

LANDMARKS' PRESERVATION



THE JOURNAL OF THE LOUISIANA LANDMARKS SOCIETY

Advocacy Updates

Hilary Somerville Irvin, Walter Gallas & Sandra Stokes

During the first quarter of 2015, Louisiana Landmarks Society actively participated in a number of matters of concern to the city's preservation community. Executive Director Walter Gallas and Sandra Stokes, LLS second vice-president and chairman of the Advocacy Committee, have been vocal at public hearings and in the media involving several important issues. Here are highlights of some recent developments:

210 State Street

On March 19, the Historic District Landmarks Commission (HDLC) nominated for landmark study almost the entire 17.2-acre riverside campus of the former Marine Hospital and New Orleans Adolescent Hospital. At the request of LLS, the HDLC at its September 11, 2014 meeting, considered nominating the entire property for landmark designation. Acquired earlier in 2014 by Children's Hospital from the State of Louisiana, the previously publicly owned property could not be considered for landmark status until its transfer to private ownership. At the September meeting, in an unexpected move, the HDLC granted a six-month deferral of the nomination process so that Children's Hospital could formulate a master plan. (See *Landmarks Preservation*, Fall 2014)

At the March meeting, Children's Hospital representatives strongly objected to the LLS request, supported by the HDLC staff recommendation, for nomination of the entire site. Instead they asked for approval of an alternative plan to designate only the individual buildings that were not scheduled to be demolished in the new

master plan - but not landmark the site. LLS countered that only through nomination of the site would the HDLC have authority over the review of future construction and site modifications. LLS relented on asking for designation of six 1930s residential cottages and the portion of the brick wall facing Henry Clay Street slated for demolition by the hospital for a new parking garage and a critical care unit in keeping with the hospital's newly released master plan. This compromise, Gallas said, shows that LLS is not inflexible. LLS members Jim Logan and Keith Hardie joined Stokes and Gallas in speaking in favor of the nomination. The HDLC subsequently nominated the hospital site minus the six buildings in the proposed new construction footprint and minus the Henry Clay Street wall for landmark study. The HDLC will hold the designation hearing for 210 State Street on Thursday, June 11, 2015, at 1:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 1300 Perdido Street.

Café Habana

Developer Sean Meenan's controversial project for redevelopment of several properties in the French Quarter at the corner of Esplanade Avenue and North Rampart Street into a Cuban-themed open-air restaurant seemed to clear its final hurdle at the March 12 City Council meeting. At that time the Council voted 4-2 to deny an appeal brought by several neighbors along with French Quarter Citizens and Vieux Carré Property Owners Residents and Associates (VCPORA). The appeal was in

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Hilary Somerville Irvin,
Editor

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SAVE THE DATES!

Landmarks Annual Meeting
May 11, 5:30PM

Roberta Brandes Gratz:
We're Still Here, Ya Bastards
Book Lecture and Signing
May 20, 6:30 PM

New Orleans' Nine
Most Endangered Sites
Announcement
May 28, 10 AM

Visit
LouisianaLandmarks.org
to learn more

A Message from the President



It has been almost a year since I was installed as President of LLS. We have accomplished some significant things since last spring.

- We established the LLS Awards to honor outstanding accomplishments in historic preservation, such as restoring, renovating, or establishing an adaptive new use for an old building.
- The 2015 list of New Orleans Nine Most Endangered Sites is being formulated marking the tenth list since 2005. (No list was issued in 2006.)
- We have installed a wonderful cooperative new Board of Trustees with many skills needed by the organization. If you have an interest in becoming a trustee, the way to get involved is through joining a committee. The committees of LLS are a prime source of selecting new trustees.
- There are many exciting and interesting things going on at the Pitot House to put it on a stable financial footing. It is very expensive to support a house that is 216 years old.
- Marché des Fêtes had a very successful bazaar last December.
- Our Advocacy Committee has been more active than in quite some time.

Chaired by Sandra Stokes, a highly regarded preservation activist, the committee is forming allies and coalitions around the city and striving to save important landmarks of the city.

