

# LANDMARKS' PRÉSERVATION



THE JOURNAL OF THE LOUISIANA LANDMARKS SOCIETY

Volume 60, No. 2 November 2022

## OUR NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK AT RISK



One of the most significant historic buildings in New Orleans is at risk. And sadly, the damage is being inflicted by none other than the State of Louisiana.

Madame John's Legacy, located at 632 Dumaine Street in the French Quarter, is one of several historic sites owned by the State of Louisiana and managed by the Louisiana State Museum. Built in 1788-1789, the present house is presumed to be similar to the original building that was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1788. In a 1995 *Times-Picayune* article, Dr. Gene Cizek is quoted as saying, "Of all the historic houses in New Orleans, this is the only one we have that really explains first-generation urban Creole architecture. It's important; this was the typical French Quarter house before the fire of

1788. It's the only example we have of what the Quarter looked like in the 18th century." It is one of the finest examples of French Colonial-style architecture in the country—or at least, it was.

Turns out that the renovations being performed by Ehlinger and Associates are inappropriate at best—but a more accurate description is that they are destructive to the history and significance of the building. Madame John's Legacy is currently one of the few purple-rated buildings in the city, signifying its national significance. It was listed as a National Historic Landmark on April 15, 1970, by the National Park Service, as it "possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating and interpreting the heritage of the United States." But the unsophisticated revamping of the building may cause the rating to be downgraded, or even cause the site to be removed completely from the prestigious listing.

An extremely unfortunate fact is that, unlike citizens renovating a historic building, the state does not have to comply with local rules, including historic preservation rules. And in a strange twist, according to the Madame John's Legacy website, this building is being altered by the Lt. Governor's Office, which oversees state museums as well as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)—the very department that enforces adherence throughout the state to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.

Although the Vieux Carré Commission has no authority over the project, the staff did issue a report for the November 16th VCC meeting. The conclusion states, "It is critical that work not proceed that would irrevocably alter, damage and/or destroy what is arguably not just one of the most important buildings within the City of New Orleans, but also within the entire state, until such time as qualified preservation professionals have been consulted and an appropriate renovation plan be in place. The design and approval process should be reconfigured so that it is much more transparent so that decisions are not made unilaterally. Secretary of Interior Standards and other preservation best practices should be observed. Advice from SHPO, VCC and other preservation experts should be sought and followed. Otherwise, a critical and unique element of our architectural and cultural heritage will be lost forever. VCC will also likely be forced to downgrade its rating of this building if the current proposal goes forward."

Louisiana Landmarks Society, along with other preservation organizations across the city, is diligently advocating for the current work to stop before the damage becomes irreparable. Urgent pleas continue. Organizations are joining together to take whatever actions are available to stop the mutilation of this New Orleans treasure.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It was quite exciting to step in as President of such a well-respected preservation organization as Louisiana Landmarks Society. It is also humbling, as I look back at some of the past presidents who seem almost mythical in their commitment and perseverance.

I thank Past President Sally Reeves for her leadership, particularly facing the many challenges during the COVID lockdown. I accepted the presidential gavel in June, and chaired Landmarks' first in-person board orientation since the pandemic in August, which was enhanced by the invaluable institutional knowledge of Past Presidents

Sandra Stokes, Jim Logan and Michael Duplantier.

Jenny Dyer, the Historic House Manager, continues to contribute to the promotion of historic preservation through her many interviews in the media. She is integral in scheduling events and tours at the Pitot House and Gardens.

And we've made the news! The Pitot House was featured in the August 20 issue of "Inside and Out" in the *Times Picayune/New Orleans Advocate*. Mike Scott's column, Inside History, tells the story of "how the Pitot House, a New Orleans architectural gem, dodged destruction." On August 30th, the organization held a press conference to reveal the hard work of the New Orleans' Nine Most Endangered List committee, chaired by Tony Marino. Television coverage and an extensive front page (above the fold) article followed. And on August 21, Nell Nolan's column featured the annual meeting.

