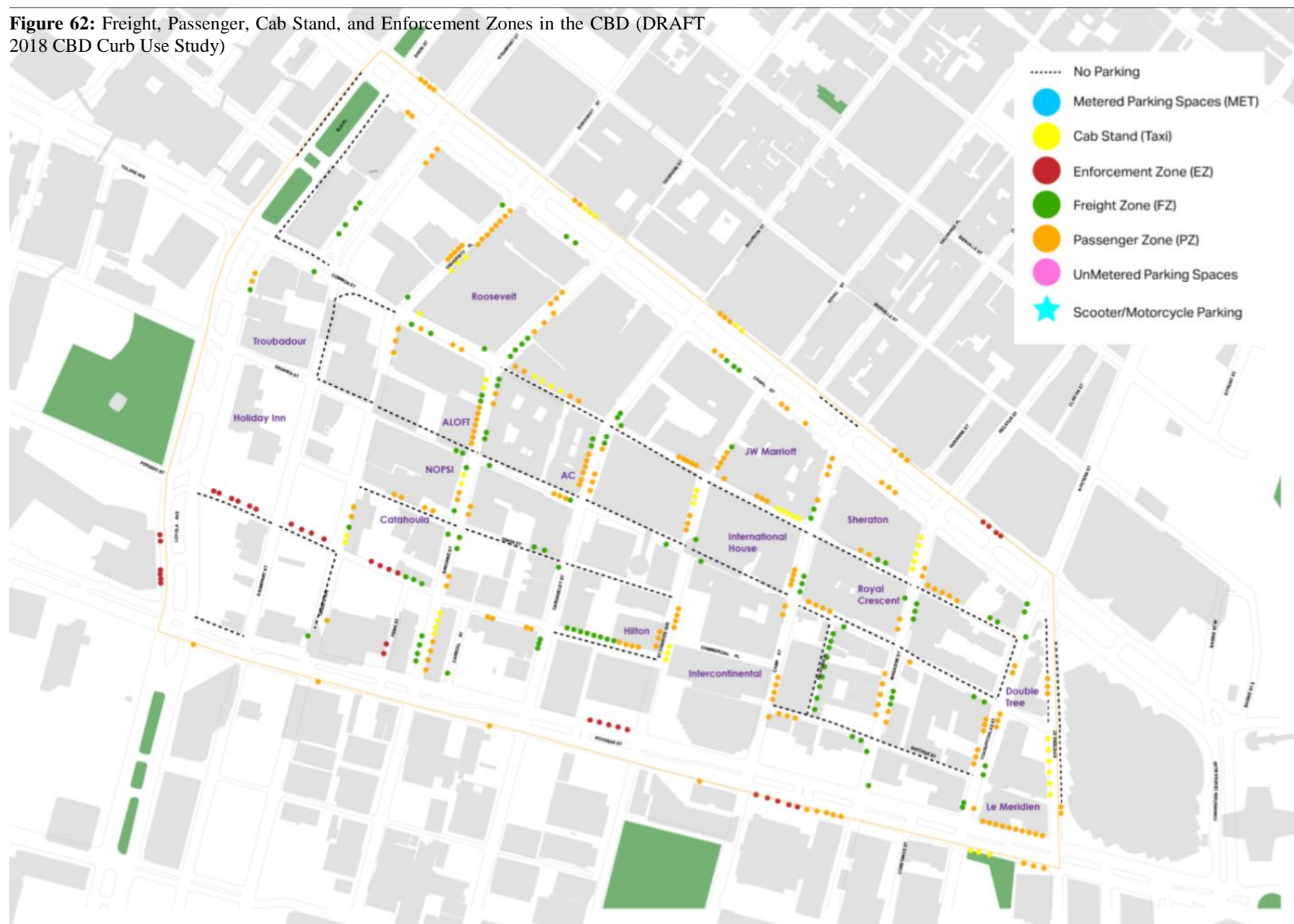


Figure 62 details the distribution of curbside parking spaces along Canal and shows there are currently only two curbside spaces dedicated as loading zones. These two spaces are clustered at the Canal Street’s intersections with Dauphine Street and St. Charles Avenue. There are approximately nine hotels and 72 businesses along the Canal Street study area – two dedicated loading zones are not sufficient. Additionally, a survey conducted by the study team reports that private vehicles<sup>134</sup> occupied 90 percent of loading zones “for long periods of time.”<sup>135</sup> The study notes that the results of these inefficiencies is often the blocking of travel lanes by freight vehicles who will make their delivery regardless of the availability of a loading zone.

The Curb Use Study notes that passenger zones are abused on a daily basis as well. The average stay time in these zones averages around two hours,<sup>136</sup> while they are intended for 10 minute stops per *City Code: Sec. 154-869*.<sup>137</sup> The study also observed the practice of businesses commandeering passenger zones by placing signage in parking stalls in order to reserve the parking as they see fit. These inefficiencies cause congestion, frustration and confusion along the roadway, and result in pedestrians dangerously crossing into travel lanes to approach their transportation.

The CPC staff has been working with the Department of Public Works and the Downtown Development District over the course of this CBD Curb Use Study, and the finalize plan should generally recommend the strategic reallocation of curb spaces to allow for additional, and better located, passenger and freight zones. Additional preliminary recommendations from the study include:

- Increasing enforcement of the loading zones
- Modifying loading zone signs to indicate maximum time limits per City ordinance
- Introducing freight/metered parking combination stalls
- Changing the regulation of specific stalls to better accommodate current and future demands
- Eliminating all no-limit/ free on-street parking
- Allowing requests for non-parking curb uses and bike parking corrals

The CPC staff believes this is an appropriate step toward relieving this issues experienced daily on Canal Street. If the recommendation of the 2018 Curb Use Study do not solve the issues on Canal Street, more creative solutions will need to be implemented. The 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy explored the chronic difficulties encountered with loading and unloading activities along the corridor and recommended that Canal be reconfigured to have “two

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<sup>134</sup> *Sec. 154-868. - Parking in a loading zone, freight only, or freight zone* states that the vehicle using a loading zone’s primary purpose must be the transport and delivery of merchandise. If a vehicle meets the definition of a delivery vehicle, it will be allowed to remain in the loading zone, freight only, or freight zone, for 45 minutes.

<sup>135</sup> City of New Orleans. Curb Use Study, pg. 14.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>137</sup> *Sec. 154-869. - Parking in a passenger zone.* No person shall park a vehicle in a passenger zone for any purpose or period of time other than for the expeditious receiving or discharging of passengers in any place marked as a passenger zone at any time, and then only for a period not to exceed ten minutes.

open through lanes; one for buses and another for vehicles to queue, load and unload and curbside parking in an intermittent lane bracketed by bumpouts.”<sup>138</sup> While curb extensions were installed along Canal Street in the years immediately following the release of the Vision and Development Strategy, the reconfiguration of travel lanes along Canal never materialized.

Though there are no current examples of a shared-use lane in New Orleans, there are examples in other cities of lanes dedicated to functions such as commercial loading and passenger pick-up and drop-off. In Vancouver, any lane that is next to a commercial property, such as a store, hotel, restaurant, or parking lot, is classified as a commercial loading zone between 7am and 6pm. In these lanes, licensed commercial vehicles are permitted to stop for up to 30 minutes to load or unload materials, while all other vehicles are prohibited to stop in this lane.<sup>139</sup> In Austin, Texas, when two or more travel lanes in one direction are available, delivery vehicles with permits can use a curb-side travel lane to conduct loading or unloading activity for a time period of up to 30 minutes.<sup>140</sup> The Austin regulations are tailored to meet the challenges of the downtown area where curbside parking is at a premium and not always available for loading purposes. San Francisco, CA provides tour buses with designated locations to load and unload passengers in locations that includes specific tour bus loading zones, passenger loading zones and commercial loading zones.

The CPC staff recommends acting on the recommendation of the 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy by reconfiguring the traffic lanes along Canal in such a way that would continue to dedicate two open through lanes to traffic and the outside lane nearest the curb would function as a dedicated shared-use lane serving as pick-up and drop-off zones for passenger and freight.

Traffic counts conducted along Canal Street by AECOM in 2016 indicate that Canal Street could be a candidate for a lane reduction with further analysis and a feasibility study. The preliminary numbers indicate that it is likely that a reduction of travel lanes from six lanes to four lanes would not substantially impact travel flow. The traffic counts resulted in Average Daily Traffic (ADT) of 15,610 vehicles per day at Canal/Rampart Street and an ADT of 10,080 vehicles per day at Canal/Camp St.<sup>141</sup> The FHWA advises that roadways with ADT of 20,000 vehicles per day or less may be good candidates for a road diet and should be evaluated for feasibility.<sup>142</sup>

One way to test the effectiveness of improvements without investing in materials that are permanent, is to perform a temporary demonstration project. The CPC recommends a 90-day pilot of the proposed shared use lane that will involve coordination between the CPC, the Mayor’s Office of Transportation, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Safety and Permits, the Downtown Development District, Canal Street stakeholders and organizations, and the everyday users of Canal Street. CPC staff recommends this demonstration be limited to Canal Street between Decatur St./Magazine St. to Rampart Street in both lakebound and riverbound

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<sup>138</sup> 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy, pg. 50.

<sup>139</sup> City of Vancouver. “Use of commercial loading zones and lanes.” September, 2018, <https://vancouver.ca/streets-transportation/commercial-loading-zones-and-lanes.aspx>

<sup>140</sup> City of Austin. “Commercial Vehicle Loading.” September, 2018, <http://www.austintexas.gov/cvlp>

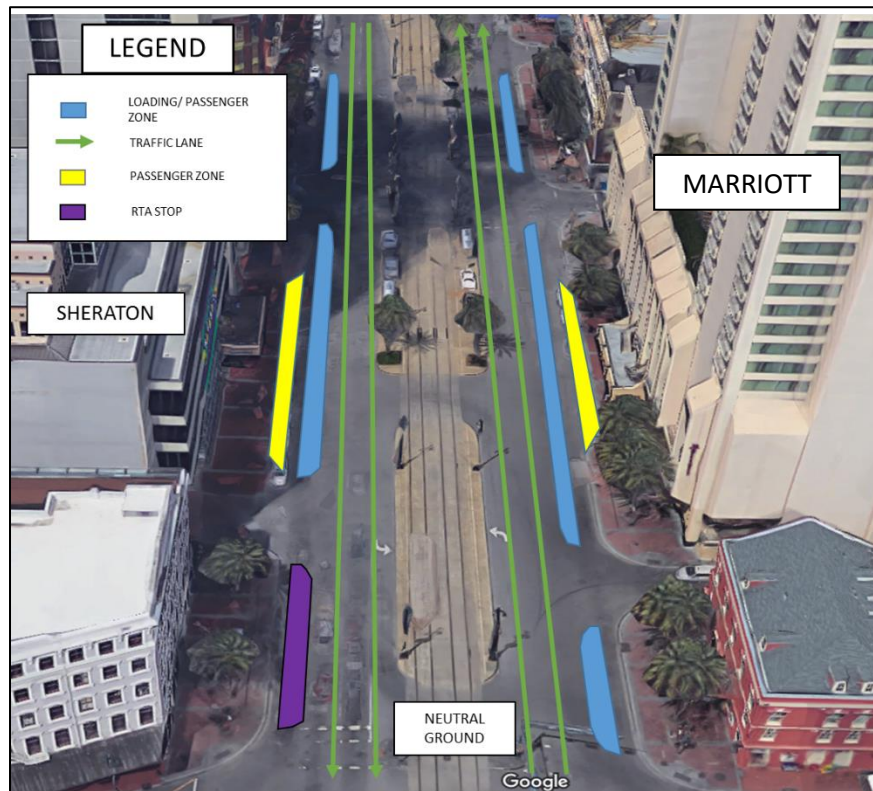
<sup>141</sup> AECOM traffic counts, 2016

<sup>142</sup> [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road\\_diets/guidance/info\\_guide/ch3.cfm#s335](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road_diets/guidance/info_guide/ch3.cfm#s335)

directions. The shared lane would generally function as a loading zone and passenger zone for large commercial loading vehicles, passenger pick-up and drop-offs for tour busses, shuttles and general passenger pick-up and drop-offs, and two travel lanes would be available in each direction for through travel.

Commercial loading vehicles would be allowed 30 minutes to complete their activities and passenger services 10 minutes. A designated loading space for commercial loading vehicles set back 10 feet from the front of the curbside passenger zone near large hotels would be marked to ensure the passenger zone could continue to flow. The passenger zones in front of large hotels would serve passenger taxi services and personal vehicles that operate out of standard cars and vans. It would be vital that these operations conclude within 10 minutes and that the passenger zone is then vacated for the next vehicle. Overall, the system would be designed to keep the flow of curbside activities moving in a safe and efficient manner while not spilling over into traffic lanes as it currently does on a daily basis.

