

THE HOLY CROSS SCHOOL

A COLLEGE PREPARATORY MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Conducted by The Brothers of Holy Cross

OFFICE OF HEADMASTER



March 14, 1994

J. Ron Brinson
President and Chief Executive Officer
Port of New Orleans
P.O. Box 60046
New Orleans, La. 70160

Dear Mr. Brinson:

Enclosed please find a copy of a report prepared and approved by the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association. This report contains recommendations related to the mitigation of the impact of the proposed new lock construction project on the Industrial Canal.

As the chair of the subcommittee appointed by Vivienne Blair, President of our association, I can assure you that considerable time was spent over the past several months in the process which resulted in this report. Several draft copies were given close scrutiny and after a careful review by the Board of Directors a copy was sent to each member. The report was finally adopted at the regularly scheduled meeting on March 11, 1994.

After meeting with you and the members of your staff on November 8, 1993, I was reassured that the concerns of the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association would not fall on deaf ears. If there are any questions about this report, please direct them to either Vivienne Blair (945-5026) or to me (942 3169). We look forward to a response at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Brother Stephen Walsh, C.S.C.
Brother Stephen Walsh, C.S.C.



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To the Port of New Orleans
From the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association

Recommendations Related to the Mitigation of the Impact
of the Proposed New Lock Construction Project on the
Industrial Canal

Submitted: March 14, 1994

Introduction

In the fall of 1993, the Board of Directors of the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association created a committee charged with the responsibility to present a formal set of recommendations to mitigate the impact of the proposed construction for a new lock on the Industrial Canal. *As approved by the membership during the regular meeting on March 10, 1994, the Board of Directors was further directed to formally submit these reflections and recommendations to the Port of New Orleans and US Corps of Army Engineers who are jointly responsible for this construction project.*

Historical Background

The Holy Cross Historic District is a neighborhood created by the Industrial Canal which was first opened in 1923. In fact, there are residents still living in the neighborhood who remember being displaced by the original construction project. Just as individual lives have been inextricably bound to the canal, so too it is clear that the future of our neighborhood is destined to be affected by the proposed Industrial Canal lock improvements.

On March 28, 1990, an explosive front page article titled "Waterway Project Targets 9th Ward" appeared in the *Times Picayune*. In part, it read:

The Army Corps of Engineers said Tuesday it has scrapped -- Violet as a site for a new inland waterway and is focusing on cutting a swath through New Orleans 9th Ward to make room for a new lock in the Industrial Canal.

The project...would force about 625 people in 200 homes in the Holy Cross Historic District to move, corps officials said. Ten businesses also would be displaced....

Talk of building a new waterway to replace the Industrial Canal Lock has been kicked around since 1956. The 34-year interlude has lulled many people into believing construction would never begin.

110 But [Col Richard V.] Gorski...and the managing director of the Port of New Orleans, David A. Wagner, all say the new cut is inevitable. "I'm convinced it's going to become a reality," Gorski said. "The only question is how long will it take. The answer is probably seven years to get it off the ground."

Since this premature and unfortunate announcement, the Holy Cross Neighborhood has visibly declined. It has suffered from neglect by the city; suffered from a lack of confidence in the general population evidenced by the lack of home purchases and a notable slackening of historical renovation in the area, and suffered from the relocation of long standing residents who saw the neglect and fled. This has contributed to the increase of both the number of abandoned houses and neighborhood blight.

Those who have stayed have suffered from a significant drop in property values. By late 1992, even after significant changes had been adopted in the plans removing all risk of dislocation of homes and businesses, Col. Michael Diffley, Army Corps of Engineers chief in New Orleans was quoted in the *Times Picayune* (November 21, 1992), "Picture trying to sell your house during eight years of construction."

To remedy this situation caused by the premature release of information as to the destruction of 200 dwellings, and to the interruption of city utilities and services, the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association respectfully recommend that consideration be given by US Army Corps of Engineers/Port of New Orleans in their mitigation plans for projects which will directly enhance the neighborhood thereby attracting new home owners and rebuild public confidence even as construction begins.

The Enhancement of the Neighborhood to Improve and Sustain Property Values

From our "Blueprint for Neighborhood Enhancement" we submit the following projects for consideration:

All drainage ditches should be removed and replaced with subsurface drainage. Likewise the streets should be paved together with curbs and sidewalks installed.

Provision of funds to provide for adequate city personnel to be assigned to the neighborhoods affected by the canal construction. Specifically, there is a need for city inspectors to deal with abandoned housing, trash dumping, as well other health and safety issues.