It's a time of excitement for the organization. Join us as we continue to strengthen, to widen our membership, and to advocate for our historic heritage. *René J. L. Fransen*

## A VERY UNFORTUNATE VOTE BY CITY COUNCIL REGARDING 440 BOURBON STREET

Louisiana Landmarks Society would like to thank the many citizens who asked the New Orleans City Council to oppose the inappropriate gallery addition to the entresol level of 440 Bourbon Street. We would also like to thank the Vieux Carré Commission (VCC) and staff for their report and subsequent vote to preserve the authenticity of this building. It is believed there are only 18 entresol buildings left in the United States.

Despite your letters, the City Council voted on Thursday to overrule the VCC. It is extremely unfortunate. The gallery addition will degrade the authenticity of the architecture and commodify a building in a National Historic District—all for the economic benefit of a Bourbon Street bar.

Nathan Chapman, President of Vieux Carré Property Owners, Residents and Associates, Inc. (VCPORA) eloquently expresses our thoughts below:

*In a sad, if not frankly shocking, vote to allow inappropriate alteration of an important French Quarter entresol building, the New Orleans City Council approved a motion by District C Councilmember Freddie King to override the Vieux Carré Commission and to allow a historically inappropriate gallery for 440 Bourbon Street.*

*With no discussion or explanation, all City Councilmembers voted to support Mr. King's motion with the exception of one—District B Councilmember Lesli Harris, who voted against, and District A Councilmember Joe Giarrusso who was absent from the dais for the vote. A special, heartfelt THANK YOU to Councilmember Harris!*

*Voting with Councilmember King were Councilmembers Helena Moreno, JP Morrell, Eugene Green, and Oliver Thomas.*

*The public's concerns went beyond the fact that the City Council voted to obscure and obliterate a rare architectural feature—its entresol floor—on the building. There was also strong objection that the applicant never submitted architectural plans to the VCC, like citizens and other businesses are required to do. Instead, they turned in an architectural sketch. That alone should have merited a denial to the proposal.*

*Observers noted the powerful Bourbon Street lobbyists in the room.*

*Our appreciation to the citizens and historic preservation organizations who, along with VCPORA, implored the Council to vote no. This includes French Quarter Citizens, the Louisiana Landmarks Society, the Preservation Resource Center, and the Faubourg Marigny Improvement Association. Other organizations, such as the Garden District Association, and an outpouring of citizens from across the city submitted written objections. Even several national groups sent messages to the council members in regard to the importance of rejecting this appeal.*

*Of all the cities in America, none more than New Orleans should understand the importance of preserving our historic architecture. And anywhere in America, we should understand that everyone should follow the same rules and requirements as everyone else.*

## CITIZEN ADVOCACY IS NEEDED...BIODISTRICT CEA SHOWS US WHY

By Sandra Stokes



We've seen what can happen when we rely on one economic engine—as when New Orleans' tourist industry disappeared during the pandemic. So everyone knows New Orleans needs to diversify its economic base. But how you accomplish diversification is important. The devil is in the details.

Last year, a Mid-City resident read one of those little public notices in the vast sea of notices in the back of the newspaper, and alerted others that the City was preparing to sign a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) with the BioDistrict—a non-elected state board. This CEA would create a Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) District, which would divert tens of millions of dollars from the general budget to create the BioDistrict, a term used to describe both the entity and the geographic area bounded by Claiborne, Carrollton, Earhart and Iberville.

Louisiana Landmarks Society joined an ad hoc advocacy team of citizens to learn more about this CEA and TIF.

The BioDistrict concept has been around since 2005, though in a different form, and with little tangible result. But when the Mid-City community witnessed the expropriation of 27 blocks of its historic neighborhood razed for the medical centers, neighbors feared still more institutional expansion. They relaxed a bit when promises were made in 2014 to remove the residential section of the neighborhood from “the District.”