**Figure 63:** Proposed Canal Street Layout



During the demonstration, the shared use lane should be marked with colored street paint that would be distinct and noticeable to drivers and curbside passengers and clearly visible signage along the curbside. Enforcement would be another key element to the success of the lane and curbside passenger zones as enforcement officers would be needed in order to ensure commercial loading operations do not exceed 30 minutes, passenger pick-up and drop-off activities do not exceed 10 minutes, and taxi services do not use the spaces as de facto cab stands. This enforcement

would be vital to the success of the reconfiguration and a vigilant enforcement effort should accompany the roll-out of the new system.

This new system would improve the safety, comfort, and efficiency of curbside activities along Canal Street as commercial loading vehicles, tour buses, taxis, and other passenger services would have a safe and dedicated space to conduct their operations. Passengers would no longer have to dangerously wade through travel lanes as they attempt to board a vehicle in front of a busy hotel. Motorists along Canal would less often experience the frustration of getting stuck behind an idling tour bus in the travel lane, and pedestrians would be less afflicted by erratic activities of frustrated motorists.

This pilot project should feature the effective combination of educational outreach and enforcement along the corridor. Travel time studies before and after the pilot should be completed to judge the effectiveness of the demonstration, and observation should be made regarding the amount of time taken to pick-up and drop off passengers and load and unload commercial goods. Additionally, business owners, vehicle operators and visitors along the corridor should be surveyed to gauge personal experiences before and after the project. If the pilot is deemed a success, it should be implemented as a permanent change along Canal Street.

The dedication of the curbside travel lane to shared usage could be one stage of a long-term plan to rethink how Canal Street is shared by vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, or other non-motorized modes of transportation. A dedicated long-term effort is necessary to solve the problems that exist.

Potential future changes could include the removal of curbside parking and the extension of the curb to fill in the space between the curb extensions. The expanded width of the sidewalk would provide Canal Street with a pedestrian right-of-way that is uniform and approximately 25 feet in width. The extended right-of-way would further provide valuable space for benches, landscaping, public art, and sidewalk cafes, further enhancing the appeal of Canal Street as a unique destination. The shared lane would then fully function as a 24-hour curbside access lane, no longer in conflict with curbside parking spaces.

Curbside parking along Canal is currently being underutilized and their existence encourage cars to circle while looking for open spaces. The 2018 Curb Use Study surveyed Canal Street to quantify the number of total existing curbside parking spaces per blockface and the percentage of those that were not occupied by a vehicle at the time of the survey. The study found that, of the 60 total spaces between Tchoupitoulas Street and Elk Place, an average of 31.6 percent of the spaces were available. This percentage is the highest amount of vacancy in the CBD.

### *Pedestrian Network*

The pedestrian network along the Canal Street corridor study area includes the pedestrian right-of-way that generally provides 20 feet of width along most of the corridor and 25 feet in width where there are curb extensions, crosswalks at each intersection that transverse the 121 foot travel zone dedicated to automobiles and transit, and the pedestrian holding areas serves as refuge spaces while crossing over the neutral ground. Curb extensions were installed in the mid-2000's at all



intersections (excluding the riverside portion of the intersection with Chartres Street) between the river and South Claiborne Avenue and palm trees, other limited landscaping, and light poles provide buffers along the pedestrian ROW and neutral ground.

The 2014 City of New Orleans Pedestrian Safety Action Plan provided an analysis of the pedestrian experience at several intersections along Canal Street that included data for crashes at intersections. Canal Street and Carondelet Street/Bourbon Street stands out for its 10 crashes, including two severe injuries. Smart design and engineering can help prevent injuries and deaths and deaths. Thousands of pedestrians cross the intersection of Bourbon and Canal Streets daily and an investment in pedestrian improvements can save lives while helping to transform Canal Street into a place where pedestrians love to be.

The plan recommended a wide range of improvements to improve pedestrian comfort and safety along Canal Street and many of those recommendations have been implemented. Since those recommendations were made, countdown signals, high-visibility crosswalks have been applied at all intersections, and truncated domes and distinct pavers have been installed at transitions between the pedestrian area and streetcar lines.

**Figure 64:** Pedestrian Improvements along Canal Street



However, there is still much room for improvement along the corridor and CPC staff supports the continued implementation of the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, including items with direct impacts on Canal Street:

- Neutral ground landscaping/buffers, such as planters or other installations, should be expanded and to discourage pedestrians crossing midblock.
- Canal and Peters Intersection - The right turn lane from South Peters Street onto Canal Street going toward the river could be removed, eliminating the small pedestrian island and creating a larger pedestrian space in front of the heavily pedestrian trafficked Harrah's Casino.
- Prohibit right turns on red lights throughout the corridor.

**Figure 65:** Planter Concept



Planters could be used to discourage midblock crossings on Canal St, lakebound at Chartres St (Dana Brown & Associates Google Streetview)

### *Bicycles*

Canal Street is currently a very difficult place to bike. With so many activities occurring simultaneously along the roadway (see curb use section), there is little room for the bicyclist to travel the corridor and no dedicated space to help facilitate a safe journey. Past plans have recommended that the bicyclist avoid the corridor altogether and designated parallel corridors such as Common Street in the CBD and Iberville Street in the French Quarter as the streets where bike paths should be installed. There is currently a dedicated bike lane travelling lakebound on Common

Street, but no riverbound lane on Iberville Street has been installed. Canal Street is the main street of the city with over 70 businesses between South Claiborne Avenue and the river. It makes sense to provide the growing number of cyclists a safe route to access the many destinations along Canal Street.<sup>143</sup> The CPC staff recommends that the City continue to explore future options for a protected bikeway along length of Canal Street, or parallel routes with access to Canal Street. Additionally, bike parking is scarce along Canal Street and selected on-street spaces could be removed and replaced by bike corrals. Bike corrals can provide storage for up to 12 bikes in the same space required for one vehicle.

Throughout September and October of 2018, BikeEasy (New Orleans' bicycle advocacy non-profit) has been implementing a project called Connect the Crescent. Connect the Crescent is a 3-month "pop-up" demonstration of a protected roadway network to show how streets can be transformed to safely and equitably serve everyone in who travels in New Orleans. The Baronne and Decatur Streets "pop-up" bikeways intersect Canal Street and the "Ferry Connector" pop-up will extend down Canal Street from Harrah's Casino to the Ferry. These bikeway "pop-up" demonstrations all represent vital arteries in the city's growing bicycle network and, if successful during the demonstration, the CPC staff recommends that these projects become permanent.

### *Transit*

Canal Street is served by numerous bus lines and two streetcar lines (Canal Streetcar Museum and Canal Streetcar Cemeteries). Four bus lines actually run down the uptown side of Canal Street (5 Marigny-Bywater, 10 Tchoupitoulas, 15 Freret, 100 Algiers Loop Owl), of these four lines, only three lines have stops along Canal Street (10 Tchoupitoulas, 5 Marigny-Bywater, 15 Freret). The 10 Tchoupitoulas line runs from Camp Street to Convention Center Boulevard with stops at Magazine Street and North Peters Street, 5 Marigny-Bywater is on Canal Street for roughly one block and has a stop at Canal and North Peters Streets, and 15 Freret runs from South Rampart Street to Baronne Street, with a stop at Roosevelt Way. The bus lines that currently run on Canal Street generally use the street as a turnaround location in an effort to keep busses from getting caught in congestion along Canal Street and to avoid large numbers of passengers waiting on or near Canal Street sidewalks.

The RTA released a Strategic Mobility Plan in 2017 that includes a wide range of strategies, action items, and targets to achieve through the year 2040. Action items listed in the Plan that directly impact transit operations on Canal Street include:

- Off-board fare collection for all Canal Street streetcar stops and informational/wayfinding signage – The Canal streetcar lines are often plagued by long lines of passengers waiting to board and riders that are uninformed on how and/or where to board the streetcar. Off-board fare collection and increased signage will help improve upon this daily issue.

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<sup>143</sup> The Greater New Orleans Regional Planning Commission, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, and the University of New Orleans. Greater New Orleans Pedestrian and Bicycle Count Report, 2017

- Remove excess streetcar stops along Canal Street – There are currently streetcar stops at nearly every block along Canal Street between the river and South Claiborne, while most of the blockfaces along the street measure approximately 330 feet. By removing excess stops the Canal streetcar line could greatly increase headway along the busy corridor.
- Explore option for a CBD circulator that would connect major destinations to Canal Street – A CBD circulator (or shuttle) has been recommended by almost every study that has been done on Canal Street. The circulator would help visitors and locals alike travel between the many destinations around the area with greater ease and efficiency when compared to a city bus or taxi service.

The City of New Orleans and the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) have been in continued discussions regarding the location of a new transit center to be located near Canal Street. Currently, the majority of the stops that would be re-located to a new transit center are along Elk Street between Canal and Tulane Streets. The majority of these stops are unsheltered and there is not enough seating and security provided. Possible locations that have been discussed include the Southern Railway Station site at Canal and Basin Streets and the State’s property next to Duncan Plaza. There is currently no timeline as to when site assessments will be made due to financial constraints at the RTA. Additionally, the RTA has a Comprehensive Operational Assessment and system redesign that is currently in the initial phases. The CPC staff recommends that the site of the future transit hub be assessed and selected in direct alignment with the system redesign process in order to ensure system-wide synergy with the future transit hub.

**Figure 66 & Figure 67:** Southern Railway Station Site Present (left) and Prior to Demolition (right)



The RTA is also exploring options for the construction of a new ferry terminal or a renovation of the existing ferry terminal at the foot of Canal Street. The existing terminal blocks pedestrian access from Woldenberg Park to Spanish Plaza and the new terminal will remove this barrier and further improve access to the riverfront. There have been continued negotiations over the cost of the project and the bridge aspect of the future or renovated terminal. The CPC staff supports the effort to significantly renovate or replace the existing ferry with a functional terminal that contributes to the transportation and riverfront connectivity goals of the City.



### Conclusions and Recommendations

Canal Street provides a high volume of transportation in every sense, through transit, vehicular, and active transportation. Its challenges are well documented, beginning with the desire to accommodate more vehicles and parking to compete with growing suburban communities, and more recently, issues accommodating the delivery needs for businesses and passenger needs of major hotels. Recent studies have resulted in improvements to pedestrian facilities, and an active demonstration project is testing protected bicycle facilities along and across portions of Canal Street. The staff supports the continued implementation of the Connect the Crescent demonstration and the recommendations of the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan. Additionally, the staff supports the implementation of the recently adopted 2017 RTA Strategic Mobility Plan, of which the construction of a downtown transit center is a recommendation action. A comprehensive curb use study is in the final stage of being developed, and will recommend the reallocation of some curb spaces to provide for more opportunities for freight and passenger zones along Canal Street. The study will also make recommendations for stronger enforcement of the misuse of passenger zones and the blocking of travel lanes. The staff believes that if this is not effective in resolving the issues observed on Canal Street, a shared-use lane should be tested through a 90-day demonstration project.

**Table 7:** Transportation Recommendations

Topic		Action Item		Recommendations	
4	Transportation	4.1	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 the blocking of travel lanes.
				4.1.2	If curb use issues are not resolved by the recommendations of the 2018 Curb Use Study, consider performing a 90-day demonstration of a shared use lane between Decatur/Magazine and Rampart Streets that dedicates two lanes to through travel and the current outer lane and curb space to shared passenger and freight activities.
		4.2	Pedestrian Safety Action Plan Implementation	4.2.1	Neutral ground landscaping/buffers, such as planters or other installations, should be expanded and to discourage pedestrians crossing midblock.



Topic		Action Item		Recommendations	
4	Transportation	4.2	Pedestrian Safety Action Plan Implementation	4.2.2	Canal and Peters Intersection - The right turn lane from South Peters Street onto Canal Street going toward the river could be removed, eliminating the small pedestrian island and creating a larger pedestrian space in front of the heavily pedestrian trafficked Harrah's Casino.
				4.2.3	Prohibit right turns on red lights throughout the corridor.
		4.3	Improvements to Bicycle Infrastructure	4.3.1	Support initiatives like Connect the Crescent, and make temporary demonstration permanent if successful.
				4.3.2	Install additional bicycle parking racks along Canal Street.
		4.4	RTA Strategic Mobility Plan Implementation	4.4.1	Support the Regional Transit Authority in determining the appropriate location for a new downtown transit center after the Comprehensive Operations Assessment and Network Redesign have been completed.
				4.4.2	Off-board fare collection for all Canal Street streetcar stops and informational/wayfinding signage – The Canal streetcar lines are often plagued by long lines of passengers waiting to board and riders that are uninformed on how and/or where to board the streetcar. Off-board fare collection and increased signage will help improve upon this daily issue.
				4.4.3	Remove excess streetcar stops along Canal Street – There are currently streetcar stops at nearly every block along Canal Street between the river and South Claiborne, while most of the blockfaces along the street measure approximately 330 feet. By removing excess stops the Canal streetcar line could greatly increase headway along the busy corridor.

