

# Eastern New Orleans Newsletter

July 20, 2009

## ENONAC Wins Appeal Against Levy Gardens Development

The State of Louisiana Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled last week that Civil District Court Judge Kern Reese was correct in finding that the conditional use process should have been exercised by Levy Gardens Partners when it applied for permits to build a multi-family residential complex in eastern New Orleans, just off Bullard Avenue.

Ending a battle that lasted over 1 ½ years, the Appeals Court ruled that any future plans for such developments must be presented to the community before permits are granted by the city.

Sylvia Scineaux-Richard, President of the Eastern New Orleans Neighborhood Advisory Commission (ENONAC) stated that “This is a very significant win because it establishes the right of residents to be involved in the planning of projects that will impact their community.”

In November, 2008 after the Eastern New Orleans Neighborhood Advisory Commission (ENONAC) sued the developer, the City of New Orleans was ordered by Judge Reese to recall a dozen building permits issued to Levy Gardens Partners.

The development plans call for over 100 units in 12 buildings, with as many as four bedrooms.

## Eastern New Orleans Recovery Watch

Project	Location	Due Date	Status
Public Library	Read / Lake Forest		
Methodist Hospital	Read Blvd		
NOPD Station			
NOFD Station	Dwyer / Read, Lake Catherine		
Joe Brown Park	Read Blvd		
La Nature Center	Read Blvd		
Plaza Mall	Read / Lake Forest		
MRGO Closure		July 2009	
Levee Strengthening		June 2011	
FCW Elementary School Rebuild	Dwyer / Bullard		
Osborne Elementary School Rebuild			
Abramson HS Rebuild	Read		
La Provence Apt Demolition			
Major Retail Centers			
Michoud Blvd Bridge	Michoud		Complete
Lawrence Creek Apt Demolition	I-10 Service Rd		Complete
Bern-Mas Apt Demolition	I-10 Service Rd		
Lincoln Beach			Start after levee completion
Fencing/Beautification along I-10			Start by Fall 2009
Six Flags			
Morrison Rd Street Lights			

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## Calendar of Events

**Every Thursday. 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm.** Chess at Jazz City Java Coffeehouse. All ages and skill levels are invited. 5555 Bullard Ave, NOLA, 70128. 504-245-8282.

**Every Thursday** except holidays, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm. GriefShare at Cornerstone United Methodist Church, 5276 Bullard Ave. 70128. (504) 248.7998. GriefShare is a special weekly seminar and support group for people who are grieving the death of someone close to them.

**New! Tuesday, July 21st 2:30 p.m.** Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for re-opening of the New Orleans Post Office, Chef Menteur Station.

**Wednesday, July 22, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm.** Lake Bullard Night at Jazz City Java Coffeehouse on Bullard Avenue. If you can't make it Wednesday night, visit during the day.

**New! Thursday, July 23. 11:00 am.** City Council Meeting. Agenda: Appeal of City Planning Decision regarding Subdivision of property owned by Old Morrison Partners, LP & VOB Developments, LLC Old Morrison Homes. (Subdivision Docket #29/09). (See attached flyer)

**Friday, July 24 – Sunday, March July 26, 2009.** Fourth Weekend. Support our New Orleans East businesses by shopping exclusively in the East! **KEEP THE MONEY IN THE FAMILY!**

**Saturday, July 25, 2009. 5 pm – 8 pm.** Renaissance Market Place monthly arts/crafts/food market offering fresh produce, fine arts and crafts, cuisine from area restaurants, and live music. Occurs on the fourth Saturday of every month. For more information or to volunteer, e-mail [renaissancemarketplace@yahoo.com](mailto:renaissancemarketplace@yahoo.com), call (504) 261-5067 or visit [www.renaissancemarketplace.net](http://www.renaissancemarketplace.net).