Removal of all utility poles and placement of utility lines underground. While this would improve the appearance of the neighborhood, in practical terms it would facilitate the "infilling" of historical buildings from other parts of the city into the Holy Cross Historic District.

Attracting New Home Owners and Retaining Existing Home Owners
 According to Patricia H. Gay, Executive Director of Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans, "The leading cause of unemployment, business closures and declining tax revenues for city services is population decline, especially decline of the middle class." (*Preservation in Print*, December, 1993, p. 4)

Residents of all income levels must be attracted by funding marketing campaigns that promote the livability of the neighborhood in general and specifically during the period of construction.

Working with the Preservation Resource Center, the neighborhood needs to consider mounting an aggressive campaign "Come Home" incentive program addressing the number of successful persons in the community who were raised in the neighborhood.

Addition of neighborhoods impacted by canal/bridge construction as a specific criterion for eligibility of existing HUD programs and the declaration of these neighborhoods as specific priority target areas for existing local, state and federal home improvement programs.

Presently, it is difficult to get insurance and mortgages for properties that cost less than \$50,000. It is also difficult for some elderly on fixed incomes to maintain their property to insurable standards. These realities impede neighborhood development and must be addressed to insure the rich diversity that has always been characteristic of the Holy Cross Historic District. In part, it calls for banks, lending institutions, and insurance companies to define policies which are sensitive. In part, it calls for broadening the eligibility criteria for certain federal programs administered locally.

In order to attract new home owners, we recommend the creation of an incentive program to encourage teachers, policemen, firemen, and city workers and employees of non profit corporations to purchase homes and to initiate renovation projects.

Residents in the immediate vicinity of the existing St. Claude Bridge who wish to move or sell during the construction process should receive assistance in relocating temporarily or permanently.

Sustaining Existing Small Businesses and Encouraging New Investment

"Attracting homeowners of all income levels...paving of streets and providing increased police protection will stimulate business and other economic development..." according to Patricia H. Gay,

Executive Director of Preservation Resource Center (op.cit., p.4) Small businesses on St. Claude Street will be particularly affected by the loss of traffic when the bridge is closed. It is this traffic which creates the threshold market necessary to survival.

Moreover, the general appearance of St. Claude Street defines the first impression of the neighborhood by new homeowners and prospective parents considering Holy Cross School. Encouraging economic development and the location of various public service agencies along this corridor would enhance the entire neighborhood.

We recommend that consideration be given for creating a "reduced tax zone" in which city sales and property taxes are reduced and/or subsidized by mitigation funds. A program of reduced property taxes might serve as an incentive to encourage new business development and relieve the burden for existing businesses. A modest reduction in the sales tax could help maintain the loyalty of old customers and attract new business.

Historical Identity As a Property Value

Because of the erosion of historical district renovation guidelines caused by the recurring exceptions made by city officials, there needs to be improvements made to enhance the historical identity of the neighborhood:

Provision of mitigation funds to insure adequate funding of the Historic District Landmarks Commission will insure a strong advocacy group which will benefit all residents in the neighborhoods potentially affected by canal construction.

Inclusion of representation of the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans as well as the Historic District Landmarks Commission in whatever plan is implemented for the administration of mitigation funds.

Installation of street signs appropriate to an historical district for all streets including "Holy Cross Historical District" together with the street name.

Installation of improved street lighting appropriate to an historical district and done with subsurface wiring.

Provision of funds for the placement of historical signs on St. Claude Avenue at the beginning and end of the Holy Cross Historic District and on all homes listed in the National Historic Register.

Creation of a trolley car line from the Central Business District all way along St. Claude to Jackson Barracks and

the Chalmette National Battlefield for the purpose of accelerating revitalization.

Enhancement of the Levee as a Neighborhood Asset

Bounded to the west by the levee and the canal and to the south by the levee and the river, there is a new awareness that this is an attractive asset which we sometimes take for granted. The Holy Cross Neighborhood Association is committed to taking initiatives that would make this a more vital part of our community.

The formulation of a long range plan for the riverfront in the Holy Cross Neighborhood from the canal east to the parish line be conducted immediately to be facilitated by the Port of New Orleans including the neighborhood residents and appropriate local agencies.

The levee in the Holy Cross Neighborhood be declared part of the Jean Lafitte National Park System and given a permanent fully-staffed ranger station.

Construction of a jogging path and bicycle path along the levee with direct input and participation by the neighbors in both its design, implementation, and evaluation.