But that didn't happen. As citizens researched this new CEA, they learned that the boundary change wasn't included in the proposal. In fact, there were no protections for the residents, the neighborhoods, or even the City. The CEA provided that the City was to turn over tens of millions of dollars in sales tax revenue with no supervisory rights, and without any protection for the neighborhoods targeted. The BioDistrict would have all manner of powers—even to take any land in the area or to create subdistricts outside “the District” anywhere in the City. The CEA had the City ceding all rights to the BioDistrict: the BioDistrict would not have to comply with any zoning ordinances, any preservation guidelines—in sum, with any restrictions, as they had *carte blanche* to do whatever they wanted to do. The BioDistrict did not have to say how they were spending the money or to produce any measurable results. The City was to turn on the faucet of money with no benchmarks to measure its progress, no rules to follow—not even any provision to stop the flow of money.

Alarmed, the citizen team notified the City Council, and in December of 2021, the CEA was pulled from the Council agenda. The team wanted the BioDistrict representatives to meet with the affected neighborhood groups. The team members insisted that the residents be removed from the boundaries, and that the city be given more oversight—issues that would have to be changed by state statute. The team, the City and BioDistrict representatives then worked with La. State Representative Royce Duplessis to make the changes at the state level. This was a huge victory for the neighborhoods as well as for the City.

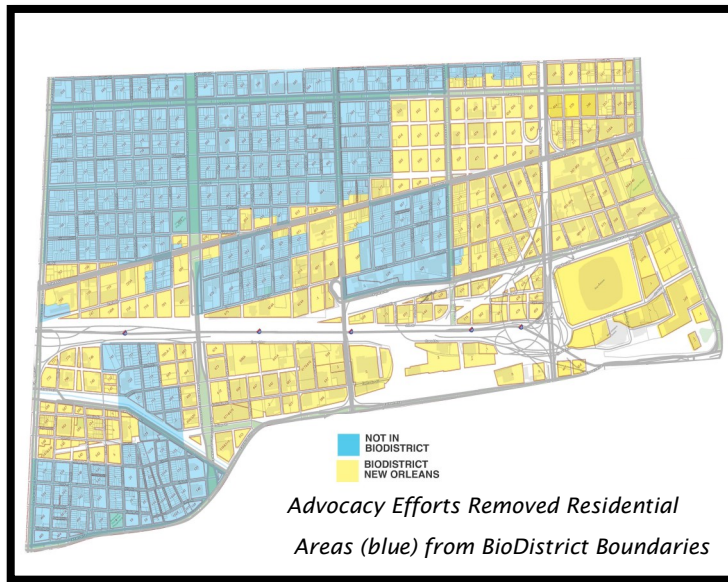
But the deep dive revealed other problems. After the win, the team notified Councilmembers that the CEA had serious legal and financial flaws that should be discussed when the CEA was considered again.

That too, did not happen. The team learned the CEA was again read into the Council agenda. And once read in at City Council, it could not be amended. It required an up or down vote. In all, the CEA was entered five times for a vote—and it was pulled four times, each time being revised and improved thanks to advocacy efforts. Each time, the team scrambled to try to understand the latest iteration of the CEA, and to meet with Councilmembers to explain the ramifications. By the end of the process, the citizen team had produced an 18-page legal analysis and a 13-page financial analysis of the shortcomings.

From the beginning, the team's consistent asks were simple and reasonable—with 13 organizations joining the call. The BioDistrict should create a master plan to show how its administrators planned to use over \$70 million in taxpayer money that would be paid out over 17 years. The City should produce independent financial and legal analyses of the CEA. And, since diverting money from the general budget for much-needed essential services affects the entire city, there should be citywide public participation. And all of this should be accomplished prior to signing the CEA. Otherwise, the City is setting a precedent for other CEA's in the future. Despite these efforts, none of these recommendations were adopted.

