



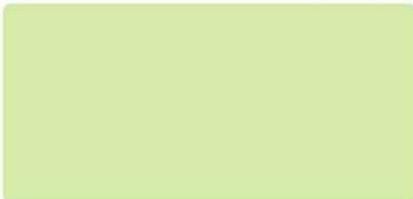
# LOCAL FOODS, LOCAL PLACES

## Technical Assistance Program



Building Our Local Food Economy: A Strategic Action Plan for the Lafitte Corridor – New Orleans, LA

August 24, 2015



## Community Story

The Lafitte Corridor is a stretch of land located in New Orleans, Louisiana, that extends through the heart of the city from Mid-City to the French Quarter. Since the founding of New Orleans, the Lafitte Corridor has been a significant transportation route. Historically, the corridor served as a commercial ship waterway and also had an adjacent Southern Railway rail line. The waterway has since been filled in and the railroad decommissioned. After many years of abandonment the corridor is returning as an urban greenway.

The Lafitte Greenway is a 2.6 mile linear park and trail extending from Basin Street at Louis Armstrong Park to North Alexander Street in Mid-City. The Greenway plays a significant role in linking together 9 historic neighborhoods, 18 schools, 26 churches, and many other public facilities in the area. An initial vision plan for the Lafitte Greenway was completed in 2007. In 2013, the City of New Orleans accepted the Lafitte Greenway Master Plan, the city and community vision for the development and use of this new public space. The Master Plan identifies the opportunity to incorporate community gardens in three areas of the greenway; however, the Master Plan does not include a clear programming and implementation strategy for the community gardens, but rather recommends that, "The local community garden organizations should be brought together to craft an overall strategy for the community gardens within the Greenway."

Friends of Lafitte Greenway is working with the community to capitalize on the growing demand for local food while fostering a healthier, more sustainable community, through creating a community plan for community gardens along the Lafitte Greenway. New Orleans has a long history of community gardens. The city's climate creates an ideal environment for growing fruits, vegetables, and other plants. Today, there is a strong desire to create an abundance of urban agriculture throughout the city. Many different people and organizations contribute to the local food economy and culture including farmers, community organizers, and agencies focused on



Figure 0 - New Basin Canal, 1940's (Top) (Source: [http://old-new-orleans.com/NO\\_Irish\\_Memorial.html](http://old-new-orleans.com/NO_Irish_Memorial.html)), Lafitte Greenway Under-Construction (Middle)(Source: Friends of Lafitte Greenway & NOLA Aerials), Treme' Community Gardens (Bottom) (Source: Friends of Lafitte Greenway)

planning, economic development, and community development –which led to the community's application for technical assistance from the federal Local Foods, Local Places program<sup>1</sup>.

## Engagement

Friends of Lafitte Greenway hosted a two-day community and stakeholder workshop on May 27-28 to develop a community action plan to promote local food access in the Laffite Corridor. This Local Foods, Local Places Workshop was supported by a small team of federal staff and consultants. The workshop was planned by a diverse Steering Committee including representatives from:



*Figure 0 - Workshop group photo – end of day two*

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/announcement - local foods local places 2014 final.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/announcement_-_local_foods_local_places_2014_final.pdf)  
<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sp-local-foods-local-places.html>

- Faubourg Lafitte Tenants Association
- Historic Faubourg Tremé Association
- SPROUT NOLA
- Market Umbrella
- Parkway Partners
- Tremé for Tremé
- City Councilmembers Jared Brossett and Susan Guidry
- Louisiana Office of Community Development
- Urban Waters Federal Partnership

Over 80 residents and stakeholders participated in the workshop, representing over 25 organizations, including but not limited to representatives of the City of New Orleans, Market Umbrella/Crescent City Farmers Market, SPROUT NOLA, Tremé for Tremé, Slow Foods New Orleans, Architecture for Humanity, as well as local residents. Federal agencies participating in the workshop included the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The first evening was designed as a community dialog session, advertised and open to the public. The second day was a hands-on workshop to assess input received from the community working session and craft a next steps plan of action for gardens and markets on the greenway. Anyone who came on night one who expressed interest in attending the day two working session was encouraged to attend.

The workshop began with a tour and discussion of three potential community garden sites along the Lafitte Greenway including the area southeast of the Sojourner Truth Neighborhood Center, northwest of the Sojourner Truth Neighborhood Center, and southeast of Jefferson Davis Parkway (Figure 3).