**New! Sunday, July 26, 2009 12:00 p.m.—2:00 p.m.** “A Taste of Praise” continental brunch and music with contemporary Christian Worship artist Eric Spooner. Jazz City Java Coffeehouse. 5555 Bullard Ave. 245-8282. Seating is limited! Donation: \$9.00

**New! Monday, July 27th 1:00 P.M.** Meeting with Mayor Ray Nagin and Neighborhood Association Presidents regarding the library and Joe Brown Park. This meeting will replace the Commissioner Advisory Board (CAB) meeting scheduled for July 28, 2009. (See page 4 for more information on this meeting.)

**New! Friday and Saturday, August 7 and 8, 2009. Louisiana Sales Tax Holiday.** Most retail purchases are exempt from the 4 percent state sales tax. Vehicles and meals are excluded. The sales tax exemption applies only to the first \$2,500 of each eligible item purchased. Local taxes will still be applied.

## Job Opportunities

**New! IT Specialist (INFOSEC)** National Finance Center, Eastern New Orleans. \$70,000 - \$83,419. Closes Sunday, July 19, 2009. Technical specialist in the area of Information Technology security. Plan, develop, implement, and maintain programs, policies, and procedures to protect the availability, integrity, and confidentiality of the NFC computing systems, networks and data.

**New! Secretary** National Finance Center, Eastern New Orleans. \$30,772 - \$30,772. Closes Sunday, July 26, 2009. Receives calls, greets visitors, maintains calendar, gives reminders, types reports, letters, etc; schedules appointments & meetings; arranges travel, organizes and maintains files.

<http://jobview.usajobs.gov/getjob.aspx?JobID=82084566&sort=rv%2c-dtex&jbf574=AG90&vw=d&re=134&FedEmp=Y&FedPub=Y&caller=agency.aspx&AVSDM=2009-07-14+12%3a57%3a00&rc=3&TabNum=1>

**IT Specialist (System Administration)** National Finance Center, Eastern New Orleans. \$56,411 - \$73,329. Closes Friday, July 24, 2009. Direct and operate the NFC computer systems; scheduled maintenance computer runs; inputs data; controls and directs computer generated output; and provides assistance and facilitating services, through the Operations and Security Center (OSC), to users of the NFC computer system. More information:

<http://jobview.usajobs.gov/getjob.aspx?JobID=81699271&sort=rv%2c-dtex&jbf574=AG90&vw=d&re=134&FedEmp=Y&FedPub=Y&caller=agency.aspx&AVSDM=2009-07-10+10%3a42%3a00&rc=3&TabNum=1>

**Supervisory Program Analyst (Two positions).** Department Of State. New Orleans, LA. \$95,010 - \$139,162. Closes Friday, July 24, 2009. conceiving and deploying monitoring and quality controls to external acceptance facilities, gather information and evaluate their performance, and conduct quality assurance inspections of the passport acceptance process. More information:

[http://jobview.usajobs.gov/getjob.aspx?JobID=81910671&aid=76675419-679&WT.mc\\_n=125&rc=5&TabNum=1](http://jobview.usajobs.gov/getjob.aspx?JobID=81910671&aid=76675419-679&WT.mc_n=125&rc=5&TabNum=1) and [http://jobview.usajobs.gov/GetJob.aspx?JobID=81910459&aid=76675419-679&WT.mc\\_n=125](http://jobview.usajobs.gov/GetJob.aspx?JobID=81910459&aid=76675419-679&WT.mc_n=125)

**Auditor (Contract Audit),** Department Of Defense, Defense Contract Audit Agency, New Orleans, LA, \$38,117 - \$49,553. Closes Friday, August 28, 2009. Examination and appraisal of financial records, reports, management controls, policies, & practices affecting or reflecting the financial condition & operation of DOD & other Federal agency contractors. Will go before top level decision makers—from CEO's of Fortune 500 companies to high-level military & civilian government personnel. More information:

<http://jobsearch.usajobs.gov/getjob.asp?JobID=75202192&AVSDM=2009%2D02%2D13+07%3A26%3A53&Logo=0&sort=rv&vw=d&brd=3876&ss=0&customapplicant=15513,15514,15515,15669,15523,15512,15516,45575&q=contract+auditor>

**US Census positions available.** Good pay, flexible hours, paid training. Field employee selection aid test every Tuesday and Thursday. 9 AM and 1 PM. St Bernard Parish Government Building Room 213, every Friday 10 AM Nunez Community College, Classroom J-4. No appointment necessary. Bring I.D. and social security card or birth certificate.