*Continued on page 4*

Continued from page 3



The final version of the CEA was approved by the City Council on October 20, 2022. Through the perseverance of the citizen advocacy efforts, some big wins for the City and the residents included:

1. No expropriation: Removes expropriation authority from the BioDistrict.
2. Assures that no BioDistrict authority will supersede that of the City of New Orleans.
3. PILOT(S): Requires the BioDistrict to make a Payment in Lieu of Taxes for the full amount that would otherwise be assessed in ad valorem taxes before it acquires any property that was not previously exempt.
4. District Standards: Requires City Council approval before developing any standards for district identity or enforcement of such standards.

5. Subdistricts: Requires City Council approval before creating any subdistricts.
6. Boundaries: Redrew the boundaries, removing all low-density residential neighborhoods, almost all multifamily housing, etc., from the District's territory.
7. Master Plan: Requires the BioDistrict to produce a master plan, with approval from the City Planning Commission and the City Council, within 12 months of signing the CEA, and every 5 years thereafter.
8. Budget: Requires City Council approval of the BioDistrict's budgets.
9. Termination: Added a termination clause, so the City Council may terminate the CEA (except for payment of debt service obligations) following a 60-day cure period.
10. Provides protection for Low-Density Residential Neighborhoods from adverse impacts from BioDistrict projects.
11. Provides a 2% annual growth rate added to baseline (a minimal adjustment for inflation).
12. Provides for the inclusion of 2% city collection fee.
13. Requires the BioDistrict to comply with all state and local audit requests.
14. Improved the Equitable Business Opportunity provisions—removing "best efforts" language and adding DBE definitions.
15. Requires that the BioDistrict produce public value equal to or greater than the value of the City's contribution.
16. Specifies that the BioDistrict is not entitled to interest on any revenues withheld if Council does not approve the budget.
17. Extended time from 30 to 60 days to allow for the City to terminate the CEA.
18. Added indemnification for the City of New Orleans.
19. Requires City approval by ordinance for any bond issues or debt instruments for which funds from the CEA are used to pay for debt service and interest.
20. Provides that the City share 25% of Intellectual Property resulting from this investment.
21. Requires board members to recuse themselves from decisions regarding their own institutions.
22. Requires BioDistrict to comply with record retention rules.
23. Requires BioDistrict to comply with Louisiana Code of Governmental Ethics.
24. Requires BioDistrict to comply with constitutional prohibition on the donation of public property.

These changes and clarifications will help to protect the City and its residents. And hopefully, the money will help create a robust economic engine for New Orleans in the form of the BioDistrict.



## Louisiana Landmarks Society's Fall Tour of Historic Mandeville



Cool and clear weather complemented the beauty of the historic homes in Mandeville visited by Louisiana Landmarks members on a recent bus tour. Reviving what was for years a feature of Landmarks' annual programming, the tour included stops at a historic house museum, four private residences, an early jazz performance venue, and lunch at Pat's Rest A While Restaurant.

Landmarks immediate past president Sally Reeves pointed out the vestigial Anglo-Creole architectural elements of the historic homes and provided remarkably detailed commentary on the ride across the Causeway and at each stop on the tour, while members of the Old Mandeville Historic Association helped to organize the tour and served as congenial hosts. The several homeowners were most gracious to the tour attendees and provided their guests with complete freedom to walk around their homes and gardens.

A stunning sunset over the placid waters of Lake Pontchartrain provided an appropriate end to a most enjoyable and educational visit to the North Shore.



## LANDMARKS NAMED THE 2022 NEW ORLEANS' NINE



Louisiana Landmarks Society named its New Orleans' Nine Most Endangered Sites at a press conference at the Pitot House on August 30, 2022. Visit our website [www.louisianalandmarks.org](http://www.louisianalandmarks.org) for details.



