



Louisiana Landmarks Society & Pitot House

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May 6, 2014

Honorable James Austin Gray, II
Councilmember, District E New Orleans City Council
City Hall, Room 2W60
1300 Perdido Street New Orleans, LA 70112
jagray@nola.gov

Re: Redevelopment for Former Holy Cross School Site

To the Honorable James Austin Gray, II:

The site of the former Holy Cross School lies within a locally and nationally designated historic district. With that designation comes not only a local, but a national responsibility to redevelop it in a way that is consistent with the existing character and historic qualities of the Holy Cross neighborhood. We are all in support of redevelopment of the site, but it must be responsible development.

Louisiana Landmarks Society fully supports the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association in their opposition to the proposal by Perez Architects for the redevelopment of the Holy Cross School site. The proposed 60' towers fronting the river are totally out of scale and out of character for a National Register Historic District. The plan is out of context with the surrounding single and double historic homes in the neighborhood, and would dwarf its village-like character in scale and massing.

Any good developer who looks at this site could easily recognize that the centerpiece for the property ought to be the historic Administration Building. Respecting the 40' height limitation, new development would allow the historic building, with its roof baseline at 47', to be showcased. The Perez proposed 60' modern towers would overshadow this sole historic building on the site, diminishing its stature and presence – and disrespecting the neighborhood and the history of the site.

When the proposed zoning of MU-1 was released in the draft Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO), the residents of Holy Cross overwhelmingly submitted comments saying that HU-RD2 was the more consistent zoning for their neighborhood. This latter zoning designation limits building height to 40'. Residents met every draft CZO deadline with a consistent message. They wrote en masse. They met with City Planning Commission staff – all during the comment and public input phase of the draft ordinance. Yet their voices and concerns have still not been addressed. Instead, the inappropriate Perez APC proposal marches on. It appears that the 60' height limit proposed in the draft ordinance is not in response to citizen/neighborhood input, as promised with the Master Plan process, but is in response to a developer's proposal – and inconsistent with the Master Plan.

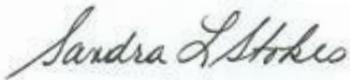
The Perez request for C1-A zoning does not comply with the current CZO, the proposed CZO, or the Master Plan. In fact, the stated purpose of C1-A is to provide for a wide variety of commercial activities – “located particularly along certain existing major thoroughfares where a general mixture of commercial services and residential activities now exist.” The former Holy Cross School site certainly does not conform to this description. The area includes dead end streets, no commercial activities--and chickens roaming freely.

As our elected officials, you must consider the immediate and long-term impact of this zoning change. What will the future look like? We contend that if you grant towers on this levee, the future will include more towers--and the demise of this and other low-scale historic neighborhoods along the New Orleans riverfront.

Louisiana Landmarks Society asks the members of the City Council to vote no to the drastic zoning change from RD-3 to C1-A – and to support the neighborhood’s overwhelming public comments to have the site zoned HU-RD2 in the proposed draft zoning ordinance – zoning far more consistent with the current RD-3 zoning. We ask that you vote to uphold the National Register Historic District.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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Chairman of Advocacy
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Executive Director

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