## Association Presidents Vote to Oppose Sun Energy

At the ENONAC Meeting on Tuesday, Neighborhood Association Presidents voted unanimously to oppose the building of the Sun Energy facility at the Bollinger Site in eastern New Orleans.

Most concerns dealt with the impact on residents' health and adverse affects to the environment. A Sun Energy representative stated that as many as 17 trucks carrying waste material would travel through the area every hour for up to 16 hours a day.

Environmentalists argued that these types of plants have not worked in other areas and pose a significant threat to those living nearby.

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Lake Carmel Subdivision seeks your support at the hearing with the City Council on Thursday, July 23, 2009 at 11:00 a.m. appealing the decision by the City Planning Commission which approved the Subdivision of property owned by Old Morrison Partners, LP & VOB Developments, LLC Old Morrison Homes. (Subdivision Docket #29/09). (See attached flyer)

Councilwoman Willard-Lewis had also suggested that as many people as possible send emails to City Councilmembers.

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"Night Out Against Crime" will be held on August 4th, 2009. If you have plans to have a neighborhood gathering, please get on the list with crime prevention at 658-5590 and provide the following:

Type of gathering: Block Party, Median/Neutral Ground Party, Lawn Party, Outdoor Bar-B-Que or New Group. Also provide your Name, Home Address, Group Name, Phone Number, Number of Barricades, Location for Barricade Drop Off, and Time.

You can also have your neighborhood location listed in this newsletter by emailing [lakebullard@aol.com](mailto:lakebullard@aol.com).

## Nagin unveils new TIF policies by CityBusiness staff reports July 17, 2009

Mayor Ray Nagin announced new policies for a tool used by developers to finance projects, saying tax increment financing (TIF) will only be allowed in areas that are blighted and stagnant.

TIFs are a mechanism through which municipalities use anticipated future gains in tax revenue, such as property taxes and hotel occupancy taxes, to finance projects in distressed or underdeveloped areas.

Under an executive order by Nagin, TIFs will be awarded only in so-called Tax Increment Districts and used to stimulate commercial and residential development in areas where projects would not be built if not for use of TIFs. Also, except for extreme cases, TIFs should only be used when matching state tax increments are contributed, according to the new guidelines.

"Today's executive order is not only a blueprint for future redevelopment that is much needed in eastern New Orleans, but it also provides guidance for us as a council body to ensure that in our ratification processes lead to decisions that are in the best economic and recovery interests of all citizens of this city first," Councilwoman Cynthia Willard-Lewis said.

Full story:

<http://www.neworleanscitybusiness.com/uptotheminate.cfm?recid=25805&userID=0&referer=dailyUpdate>



### Got some good news?

Announce your engagement, wedding, birth, promotion, etc. by emailing [lakebullard@aol.com](mailto:lakebullard@aol.com).

## **Chef Menteur Station Grand Opening**

The public is cordially invited to the official “Grand Re-Opening” and customer appreciation open house at the Chef Menteur Post Office located at 5919 Chef Menteur Hwy at the corner of Downman and Chef Menteur Hwy.