Topic		Action Item		Recommendations	
4	Transportation	4.4	RTA Strategic Mobility Plan Implementation	4.4.4	Explore options for a CBD circulator that would connect major destinations to Canal Street – A CBD circulator (or shuttle) has been recommended by almost every study that has been done on Canal Street. The circulator would help visitors and locals alike travel between the many destinations around the area with greater ease and efficiency when compared to a city bus or taxi service.

## 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, these overlapping responsibilities are beneficial for the corridor, as the groups have reinforcing interests in the quality of the corridor. They are also problematic, however, as they obscure what entity has ultimate responsibility over matters of public safety, maintenance and cleaning, and quality of life concerns.

### *City of New Orleans*

#### New Orleans Police Department

The New Orleans Police Department is the primary authority for public safety along Canal Street. It has enforcement authority over a wide range of laws, including those related to violent crimes, property crimes, and quality of life issues. The segment of Canal Street between the Mississippi River and Claiborne Avenue is divided between the New Orleans Police Department's 8<sup>th</sup> District and 1<sup>st</sup> District. The 8<sup>th</sup> District covers the downriver side of Canal Street between the river and Rampart Street and the upriver side of Canal Street between the river and Claiborne Avenue. The 1<sup>st</sup> District includes the downriver side of Canal Street between Rampart Street and Claiborne Avenue.

The Police Department faces a number of challenges as it relates to the Canal Street corridor. One constraint is that limited staffing decreases the police presence on Canal Street. Because the Police Department, and particularly the 8<sup>th</sup> District, has responsibility over the French Quarter and the Central Business District, its ability to patrol Canal Street is compromised by its need to patrol Bourbon Street and other areas. In recent years, limited staffing levels have limited the Police Department's presence on Canal Street, but this has not always been the case. Until about 2013, Canal Street was served by the Canal Street Enhancement unit, which patrolled Canal Street from the river to Claiborne Avenue and the 100 blocks of streets intersecting Canal Street. The unit was discontinued because of reduced staffing levels. Between December 2010 and December 2014, there was a 35 percent decline in the number of officers assigned to the 8th District.<sup>144</sup> This reduced staffing necessitated that special units, including the Canal Street Enhancement Unit, halt operations. It also requires the Police Department to prioritize the enforcement of violent crime over lower-level infractions that, while relatively minor, affect quality-of-life and the perception of Canal Street safety.

Another challenge in policing Canal Street relates to the role of Canal Street as a gathering point from people across the city. There is reporting to the City Planning Commission staff that the dense clustering along Canal Street of bus lines serving different neighborhoods can result in violent

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<sup>144</sup> "On the Ballot: October 24, 2015" *Bureau of Governmental Research*. [https://www.bgr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/BGR\\_Ballot\\_Oct-2015.pdf](https://www.bgr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/BGR_Ballot_Oct-2015.pdf) Accessed September 23, 2018.

conflict stemming from neighborhood or gang rivalries. These conflicts can occur at transit stops at and near the Canal Street/Elk Place/Basin Street/Rampart Street intersections and at fast food restaurants, where people can congregate in the afternoons and evenings. NOPD has increased its presence in this major RTA transfer areas and has reported that the incidences of violent conflicts have since reduced.

The police department must also contend with non-violent behaviors that cause residents and visitors to perceive Canal Street as unsafe. These activities include panhandling, solicitations, street performance, and similar behavior reported by stakeholders to CPC staff. Police can discourage this behavior temporarily but cannot permanently prevent it, both because the activity is often not criminal and because it requires a constant police presence to eliminate. For example, noise violations by street performers are difficult to prevent because enforcement requires documentation of sustained noise over decibel limits. Street performers can evade enforcement simply by temporarily stopping their performances when their noise levels are being measured.

The NOPD is also tasked with responding to the presence of vagrant and homeless populations along and just off of Canal Street. There are relatively high levels of vagrancy and homelessness on Canal Street, and the corridor may be attractive for several reasons. It has very high levels of pedestrian traffic, which encourage panhandling; it is the centerpiece of the city's transit network, which makes it an easily accessible destination; and it has building vestibules, transit stops, and other physical spaces that provide shelter.

The NOPD has recently begun a pilot program intended to assist the homeless population that exists along and near Canal Street. Funded by the MacArthur Foundation, the pilot program employs five social workers specific to the 8<sup>th</sup> District which provide services to the homeless population, as reported by Commander Guernin in an interview with the CPC staff. These efforts are supported by the recent opening of the City of New Orleans Shelter and Engagement Center, a 12,000 square foot low barrier shelter on the second floor of the former Veterans Affairs (VA) Hospital Building on Gravier Street in the Central Business District<sup>145</sup>.

The NOPD's policing activities are supplemented by the Downtown Development District's security detail, which is staffed by off-duty NOPD officers, the French Quarter Management District's French Quarter Task Force, and the Louisiana State Police patrols organized through the French Quarter Economic Development District. These supplementary patrols are made in coordination with NOPD, with the 8<sup>th</sup> District police, the DDD, the French Quarter Task Force, and the State Police meeting regularly

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<sup>145</sup> "Mayor Cantrell, City Officials and Partners Cut Ribbon on Low Barrier Shelter". *City of New Orleans*. <https://nola.gov/mayor/news/september-2018/mayor-cantrell.-city-officials-and-partners-cut-ri/> Accessed September 23, 2018.

## Department of Sanitation

The Department of Sanitation oversees sanitation services along Canal Street. These services include mechanical street sweeping and flushing, pressure washing of sidewalks and designated areas, public litter can collection, litter removal, and special event cleanup.<sup>146</sup> This is coordinated with the sanitation services performed by the Downtown Development District and the Regional Transit Authority, as described below.

## Department of Public Works

Visits to Canal Street, as well as interviews with stakeholders, have documented problems with curbside use, including street parking, loading and unloading activities, and passenger pick-up/drop-off activities. This activity regularly occurs outside of designated zones and times, including in the right travel lanes, causing traffic congestion and creating an unsafe environment for vehicles and pedestrians. This problematic curbside use is perceived by stakeholders as the result of limited enforcement. The Department of Public Works' Parking Division is responsible for enforcing the use of curbside space.

There are two public entities created by state legislation that are charged with promoting the economic development, safety, and maintenance of Canal Street. These are the Downtown Development District (the boundaries of which include both sides of Canal Street between the Mississippi River and Claiborne Avenue) and the French Quarter Management District (the boundaries of which include the downriver side of Canal Street between the Mississippi River and Basin Street).

### *Downtown Development District*

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 of bonds to fund its CBD-wide capital improvement program, including \$5 million for Canal Street streetscape improvements.<sup>147</sup>

The DDD's efforts are directed towards capital improvements, economic development, public safety, public space operations, and communications/marketing. The DDD's public safety efforts

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<sup>146</sup> "Sanitation: French Quarter and DDD Sanitation Services". *City of New Orleans*. <https://www.nola.gov/sanitation/french-quarter-sanitation-services/>. Accessed September 23, 2018.

<sup>147</sup> "Downtown Development District". *New Orleans Satellite Government*. <http://nolasatellitegovernment.tulane.edu/organization.php?oID=21>. Accessed September 23, 2018.



include a Public Safety Ranger program, which supports overall downtown public safety needs. DDD has private security patrols, which increased from 16 to 24 hours per day in 2018, and which include foot patrols on Canal Street. It is important to note that the DDD does not have enforcement authority. If needed, a DDD official must contact the NOPD to issue a citation.

In 2018, the DDD partnered with NOPJF to install additional crime cameras throughout downtown. They also include private security services and code enforcement. The DDD made homeless outreach efforts and helps operate the low barrier homeless shelter.<sup>148</sup> The DDD's efforts toward maintaining the public environment include supplementary sanitation services, sidewalk cleaning, special event clean up, graffiti removal, landscaping, and holiday lighting. The DDD also provides public assets such as wayfinding signage and trash receptacles.

Its economic development efforts include programs to promote the CBD overall, as well as promotion 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 design<sup>149</sup>.

The DDD's Façade Improvement Micro Grant Program provides an economic incentive for retailers to improve the appearance of window displays and signs. This incentive is toward the goal of increasing customer traffic and improving the visual appeal of the street. The program is oriented toward small improvement projects costing \$10,000 or less. The grant covers 60% of eligible project costs, up to a maximum of \$6,000. In meeting with the City Planning Commission staff, the DDD's staff noted the success of these façade grant programs, and particularly the Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program, as having helped transform the physical character of Canal Street.

In 2018, it published a new Canal Street brochure and a Canal Street Comprehensive Development Map. It intends in 2019 to execute its "Canal Street Upper Floor Redevelopment Initiative"<sup>150</sup>. The DDD promotes the CBD through its communications efforts, which include special events, banners, publications, and advertising.<sup>151</sup>

In conversations with stakeholders, the CPC staff has received complaints that the DDD's efforts, particularly in relation to public safety and street cleaning, are not sufficient to meet the needs of Canal Street. In the staff's view, it may be the case that because the DDD serves the entire Central

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<sup>148</sup> "Budget and Work Plan 2019". *Downtown Development District*.

<sup>149</sup> "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](http://downtownnola.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/2012_Facade_Program_Policies_and_Procedures_Public_Doc_Final_Rev_May_21_2012-1337724114.pdf). Accessed September 23, 2018.

<sup>150</sup> "Budget and Work Plan 2019". *Downtown Development District*.

<sup>151</sup> "Budget and Work Plan 2019". *Downtown Development District*.

Business District, which is composed of numerous neighborhoods with distinct needs, Canal Street may not receive the adequate services it needs to meet its intense use.

### *French Quarter Management District and French Quarter Economic Development District*

The downriver-side of Canal Street is included within the boundaries of the French Quarter Management District, which is a political subdivision of the State. The French Quarter Management District includes the area bounded by the Mississippi River, the center line of Canal Street, the rear property line of the properties fronting on the lake side of North Rampart Street, the rear property line of the properties fronting on the downriver side of Esplanade Avenue to the Mississippi River.

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, it does not currently have active grant programs. 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. These patrols, which supplement the patrols of the NOPD, are performed by off-duty NOPD officers.<sup>152</sup> Funding for the French Quarter Task Force is provided by the Convention and Visitors Bureau through the hotel self-assessment tax. It is authorized by a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement executed in July, 2017.<sup>153</sup> The public can report crimes to the French Quarter Task Force through its mobile application.<sup>154</sup>

In addition to on-duty NOPD patrols and the French Quarter Task Force patrols, the French Quarter, including Canal Street, are patrolled by Louisiana State Police. Following a 2015 referendum, sales taxes on goods and services (except for the rental of hotel rooms) within the boundaries of the French Quarter Management District have been used to fund the French Quarter Economic Development District and full-time Louisiana State Police trooper patrols in the district. Since January 1, 2016, a quarter-cent per dollar sales tax increase has been assessed within the

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<sup>152</sup> "On the Ballot: October 24, 2015" *Bureau of Governmental Research*. [https://www.bgr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/BGR\\_Ballot\\_Oct-2015.pdf](https://www.bgr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/BGR_Ballot_Oct-2015.pdf) Accessed September 23, 2018.

<sup>153</sup> *French Quarter Management District*. <http://www.fqmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/executed-CEA-7.20.17.pdf>. Accessed September 23, 2018.

<sup>154</sup> French Quarter Management District. <https://www.fqmd.org/french-quarter-task-force/>. Accessed September 23, 2018.

district, generating approximately \$2 million yearly. These funds are matched by hospitality organizations (the Convention Center and the Convention and Visitors Bureau), with an additional \$500,000 allocated from the City. In total, the quarter-cent sales tax and the supplementary funds result in \$4.5 million dollars annually, which fund at least 30 full-time Louisiana State troopers to conduct patrols in the district. These Louisiana State Police patrols supplement those already performed by the NOPD.<sup>155</sup>

Canal Street has a similar relationship to the French Quarter Management District and French Quarter Economic Development District as it does to the Downtown Development District. Just as Canal Street must share the DDD's resources with Poydras Street, the Warehouse District, and other parts of the Central Business District, so too must it share the FQMD/FQEDD's resources with Bourbon Street and the rest of the French Quarter. Because Canal Street is a unique corridor within the city, with needs that are distinct from both the Central Business District and the French Quarter, these arrangements appear to be insufficient to meet its needs.