Which brings me to the point of this article: None of this happens without help from you. If you are reading this newsletter, you obviously have an interest in preservation; therefore, I am going to share my thoughts with you as I would a colleague. We need you to be an engaged and supportive member of Louisiana Landmarks Society. The very existence of the New Orleans that we know and love depends upon it. Here's how you can help:

- If you are planning an event, please consider using the fabulous Pitot House. Just think how wonderful it would be to hold your event on the grounds of the beautiful and historic Pitot House.
- If you are already a member, we are asking that you increase your membership level to the next level at least. If you are a member at the \$25 level, please consider increasing that to \$60. This is YOUR organization after all, and the preservation of our city depends upon you.
- If you are a donor who has not made a significant donation, because you have not been asked, please forgive us for being so timid. We are asking for your donations now or as part of your planned giving strategy. The city is changing so much, it is hard to

fight all of the battles without your monetary support. In fact, we are at a critical position. In order to further develop our activities in advocacy we need your support, so I am, frankly, begging for your help.

- We also are asking for your cooperation in contacting our elected officials when you receive a request from the Advocacy Committee to do so. Imagine the impact of our efforts when public officials receive 500 emails from LLS members impressing upon them the importance of our causes.
- If you belong to a neighborhood organization and your neighborhood is faced with a major problem, we sure would like you to be a member of Landmarks, so that we can show the public that we are there to support your organization in its time of crisis. If an unscrupulous developer wanted to put a 60-foot building in your backyard where the height limit is 50 feet, you don't want to stand alone in the battle. Your support helps us build solid working relationships. It is as simple as that.
- If you are a "fallen away" member, please return at a significant membership level. You are not hurting anyone by your non-renewal except the city that we all love. Its preservation is up to us all.

New Orleans needs YOU. Don't let our city down. Join LLS NOW.

Sincerely,

Casey



HOST YOUR EVENT AT THE HOUSE

Make Louisiana Landmarks Society's Pitot House the setting for your next event. Whether it is 20 or 300 people, the Pitot House is a unique New Orleans venue for a meeting, a corporate cocktail hour, or a romantic wedding. And your event at the Pitot House will support the worthy cause of historic preservation.



2015 Annual Meeting and Election of Officers and Trustees

On May 11 the membership will vote on the following nominees:

President—T. Casey Stuart
 1st Vice President—R. Stephen Chauvin,
 AIA, NCARB
 2nd Vice President—Sandra Stokes
 Treasurer—Aubry A. Miller
 Assistant Treasurer—Charles A. Berg,
 AIA
 Corresponding Secretary—Drew Stewart
 Recording Secretary—Rachel Robinson

Returning Members of the Board of Trustees:

Michael D. Ballard Jr.
 Hilary Somerville Irvin
 Heather Knight
 Elizabeth M. Landis
 Howard W. Mielke, Ph.D.
 Thomas W. Milliner

Meet Our Proposed New Board Members



Louis W. McFaul graduated from Tulane University in 1974. He worked as Registrar of the Louisiana State Museum 1977-1978. He received an MBA from Tulane 1980. From 1980 until his retirement in 2013 he worked in banking. He is on the Board of Directors of the River Oaks Square Arts Center.



Jerry Pepper, a New Orleans native, graduated from Jesuit High School, received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Tulane University, and a Juris Doctorate from LSU's Paul M. Hebert School of Law. He currently serves on the Board of Save Our Cemeteries and the Police Citizens Advisory Board for NOPD's 3rd District.



Justin Stone is an associate at Jones Walker LLP in the Tax & Estates Practice Group. Justin graduated in 2012 from the Georgetown University Law Center where he received his Master of Laws in Taxation, Certificate in State and Local Taxation. Justin received his juris doctor degree from Wake Forest University School of Law in 2011.



Jay Seastrunk grew up in New Orleans. He attended Tulane School of Architecture. Projects he participated in include London's Heathrow Terminal 5 and Universal City Walk Orlando for HOK. He has worked for Eskew + Dumez + Ripple on a building for Ochsner Pediatrics and renovations to the Mercedes-Benz Superdome; and with Performance Architecture on university performing arts projects around the country.

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Preservation Represents Genuine Progress

Sandra Stokes

Commentary reprinted from The New Orleans Advocate, April 11, 2015

Historic preservation, while sometimes criticized as anti-development, is in a very real sense good “economic development.” In a city like New Orleans, with its numerous historic neighborhoods and distinctive culture, preservation represents genuine progress. It encourages contemporary uses of our historic buildings — and the tourism and tax dollars that follow.

Preservation recognizes that the physical fabric of New Orleans is the stage for our distinctive culture — a lifestyle that separates us from other cities in America. Visitors from all over the world see our city as unique, as special, as historic. Our guests want to experience the authentic. They want to eat genuine Creole food, to hear music where it was rooted, to experience our architecture, to visit our cemeteries and to learn more about the past as reflected in everything they see around them. Most visitors become enchanted; many return over and over again.