Install lighting near the river for security and protection so that the levee may also be used for recreation. Place trash receptacles and benches with a guaranteed permanent maintenance program.

Within our "Blueprint for Transportation," we remark upon the use of water taxis, river ferries, and the consideration of regular tour boat docking in order to visit the historical sites including Jackson Barracks in our neighborhood.

Neighborhood Security

A safe and secure neighborhood is the first priority consistently expressed by the members of the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association. It is of considerable concern to the residents that a situation which is already aggravated will only further deteriorate during the period of canal construction.

The Industrial Canal is both a real and psychological barrier which isolates the Lower 9th Ward and the Holy Cross Historic District neighborhood from ready and easy access to city services. In real terms, there is no health clinic to provide even emergency care nor is there any stationary ambulance service.

The neighborhood presently lies within the jurisdiction of the Fifth District Police Command whose boundaries stretch from Gentilly to the river and from Esplanade on the west to the St. Bernard Parish line on the east. The headquarters located west of the canal, receive from seven to ten thousand calls per month requesting assistance or police presence. In the fall of 1993, it was widely reported that the Fifth District Police Command had only four police cars that were operational.

With the flight of residents from the neighborhood and the increase of abandoned houses in last two or three years, long time residents have become aware of an increasingly visible drug problem in the Holy Cross Historic District.

In order to maintain a safe and secure neighborhood for the residents as well as attract new home owners, and restore public confidence in the area:

In the light of the present demands on the 5th District and given the long duration of the canal construction we believe that a strong case can be made to create a *new 9th District Police Command in the 9th Ward*. We strongly believe that the so called NOPD substation on Claiborne and Caffin should be replaced by this new police command as had been earlier projected to be built by the city.

It should be noted that the substation has never been fully equipped as a police command communication post. A police command with adequate vehicles and equipment dedicated solely to responding to the needs of citizens residing in the construction-impacted area would alleviate the anxiety about security in the future. Finally, we strongly recommend that during the entire period of construction, funds be provided by the mitigation plan to fully staff this police command with members of the NOPD on a twenty-four basis.

We believe that the use of *helicopters* should be incorporated into security planning to enhance police surveillance and to increase mobility of the police. Further, helicopters might also be available for medical evacuation.

We expect the Army Corps of Engineers and the Port of New Orleans to assume leadership in the definition and implementation of *clearly defined emergency procedures* which anticipate problems. We further expect that such plans would not only insure the continuation and enhancement of existing city of New Orleans support systems but that plans would be made for establishing formal cooperation between Orleans and St. Bernard police services and emergency support systems to the benefit of the entire Lower 9th Ward.

We expect the Army Corps of Engineers and the Port of New Orleans to assume leadership in the definition and implementation of **emergency evacuation procedures** both in terms of evacuation routes and emergency shelters for all the neighborhoods east of the canal during the period of construction. Our concern for clearly defined procedures primarily anticipates a natural disaster. However, those of us living on the river and in the vicinity of the canal are not entirely naive about the volatile nature of some of the cargoes which pass by our homes in barges and vessels.

Finally, attention is drawn to other sections of this report which focus on transportation and on education. In this regard we underscore the concern for **safety related to transporting students** to the various public schools (McDonough 19, Lawless Senior High School, Hardin School Edison School, and Lawless Elementary) together with St. David's Parochial School, Ephesus Academy and Holy Cross Middle School and High School. Furthermore, many secondary school students leave the neighborhood to attend schools located west of the Industrial Canal.

Transportation

Transportation to the CBD, uptown, and expressways will be severely affected with the widening of the canal and the proposed two year closure of the St. Claude Street Bridge.

In addressing this issue the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association brainstormed in an effort to create as many options as possible. Using this creative "no-holds-barred" approach produced a variety of ideas.

A comprehensive RTA transportation plan with smaller buses, shuttles, and "jitneys" providing frequent and additional routes to and from mainline buses on Claiborne, Florida, Galvez, Caffin, Forstall, Jourdan and Delery. Free or highly subsidized fares with transfers available.

Trolley Car to Jackson Barracks and Chalmette National Battlefield.

Consideration of rerouting the railroad spur which comes down the middle of St. Claude Street.

Possibility of temporary bridge paralleling the riverside of the St. Claude bridge.

An up and down river ferry from Holy Cross to Carrollton with stops at Bywater, Marigny, CBD, Jackson, Napoleon and Carrollton. There should be a mechanism, perhaps passes only during peak hours or subsidized fares to insure residents of the affected areas are guaranteed places. This

would be a benefit to school children who travel far uptown daily as commuters in the work force.