Figure 3 – Potential Community Garden Sites

Participants also visited the ReFresh Project <sup>2</sup> site, an innovative fresh food hub located on North Broad Street at Bienville Avenue coordinated by SPROUT NOLA<sup>3</sup>. The project brings together a collaboration of on-site tenants including Whole Foods, Liberty's Kitchen (a café), and other health and social service organizations.

Those visits were followed by envisioning, brainstorming, and action-planning discussions among a diverse group of citizens, and local, state and federal stakeholders. These discussions helped participants identify the community values that underlie the action plan for their local food initiatives. The dialogue also helped clarify how local foods can make communities in the Lafitte Corridor healthier and more economically vibrant by further developing and showing the unique food culture and history of the region. Participants identified obstacles to and solutions for expanding access to local foods and created a next steps action plan described in this document and appendices. This plan is a community-based plan with recommendations for what could happen in the corridor in terms of gardens and markets. The Local Foods, Local Places workshop and process fully recognized that the City of New Orleans has ownership of, and management responsibility for the greenway. This action plan contains community recommendations for next steps and represents a starting point for dialog with the City about what could be.



Figure 4 - Workshop activities, day one.

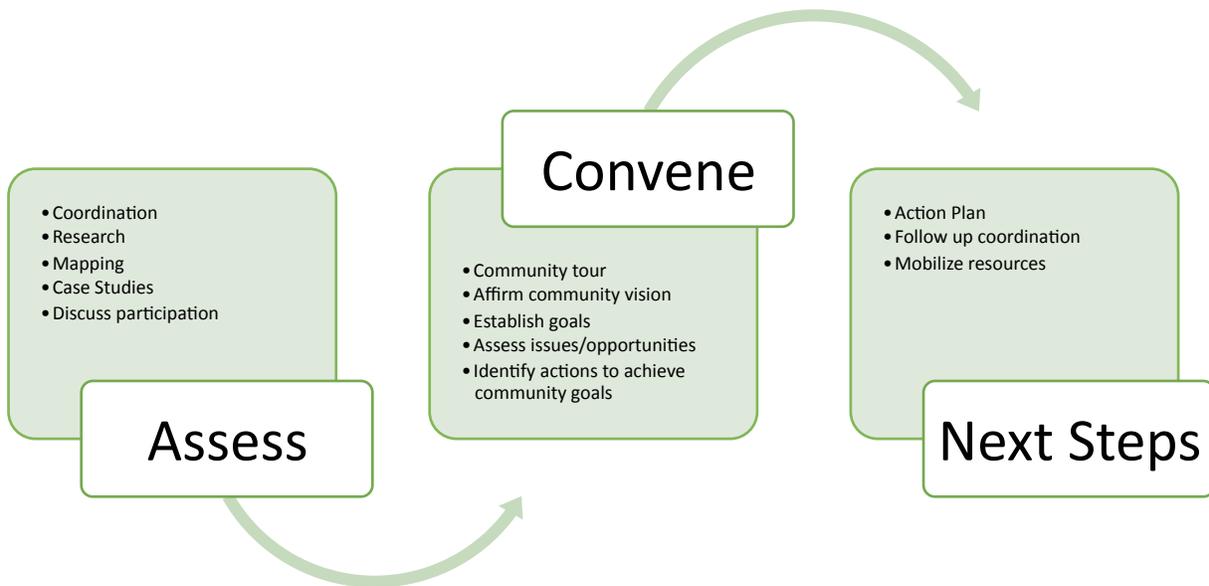
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<sup>2</sup> <http://broadcommunityconnections.org/projects/refresh>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.sproutnola.org/>

## Technical Assistance Process

The technical assistance process conducted for Local Foods, Local Places had three phases as illustrated in **Figure 5**.



*Figure 5 - Technical assistance process.*

The “Assess” phase entailed three conference calls prior to the two-day workshop. During these calls, the local steering committee, federal partners, and planning consultants planned the logistics of the two-day workshop and discussed the story behind the Lafitte Corridor. The planning consultants informed the local committee that they would provide mappings and case studies for the two-day workshop to facilitate discussion amongst participants.