What if we had high-rises on Royal Street, big-box stores on Chartres Street, or even an elevated freeway in front of Jackson Square? Where would we be as a city if the buildings in the Vieux Carré and our other historic neighborhoods were not protected by federal, state or local laws? Thanks to responsible legislation and the continuing efforts of the preservation community, the world continues to travel to New Orleans. We spend so much time and energy trying to attract industry, and we should — yet preservation is the largest and most consistent economic driver our city has. It provides the draw — the reason we have such a booming tourist industry. And it is the reason that New Orleans is known all over the world.

What happens in the future at the foot of Canal Street at Tchoupitoulas Street can either enhance our city or harm us. Good urban planning says there ought to be a cohesive transition from the “quaint and distinctive character” of the French Quarter to the Central Business District. This was recently threatened by a hotel proposal that was clearly in violation of the city’s Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance as well as its Master Plan. Both the City Planning Commission and Historic District Landmarks Commission voted unanimously to deny the application.

This misguided development called for retaining only the façades of three historic buildings on Tchoupitoulas and total demolition of a fourth historic building on Canal Street. These four buildings have much in common in age and scale with their neighbors across Canal Street. The demolished historic buildings were scheduled to be replaced by a 21-story, 250-foot generic tower that could be built anywhere in the country. The tower would be over three times the allowable height limit of 70 feet.

In the public debate surrounding projects such as this, citizens who challenge controversial proposals are often accused by some of being “obstructionists” — of being opposed to “progress” for their community. But wiser minds recognize that good design and good urban planning are at the very heart of any progressive city.

Being opposed to out-of-scale, inappropriate development in one of our historic districts does not make anyone an obstructionist. Rather, it makes “destructionists” of developers willing to ignore our history, dismiss our culture and demolish our historic buildings for structures that could be built anywhere.

Preservationists are not saying to hold everything frozen in time. What they are saying is that what you build in a historic district should be appropriate for that district. If it is not, build it somewhere else. It’s really a simple concept — there is an appropriate place in our city for everything.

Why should developers be permitted to ignore our ordinances to create questionable projects whose principal justification is that they represent new development, or “progress” for the city? And what message does that send to the many local investors who brought their projects to fruition in historic districts while carefully adhering to our zoning and planning laws? New Orleans should not accept less in quality or design, nor break its basic rules and ignore its tradition for the lure of a “quick buck,” or what a destructionist might call “progress.”

Although the out-of-scale, out-of-place proposal for Canal and Tchoupitoulas was recently withdrawn, the discussion needs to continue to ensure that what is ultimately developed for that site embraces our historic buildings and is built in harmony with the existing physical landscape.

I applaud Mayor Landrieu for opposing the destructive plan proposed for these four historic buildings and stand with him in insisting on development at the foot of Canal Street that is fitting for our city and that reflects its distinctive character. We are New Orleans, for goodness’ sake. We deserve better.

From the Executive Director

Walter Gallas

The program for the presentation of the 2015 Awards for Excellence in Historic Preservation was a memorable evening for many reasons. We attracted 300 attendees, one and a half times last year's figure. We had another dramatic venue, the award-winning Peoples Health New Orleans Jazz Market on thriving O.C. Haley Blvd. We added pages to the awards program book to accommodate the increased number of ads. And we netted \$15,000, a 56% increase over 2014.

We had eighteen impressive award winners, representing everything from modest shotguns and Creole cottages, to a revived neighborhood theater, to a trio of projects all of which began their lives as public markets--the Jazz Market being one of them. You can see all the winners at our website, www.louisianalandmarks.org.

Thanks to Casey Stuart, Stephen Chauvin, and Sandra Stokes for so ably handling the award introductions assisted by Rachel Robinson. Thanks, too, to Drew Stewart for the fine PowerPoint presentation, and to LLS board members who pitched in. Brook Tesler developed a timely social media count-down to the program and provided all around and much appreciated assistance.

And finally, special thanks to Meagan Pryor for so much of the behind-the-scenes work that made everything look easy on the front end. Meagan will be leaving Landmarks in May, but we will continue to see her involved on a volunteer basis with some of our activities. Best wishes to you, Meagan! Amanda Duhon is joining the office staff as administrative assistant. Welcome, Amanda!