Water taxis: swift, flexible vessels which would operate on the same principle as the ferry except they run more frequently. Free or subsidized fares with transfers available.

Automobile Transportation:

A comprehensive plan preparing streets and main arteries for altered traffic patterns. This should include wide neighborhood consultation to identify those detour routes which neighbors actually use in times of temporary emergency often ignoring or bypassing the "official" detours.

Provision for frequent and continuous preventative maintenance and repair of all heavily traveled streets

Provision for maintenance/gas subsidies in the form of coupons because of delays and wear and tear. An alternative would be the creation of an incentive program to use public transportation, to car pool, or to use a park and ride option.

Provision of resources to adequately staff police for permanent traffic patrol during prime drive time.

Provision of alternate lanes to facilitate the flow of traffic uptown and to CBD in the morning and return flow in the evening.

Holy Cross Middle School and High School Transportation Program

Holy Cross School was founded in 1879 and remains today as the largest free enterprise employer and business in the neighborhood. To sustain its enrollment, the school has for nearly twenty years maintained a fleet of more than twenty buses which transport approximately 500 students a day from Metarie to Mandeville and from uptown to Terrytown. Excessive delays which cause additional travel time, interrupt attendance, or unduly extend the school day will only erode the confidence of families and contribute to their reluctance to consider Holy Cross School as a viable option for young men between the 4th and 12th grades. Therefore, planning must insure that Holy Cross is not adversely affected. Likewise, the rerouting of these buses onto already narrow and crowded neighborhood streets has the potential of aggravating the neighbors. Provision must be made preparing adequate corridors for a fleet of twenty buses who enter and leave the neighborhood all at approximately the same time.

Health, Safety and Welfare

The health, safety and welfare of our residents--particularly our children and our elderly--must be insured despite the disruptions anticipated by the widening of the canal and the replacement of the St. Claude bridge.

Some options for mitigating disruptions are:

Policies and procedures which provide for readily accessible **medical evacuation**, including helicopters and paramedics for emergencies. This may also be the opportunity to develop a formal cooperative arrangement with the various military installations in the immediate area of the construction to benefit the community health services.

Formal arrangements with St. Bernard Parish hospitals for treatment of our residents.

Establishment or enhancement of a **full-service clinic** east of the Industrial Canal. The clinic should include the following minimum services: a full laboratory, x-ray capacity, geriatric and family practices for these specific populations including case management, home health/homemaker services, family planning, counseling, screening and preventive health services, a subsidized pharmacy program, health career program for teens, an interface program with Lawless and Caffin clinics, twenty-four hour security and transportation when referral is necessary.

The clinic would accept all health insurance and would treat the uninsured. Any difference between the cost of service and ability to pay because of under-insurance or lack of insurance would be paid by the mitigation plan. Funds for special services would also be covered by mitigation funds.

The Tulane School of Public Health and neighborhood are in the process of establishing a partnership to improve health and health related projects in the neighborhood. This emerging partnership could be enhanced by the participation of the Port of New Orleans and Army Corps of Engineers.

The enhancement of New Orleans **fire fighting** equipment and personnel assigned permanently below the canal. Formal arrangements with St. Bernard Parish, military and commercial facilities should be strengthened or implemented.

The creation and dissemination of a viable emergency evacuation plan by Corps of Engineers, the Port of New Orleans, FEMA, and the city. It is expected that this process would solicit wide community participation.

Enhancement of Neighborhood Welfare

There should be integrated community services for elderly and families which complement the health services planning.

This would include transportation, home help, respite care, expanded "meals on wheels," consumer advocacy and education, entitlement assistance, adult day care all of which would directly service our senior residents.

Services for families would include family life education, case management, goal setting, employment and training assistance. A neighborhood center/settlement house which would provide substantive programs for teenagers and young mothers.

Of particular note are existing plans and efforts to create a playground within the Holy Cross Historic District. We are particularly encouraged that The Port of New Orleans has demonstrated a generous and willing spirit in presenting alternative sites for consideration.

Education and the Schools

There are no public schools located in the Holy Cross Historical District. However, the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association recognizes the fact the quality of public education "below the bridge" has a profound impact on everyone who lives and does business in the area.

There are serious problems associated with the construction phase of the canal project that must be addressed by the mitigation plan and of utmost importance is student health and safety in the event of a catastrophic emergency as well as the daily personal emergencies experienced in each school setting.