### *Regional Transit Authority*

The Regional Transit Authority, which was established by state legislation in 1979, is the governmental entity that oversees the public transit network that extends through New Orleans. The network's operations are managed by Transdev, a private company.<sup>156</sup> Canal Street has historically been and remains today as the spine of the network, where many of its lines intersect, so it is the most important transfer point in the network. Further, because it borders the employment centers of the Central Business District and the French Quarter, the transit routes serving Canal Street crucially important in connecting transit riders with their workplaces.

Canal Street is served by the Canal Street streetcar, which was reestablished in 2004 and serves lines running from the foot of Canal Street to City Park and to the cemeteries. The network's other streetcar lines intersect Canal Street, including the Saint Charles streetcar line, the Rampart-Saint Claude streetcar line, and the Riverfront streetcar line. Numerous bus lines also intersect Canal Street, with stops at multiple locations along the corridor and the greatest concentration of stops and riders at Canal Street's intersections with Rampart Street and Elk Place/Basin Street. Additionally, Canal Street is served by the Canal Street/Algiers Point ferry, which crosses the Mississippi River between the foot of Canal Street and Algiers Point.

The RTA/Transdev perform maintenance at their stops and shelters that supplement the activities of the City and the DDD. The maintenance is done by private advertisers in accordance with their arrangements with the RTA to advertise on transit shelters. On Canal Street, Laurel Outdoor Advertising services transit shelters three times per week, including emptying trash cans, pressure washing the shelter and stop pad, picking up debris and litter around the shelter, removing graffiti, and performing safety inspections.

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<sup>155</sup> "On the Ballot: October 24, 2015" *Bureau of Governmental Research*. [https://www.bgr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/BGR\\_Ballot\\_Oct-2015.pdf](https://www.bgr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/BGR_Ballot_Oct-2015.pdf) Accessed September 23, 2018.

<sup>156</sup> New Orleans Regional Transit Authority. <https://www.norta.com/>. Accessed September 23, 2018.

### *New Orleans Building Corporation (including the former Canal Street Development Corporation)*

The City of New Orleans owns a number of important properties in the Canal Street corridor through the New Orleans Building Corporation, a public benefit corporation. The New Orleans Building Corporation was established in 2000 for the purpose of owning, leasing, developing and operating properties owned by the City or by the Corporation itself.<sup>157</sup> In 2016, it was merged with the Canal Street Development Corporation, a public benefit corporation formed in 1989 and tasked with redeveloping properties along Canal Street.<sup>158</sup> As a result of the merger, the New Orleans Building Corporation's portfolio of properties along Canal Street includes the World Trade Center/Four Seasons property at the foot of Canal Street, Harrah's New Orleans Casino, Hyatt French Quarter Hotel, D.H. Holmes Apartments, and the Saenger Theater. While a City entity, it does not oversee Canal Street as a public space. It is essentially a real estate development and management company. It is included in this discussion because it is a prominent, City-affiliated stakeholder in Canal Street.

### *French Quarter Business Association*

The French Quarter Business Association is a membership organization for businesses in the French Quarter. A private organization, its mission is to enhance the business climate in the French Quarter. It views itself as a conduit through which businesses, civic organization, residents, and government entities can communicate and cooperate with one another. While the French Quarter Business Association is a private organization, it administers a graffiti program that effectively supplements City code enforcement activities. The graffiti program is a "business and citizen-based" program to eliminate graffiti from the French Quarter. In addition to promoting graffiti prevention and the reporting of graffiti, the FQBA has "graffiti cleanup" events<sup>159</sup>. While not focused solely on Canal Street, the FQBA's membership includes eight businesses located on Canal Street. It is included in this discussion because it is a private stakeholder in Canal Street

### *Conclusions and Recommendations*

In sum, this section shows that there are multiple governmental entities tasked with managing and improving Canal Street. These include the City of New Orleans, which provides public safety, public works, sanitation, and other services on Canal Street, just as it does throughout city-wide; the Downtown Development District, which provides economic development, public safety, and capital improvement services; the French Quarter Management District, which has a role similar to the DDD but with a primary emphasis on public safety; and the Regional Transit Authority, which has a strong presence on Canal Street, which is the centerpiece of its bus and streetcar network and which is also served by the Canal Street/Algiers Point ferry. All of these entities have an important interest in Canal Street but none is focused exclusively on Canal Street.

The last comprehensive planning effort directed at Canal Street, the DDD's 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy, similarly identified the numerous public entities with an interest

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<sup>157</sup> "New Orleans Building Corporation Records Inventory". *New Orleans Public Library*. <http://nutrias.org/inv/mayor/nobc.htm>. Accessed September 23, 2018.

<sup>158</sup> "Canal Street Development Corporation". *New Orleans Satellite Government*. <http://nolasatellitegovernment.tulane.edu/organization.php?oID=13>. Accessed September 23, 2018.

<sup>159</sup> "Graffiti Program". *French Quarter Business Association*. <https://www.fqba.org/graffiti-program-our-initiative/>. Accessed September 23, 2018.

in Canal Street and saw the multiple overlapping interests as problematic. Because Canal Street was the responsibility of all of the organizations, it was the obligation of none. Because there was not a single management organization for Canal Street, no individual agency was responsible for implementing the 2004 Vision and Development Strategy.

To correct this and ensure that the Vision and Development Strategy would be realized, the 2004 strategy recommended that an entity exclusively focused on Canal Street be created. It would have been called the Canal Street Development District. Rather than a stand-alone organization, the Canal Street Development District was recommended as being contained within the DDD. The DDD was to be designated as the lead implementation organization for the strategy. The Canal Street Development District was envisioned as being managed by a Canal Street Development Director, who would report to the DDD's Executive Director.

#### Consolidate management of public-sector efforts into a single entity

The 2004 Vision and Development Strategy's advice of putting Canal Street under the management of its own public sector entity remains sensible today. Canal Street is distinct from the rest of the city in its role as the city's main street, its width and physical characteristics, its building stock and land uses, the array of curbside uses it experiences, its role as the centerpiece of the public transit system, and its place at the meeting of the French Quarter with the Central Business District. These unique characteristics make managing it a tremendous task and something that should not be left to organizations such as the DDD and French Quarter Management District, which have to manage Canal Street in addition to the remainders of their districts. Canal Street's needs are not met when they have to compete against the needs of other parts of the CBD or French Quarter. The street should have the full attention of a single public sector agency, and it to being a single entity would make it easier to ensure accountability in its management.

This public sector entity could be contained within the Downtown Development District, as advised in the 2004 study, or could be a separate entity, such as a non-profit organization. It should be tasked with enforcing public safety, quality-of-life, sanitation, improving public infrastructure, and other public sector obligations. These nuts-and-bolts public sector obligations could be supplemented by efforts to promote Canal Street as a destination and coordinate among the businesses and property owners along the street.

#### Promote Canal Street through a "main street" organization as part of an existing public sector entity or a new, stand-alone organization

Canal Street needs a public sector organization to manage the public services provided to the street. It also needs a "main street" organization to promote it as a destination and to coordinate among its businesses and property owners. These two tasks—managing public services and promoting Canal Street—can be done by the same public sector organization or they can be done by two organizations. The "main street" function of promoting/coordinating Canal Street should be done based on the National Main Street Center program elements.



The National Main Street Center was originally developed in 1980 as a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation to allow historic downtown main streets to have coordinated leadership and promotion efforts. This coordination would allow downtown main streets, which historically were divided among numerous retailers without shared interests, to compete with suburban shopping malls, where the malls' management coordinate to present a quality shopping experience. New Orleans has Main Street programs for the Oretha Castle Haley corridor (O.C. Haley Boulevard Merchants & Business Associations), North Rampart Street (North Rampart Main Street, Inc.), Broad Street (Broad Community Connections), and the historic commercial corridors of Old Algiers (Old Algiers Main Street Corporation).

The National Main Street Center's "Main Street Approach" involves articulating a strategy for a main street's revitalization. The strategy is to be organized around "four points": economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization. "Economic vitality" refers to building a diverse economic base, entrepreneurship, and spurring new investment. "Design" refers to creating an inviting public space. "Organization" refers to creating community engagement and coordination among stakeholders. "Promotion" speaks to efforts to define the place and commutate its unique features to the broader community.<sup>160</sup> The efforts by the main street organization toward these four points would supplement the work done by the DDD to improve Canal Street's physical character and enhance its retail mix. It would also allow for increased coordination among the businesses with a presence along Canal Street. This coordination could involve events along Canal Street similar to the "Art for Art's Sake" and "Merriment on Magazine" events on Magazine Street, and events like "White Linen Night" and "Dirty Linen Night."

A Canal Street main street organization would work with the state coordinating agency, which is housed within the Office of Cultural Development's Division of Historic Preservation. The Canal Street main street organization could be included within the DDD, or it could be a stand-alone business improvement district or economic development district, or it could be a community development corporation or non-profit organization. It would be self-managed, rather than being under outside management, which would allow the organization's initiatives to be developed through consensus and helps ensure that implementation is successful. The organization's governing board would include a variety of representatives from the community, active volunteers working on revitalization planning and implementation, and a staff that manages the program, handles volunteers, directs implementation, and represents the organization to the public.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> "The Main Street Approach". *Main Street America*. <https://www.mainstreet.org/mainstreetamerica/theapproach>. Accessed September 23, 2018.

<sup>161</sup> "Louisiana Main Street National Network". *Louisiana Office of Cultural Development, Division of Historic Preservation*. <https://www.crt.state.la.us/cultural-development/historic-preservation/main-street/national-network/>. Accessed September 23, 2018.

**Table 8:** Organizational Structure Recommendations

Topic		Action Item		Recommendations	
5	Organizational Structure	5.1	Establish Management Entity Specifically for Canal Street	5.1.1	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.
		5.2	Strong Focus on Quality of Life Issues	5.2.1	Re-establish NOPD's Canal Street Enhancement Unit, full security camera coverage along Canal Street, and stronger focus on issues impacting the quality of life on Canal Street including panhandling, cleanliness of sidewalks, and property maintenance.

## G. Opportunity Sites

The Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy identified 15 sites that, in 2004, were key opportunities for redevelopment along Canal Street. City Council Motion M-18-200 specifically asked the City Planning Commission to identify opportunity site in the study area. Many of the opportunity sites identified in the 2004 study have since been redeveloped, but a number of them remain ideal candidates for redevelopment or restoration. The staff will list these opportunity sites, as listed in the 2004 study, and provide an update if they have been redeveloped or describe why they are still good candidates for redevelopment.

### A. *Pedestrian Connection between Riverwalk and the Spanish Plaza to the Aquarium and Woldenberg Riverfront Park*

The Vision and Development Strategy believed that the riverfront pedestrian connection between the Aquarium and Spanish Plaza needed to be greatly enhanced. The Plan believed that the queuing of cars for the ferry and the ferry terminal itself created too much of an obstacle for pedestrians. For one, the plan did not foresee the ferry being carless. The plan believed that the ground level of the ferry terminal should be opened up, clearing the pedestrian walkway and creating a greater physical connection. The plan also believed at the time that a new pedestrian walkway could be constructed closer to the World Trade Center building and in a manner that the pedestrian connection could still be made.

The New Orleans Regional Transit Authority proposed constructing a new ferry terminal in 2016. The proposed work included demolishing the current terminal and constructing a new glass fronted structure. The original proposal included no elevated walkway, but later proposals did include a walkway closer to the Aquarium. On September 2019, officials from the RTA discussed updating the design of the proposed terminal.<sup>162</sup> This change is proposed because the scope of the original work resulted in responses to the RFP that was over the proposed budget.

### B. *Infill and expansion of Canal Place and the Entergy Substation*

One Canal Place occupies a prominent space at the foot of Canal Street, stretching to North Peters Street and rearward to Iberville Street. The complex includes connected retail, office, and hotel uses. The One Canal Place tower, a 32-floor office tower, was completed in 1979. The Shops at Canal Place, a three story upscale shopping mall, and the Westin New Orleans Canal Place hotel, were constructed in subsequent phases in the early 1980s. The development also retains zoning entitlements to a tower that was approved but never constructed.