## LOUISIANA LANDMARKS SOCIETY'S ANNUAL MEETING AND HARNETT KANE AWARDS



Sandra Stokes with past Harnett Kane recipients John Koeflerl (2019) and Nathan Chapman (2017)

Louisiana Landmarks Society held its annual meeting June 2, 2022, at the Pitot House where new and returning board members were elected.

Landmarks Society awarded **Sandra L. Stokes** the **2022 Harnett T. Kane Award**. The Harnett T. Kane Preservation Award of the Louisiana Landmarks Society was established in 1968 to recognize those who have made significant contributions in the field of historic preservation in Louisiana. Previous winners include Fred Starr in 2021, Lyn Tomlinson in 2020 and Ann Masson in 2018.

### PITOT HOUSE WELCOMES A NEW COLLECTION PIECE



What Creole country home is complete without a prie dieu? The name "prie dieu," meaning "Pray to God," dates from 17th-century France, where the aristocracy often had this type of stool in a small room or oratory set aside for private prayer. Catholics often said prayers in their homes in colonial and antebel-

lum Louisiana. With so few priests scattered over such great distances, especially in rural areas, worshipping and praying in one's home was common.

Board member Jeff Bernard and his mother, Virginia Fairfax Bernard, donated this special piece in memory of his father, Joseph Grima Bernard. They have also renewed the loan of the Fairfax bed, which holds a special place in the summer bedroom. The Fairfax bed is a unique example of the of early 19th-century New Orleans craftsmanship attributed to the "Butterfly Man." We are grateful to the family for their support of our mission and our collection.

### PITOT HOUSE'S NATIVE GARDEN

Thanks to a generous grant from the New Orleans Town Gardeners, the Pitot House has been certified as a Native Plant Habitat by the Louisiana Native Plant Society. We are looking forward to inviting the Town Gardeners, Board and Members of the Louisiana Landmarks Society to a ceremony highlighting the new gardens and installing the sign. The new gardens are both an asset to the local environment and to the aesthetics of the Pitot House as a historic property. We are also grateful to the Garden Study Club, which recently awarded us a generous grant to maintain and improve the parterre garden.

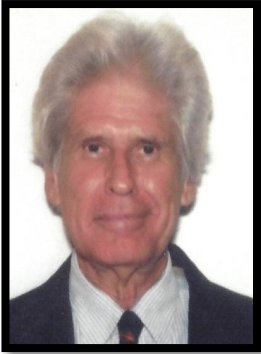




---

## IN MEMORIAM

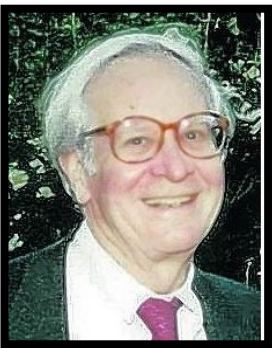
The New Orleans preservation community mourns the loss of several local leaders who contributed so much to the cause of preservation.



**JOHN GEISER, III**

d. July 7, 2022

A past president of the Louisiana Landmarks Society and in 1986 awarded the Harnett Kane Award, the Society's highest honor, John served on the Landmarks board for many years. In addition, his volunteer preservation work included serving as president of the St. Charles Avenue Association and the Garden District Association as well as a founding board member of the Preservation Resource Center. He also served as an officer of the Friends of the Cabildo, the Orleans Parish Landmarks Commission and the Beauregard-Keyes House in his long career.



**WALTER C. FLOWER, III**

d. September 14, 2022

An admired community leader in many varied fields, "Chip" Flower long served the preservation community as a founder of the Faubourg St. Mary Corporation, which was instrumental during the resurgence of the preservation and redevelopment of the historic neighborhoods of downtown New Orleans in the 1970s and 1980s. He also served as president of the Garden District Association and the St. Charles Avenue Association, and as a board member of Rosedown Plantation, Longue Vue House and Gardens, Beauregard-Keyes House and the New Orleans Botanical Garden.