We recommend that each school in the area--both public and private--be funded through mitigation funds to hire a full time school nurse.

The curriculum in each school will be likewise impacted by canal construction and bridge closure in that students will be cut off from ready access to the nearest public library. General and much needed enrichment activities such as field trips, speakers, and cultural events will be difficult if not impossible to schedule since these activities require exact arrival and departure times. Consulting and support from the central office will be curtailed. For the schools without air conditioning the noise level during construction will seriously impact instruction.

Given the serious problems that will negatively impact learning, it must be noted that the students enrolled in the public schools located below the bridge are already rated among the lowest

achieving in the city. This is even more alarming when one considers that these schools are not public housing project schools.

Data to be included is currently being gathered for us by a member of the school board.

Name	Percentage of students scoring above 50th percentile on 1992 Calif Achievement Test	
	Reading	Math

Hardin	28.7	31.6
Edison	30.3	33.1
Lawless	19.2	18.7
McDonough 19	21.0	21.5
System Wide Range Elementary	11.7/87.1	14.9/91.8
Lawless Middle	15.7	11.1
System Wide Middle School	5.9/92.5	7.8/93.5
Lawless Senior	17.5	16.9
System Wide Range High School	2.5/99	4.6/98.6

Admittedly, there are plans to build a new school, Martin Luther King, Jr. School, which will incorporate a public library. However, the citizens can not wait for the completion of this one school which may be delayed, as the sole answer to improving educational conditions in the Lower Ninth Ward.

We recommend that funds be designated for a full time librarian in each school with a generous budget for new library acquisitions.

We recommend that each school receive funds for cultural enrichment activities and for hiring consultants as needed.

Schools should receive funds to air condition all instructional space in the school.

Without dramatic and immediate attention to the educational issues we have defined, then other mitigation efforts will be seriously compromised. Strong schools are characteristic of strong neighborhoods.

Conclusion

We submit to the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Port of New Orleans that the public schools in this area have been neglected by the public school system in the same way that the area has been neglected by the city. Just as public confidence in the neighborhood has been eroded by the uncertainty surrounding this project, we believe that same ambiguity has adversely affected the confidence of public officials in the long term stability and future of our neighborhood.

We contend that since the March, 1990, announcement and despite changes in the plans we have already been adversely affected. For us reflection upon the proposed mitigation plan is not an hypothetical exercise. We have already experienced a loss of vitality and are anxious to get on with the project and see this as an opportunity to reinvigorate and renew our neighborhood.

Addendum: From the Director, Patricia H. Gay, Preservation in Print, December, 1993, p.4.

(This report was prepared by a subcommittee appointed by the President of the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association and chaired by Brother Stephen Walsh, C.S.C., Headmaster, Holy Cross School. The report underwent the close scrutiny of four drafts. A copy of the report was sent to each member of the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association prior to the regularly scheduled March 11, 1994 meeting of the Association. At that time it was approved to be submitted to the Port of New Orleans.)

From the DIRECTOR

Patricia H. Gay, Executive Director
Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans

Campaign Issues

The following is a partial summary of campaign issues as developed in meetings of the PRC Legislative Review Committee, chaired by Willard Henson, and the PRC Preservation Council, chaired by Diane Hamon. PRC members are requested to ask mayoral and councilmatic candidates questions regarding these issues at every opportunity.

Crime

Public safety is absolutely essential. Adequate police protection must be provided to all citizens.

Vacant and Blighted Historic Properties

Vacant and blighted historic buildings that are not in danger of collapse should be protected and offered for sale to purchasers regardless of income who would renovate and occupy the properties.

Destroying properties because of crime does not solve the crime problem. Funding must be allocated for boarding up such properties and efficient and effective procedures established for accomplishing the sale and renovation of the properties.

Problems that impede the expropriation and tax adjudication process must be aggressively addressed. The expropriation process must be streamlined. The lengthy process currently discourages buyers.

An incentive must be developed for the purchase and renovation of blighted properties.

The Community Improvement Agency must be adequately funded to implement the expropriation process. Funding must be allocated for marketing properties on the Community Improvement Agency Blighted Property List. Funding for appraisals should be allocated at no cost to low-income persons interested in purchasing properties on the Blighted Property List.

When funds from any source are available to the city, blighted properties and historic neighborhood enhancements should be a priority over funding new development, by strengthening existing programs and creating new ones.