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<sup>162</sup> Evans, Beau. RTA will redo Canal Street ferry terminal design, remodel pedestrian bridge. The Time-Picayune. 26 September 2018.

**Figure 68:** One Canal Place



The Canal Place development is an example of the type of “key destination” envisioned for Canal Street, particularly because it contains upscale retail stores that are not found elsewhere in the region. There are opportunities to build upon this success, both within the existing complex and through new development on adjacent properties. The development’s main entrance faces Canal Street and is set next to a sizable plaza. While attractive, this plaza is underutilized and could be activated through additional restaurants, café seating areas, and events. The North Peters Street façade is largely blank along the street and could be enlivened through the installation of additional entrances, windows, or dramatic display areas.

In addition to updating and activating the existing structure, there is the potential for the complex to be expanded or for separate but complementary development to be constructed. These development opportunities exist on two separate properties: 201 Canal Street, an adjacent surface parking lot containing nearly 30,000 square foot of site area, and the Entergy substation along Canal Street, an approximately 38,000 square foot site between Badine Street East and Badine Street West. Both parcels are development opportunities because of their adjacency to Canal Place, their proximity to the French Quarter, the Mississippi Riverfront, and Harrah’s Casino, and the high pedestrian traffic along this segment of Canal Street. The properties also benefit from the generous building scale allowed by their zoning. Unlike most other properties in the lower segment of Canal Street, which are limited in allowable building height due to their historic contexts, these properties are not subject to height limits, with the potential building height limited only by a floor area ratio limit of 12, which is the same limit that applies to the upper portion of Canal Street between South Saratoga Street/Crozat Street and Claiborne Avenue.

Developing the parking lot which would fill one of the few substantial undeveloped parcels on this segment of Canal Street, while developing the Entergy substation site, while logistically very complex, would remove a barrier between Canal Street and the riverfront.

*C. Redeployment of the Custom House space, beyond the Insectarium*

The United States Custom House is a massive, monumental federal building occupying the full square bounded by Canal Street, North Peters Street, Decatur Street, and Iberville Street. It is a Canal Street landmark noteworthy for its scale, architecture, and its history. The structure is a four-story edifice constructed of gray granite with a cast iron cornice. Its design includes modified Greek and Egyptian Revival elements. The four facades are similar, with the center of each façade defined by a projecting pavilion consisting of four round fluted Egyptian-esque columns and the ends of the facades featuring projecting bays including four modified Egyptian pilasters extending to the entablature. The building's floor plan is oriented around the Marble Hall, an impressive Greek Revival room.

Construction on the building began in 1848, and occurred over decades, interrupted by the Civil War, being completed in 1881. Originally designed to house custom facilities, a post office, and federal courts, the structure, in combination with the circa 1830s U.S. Mint building on the other end of the French Quarter, was a symbol of federal power in the New Orleans and the Mississippi River Valley.<sup>163</sup>

**Figure 69:** U.S. Customs House



<sup>163</sup> “U.S. Custom House, New Orleans, La.” United States General Services Administration. <https://www.gsa.gov/historic-buildings/us-custom-house-new-orleans-la#architecturaldesc> Accessed October 7, 2018.



Since 2008, the Custom House has been home to the Audubon Institute’s Insectarium, a museum dedicated to insects. This is a wonderful institution to have on Canal Street and a complement to the nearby Aquarium of the Americas. The Custom House presents an opportunity for similar intuitional use or complementary entertainment uses, as its scale allow it to accommodate for large-footprint tenants.

*D. Sanlin Block (400 block, business district side)*

The 400 even block of Canal Street features a collection of important but underutilized historic buildings, as well as vacant land, and is ripe for renovation and redevelopment. This block, on the upriver side of Canal Street between Tchoupitoulas and Magazine Streets, is prominently located neighboring Harrah’s Casino, the U.S. Custom House, and the forthcoming Sazerac House Museum.

**Figure 70:** 1840s buildings facing Tchoupitoulas St. on square of 400 Canal Street



The site is composed of multiple lots, most of which are under separate but related ownership. It includes a series of historic buildings: the Sanlin Building (442 Canal Street), facing Canal Street, which is a collection of four story buildings dating from the 1840s which are concealed by a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century aluminum façade; a structure facing Canal Street (422 Canal Street) that was built in the 1860s and expanded and redesigned in 1880s by noted architect James Freret; and three 1840s buildings facing Tchoupitoulas Street (105-111 Tchoupitoulas Street). In addition to the historic buildings, the site includes a 20<sup>th</sup> century single-story commercial building (400 Canal Street/103 Tchoupitoulas Street) at the corner and a large surface parking lot along Canal Street, both of which are ripe for redevelopment.

The block is zoned CBD-2 Central Business District, which is a mixed use zoning district that extends along the central portion of the Canal Street corridor between Peters Street and Roosevelt Place/Burgundy Street. The district allows commercial uses including restaurants, hotels, and retail stores, as well as residential uses and a very restrictive range of low-intensity industrial uses. Height is limited to 70', which is modestly greater than the existing structures on the site and allows new development of buildings that are four to five stories in height. The site presents opportunities due to its location within historic central portion of Canal Street, the presence of historic buildings, which could be eligible for federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits, and the opportunity to redevelop the large, vacant central part of the site, as well as the historically insignificant single-story structure at the corner. Further, several properties along the block are under separate but related ownership. This facilitates the combining of multiple properties under single ownership as part of a redevelopment effort.

The portion of the block at the intersection of Canal Street and Tchoupitoulas Street (including 400-422 Canal Street and 103-111 Tchoupitoulas Street) was the subject of 2015 proposal for a 20-story hotel development, which would have had a floor area of approximately 390,000 square feet and contained 381 guest rooms. The proposal called for the demolition of all structures on the site, except for the retention of the facades of 105, 109, and 111 Tchoupitoulas Street. The structure was to stand 250 feet in height, exceeding the 70 height limit in place at the time (and which remains in effect today). The City Planning Commission recommended denial of the application, as advised by its staff, noting that the development was too tall and massive for the site. This out-of-scale height and massing was inconsistent with the Master Plan. The Commission also found that the proposed demolition of historic buildings would undermine the policy intent of the Master Plan's historic preservation element, which emphasized the importance of historic structures to the character of the city and Canal Street in particular. The developer ultimately withdrew the development proposal. The site's historic building stock remains intact, ready for renovation and restoration complementary to the historic character and scale of Canal Street. The property owner has recently taken steps toward a new development proposal for the site, although development plans have not yet been submitted to the City for review.

*E. Cigali (Giani) Building at Camp Street with Adjacent property (600 block, business district side)*

The Cigali (Giani) building was identified in the 2004 Plan as a prime candidate for full historic renovation and mixed-use programming. The plan made specific note of the "harsh modern façade" that clad the ground floor.

**Figure 71 & Figure 72:** Gianì Building pre-renovation (left) and post-renovation (right)



This building and the adjacent building underwent significant renovations since the Vision and Strategy Plan that included improvements to the ground and upper floors. The facades on the upper and ground floors have been restored to a more historically appropriate look and condition, and the fire escape and rooftop billboard have been removed. The ground floor spaces are occupied by a souvenir/convenience store, fast food restaurant, and an apparel store.

**Figure 73 & Figure 74 :** Photos of the lobby (left) and rooftop pool (right) of the Gianì Building (Source: Airbnb)



According to data obtained from the Department of Safety & Permits in May 2018, the upper floors of these buildings have 33 active commercial Short Term Rental licenses.

*F. Gus Mayer Building and adjacent property, at Carondelet Street extending to the Boston Club (800 block, business district side)*

The three buildings that make up the CBD corner of Canal Street and Carondelet Street were analyzed in 1994 in the Acres of Diamonds report, and that analysis was updated in 2015 by the DDD to determine the feasibility in today's housing market. All three buildings are currently occupied on the ground floor and include LIVÉ, Nouveau, and CVS Pharmacy. As is the case with most of the historic buildings on Lower Canal Street, providing a second means of egress plays a large role in making upper floor occupancy feasible. For this reason, corner buildings provide the best opportunity because of the multiple street frontages. The Gus Mayer building's location on a corner with the potential combination of the upper floors of two additional buildings could provide a significant opportunity to make this upper floor renovation project feasible.

*G. Corner consolidation and revitalization, adjacent to Boston Club at Baronne (old Godchaux Clothing store, 800 block, business district side)*

The Godchaux Building is another property that was structurally analyzed in the Acres of Diamonds report in 1994 for the feasibility for an upper floor conversion into residential units. Unlike many buildings along Lower Canal Street, the Godchaux Building has elevators and a lobby separate from the retail space on the ground floor. As noted in this report, the upper floor of this building were renovated for office use in the 1990s, a reason cited by one of the operators for why it is not occupied now. The Acres of Diamonds report provided a glimpse at a solution for renovating these upper floor for residential use and states that, at the time, it made financial sense. At that time, it seemed much more feasible than many of the other proposed renovations simply because it was under one ownership, did not involve multiple buildings with varying floor heights, and has a second means of egress through the adjacent building that fronts on the 100 block of Baronne Street. The proposal did not consider the combination of the Godchaux Building and adjacent buildings on the 800 block of Canal Street. This would introduce some of the complications that otherwise would not exist for the renovation of the building and that made the building seem like one of the easier upper floor renovations on Lower Canal Street.



#### H. Audubon Building (900 block, French Quarter side)

The 2004 Vision and Strategy Plan recommended that plans to renovate the Audubon Building into a hotel be supported, and that if the renovation did not pan out, residential units be considered instead. This structure, located at 931 Canal Street, is an eight-story brick and terra cotta building originally constructed in 1909, and once housed the Kress & Co. 5 & 10 on the ground floor and offices on the upper floors. The building sat vacant after Hurricane Katrina until its renovation in 2010 into a boutique hotel named The Saint. The Saint has 183 rooms and a fitness center, bar, and restaurant.

**Figure 75:** The Saint Hotel



#### I. “1000 Block” of Canal, business district side

The Vision and Development Strategy recommended upper floor renovations to loft apartments on this block. If the residential proposal did not work out, the plan believed this would be an ideal location for the cultural museum that the plan touted so often. Today, the 1000 block of Canal Street is the location of two notable projects which have been discussed in previous sections of this report: *Hostelling International* and the reconstruction of 1016 Canal Street. Both of these projects will result in the occupancy of upper floors of buildings on Canal Street. *Hostelling International* is renovating two buildings for its hostel operations, and the 1016 Canal Street project will rebuild a historic buildings that was almost completely destroyed by a fire. The historic façade was saved after the fire and will be incorporated into the new building.

The Vision and Development Strategy also recommended that surface parking lot behind the buildings on the 1000 block of Canal Street be redeveloped into a hotel or other theater-supportive uses. This property could also be essential in providing a second means of egress that could enable the upper floor renovations of the buildings on the 1000 Canal Street if a portion of this property could be dedicated for this use.



J. *“1000 Block” of Common Street, downriver side*

The Strategy Plan suggested that the 1000 block of Common street redeveloped with structured parking with retail spaces on the ground floor. There has been no construction activity or plans submitted for the redevelopment of this property.

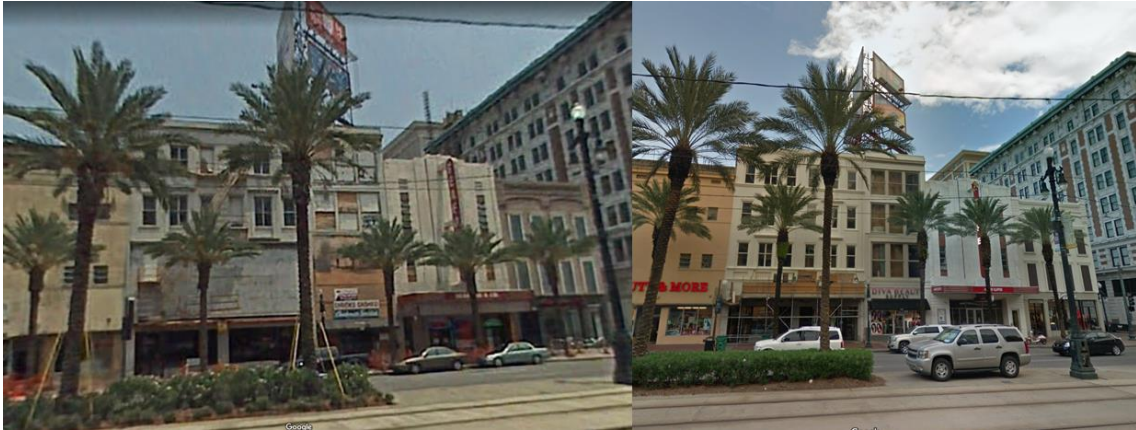
K. *“1000 Block” of Canal, French Quarter side*

**Figure 76:** Hard Rock Hotel and Residences



The 2004 Vision and Strategy Plan advocated for the redevelopment of the old Woolworth’s at the corner of North Rampart Street and Canal Street in a mixed-use development consisting of ground floor retail and apartments on the upper floors. Since this plan, the Woolworth’s building has been demolished to make way for the Hard Rock Hotel and Residences. The Hard Rock Hotel and Residences is currently under construction at the corner of Canal Street and North Rampart Street. The building will have 17 floors that will provide a mix of hotel rooms, apartments, and lower floor commercial space. The building pictured above was originally planned to be exclusively residential in use, but the design was later sold to Hard Rock, which changed the programming to include some hotel rooms.