**NORMAN MARMILLION**

d. October 11, 2022

Norman and his wife Sand saved, restored and for three decades owned and operated beautiful Laura Plantation in Vacherie, among the most faithfully restored of the extant nineteenth century Mississippi River plantations located on the German Coast of Louisiana. Norman and Sand's scholarly interest in Louisiana history and in French and Creole heritage along with their matchless drive and creativity both informed and inspired the restoration of Laura and the authentic cultural expressions and interpretations that serve to lovingly animate its history and programming.



**CAPT. CLARKE "DOC" HAWLEY**

d. November 11, 2022

A French Quarter institution, Doc was an ageless and dapper Vieux Carré fixture who helped to define the sustaining character of long-term residency in the most historic neighborhood of New Orleans. His professional career was devoted to the Mississippi River, New Orleans' most historic natural resource, including serving as captain of the overnight paddlewheeler *Delta Queen*, and 20 years as captain of and master of the calliope on the *Natchez*, decades of service that merited him the National Achievement Award from the National Rivers Hall of Fame.

---

## BECOME A MEMBER OR RENEW

**STUDENT - \$20**

Free admission and tour for one  
10% discount in gift shop  
Advance notice of events

**35 and UNDER - \$35**

Free admission and tour for one  
10% discount in gift shop  
Advance notice of events

**INDIVIDUAL - \$50**

Free admission and tour for one  
10% discount in gift shop  
Invited to member events and advance notice of events

**HOUSEHOLD - \$75**

Free admission and tours for four  
10% discount in gift shop  
Invited to member events and advance notice of events

**ADVOCATE - \$100**

Free admission and tours for four  
10% discount in gift shop  
Invited to member events and advance notice of events

**BUSINESS - \$200**

Free admission and tours for six  
10% discount in gift shop  
Invited to member events and advance notice of events

**GUARDIAN - \$250**

Free admission and tours for eight  
10% discount in gift shop  
Invited to member events and advance notice of events

**PROTECTOR - \$500**

Free admission and tours for eight  
10% discount in gift shop  
Invited to member events and advance notice of events

**PRESERVER - \$1000**

Free admission and tour for eight  
10% discount in gift shop  
20% discount on event rentals  
Invited to member events and advance notice of events

## Louisiana Landmarks Society

## Mission Statement

*The Louisiana Landmarks Society promotes historic preservation through education, advocacy, and operation of the Pitot House*

## Board of Trustees and Staff

René J. L. Fransen - *President*

Michael Mancuso - *1st Vice President*

John "Jeff" Bernard - *2nd Vice President*

Harry Barkerding - *Treasurer*

Sally K. Reeves - *Assistant Treasurer*

Theodore "Teddy" Pierre, Jr. - *Recording Secretary*

Keith Hardie - *Corresponding Secretary*

William Barry, Jr.

Edward Deano

Margot Hammond

Susan Johnson

Anthony "Tony" Marino

Michael Reid

Lloyd "Sonny" Shields

Peter M. Wolf

Brittney Gros Wylie

Jenny Dyer - *Historic House Manager*



**1-Year Membership (For a renewal, the year's membership will begin when the current membership expires.)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ (as you would like it to appear in acknowledgments)

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Check Membership Level: ☐ Student \$20 ☐ 35 and Under \$35 ☐ Individual \$50 ☐ Household \$75 ☐ Advocate \$100 ☐ Business \$200 ☐ Guardian \$250 ☐ Protector \$500 ☐ Preserver \$1000

I would like to make an additional donation in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is a check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

I prefer to charge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ CVV number \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to: Louisiana Landmarks Society

Mail to: Louisiana Landmarks Society

1440 Moss Street, New Orleans, LA 70119



You can also charge your membership securely online. All major cards are accepted.  
[www.louisianalandmarks.org](http://www.louisianalandmarks.org)