Geocaching: Anytime, Anywhere, Real World Adventure

Susan Kierr



Josie Hess, looking for geocache

At Pitot House we have been hosting a geocache for three years. This recreational activity is a kind of scavenger hunt that you do with the Global Positioning System (GPS) in your mobile phone. To learn more, visit www.geocaching.com

Each geocache, and they exist all around the world, is a container, usually small and inconspicuous, waterproof and somewhat camouflaged. Inside is a log book with a pen or pencil. Often the cache has an item in it for trading, a trinket, for example, that goes with the finder, who can leave something behind in trade.

Ours at Pitot House is thanks to the work of Sarah Hess, neighbor and LLS member.

Here are examples of some of the many comments that have come to Pitot House through our geocache:

-Great spot, thanks for guiding us here.

-Fun find, easy and well worth the hunt.

-Here from California, love your house and garden.

-Just found your cute cache!

-On our recent trip to New Orleans from Montreal we discovered your cache and enjoyed the bayou.

Scenes from the Awards Ceremony 2015



Members from the 2015 Awards Review Committee:

Top from left: Gene Cizek, Elliott Perkins, and Casey Stuart

Bottom from left: Walter Gallas, Sally Reeves, and Sandra Stokes

Members not pictured: James Amdal, Chuck Berg, Nicole Hobson-Morris, Hilary Somerville Irvin, and Jesse LeBlanc.



From Left: Award winners, Rick Fifield, Patricia Byrd, and Kris Pottharst with Walter



From Left: Jacques Morial with award winner, Pat O'Brien

Advocacy Update continued...

opposition to the Vieux Carré Commission's approval of the proposed architectural modifications and the City Planning Commission's approval for combining the two lots upon which 1236 and 1240 Esplanade are sited into one lot of record. LLS representatives Gallas and Stokes joined the Habana opponents at the City Council meeting, as well as at the earlier Vieux Carré Commission and City Planning Commission meetings. (See *Landmarks Preservation*, Winter 2015)

On March 25, French Quarter residents Charles Garber, Rene Fransen, Rodney Villarreal and Edward Bonin filed a lawsuit in New Orleans Civil District Court against the City Council and City Planning Commission. Represented by attorneys Stuart Smith and Lloyd "Sonny" Shields, the plaintiffs claim that the Council and Planning Commission ignored the state constitution by not protecting the "quaint and distinctive character" of the French Quarter and thereby endangering their quality of life and the historic character of the Vieux Carré. On April 13, 2015, the suit was amended and expanded to include Louisiana Landmarks Society, VCPORA and French Quarter Citizens. The three-year Café Habana battle continues.

400 Canal Street

On March 27, shortly before City Council was to hear an appeal of the City Planning Commission's denial of their contentious proposal to build a 21-story, 250 foot tall hotel at this highly visible and symbolic downtown location, the developers withdrew the appeal from the City Council agenda. The proposal included the demolition of six buildings, four of which dated from the 1840s. As a compromise the plans were modified by the developers to include the retention of the facades of three of the historic store-houses. In addition, the developers

needed several waivers to the city's zoning and permitting laws to build higher than the site's 70-foot limit. LLS participated in the vigorous efforts to defeat the project as proposed and continues to work with the Preservation Resource Center and other organizations to stay abreast of future developments. (See Sandra Stokes' Op-Ed reprinted in this newsletter from *The New Orleans Advocate*)

Old Carrollton Courthouse

LLS is taking the lead in the campaign to protect the old Carrollton Courthouse, designed by noted architect Henry Howard circa 1854, as the Jefferson Parish Courthouse before the town of Carrollton was annexed into New Orleans. This stately Greek Revival building served as a school beginning in 1874 and between 1957 and 1990 was known and beloved by many as the home of the nationally acclaimed Benjamin Franklin High School. The building has been vacant since 2013. The Orleans Parish School Board plans to auction the property to the highest bidder with no safeguards in place to retain the historic building.

Since the building is publicly owned, it is not yet eligible to be protected as an HDLC landmark. Without conditions attached to its sale, the building stands at risk for any number of inappropriate actions, including demolition. The public needs the opportunity to weigh in, too, about the building's future. LLS is working to raise public awareness and stimulate actions now to stave off future unsuitable consequences. Yard signs are available at the Pitot House and a dedicated website and petition can be found at www.savecarrolltoncourthouse.org.

Draft Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance

The years-long process to develop a new Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO) for New Orleans is moving to conclusion with the anticipated adoption of the CZO by the City Council on May 14, 2015. LLS has continued to meet with neighborhood associations, to be represented at public hearings, and to make and submit comments.