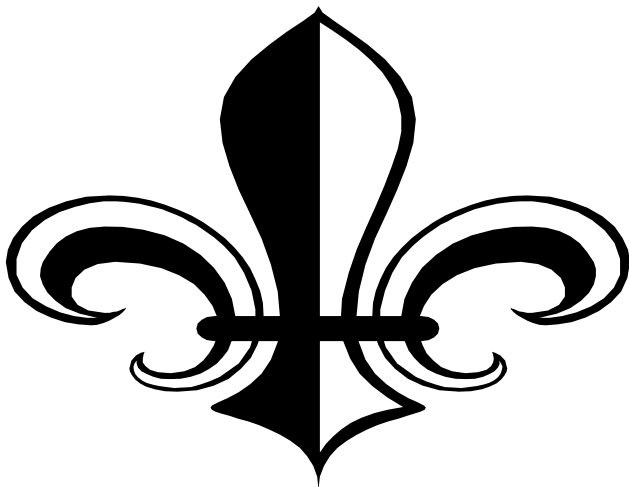
The New Orleans Post Office will officially re-open the Chef Menteur Station with a “ribbon cutting ceremony” at 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 21st.

Please join your government officials and members of the Customer Advisory Council to celebrate this great event for the residents of the Chef Menteur Community.

Thank you for your patience and I hope to see you there,

*Jerry Woodard*

New Orleans Postmaster



## **Mayor Nagin to Meet with Neighborhood Association Presidents**

New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Cynthia Sylvain-Lear, Director of Capital Projects Bill Chrisman, and city architects, will meet with neighborhood association presidents on **Monday, July 27, 2009 at 1:00 P.M.** This meeting will replace the Commissioner Advisory Board (CAB) meeting scheduled for July 28, 2009.

The meeting, which will address issues associated with the eastern New Orleans public library and Joe Brown Park, was arranged by Councilwoman Cynthia Willard-Lewis.

Eastern New Orleans Neighborhood Advisory Commission President Sylvia Scineaux-Richard stated that “It is crucial to eastern New Orleans residents that we be engaged with the plans for the restructuring of our community's future”.

The meeting will be held in the Mayor's office. Neighborhood association presidents are asked to confirm their attendance at the meeting no later than **Thursday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>** so that adequate preparations may be made.

## Participants of Renaissance Marketplace

### E.E. Williams

The man who paints with flowers

504.939.7795

504.550.5984

Call for an appointment  
Now accepting commissions



### Golden Wagon

Established 1982

Wholesale-Retail Sterling Silver  
Unique Handcrafted Fleur-de-Lis Jewelry  
Fresh Water Pearl / Red Coral / Amber  
Turquoise and Many Other Natural  
Stones  
Designer Watches  
New Orleans Souvenirs

1200 N. Peters St., NO, LA 70118

French Market

504.250.8883

504.250.1996

Open 7 Days a Week  
9 am – 6 pm

The Eastern New Orleans Neighborhood  
Advisory Commission (ENONAC)  
Executive Board has a position available  
for a **Commissioner-At-Large**.

If you are interested, or would like to  
nominate someone, contact ENONAC at  
[info@enonac.org](mailto:info@enonac.org)

Paul Bratton, of DHS, reported that FEMA is in the process of downsizing its workforce in Louisiana and Funding & Resource Development Specialist will be eliminated. Paul is returning to Long Term Community Recovery and hopes to continue with identification of funding/resource development opportunities.

In the meantime, he shared the following resources to help in searching for funding and technical assistance:

- <http://www.grants.gov>
- Philanthropy News Digest: RFP Alerts
- <http://www.SchoolFundingCenter.com>
- Greater New Orleans Foundation: Competitive Grants Opportunities
- <http://www.GrantsAlert.com>
- <http://www.Benefits.gov>
- Desire NOLA Newsletters
- Community Center of Saint Bernard Newsletters
- Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations (LANO) Newsletters
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: RFPs
- Channing Bete Company: Funding Opportunities e-newsletters
- Neighborhoods Partnership Network: Newsletters

## Businesses in the East

### T. Lynn's Furniture & Lighting, LLC

5741 Crowder Blvd, Suite B10  
New Orleans, LA 70127

"Affordable home and office furnishings"

Troy Taylor Meloncon  
504-248-2828 phone  
504-248-2833 fax  
877-44T-LYNN toll free

"Stylish yet affordable"

### Meady's Barber Shop

4655 Michoud Blvd.  
New Orleans, LA 70129  
(504) 254-2861

#### Monday

Senior Service Day  
\$12

#### Tuesday

Bring a Friend Day  
50% off for 2<sup>nd</sup> Person

#### Wednesday

Fun Kids Day  
\$7 (12 yrs & under)

Walk-Ins Welcome!