**Figure 77:** 1000 block of Canal Street 2007 (left) and 2016 (right)



In addition to the major redevelopment on this block in the Hard Rock project, the DDD funded a façade renovation for 1015 Canal Street (Rainbow clothing store) and The Ruby Slipper restaurant moved into 1005 Canal Street in 2014 after refurbishing the historic façade and marquee sign.

*L. 1000 Block of Iberville, downriver side*

The Vision and Development Strategy proposed that the parking facilities at the 1000 Iberville Street be expanded to contribute to the parking supply to support the theater district and French Quarter. There has been no construction activity or plans submitted for the redevelopment of these properties.

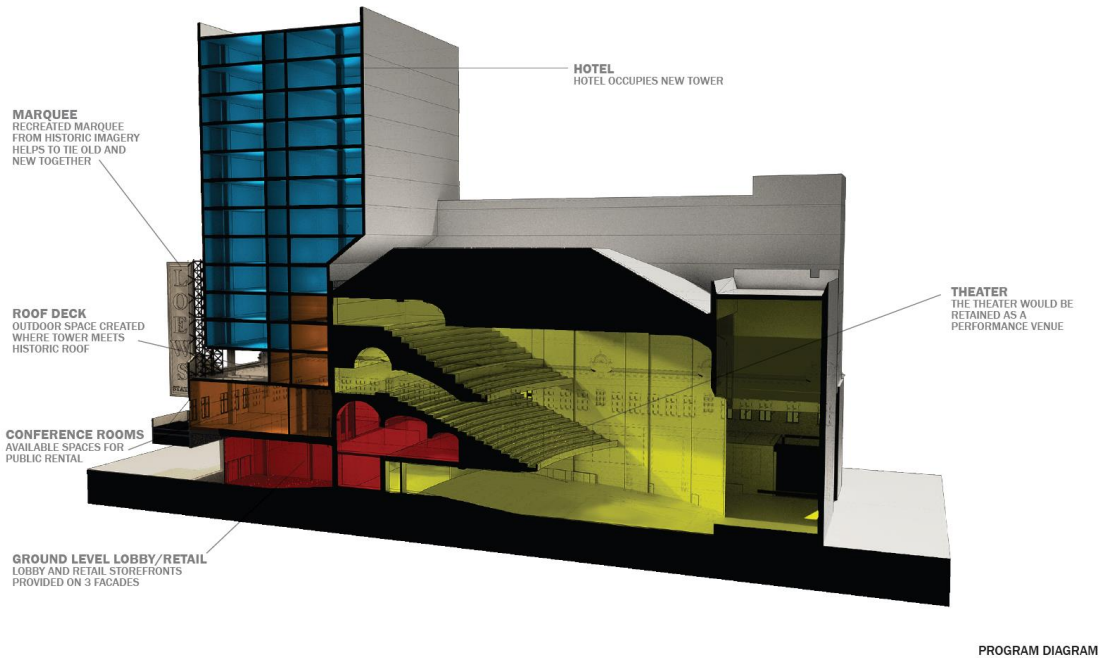
*M. Loews State Palace, Saenger and Joy Theater blocks*

The Saenger and the Joy Theaters have been renovated and regularly host performances. The Joy Theater was the first of the four theaters in New Orleans' theater district to reopen after Hurricane Katrina. The Joy Theater began renovations in 2010 and hosted its first show, Irma Thomas and Lance Ellis, in December 2011.<sup>164</sup> The Saenger Theater, under the management of the Canal Street Building Corporation (now New Orleans Building Corporation), underwent a significant renovation that included an expansion of the back of the theater into the former Iberville Street right of way to accommodate modern theater equipment. The theater opened in the fall of 2013 with comedian Jerry Seinfeld as the opening act.

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<sup>164</sup> Pope, John. Joy Theater on canal Street comes back to life, 6 years aft Katrina. The Times-Picayune. 18 December 2011.

**Figure 78:** Program Diagram for State Palace proposal (Trapolin Peer Architects)



Plans to renovate the Loews State Palace Theater is currently being reviewed by the Central Business District Historic District Landmarks Commission. The CBDHDLDC has reviewed two distinct proposals for the renovation of the old theater into a hotel. The current issue with the proposal is the height and massing of the proposed structure. In an early version of the plans, the developer proposed to demolish the theater portion of the building for new construction of a hotel and preservation the Canal Street façade. The most recent iteration of the proposal preserves the theater portion of the building and shifts the mass of the hotel above the existing Canal Street façade, necessitating a waiver of the 120-foot maximum height allowed in this district. The CBDHDLDC was not able to reach a majority decision, resulting in no action being taken on the application. The developer has since appealed the Commission’s decision to the City Council. The Loews State Palace Theater remains the only theater at this intersection that has not be renovated.

- N. Tulane Medical Center Facilities Expansion (1200, 1300 & 1400 blocks, French Quarter side)*
- O. Mixed Use, Mixed Income residential and Medical Center uses (1500 & 1600 blocks, French Quarter side)*

The portion of Canal Street between Elk Place/Basin Street and Claiborne Avenue has a number of opportunity sties for development. These include:

- 1317 Canal Street: This site contains an automobile rental company with associated surface parking. Another parking lot that is associated with the 1201 Canal Street residential buildings is located to the rear of the automobile rentals. The vast majority of the square consists of surface parking lots.



**Figure 79:** Avis car rental located at 1317 Canal Street



- 1400 Canal Street: this site is two grass-covered vacant lots under single ownership. The lots are between two Tulane-owned buildings on different squares. Two lots to the rear are used for surface parking.

**Figure 80:** Vacant lots located at 1400 Canal Street



- 1540 Canal Street: This site is located on a square that is owned entirely by a single entity. The vast majority of the square is used as a surface parking lot, with only two relatively small buildings.

**Figure 81:** Surface parking lot located at 1540 Canal Street



- 1539 Canal Street: This site is on a square that is approximately 75 percent occupied by a surface parking lot. Portions of the parking lot are under different ownership. The only building on the square is a high-rise residential structure.

**Figure 82:** Surface parking lot located at 1539 Canal Street



All of the opportunity sites on this upper portion of the Canal Street study area are within a CBD-7 Bio-Science District. The district is intended for large-scale bio-science campuses and supportive services. Tulane University’s downtown campus includes the School of Medicine, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, and School of Social Work, with over 1,400 students in this area between Canal Street and Tulane Avenue.



Tulane's campus is an anchor in this area and any expansion would be a welcome and permitted use.

In addition to hotels and Tulane University, Upper Canal Street has a significant residential presence that is not found elsewhere in the study area. Upper Canal Street contains two major residential buildings at 1201 and 1501 Canal Street. The Canal Crossing multi-family residential project at 1535 Canal Street is nearly complete. Additional residential developments would be a welcome and permitted use in the area; housing would be within walking distance to the French Quarter, hospitals, and job centers. As it stands now, most Tulane graduate students do not live in this area, but perhaps would be a prime market if affordable housing and amenities were available.

There are a number of hotel developments that are providing a positive trend for Upper Canal Street. The Jung Hotel has recently opened with upscale accommodations and amenities. TownPlace Suites by Marriott has opened at 1600 Canal Street. Renovation of the "Governor House" hotel at 1630 Canal Street is underway. At the corner of Canal and Basin Streets, a Hard Rock Hotel is under construction. In addition to being walking distance to the French Quarter, hotels could seek to attract patrons of the Saenger and Joy Theaters by their proximity and their ability to provide post- or pre-show amenities with restaurants, bars, and live music.

Upper Canal Street has a great deal of potential due to development opportunities on vacant or surface parking lots. Hotels, restaurants, multi-family residential, retail, bio-science and educational facility uses could take advantage of opportunities for new construction. Adherence to the Multi-Modal Pedestrian Corridor requirements of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance will assure that as new development occurs, a lively ground floor streetscape is provided on Canal Street.

#### *Spirit of Charity Innovation District*

The future of Upper Canal Street could be dramatically influenced by the renovation and adaptive re-use of Charity Hospital, which is only two blocks from Canal Street. Due to its 1.2 million square foot size, Charity's redevelopment would have a major impact in the area. Following an Urban Land Institute report focusing on the re-use of Charity Hospital, the LSU Foundation's Real Estate and Facilities Foundation solicited proposals for the redevelopment of Charity and recently selected a development group.

Concurrently, the Greater New Orleans Foundation is preparing a Spirit of Charity Innovation District strategic plan for the area bounded by Poydras Street, Claiborne Avenue, Iberville Street, and Basin Street/Elk Place/Loyola Avenue. In addition to Charity Hospital and the opportunity sites described above, there are more surface parking lots in the blocks between Tulane and Cleveland Avenues as well as underutilized and vacant buildings. Spirit of Charity planners are looking at using incentives such as tax increment financing (TIFs) to finance the implementation of the strategic plan and potentially provide gap financing to the Charity Hospital redevelopment. The Spirit of Charity district seeks

to spur economic activity in this area of the Central Business District with a focus on equity, land use, affordable housing, mobility, and workforce development.

### *Iberville Redevelopment*

An opportunity identified by many previous planning efforts that has been successfully realized is the redevelopment of the Iberville public housing site. One of several traditional public housing developments constructed and opened in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the development occupied a 23 acre site and had large, “superblocks” set within a street network that was disconnected from the surrounding neighborhood. The superblocks were developed with brick, barracks-style residences arranged around central green spaces and parking lots. Since 2011, the site has been gradually redeveloped under the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Choice Neighborhoods Initiative program. A successor program to the HOPE VI program, under which traditional public housing developments across the country were redeveloped in a new urbanism-influenced manner containing a mix of housing types, dense, walkable street networks, and residents at varying income levels, the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative sought to complement the physical redevelopment of Iberville and other public housing sites with services to improve residents’ health and well-being, and to improve economic opportunities available in the neighborhoods in which the developments are located.<sup>165</sup>

The Choice Neighborhoods grant was issued in 2011 and construction began in 2013.<sup>166</sup> In total the development contains seven phases, six of which have been completed as of March, 2018, with the seventh anticipated as being complete by January, 2019. In total, the development will contain about 700 residential units within new construction, as well as some of the original Iberville buildings, which are renovated in accordance with the federal Department of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Rehabilitation.<sup>167</sup>

### *Interior of square bounded by Canal Street, Saint Charles Avenue, Carondelet Street, and Common Street*

Of the sites identified in this study as opportunity sites, this one is probably the most unexpected, as it is mostly hidden from view. Just behind the row of intact, mostly 19<sup>th</sup> century structures on Canal Street between Saint Charles Avenue and Carondelet Street is a large undeveloped space that occupies much of the interior of the square. The vacant land is about 18,000 square feet in total and is divided between multiple properties (mostly the rears of properties, behind structures), some of which are in common ownership, according to the Orleans Parish Assessor’s website. The area presents an interesting development opportunity, as it is not subject to a height limit, but solely a 14 floor area ratio limit, and so the existing buildings wrapping the site could be supplemented

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<sup>165</sup> “Choice Neighborhoods”. *United States Department of Housing and Urban Development*. <https://www.hud.gov/cn> Accessed October 7, 2018

<sup>166</sup> “Our Communities.” *Housing Authority of New Orleans*. <http://hano.org/communities.aspx> Accessed October 7, 2018

<sup>167</sup> “Project in Development: Iberville Redevelopment.” *HRI Properties* <https://www.hriproperties.com/current-project/iberville-on-site/> Accessed October 7, 2018

with an interior tower. This tower opportunity allows for the ample floor area needed for a hotel or other large scale development, but with the mass of the development set back into the center of the square, where its scale does not interfere with the street experience of the existing historic building stock.