Time to Amend the Master Plan

William E. Borah, Attorney at Law

William Borah recently sent the following letter to City Planning Commission executive director Robert Rivers. We think this is an important message to share with our membership.

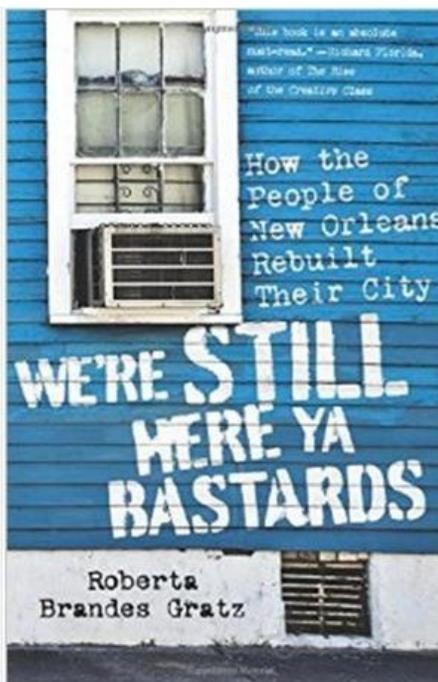
As the city moves forward with the effort to revise the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, it is imperative that the City Planning Commission undertake a comprehensive revision of the Master Plan. As you know, such a revision is authorized by the Home Rule Charter, Art. V, Chap. 4, Sec. 5-404(4). Because the Zoning Ordinance is required to be consistent with the Master Plan, a revised zoning ordinance cannot responsibly direct future growth – no matter how competently done, or how well intentioned the effort may be -- if the Master Plan upon which it is based does not provide an effective guide for the future development of the city. And as we have learned since its adoption in 2010, the “Plan for the 21st Century” fails miserably when it comes to directing the growth of the city for the next 20 years. It sets unrealistic goals, does

not set priorities, is often confusing and inconsistent, has an overabundance of background information, fails to limit the plan to guiding the physical growth of the city, and gives every indication of being prepared by a firm that had little or no experience in drafting master plans for a jurisdiction where plans had to be followed – in other words, a jurisdiction where the comprehensive plan to direct the future growth of the city has the force of law.

Fortunately for New Orleans and the Planning Commission there is a document that outlines the defects of the current Master Plan and proposes a strategy for remedying its deficiencies. The 2009 Bureau of Governmental Research report, “In Search of the Master Plan,” is that document, and it as valid today as the day it was written. (See <http://www.bgr.org>)

I recommend that you, your staff, and the Planning Commission read or re-read the report and contact the BGR, its consultants Sedway Consulting/ Barry Miller Consulting, and seriously consider following the recommendations outlined in the report. Specifically, I suggest that the Planning Commission give serious thought to retaining the services of Paul Sedway and Barry Miller to work with the staff of the Planning Commission to initiate a comprehensive revision of the Master Plan. Without such a revision, no matter how well-crafted is the new zoning ordinance, New Orleans will have, and continue to have, a defective land use planning process.

Your consideration of above recommendations is much appreciated.



Roberta Brandes Gratz
Wednesday, May 20 @ 6:30 PM

First Unitarian Church
5212 S. Claiborne Ave.
Book Signing and Reception to Follow

Join us Wednesday, May 20 @ 6:30pm for a lecture by Roberta Brandes Gratz for the release of her new book, *We're STILL Here Ya Bastards: How the People of New Orleans Rebuilt Their City*.

Gratz presents a panoramic look at New Orleans' recovery in the years following hurricane Katrina by sharing the stories of people who returned to their homes and have taken the rebuilding of their city into their own hands. An internationally renowned urban critic, she shows how the city is recovering despite erroneous governmental policies that

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JOIN LANDMARKS AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Your membership helps Louisiana Landmarks Society promote historic preservation through education, advocacy, and operation of the Pitot House.

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

- \$25 Loyalist *individual*
- \$40 Advocate *household*
- \$100 Supporter
- \$250 - 499 Guardian
- \$500 - 999 Protector
- \$1000 - 4999 Sustainer

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

**WE WANT TO HEAR
FROM YOU!**

As always, if any of our members have an item of interest or an idea for something they would like to see in *Préservation*, please let us know! Leave a message at the Pitot House at 504.482.0312, email info@louisianalandmarks.org, or email our editor Hilary Somerville Irvin at hilaryirvin@gmail.com.