### *Lake Bullard*

Neighborhood Improvement District

P.O. Box 870092

New Orleans, LA 70187-0092

Web Site: [www.lakebullard.org](http://www.lakebullard.org)

e-mail: [lakebullard@aol.com](mailto:lakebullard@aol.com)

Phone: (504) 352-0227

Lisa Stafford, Editor

## NO VACATION FROM LEARNING

**More N.O. students are spending the hot months in class, lighting a fire under achievement levels**

Friday, July 17, 2009

Robert Russa Moton Charter School, now located off Chef Menteur Highway, first changed its schedule 20 years ago, adding 40 days to the school year.

Immediately, the school started to get results, recalls Principal Paulette Bruno. In the first quarter of the year, only seven students were suspended, compared with more than 50 a year earlier. Bruno said the "children weren't out of school long enough to get into problems."

No longer did Moton's educators have to spend the first few weeks of the school year reviewing last year's material. Within a few years, Moton's test scores and reputation bounced up.

In the early 1990s, however, the Orleans Parish School Board told Moton it no longer had the money to pay for a longer school year, Bruno said. At that point, the school switched to a year-round schedule -- with the traditional number of school days spaced evenly around the school year. During the three-week breaks, students have the option of attending morning classes at Moton, which feature elective offerings like cooking in addition to core academic fare.

Bruno said the school uses its Title 1 money, federal financing aimed at boosting achievement among low-income students, to pay teachers to work during those breaks, when nearly 75 percent of the families choose to come to school. **Today, Moton is one of the highest-performing open-enrollment public schools in the city.**

Holding school year-round seems natural now. "I can't even imagine what we did during the three months off," Bruno said.

Full story: <http://nola.live.advance.net/news/t-p/frontpage/index.ssf?/base/news-13/1247808611238590.xml&coll=1>

The Eastern New Orleans Newsletter is published weekly. Past issues can be found at [www.enonac.org](http://www.enonac.org). Deadline for inclusion in the Monday newsletter is Friday at 5 pm. Information submitted for inclusion in the newsletter may be emailed to [lakebullard@aol.com](mailto:lakebullard@aol.com).

SOUTHERN STAR



AMUSEMENT

### **Southern Star Amusement forges ahead with plans for shuttered park**

New Orleans, LA July 17, 2009 – Southern Star Amusement, Inc., which has been pursuing the opportunity to take over the former Six Flags amusement park property in New Orleans, is continuing to move forward with their efforts. Danny Rogers, founder of the company, and long time amusement park veteran, stated, “We are confident that things will continue to move forward.” Rogers continued to say that Southern Star Amusement has now opened a new office in New Orleans East. “Our new offices on Lake Forest Boulevard are convenient to the park site. They will also make us more accessible to the community so that we may meet potential vendors and suppliers, as well as to respond to requests or concerns of area residents.”

Southern Star Amusement has plans in place to transform the shuttered property with new themes and attractions. Plans include restoring the remaining major rides, including the Mega Zeph wooden rollercoaster, adding several new rides and shows, as well as new water park rides and attractions. “The new facility will not be ‘just’ a water park or ‘just’ a thrill park. We will be incorporating features of each, along with quality family entertainment.”

Southern Star Amusement, Inc. has also been adding to its team. “While Southern Star Amusement may be newly formed, our team members literally have hundreds of years of combined theme park experience,” Rogers

commented. The newest board member, Peter Markham, has a long history within the industry. Mr. Markham organized and led Buena Vista Construction, Walt Disney's Construction Company, and accomplished the construction of the Magic Kingdom, The Main Entrance Complex and the Service Area at Walt Disney World. His has also served as Vice President of Project Management at Walt Disney Imagineering. Rogers went on to say, “Mr. Markham represents the caliber of individual we are bringing on board so that we can turn this park into a world class venue.”