Urban Middle Class

The leading cause of unemployment, business closures and declining tax

revenues for city services is population decline, especially decline of the middle class. Elected officials must articulate this problem and generate community awareness that New Orleans must increase its urban middle class in order to be a functional and dynamic city, for the benefit of all citizens but especially the urban poor.

Residents of all income levels must be attracted by funding marketing campaigns that promote the livability of New Orleans.

Residents must be retained and attracted through policies that respect neighborhood needs and amenities in all city departments.

Residents of all economic, social, and racial backgrounds must feel welcome in our city and in any neighborhood.

Historic Preservation

Designation of historic districts and landmarks is the most effective tool immediately available for protecting historic neighborhoods and architecturally significant buildings, therefore adequate funding of the Vieux Carre Commission and the Historic District Landmarks Commission is essential.

The historic character of the city and its protection should be a priority of municipal government and a factor in all decisions.

The historic built environment of New Orleans defines the city; it has been declared the most unique in North America. Because it is the collection of buildings and the urban plan that make New Orleans special, and because historic preservation represents a commitment to the good of the community, elected officials must speak out for the protection of the historic built environment whenever necessary.

There should be a commitment to the preservation commissions to respect and uphold their decisions.

New Zoning Ordinance

The new zoning ordinance must reflect the strong commitment to New Orleans neighborhoods and historic architecture and ambience as put forth in the City Master Plan.

Appointments to Boards and Commissions

For government to function smoothly and efficiently and with the confidence of

all citizens it is essential to appoint the most qualified people possible to all boards and commissions, in a timely manner. Recommendations from professional groups should be sought whenever possible. Residents must be adequately represented on any board or commission that affects their neighborhood.

Enforcement

A major and critical concern of citizens for several years has been failure to enforce the building and zoning codes, including the failure to enforce penalties. Success in revising and establishing legislation and ordinances that better serve needs of the city today are irrelevant if they are not enforced. Penalties should be devised to cover costs of effective enforcement citywide, so funding should not be an issue.

Cultural Tourism Marketing and Development

At a time when millions of dollars will be spent marketing casino gambling in New Orleans, it is more critical than ever to strengthen marketing of the city as a cultural tourism destination, and marketing cultural attractions.

Casino Gambling

Increased jobs and tax revenues from casino gambling must benefit the city in a meaningful way (for example, in Atlantic City after 15 years of increased jobs and tax revenues from casino gambling, there have been no significant improvements—the city suffers even more today from blight, homelessness and other problems). Specific efforts must be made to retain residents who benefit from employment through gambling and to attract new residents to our declining neighborhoods. Otherwise, blight and crime will continue to spread, negating any potential benefits from casino jobs and tax revenues.

Vieux Carre

The Vieux Carre, a national treasure, is the heart of our city. Its authenticity, unique character and viability as a mixed-use historic neighborhood must be protected from increasing commercialism, and residential use should be encouraged and supported by all governmental authorities.

The 25-year ban on new hotels in the Vieux Carre must be maintained.

Transportation Planning and Development

Perceptual parking must be developed for all casino gambling and the Vieux Carre.

Additional street car lines wherever they are placed will bring revitalization. Additional lines should be a major planning and development objective.

Extend riverfront street car up and down riverfront as much as possible.

The Canal streetcar must be a priority.

Limit size and speed of buses through historic neighborhoods.

Do not plan major traffic corridors through historic neighbors, such as the Warehouse District.

Urban Planning and Design

New Orleans is possibly the best planned city in the United States, with all problems stemming from urban planning and development errors of recent decade. Efforts must be made to correct these errors through proactive planning and design, and new proposals must be evaluated for their impact on the surviving aspects of the historic plan that has served the city so well.

The City Planning Department must be adequately funded as a priority, and must have security from year to year that needs will be met.

Additionally, since the appearance of the city is a factor in economic development and quality of life, adequate funding must be allocated to maintenance of parks, neutral grounds, sanitation, litter collection, and streets.

Major Inner-City Trouble Spots

In certain areas of the city there is major decline, disinvestment, deterioration and demolition. Solutions can be undertaken that build on the remaining historic architecture, inner-city location and convenience, and diversity. Attracting homeowners of all income levels, attracting major investment for residential development of all income levels, design review, paving of streets and providing increased police protection will stimulate business and other economic development in these areas.