## H. Summary of Recommendations

The City Planning Commission staff has reviewed nearly a century's worth of information in its search for the issues, current and historic, that have plagued Canal Street. The evolution of the retail industry that made Canal Street the centerpiece of retailing in New Orleans for over a century eventually moved on to newer suburban communities. The exodus of retailers from Canal Street also resulted in the vacancy of upper floors that were often used as additional retail space, workshops, storage, photo studios, offices, and residences. Reversing this decline and repositioning Canal Street for renewed investment, including an improved retail mix along and the occupancy of the upper floors, has been a central point of study for Canal Street since the 1990s.

The City Council motion asked the CPC to make recommendations that will help restore Canal Street into a key destination. This will require a strategy that includes a series of distinct but complementary efforts, all aimed at improving the experience of Canal Street in a way that encourages reinvestment. One component involves public sector actions to bring quality retailers to Canal Street. These actions can build upon the DDD's retail attraction strategy, which was developed in 2004 and supplemented by a 2007 update and 2013 market analysis. These retail attraction efforts are similar to those example seen in other cities in their suggestions for certain types of retail in specific target areas, a comprehensive listing of retail spaces and target tenants, and an analysis of market trends. The CPC staff believes that these efforts should be continued and supplemented with an updated comprehensive retail strategy that reflects today's market conditions and retail trends.

In addition to attracting improved retail offerings, which will largely occupy buildings' ground floors, it is necessary to return upper floors to use. Recent plans have recognized that upper floor reuse is being stifled by building code requirements and fragmented ownership. These obstacles continue present a barrier to redevelopment. However, new opportunities have emerged in recent years. Short term rentals appear to have provided an opportunity for property owners to make upper floor redevelopment possible, and the CPC staff supports allowances for these uses in the upper floors of Canal Street. An enhanced retail mix and increased occupancy of the upper floors should be mutually supportive, as the use of upper floors creates an improved market for ground floor retailers.

These efforts are dependent upon a number of interrelated issues that can be addressed through small investments and promotion. Small improvements could be made to the streetscape itself to make Canal Street more pedestrian and shopper friendly, including promoting the installation of awnings and outdoor seating for the public and cafés or restaurants. Additionally, transportation improvements can be made to improve access of freight and people to the area including the re-imagining of the current curb uses to allow for more freight and passenger access, the installation of more bicycle parking for workers and retail patrons, and the construction of a new downtown transit hub to provide a safe, enclosed facility for transit riders.

Finally, the common thread of this is the consolidated management of Canal Street by one entity. The last comprehensive planning effort directed at Canal Street, the DDD's 2004 Canal Street Vision and Development Strategy, similarly identified the numerous public entities with an interest in Canal Street and saw the multiple overlapping interests as problematic. Because Canal

Street was the responsibility of all of the organizations, it was the obligation of none. The importance of Canal Street deserves the singular attention of an individual entity that can address retail mix, upper floor coordination, transportation issues and management, cleanliness, and vagrancy. This entity could reside in the DDD, where many of the duties are now being done, or some other public entity.



## Canal Street Study Key Recommendations Summary Table

Topic		Action Item		Recommendations		Page Numbers		
1	Retail	1.1	Centralized Retail Management Program	1.1.1	Continue to recruit retailers by making contacts with local and national businesses, and through the development of promotional materials that highlight the potential on Canal Street and its success stories, inform them of available tenant spaces, and a list incentives that are accessible and predictable.	75 – 81		
				1.1.2	Develop a comprehensive update to the 2004 retail strategy that considers the current market on Canal Street and the significant changes in national retail trends.	75 – 81		
2	Upper Floor Occupancy	2.1	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.	84 – 85		
				2.2	Examination of Upper Floor Suitability	2.2.1	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.	85 – 89
				2.3	Commercial Short Term Rentals	2.3.1	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.	90 – 94
				2.4	Transfer of Development Rights	2.4.1	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.	94 – 101

Topic		Action Item		Recommendations		Page Numbers
3	Placemaking	3.1	Pedestrian Amenities Improvements	3.1.1	Demarcate outdoor seating and other uses that businesses can claim in the public right-of-way and create a set of design and use standards (such as planter barriers, exterior lighting, maintenance agreements, etc.) around them so that they do not create further congestion in pedestrian zones but rather create positive experiences	103 – 116
				3.1.2	Codify and demarcate specific areas for pop-up cafés and shops, galleries, and mobile vendors to activate more isolated parts of the retail corridor, especially in the short-term.	103 – 116
				3.1.3	Promote the installation of awnings, canopies, balconies, and galleries at locations where they are architecturally appropriate. These weather protection devices enhance the pedestrian experience by providing protection from the sun and rain. They also break up the expansiveness the Canal Street right-of-way, making it feel like a more compact and walkable environment. Balconies and galleries benefit the property owner by creating additional usable space, which could incentivize the use and renovation of upper floors.	103 – 116
				3.1.4	Additional streetscape improvements that build upon existing improvements and further enhance the public realm, including improved wayfinding, and additional lighting and public seating. Installations should complement the historic character of the buildings and the energy of the lights, signs, and street life. Seating can have power, charging and broadcast infrastructure embedded to improve pedestrian and worker experience.	103 – 116
				3.1.5	Large planters and other landscaping interventions. Explore conversion of underutilized portions of right-of-way into green infrastructure or pocket park amenities	103 – 116
				3.1.6	Partnerships with local artist groups to brand districts with significant public art and monumentation	103 – 116

Topic		Action Item		Recommendations		Page Numbers
3	Placemaking	3.2	Theater District/ Entertainment Center	3.2.1	Supplement existing zoning regulations to promote live entertainment venues and other appropriate uses that support an active Theater District. This could be done through changes to base zoning district regulations or through the adoption of an arts and culture overlay zoning district similar to ones that exist in other historic corridors	103 – 116
				3.2.2	Create additional special events on Canal Street, which would be marketed and managed by a public entity or main street organization, and analyze infrastructure needs to support festivals and civic events on the street.	103 – 116
4	Transportation	4.1	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 the blocking of travel lanes.	117 – 123
				4.1.2	If curb use issues are not resolved by the recommendations of the 2018 Curb Use Study, consider performing a 90-day demonstration of a shared use lane between Decatur/Magazine and Rampart Streets that dedicates two lanes to through travel and the current outer lane and curb space to shared passenger and freight activities.	117 – 123
		4.2	Pedestrian Safety Action Plan Implementation	4.2.1	Neutral ground landscaping/buffers, such as planters or other installations, should be expanded and to discourage pedestrians crossing midblock.	123 – 125
				4.2.2	Canal and Peters Intersection - The right turn lane from South Peters Street onto Canal Street going toward the river could be removed, eliminating the small pedestrian island and creating a larger pedestrian space in front of the heavily pedestrian trafficked Harrah's Casino.	123 – 125
				4.2.3	Prohibit right turns on red lights throughout the corridor.	123 – 125
		4.3	Improvements to Bicycle Infrastructure	4.3.1	Support initiatives like Connect the Crescent, and make temporary demonstration permanent if successful.	125 – 126

Topic		Action Item		Recommendations		Page Numbers
4	Transportation	4.3	Improvements to Bicycle Infrastructure	4.3.2	Install additional bicycle parking racks along Canal Street.	125 – 126
		4.4	RTA Strategic Mobility Plan Implementation	4.4.1	Support the Regional Transit Authority in determining the appropriate location for a new downtown transit center after the Comprehensive Operations Assessment and Network Redesign have been completed.	126 – 127
				4.4.2	Off-board fare collection for all Canal Street streetcar stops and informational/wayfinding signage – The Canal streetcar lines are often plagued by long lines of passengers waiting to board and riders that are uninformed on how and/or where to board the streetcar. Off-board fare collection and increased signage will help improve upon this daily issue.	126 – 127
				4.4.3	Remove excess streetcar stops along Canal Street – There are currently streetcar stops at nearly every block along Canal Street between the river and South Claiborne, while most of the blockfaces along the street measure approximately 330 feet. By removing excess stops the Canal streetcar line could greatly increase headway along the busy corridor.	126 – 127
				4.4.4	Explore options for a CBD circulator that would connect major destinations to Canal Street – A CBD circulator (or shuttle) has been recommended by almost every study that has been done on Canal Street. The circulator would help visitors and locals alike travel between the many destinations around the area with greater ease and efficiency when compared to a city bus or taxi service.	126 – 127
5	Organizational Structure	5.1	Establish Management Entity Specifically for Canal Street	5.1.1	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.	131 – 140

Topic		Action Item		Recommendations		Page Numbers
5	Organizational Structure	5.2	Strong Focus on Quality of Life Issues	5.2.1	Re-establish NOPD's Canal Street Enhancement Unit, full security camera coverage along Canal Street, and stronger focus on issues impacting the quality of life on Canal Street including panhandling, cleanliness of sidewalks, and property maintenance.	131 - 140



## I. City Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

### City Planning Commission Meeting (October 23, 2018)

The staff gave a summary of the Study's findings and recommendations. Three people spoke regarding the study. The speaker cards are attached to this report, and video of all public testimony, deliberation, and votes by the City Planning Commission can be found on the CPC's website and at the following link:

[http://cityofno.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=2&clip\\_id=3120](http://cityofno.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=3120)

The Commissioners discussed specifically the staff's recommendation for a 90-day demonstration of a shared-use lane on Canal Street. Several Commissioners expressed concern that the proposal would exacerbate Canal Street's issues with the misuse of curb spaces and the blocking of travel lanes. Commissioner Lunn asked the staff about the possibility of additional landscaping on Canal Street. The staff responded that the Study does recommend more landscaping in addition to other pedestrian amenities such as awnings and café seating. Commissioner Lunn made a motion to accept the staff's recommendation with the exception of the recommendation for a 90-day demonstration of a shared-use lane on Canal Street. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown, but failed to be adopted.

#### **Motion**

**BE IT MOVED BY THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION THAT THE CANAL STREET STUDY IS HEREBY ACCEPTED, WITH THE AMENDMENT THAT THE RECOMMENDATION FOR A SHARED-USE LANE ON CANAL STREET BE DELETED. BE IT FURTHER MOVED THAT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO FORWARD THE STUDY TO THE CITY COUNCIL.**

YEAS: Brown, Lunn, Steeg

NAYS: Green, Hughes, Stewart

ABSENT: Isaacson, Wedberg

Commissioner Brown made a motion to accept the recommendations of the Canal Street Study. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lunn and adopted.

#### **Motion**

**BE IT MOVED BY THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION THAT THE CANAL STREET STUDY IS HEREBY ACCEPTED. BE IT FURTHER MOVED THAT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO FORWARD THE STUDY TO THE CITY COUNCIL.**

YEAS: Brown, Green, Lunn, Steeg, Stewart

NAYS: Hughes

ABSENT: Isaacson, Wedberg

## J. Next Steps

The City Planning Commission's recommendations, together with the staff report and recommendations, shall be forwarded to the City Council for consideration. The City Council may choose to hold its own public hearing on the Study, though it is not required.

Most of the recommendations within this report would require enhanced prioritization of resources to Canal Street, and would not require further action by the City Planning Commission. Changes could also include amendments to the City Code or State legislation, processes in which the CPC would not be formally involved with. A couple recommendations were made for changes to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, which the City Council would need to direct the CPC to consider as a text amendment. If that is done, the CPC will docket the request and write a staff report with recommendations for specific zoning text changes. The zoning docket would request an additional public hearing before the CPC, and the CPC may choose to recommend text changes to the City Council with or without modification of the staff recommendations, or they could recommend denial of the proposal. Next, the City Council would hold a public hearing before considering adoption of zoning text changes. The Council may adopt, adopt with modifications, or deny the recommendations of the CPC.

# City Planning Commission Speaker Card

Date: 10/23/18

I would like to speak regarding CPC Docket: 7. Canal St. Study

## INFORMATION ONLY

Name: Andreaneia Morris / G.NORTH

Address: 4640 S. Carrollton St. New Orleans, LA 70119

I'd like to cede my time to: \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks: \_\_\_\_\_

# City Planning Commission Speaker Card

Date: Oct 23rd 2018

I would like to speak regarding CPC Docket: canal street study

## INFORMATION ONLY

Name: Breonne DeDecker

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like to cede my time to: \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks: \_\_\_\_\_

# City Planning Commission Speaker Card

Date: 23 Oct 18

I would like to speak regarding CPC Docket: Canal St Study

## INFORMATION ONLY

Name: Kurt Weigle - DDD

Address: 201 St. Charles #3912 NOLA 70176

I'd like to cede my time to: \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks: \_\_\_\_\_

## Larry W. Massey Jr.

---

**From:** CPCinfo  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 8, 2018 1:06 PM  
**To:** Paul Cramer  
**Subject:** FW: Comment for New Canal Street Study

**From:** Derek Scontrino [mailto:d.scontrino@aol.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 8, 2018 12:52 PM  
**To:** CPCinfo <CPCinfo@nola.gov>; dscontrino@landcrafthomes.com  
**Subject:** Comment for New Canal Street Study

### ***To the Executive Director-***

Good Afternoon. I live on Villere Street a block off of Canal in the CBD . I wanted to share some of my thoughts on ways the city can help Canal Street to grow and prosper, since I have a vested interest in its continued revitalization!