Rogers stated, “We are looking forward to the Industrial Development Board meeting next week, and are continuing preparations so that we may move immediately to take over a revised lease so that the park may be re-opened for the 2010 season.” Company officials are making plans to begin construction on the site within the next few months.

Southern Star Amusement’s new office is located at 10555 Lake Forest Boulevard, Deer Park Building 3-G, New Orleans, LA 70127. Office number is 504.324.1985.

#### **About Southern Star Amusement**

Southern Star Amusement, Inc., is a location based entertainment development company dedicated to creating quality, family friendly attractions. More information can be found at

<http://www.southernstaramusement.com>.

*Contributed by Southern Star Amusement*

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**Join the New Orleans East Group on FaceBook!**

# **Jazz City Java Coffeehouse**

presents...

## **“A Taste of Praise”**

Sunday, July 26th, 12:00 p.m.—2:00 p.m.

5555 Bullard Ave. 245-8282

Join us after Sunday service for a delightful  
afternoon! Enjoy a continental brunch  
while listening to the contemporary  
worship music of

*Eric Spooner*

“Eric Spooner is one of the most inspiring Christian Worship  
artists rising on the music and ministry scene today.”

**Seating is limited!**

**Donation: \$9.00**

**Councilmember Willard-Lewis  
Announces Community Tour of  
UNO Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Studies  
July 18, 2009 in Lake Catherine Neighborhood  
21000 Chef Menteur Highway**

District "E" Councilmember Cynthia Willard-Lewis, along with the nonprofit Foundation for Coastal and Habitat Enhancement Studies, announced a community tour of the University of New Orleans (UNO) Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Science (PIES) on Saturday, July 18, 2009. The facility, formerly the triplex boathouse, is located in the Lake Catherine neighborhood in District "E."

The PIES will serve as a research facility for scientists and educators to study the marine life and aspects of the Pontchartrain estuary, all the way from Pass Manchac to the Chandeleur Islands. The facility will also provide classrooms for a program that will bring middle and high school students to the facility to introduce them to wetlands and marine biology.

The PIES facility features approximately 4,300 square feet of air conditioned labs and classrooms, along with a kitchen and dining space. The facility is also American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant and equipped with an elevator.

Councilmember Willard-Lewis said, "This event is a great opportunity for the community to come in and view this great new facility before UNO moves in and begins operating. This is a true sign of the ongoing recovery and reinvestment in District E."

**Contact:** Clarence Bickham  
Chief of Staff  
Office of District "E" Councilmember Cynthia Willard-Lewis  
Phone: (504) 658-1055  
Cell: (504) 485-1979  
Email: [cbickham@cityofno.com](mailto:cbickham@cityofno.com)

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

*Mayor's Office of Communications*  
**City Holds Largest Auction of the year**  
*July 16, 2009*

At the largest car auction of the year, the City sold 183 abandoned cars at the Almonaster Auto Pound. These vehicles had either been left and abandoned on neighborhood streets, have been discarded, unclaimed by residents, or may have been abandoned due to excessive parking fines or fees. Funding collected will go towards the city's general funds. Providing an excellent opportunity for citizens to purchase a car for a very good price, the auction will clear the pound and allow the city to remove more abandoned cars from neighborhoods.

Visit [www.brownsauction.com](http://www.brownsauction.com) to register for future auctions.