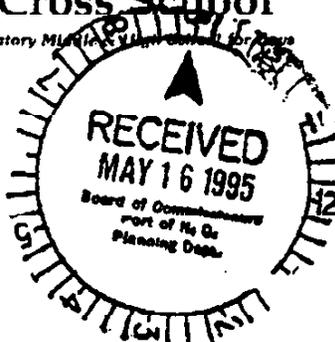
Holy Cross School

A College Preparatory Mission School for Boys

OFFICE OF THE HEADMASTER

May 15, 1995

Lydia Z. Jemison
Planning Officer
Board of Commissioners of
the Port of New Orleans
P.O. Box 60046
New Orleans, La. 70160



Dear Ms. Jemison,

I should like to take this opportunity to respond to the *New Lock and Connecting Channels Draft Evaluation Report Mitigation Plan (April 1995)* which you sent under a cover letter of April 28, 1995 announcing a meeting on May 2, for the purpose of discussing this report. While I did attend that meeting, I should like to take this opportunity to formally share some observations.

First of all, a general reaction to some of the response of "Corps" or "Dock Board" personnel. To suggest that those of us unfortunate enough to live in close proximity to the Inner Harbor Navigational Canal have a narrow view of this project and in our concern for own needs are failing to see the global good of the American economy misses the mark entirely. Students of elementary psychology are aware that "food" and shelter are at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. To put it frankly, you are messing with our homes and an improved GNP isn't going to necessarily put bread on our table.

My primary suggestion then is that your report demonstrate a real sensitivity to the concerns of my neighbors some of whom summed up their feelings after our recent meeting with the comment, "We don't count."

At the meeting we were encouraged to recommend improvements to the draft under discussion. Here are a few suggestions:

Put yourselves in our shoes.

In our meetings you keep telling us we are neighbors and partners but no where do you tell our story. From my point of view, your report lacks a rhetorical style that is calculated to persuade. If you don't care about us, how can we believe that anyone in Vicksburg or Washington, D.C. will care about us? While we are not the primary audience for this report, there seems to be little awareness of us at all. No where is there conveyed a sense of advocacy for the affected neighborhoods.

No where in the body of your report do you articulate solutions in response to our needs. For instance, if you were to admit that our primary concern is neighborhood security as well as admit to

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our perception of mediocre police protection (less than 130 policemen assigned to the Fifth District with a population of 110,000, one of largest in the city) and that we might be justified in our concern that this construction project might further erode an already aggravated situation you would go a long way towards ameliorating our attitude. After all, our police department has been the subject of national news coverage.

However, when your report lacks such detail and never alludes to any formal communication with the Police Department why should we believe that you understand our concerns? A temporary police substation which already exists at the Sanchez Center is not the issue. The issue is that it is neither adequately equipped nor properly staffed. Provision of cars and manpower during the construction period could win you considerably more support.

Another example would be to make provision in the new St. Claude Bridge for trolley car tracks since it is quite possible that this might be more easily done in the initial construction than later on. Couching the case in the eloquent terms articulated by Mark Cooper at the May 2 meeting makes good sense and further "connecting" it to the historic Jackson Barracks strengthens the argument in terms of the federal audience. Your provision for tracks would be one less hurdle for the neighborhoods to jump in making their case locally for the restoration of the street cars.

Those of us who know the neighborhood know that some of the streets defined as official "detour" routes have adjacent and parallel streets in very poor repair. These adjacent streets are bound to become detours to the detours and shortcuts and the already deteriorating streets will fall into further disrepair.

Finally, there is not enough substantive detail in the report to lead one to accept your conclusion that you have developed "a comprehensive plan...insuring that the communities adjacent to the project remain as complete, liveable neighborhoods during and after construction of the project." Nowhere in the body of the report is there a concise description of the neighborhoods affected by this project. Finally, why can't the goal be to insure that these neighborhoods are marginally better off at the end of the project?

Nearly half of the proposed budget is allocated for improvements to the adjacent levee or bridges or to removal of debris by barge. Undoubtedly, these measures will soften the impact of the project. Nevertheless, isn't this simply the cost of doing the job right and might you understand why some may find it self-serving on your part to include these as mitigation rather than construction costs?

Take recent changes into consideration.

Most notably, you should be aware that the Holy Cross Neighborhood is undergoing a remarkable mood shift: from

powerlessness to a sense of empowerment. This is reflected by the vitality of the Holy Cross CDC, the HCNA participation in Christmas in October, and the completion of a sophisticated land use study for HCNA by the College of Urban and Public Affairs at UNO. Specifically, you might reference the emphasis placed on business development of St. Claude in our UNO study in terms of supporting the concept of the business incubator.