**Item one:** the homeless camps under the Claiborne overpass are an obvious eyesore and need to be removed. Additional beautification and unique programming to utilize the space under there is also needed.

**Item two:** Signalized crosswalks at every street crossing and better maintained crossing markings would help improve pedestrian safety. this also should include the installation of bollards on the corners near major intersections!

**Item three:** increased deployment of city crime cameras would be an added safety element for the street

**Item four:** voice magnification tools (i.e. megaphones) should be prevented. prohibiting the use of these devices on any sidewalks on Canal would remove a noise nuisance.

**Item five:** street vending tables etc should be prohibited and promptly removed by the police.

**Item six:** Bus stops... all bus stops on Canal should be moved to side streets and/or a centralized downtown transit center would be ideal (perhaps where the old station used to be in the Basin Street neutral ground. People loitering outside businesses discourages people from patronizing those store fronts and results in blight and uncomfortable conditions for the riders as well as other stakeholders.

**Item seven:** Support for the revitalization of State Palace Theatre.. the latest proposal to build a hotel on top of the maintained theatre should be supported by the city since this will respectfully put this property back into commerce and activate a crucial connector block for not only Canal but the CBD as a whole!

**Item Seven:** Refined zoning regulations to help spur revitalization. This can be done by prohibiting certain uses and easing or allowing others uses to incentivize new businesses to open up. I recommend making pawn shops, cash advance stores, tattoo parlors, and foot spas/ massage studios prohibited uses. A spa or salon that offers a full suite of services should still be allowed. Encouraging high end hostels, Short Term Rentals and Stay Adam/Sonder type reuse of the upper floors of buildings on canal or the first block on intersecting side streets should be encouraged. Other zoning incentives could be allowing cigar lounges and other live entertainment and amusement facilities. Also, if the state were to officially legalize sports betting and depending on the results of fantasy sports constitutional amendmend.. i think permitting facilities catering to that could further activate the street.

**Item Eight:** entergy substation next to Canal Place. Working with entergy to create a more pedestrian friendly and attractive exterior for this block would help maintain the flow of pedestrians all the way to the river.

**Item Nine:** better enforcement of blight and graffiti in the area... for example, theres a billboard located on parking lot on the downriver side of the 1500 block of Canal that has had graffiti on the billboard sign itself for years. This parking lot is a conditional use but a requirement of the CU is that the property be maintained and graffiti free. where enforcement of this

? The ddd and city can put a hold on the license to operate the lot until this is rectified. A zero tolerance policy for panhandling, graffiti, trash and blight on the street would be a gamechanger. lot of laws on the books already, theres just poor enforcement!

**Item Ten:** I also think a special tax on surface parking lots in the area or downtown in general should be looked into. these properties dont contribute to the urban fabric and in fact ruin it! something to activate these parcels and at least strict maintenance standards of these lots should be looked into! FAR bonuses given to those that redevelop existing surface lots could be a great incentive for redevelopment!

**Item Eleven:** Ritz Carlton ground floor. discussions with the owners of the property of ways to activate that ground floor with uses other than conference rooms should be talked about. the current use creates a dead zone for that block

Thanks for your consideration of these ideas! Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments as well!

Derek S  
(504)355-6902  
201 S Villere St  
New Orleans, La 70112





# Louisiana Landmarks Society

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**HOUSE COORDINATOR**  
Jenny Dyer

Aug. 27, 2018

New Orleans City Planning Commission  
c/o Executive Director Robert Rivers  
1300 Perdido Street, 7th Floor  
New Orleans, LA 70112

Re: Canal Street Study, Motion M-18-200

Dear Mr. Rivers et al,

Canal Street has from colonial times played an important role in the fabric of our city. It represented a dividing line between the Creole and American sectors for a time, but far from being a No Man's Land, the thoroughfare was a cultural meeting point where Franco, Anglo, and African lifeway's blended. Likewise, today it represents the linear juncture between the Central Business District and French Quarter, where modern New Orleans meets our treasured cultural heritage.

Canal Street at its best is a place of cultural and commercial vibrancy, and it is our hope that the study now underway will extend that synergy to more parcels and blocks. Louisiana Landmarks Society supports efforts by the City Council and City Planning Commission to ensure policies and regulations enable, or at a minimum do not obstruct, the adaptive use of historic buildings along the corridor. In particular, the occupancy and activation of upper floors is a well diagnosed challenge, given the high profitability of ground floor square footage. Linking adjacent structures and providing modest tax abatements for egress improvements are among the tools available to encourage upper floor occupancy.

We find perplexing the provision to examine "whether encouraging upper floor development for the purpose of operating short-term rentals ... could spur revitalization," given that a majority of these buildings are already eligible for use as short term rentals under current zoning and ordinances. In fact, the CBD

*Continued ...*

***The mission of Louisiana Landmarks Society is to promote historic preservation through education, advocacy, and operation of the Pitot House.***

is home to more STR-eligible properties than anywhere else in the city; absent a change in that policy it may be difficult to focus STR investment in one corridor. What the CBD lacks is housing that is affordable for workers in the hospitality sector, and some evaluation of opportunities to meet that need would be a welcome addition to the study.

Finally, it is imperative to note that the study objective of identifying commercial opportunity zones must not be construed at odds with the objective of historic preservation along the corridor. We should not sacrifice irreplaceable built heritage to allow for up-zoning and new construction. The opportunities for infill, reoccupation, and adaptive use are sufficient to guide the identification of opportunity zones construed to incorporate rather than replace existing structures.

Thank you for taking these comments into consideration, and please feel free to contact us for clarification or assistance of any kind. We look forward to the finished product.

Sincerely,



Sandra Stokes  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
Advocacy Co-Chair



Nathan Lott  
Recording Secretary  
Advocacy Co-Chair

To: New Orleans City Planning Commissioners and Staff  
From: Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center  
Date: August 28, 2018  
Re: Comment on the 2018 Canal Street Study

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Dear City Planning Commissioners and Staff,

The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) previously submitted comments on the 2018 Short Term Rental study. As the Canal Street study also examines short-term rentals (STRs) as a way to encourage revitalization on Canal Street, we submit these comments as guidelines to ensure affordability considerations are also part of the study.

To begin with, the study area includes two distinct sections of Canal St, which are developing in separate ways. The lakeside portion between Rampart St and Claiborne Ave is developing quickly with hundreds of units of luxury residential units and hotel rooms recently completed or under construction in large buildings. Little additional stimulation appears to be necessary on this portion of the corridor.

Instead, the actual target of the study seems to be the upper floors of smaller, historic buildings on the portion of Canal St. riverside of Rampart St. Because they are historic buildings, developers seeking to revitalize these upper floors will already have the benefit of historic tax credits. Any zoning recommendations that come out of this study, should specifically take into consideration this distinction between the two different portions of the corridor.

We also want to note the great demand for homes affordable to the average worker, especially in areas close to our job centers. Any study of this portion of Canal St. should examine how changes can be used to simulate not just development for the sake of development, but also solutions to our affordable housing crisis.

With that in mind, we suggest that the CPC consider new rules for STRs that can stimulate development and provide immediate affordability to residents in this high demand area. Based on GNOFHAC's analysis of May 2018 STR permit data, we previously recommended allowing existing rental buildings STR permits only if they are paired with affordable units under one of two options:

- 1) One-to-One Match with a Cap: Allow STR permits up to a 15% cap of the building's total units, but only if the building also holds a matching number of units affordable at 60% AMI.
- 2) One-to-Two Match with no Cap: Allow an unlimited number of STR permits per building, but only if the building also provides two units affordable at 60% AMI for every one STR permit.

We still believe this is the correct solution for larger residential buildings like 1201 Canal, The Sanger, Canal Crossing, or The Jung apartments. These larger buildings require a regulatory mechanism to ensure they do not become undercover hotels, avoiding taxes and pulling supply from the residential market in a highly valued area of the city. Even smaller buildings down to ten units might combine the additional revenue of one or two STRs with the development subsidy of historic tax credits to create successful developments that include some affordable housing.

For the smaller historic buildings with less than ten units, we hope that the CPC will recommend a very narrow solution that takes into account the possible historic tax credit subsidy available to developers of these buildings and does not unnecessarily stimulate STR growth.

We thank you for your attention to these comments and recommendations and would be happy to answer any questions or provide further details.

Sincerely,

Maxwell Ciardullo  
Director of Policy and Communications  
GNOFHAC

**Larry W. Massey Jr.**

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**From:** Mavis Early <mavisearly@gnohla.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 15, 2018 2:23 PM  
**To:** Robert D. Rivers; Paul Cramer; Larry W. Massey Jr.; CPCinfo  
**Cc:** Leslie T. Alley  
**Subject:** Canal Street Study- GNO Hotel & Lodging Association public statement  
**Attachments:** STR-Canal St Study GNOHLA statement 10-12-18.docx; ATT00001.htm

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Please see attached, the Greater New Orleans Hotel & Lodging Association's statement to be filed as public comment and distributed to City Planning Commissioners.

Many thanks for the exemplary professional work that you do.





**Greater New Orleans  
Hotel & Lodging  
Association**

TO: City Planning Commission, City of New Orleans  
FROM: Greater New Orleans Hotel & Lodging Association  
DATE: October 15, 2018  
RE: Canal Street Study

Commissioners,

The Canal Street study covers a geographic area from Claiborne Avenue to the Mississippi River. There are many varied types of building in this corridor, including multi-story buildings.

Although the study covers this geographic area, the CPC staff presentation focused on and provided only photos of three-story historic buildings. This could be misleading. One of the things under consideration is whether or not short-term rentals (STRs) are a recommended use in ALL buildings on Canal Street from the Mississippi River to Claiborne Street. Uses and regulations that may be appropriate for a second and third floor of an historic building may not be appropriate for other larger buildings on Canal Street.

To address “whether encouraging upper floor development for the purpose of operating short term rentals along this corridor could spur revitalization, such as attracting more diverse and upscale retail on the bottom floors”:

Most would agree that vacant and unused second and third floors of historic buildings on downtown Canal Street would improve the appearance and viability of Canal Street.

However, these second and third floors could be used for many diverse commercial purposes if one could comply with the requirements of the International Building Code, which we understand has been the barrier in development of these second and third floors. Such commercial purposes include offices, retail, restaurants, shops that provide services, etc. These floors could also be used for much needed affordable housing, apartments and condominiums.

With regard to short-term rentals specifically, *a short-term rental is defined as a ‘residential use’*. Short-term rentals should be limited to residential, owner-occupied properties. Residential, owner-occupied STRs, with proof of homestead exemption provides accountability, self-policing and neighbor-to-neighbor policing,

and will not be difficult to enforce. Anything other than residential, owner-occupied STRs can and will be manipulated and enforcement will fail.

*'Commercial short-term rentals' are hotels, plain and simple. A hotel provides rooms short-term to guests for compensation, no difference from a 'commercial short-term rental'.*

Thus, the 'commercial short-term rental' license should be eliminated. A hotel license should be required to ensure compliance with all of the standards and regulations that protect the safety of our guests.

To have a separate STR license and regulations for 'commercial short-term rentals' makes no sense. Commercial short-term rentals are de facto hotels, and should be required to obtain a hotel license.

A commercial short-term license creates disparity between hotels and commercial STRs and creates unfair competition for two businesses that provide the same services. Commercial STRs should be held to the same standards and regulations as hotels. Hotels do not object to competition, in fact, hotels thrive on competition, but that competition should have a level playing field.

*As noted earlier, short-term rental is defined as a 'residential use'. Surely, commercial short-term rentals are not residential uses, but commercial uses, as is obvious and as the name indicates.*

A commercial lodging business that rents rooms on a short-term basis for compensation is a hotel. A commercial lodging business may use a reservation system or platform for booking lodging. The booking engine or mechanism for renting of the rooms is immaterial. The business is the same.

Why should there be two types of licenses for providing the same services?

A hotel by any other name is still a hotel. There should be parity, a level playing field. There is no need for a 'commercial short-term license'. A hotel license is the appropriate license.

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