## What's Wrong With New Orleans East?

*The following is a collection of excerpts from conversations and meetings with residents of eastern New Orleans over the past several months. While it may seem negative at times, it is meant to instill hope in our future and challenge each of you to do your part in bringing our area up to its full potential. These issues are not new to any of us who live in the area, but we should begin to view these issues differently. Instead of repeating them over and over in our meetings, we should try to develop a solution to at least one of these issues. It doesn't matter how small the solution may seem—it could be as small as writing a letter—but bring it to a meeting, and be ready to galvanize the support of your neighbors in completing that particular task.*

About 15 minutes east of downtown New Orleans lies a community of approximately 40 neighborhoods, devastated by flooding associated with breached levees in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. In New Orleans East, or the East, as it is commonly called, the majority of the homes in the area received four to six feet of water from the storm surge and broken levees. The immediate cry of the politicians was for the area--roughly 100 square miles, and before Katrina, about 40% of the city's tax base--to become green space. The area, politicians argued, was too far gone, and at too great of a risk for future damage from storms, to rebuild.

Today, that community has largely rebuilt itself. Residents in the area received few of the Road Home grants that were made available, so with insurance money, savings and/or personal loans, these residents rebuilt their lives. Although the politicians no longer publicly speak of turning the area into green space, one has to wonder if that still isn't the plan. Although it is estimated that the majority of the previous 90,000 residents have returned, there are still few signs of economic recovery.

While other parts of the city bask in the shadows of cranes rebuilding damaged buildings, or assembling entirely new structures, there is little development in the East. There is only one major grocery store to service the entire area, and only recently, a Lowe's home improvement store joined the lone Home Depot store that existed prior to Katrina. A plethora of granite, cabinet and flooring stores abound in the area. Methodist and Lakeland hospitals sit desolate, though it is believed that they could be operational with minimal effort.

Lack of economic development is frustrating enough, but that frustration is compounded by the fact that residents are frequently told that feasibility studies must be completed before change can take place. Residents find it hard to understand why millions of dollars should be spent for someone to say that we need services when it's obvious that they are needed because none exist.

### History

Although New Orleans East is lagging in disaster recovery, many of its problems began long before Katrina. In the seventies, developers had a vision of creating a middle class suburban area east of downtown New Orleans. This fresh, new territory would be called Orlandia, though the effort was later abandoned. In spite of this, upscale homes sprang up around seven lake communities in the area, and a large mall, complete with a skating rink and posh stores served the residents of this new suburbia. Several local businesses provided jobs to inhabitants of the East, which offered convenient places to live for highly skilled workers like engineers and computer programmers at locations such as NASA, Martin Marietta and the USDA's National Finance Center.

But this tide of prosperity began to recede. The eighties brought a double blow to the East in the form of a slowing economy related to the oil slump, and a disproportionate amount of subsidized rentals in the area, relative to the rest of the city. Unfortunately, the high concentration of subsidized housing lowered the economic base of the area, and additionally, many of the originally beautiful apartments, became poorly maintained eyesores. Businesses began to leave the area in droves. The Plaza mall lost its edge as a unique shopping center when the skating rink shut down. Soon, the majority of the businesses in the mall seemed to cater solely to young urban shoppers. Upscale clothing stores were replaced with large numbers of hip hop

urban wear and athletic shoe stores, which were of little interest to middle-aged shoppers.

For years, residents sat helplessly by while businesses left the area and slum lords neglected many of the massive apartment complexes. These complexes were reduced to ruins right before the eyes of its powerless neighbors, and said to all who passed through the area on Interstate 10 that New Orleans East was a community of widespread blight.

## **Then Katrina Hit**

Although no one believes that Katrina was good for the area, there was a widely held belief that it provided the opportunity to correct some past mistakes. Maybe now those neglected and crumbling apartment complexes could be removed once and for all. Maybe now we could enforce building codes so that the owners of those complexes still in existence could be required to maintain those properties. Maybe now economic development could be planned instead of thrown together in a haphazard manner. Maybe multi-family housing density could be reduced.