In some measure, the "locks project" has brought us together and in "fighting against" the locks we learned how to "work together." And in working together we have found that some of the aspirations articulated in our initial formal response (Exhibit IV of this report) have already been realized. Buying into some of our new agenda in terms of the use of the levee will strengthen your case.

Be more precise.

The report is precise in terms of engineering issues, eg. noise and traffic, and this is reflected in the budgeted line items, eg. \$202,500 for floodwalls and \$514,200 for pedestrian shuttles. It lacks corresponding detail calculated to convince when it comes to our issues and this is reinforced when one notes that in the budget amounts are rounded off, eg. Housing Trust Fund \$1 million and Training Assistance at \$500,000. An example could be to recast the Housing Trust Fund by clarifying eligibility and disbursement of funds.

I am frankly surprised that you didn't do a better job of highlighting with a specific budget line item a project that will directly benefit the neighborhoods, Eg. III, 7, b (page 19)-- improvement of lighting and drainage four blocks each side of canal.

Where detail is provided, Eg. item II, 2, f (school crossing guards), the amount seems modest (only \$40,000 allocated over several years) given the number of schools in the area and the soon to be opened public elementary school on Caffin and Claiborne/Judge Perez.

More convincing would be a proposal which provided schedules which allocated these funds out over several years thereby providing concrete detail.

Holy Cross School and Educational Opportunity

I should like to apply the three principles I have articulated: putting yourself in our shoes, taking recent changes into consideration, and being more precise to a situation I know something about.

More specifically, I should like to respond to item II, 2, k found on page 12 of your report. It alludes to the possible impact of the bridge closure on Holy Cross School. As written it

is too vague and it did not escape my attention that there is no specific line item in the proposed budget to support these eventualities.

First, allow me to address the issue from the point of view of Holy Cross School which will be affected by the closure of the St. Claude Bridge. Allow me to make the following points:

1. The St. Claude Bridge is part of the mythology of Holy Cross School. Generations of Holy Cross men have used the excuse. "The bridge was up," to account for all sorts of lapses in their lives.

2. Holy Cross is a 117-year-old neighborhood and metropolitan school which draws its students from five civil parishes. In some measure this draw is due to the large number of students of legacy enrolled. Approximately ten (10) percent of the students are the fourth generation to enroll, another thirty (30) percent are the third generation and yet another forty (40) percent are the second generation to enroll. With nearly 9,000 alumni of record, Holy Cross can exercise considerable political clout should it chose to do so.

2. We have our own fleet of sixteen school buses which transport sixty (60) percent of our students. Adding fifteen or twenty minutes to an already hour long bus ride would discourage enrollment. Extending the school day would erode participation in after school athletics and extra curricular activities.

3. "Demonstrable losses of enrollment" in a school with grades 4 through 12 erodes income not just for the two years of bridge closure but could have a long term effect from four to six years.

4. Holy Cross is the major private enterprise and one of the largest employers in the neighborhood. A decreased enrollment means fewer jobs.

4. Twenty-five percent of our students come from the West Bank and another sixty (60) percent reside west of the canal. We need something imaginative like a cross river shuttle service (something like the Navy launch between the Navy Station and the Port of Embarkation) and a shuttle system from the Port of Embarkation to a temporary landing at Holy Cross. Our cross town buses could deposit students at an westside water shuttle stop and be ferried to the new Holy Cross landing.

Creating an imaginative solution like this would avoid the issue of possible "monetary compensation for demonstrable losses," and add to the sense of adventure of coming to Holy Cross: it might even increase enrollment. We'd might even change our bumper stickers from "It's worth the ride" to something like "only a boat ride away."

Additionally, there is the broader issue regarding of insuring

educational choice within the neighborhood:

1. There are students in the immediate area and certainly in St. Bernard Parish who have chosen to go other private girls' and boys' high schools throughout the city.
2. Additional time and distance caused by the closure of the bridge makes magnet schools less accessible and could limit educational opportunities for students residing east of the canal.

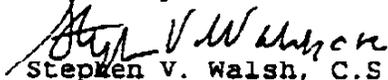
Conclusion

The working draft of the Mitigation Plan seems to have been written by engineers for engineers. The verb "to mitigate" is derived from the Latin word for soft, *mitis*. In its present form your report is for hard hats. It lacks heart.

It should come as no surprise to learn that an integral part of the legacy of Holy Cross School is the conviction "that we will not educate the mind at the expense of the heart."

Finally, it should be clear that this is my own personal response and does not represent any official stance on the part of any other group.

Sincerely,


Stephen V. Walsh, C.S.C., Ph.D.
Headmaster