That hope was dashed as again, residents sat by powerless while other communities, some that weren't even damaged by the ravaging winds of Katrina or the rushing flood waters that followed, received recovery dollars that should have gone to the areas most devastated. Over three years after Katrina, some New Orleans East streets still sit dark after nightfall. There is no library, an unfinished park, no fire stations, and few restaurants. In meeting after meeting with city representatives, inadequate explanations are given for the slow pace of rebuilding in New Orleans East, and the paltry amount of dollars that have been spent on our projects.

Community groups must constantly be on guard for unscrupulous developers, many of whom are non-Louisianians, who build housing that does not fit the fabric of the neighborhoods in which they build. Some feel that developers should be required to live in areas in which they build--that way they could experience what residents experience. Although the city has drafted a Master Plan, there seems to be no overall plan for development in the East. This is evident when outside developers continue to build apartments for which there is no demand, based on the significant number of vacancies in existing complexes. These developers, driven by government tax credits, continue to build high concentrations of "affordable" multi-family housing in one area, instead of disbursing such housing throughout the metropolitan area. Although other parishes, and even communities in Orleans Parish, have openly stated that they do not want subsidized housing, Eastern New Orleans groups who make the same arguments against such housing are criticized and labeled as "elitists".

Eastern New Orleans is often seen as the area's dumping ground – for proposed projects like crowded, poorly maintained apartments; landfills and garbage dumps, a juvenile prison, and most recently, a halfway house for rehabilitating drug abusers and dealers. Waterfront properties are prized throughout the country, yet ours goes virtually ignored.

Eastern New Orleanians are not whiners and complainers, as many believe. But when, after almost four years, the public library, hospitals, police stations, fire stations, the park, the mall, the schools, major retail centers, and apartments are in need of major repairs or demolition, while other parts of the city are thriving, residents of the East understandably feel left out and neglected.

## **What Residents Are Doing**

Residents have not given up, though. Rather than walk away from beautifully renovated homes, many of whom have no mortgages, residents have chosen to stay and fight. In an effort to support those businesses that have returned to or established themselves in the area, organizers have coordinated a campaign to shop in the East, and only in the East, on the fourth weekend of every month. This can be a major sacrifice for residents when clothing is needed, or a meal from a popular restaurant chain is desired.

Neighborhoods have organized homeowner associations, and groups like the Eastern New Orleans Neighborhood Advisory Commission meet regularly to learn of resident issues and work to find solutions. Groups are working together to dispel the ill-conceived notion that New Orleans East is a crime-ridden, low-income slum area.

We hope that you will do your part also. Let's not make the same mistakes. If you do not live in the East, learn about the area and tell others about the treasures found here. Take a detour from your normal route and drive through the area. What you see along I-10 is not all there is to the East. New Orleans East has:

- Envidable real estate--from newly built or refurbished apartment complexes, to quiet family-friendly subdivisions with modest yet beautiful homes, to gated subdivisions filled with palatial mansions—many nestled among the largest number of lakes of any other community in the metropolitan area.
- Recreation and entertainment venues in the form of Bally's Casino, Six Flags and Lincoln Beach, certainly in need of work to get them to their full potential, but capable of attracting locals and tourists alike, just the same.
- Forty percent of the city's tax base and 60% of the city's land mass.
- One of the highest per capita incomes in the New Orleans metropolitan area.
- Joe Brown Park, one of the largest suburban parks in the nation, complete with tennis courts and an Olympic-sized swimming pool.
- Historical sites, such as Fort Pike and Fort Macomb, integral to the area's rich history.
- The Louisiana Nature Center and Bayou Sauvage, large nature refuges teeming with exotic wildlife.
- The most culturally diverse area in the city, with one of the nation's largest Vietnamese communities.
- A 7,000-acre industrial park, Fortune 500 employers, and ample retail space.
- Multiple modes of transporting people and goods—from an airport, to major roadways, railways and waterways.

It is understandable that the French Quarter and all of its tourist attractions are considered New Orleans' crown jewel, but New Orleans East is most certainly the city's diamond in the rough, and with so much unrealized potential, it definitely deserves to be renewed.

Opportunity might live in Jefferson Parish, but it's rising in the East.