The purpose of the planned two-day workshop was to build upon the existing body of documents and identify the opportunity to incorporate community gardens in three areas of the greenway as mentioned previously. Since 2007, there have been several planning and design documents specific to the Lafitte Corridor including:

- 2007 Lafitte Greenway Master Plan
- 2010 Lafitte Greenway Sustainable Water Design
- 2013 Lafitte Greenway Management Strategy Report
- 2013 Lafitte Corridor Revitalization Plan
- 2013 Lafitte Greenway Master Plan

During these pre-workshop calls, federal partners and consultants learned about the existing relationship between the Lafitte Greenway and the Crescent City Market, which operates at the American Can Company located near the greenway during one afternoon a week. Additionally, the local steering committee discussed the farmers market being considered by the City of New Orleans under the Claiborne Avenue elevated expressway as part of the Livable Claiborne Communities Study.

Next, the “Convene” phase included a community tour and a two-day workshop. During the tour and workshop, participants were able to visit all three potential community garden sites along the Lafitte Greenway and discuss issues and/or opportunities for each of the sites. At the end of the

two-day workshop, a draft set of goals and action items, created by workshop participants, was established to achieve the community's vision of gardens along the greenway.

Following the workshop, there were three additional calls to discuss the Action Plan document and mobilize resources to achieve goals and actions presented in the plan. It was during these three post-workshop calls that roles and responsibilities became clearer in making the proposed community gardens along the Lafitte Greenway a reality.

## Vision and Values Exercises

The first night of the workshop began with exercises to have participants share some core values and beliefs. Values drive aspirations for the future, and voicing these are key to pave the way to the more detailed work of action planning the following day. Participants were asked to say something they believed about the potential of the Lafitte Corridor. For the full list of statements, refer to **Appendix B**. A summary of the overall values expressed during the exercise is listed below. This exercise revealed that the community feels very optimistic about the health and opportunity of the Lafitte Corridor.



Figure 6 - Workshop activities, day one.

- Opportunity to educate adults and youth about healthy eating/living
- Spend money on health food now or spend money on doctors later
- Right to clean, fair food
- Time to reclaim food culture
- Increase physical activity through gardening
- Catalyst for community relations
- Opportunity to reduce sickness in community
- Food forest/edible landscape
- Create better access to healthy foods
- Bring different groups of people together
- Become a model for the rest of the city
- Community gardens are a great space for sharing (i.e. family history, recipes, etc.)

The Master Plan for the Lafitte Corridor identified the intention to have gardens and markets on the greenway. Participants at the day one public workshops were also asked to work in small groups to help to understand what that means, why it's important, how it can work to best serve the communities along the greenway. The following questions were presented on a worksheet.

1. Why do it? What does this mean to you, is it important and necessary, and if so why?
2. Define what success means. What do these look like to you, what does success mean say 15-20 years from now. If it helps, imagine an event 20 years from now and describe what has happened, why it matters.
3. Opportunities? Discuss the potential and opportunity for gardens and markets in the corridor.
4. Constraints? What challenges exist, possible barriers to success?

5. Operations, and sustaining progress? If you had a magic wand, and could make this happen, describe how you would make it work and function on a practical level? Who is involved, who organizes, who benefits, who operates? How is it supported and sustained?

The participants then shared the results from their individual worksheets and discussed similarities or themes that emerged. Each working group then presented their findings, which are collated by goal area in **Appendix B**.

## Focus a Plan around Gardens First, Markets Second

What emerged from the envisioning/values and opportunities/constraints exercises of the first night's community sessions was that this workshop should emphasize planning and implementation needed for the variety of gardens that could exist on the corridor. While the participants agreed to shift the action planning priorities for day two of the workshop to focus on the gardens, this was not to be seen as a vote against having markets in the corridor. Farmers markets and arts & crafts markets would help support vitality and economic opportunities in the corridor. Still, participants agreed that the garden development needs greater attention in the near and mid-term since various market initiatives are already making progress.

The Crescent City Farmers Market is already in close proximity to the corridor, at the American Can Company. The market there is well managed and is growing in popularity. When the need for more space arises more urgently, the Farmers Market managers may work with the City to request to expand to the nearby portion of the Greenway. Participants noted that there are tentative locations in the Greenway's Master Plan for future Crescent City Farmers Markets. Asali Ecclesiastes, Claiborne Corridor Program Manager for the Network for Economic Opportunity, mentioned that a future market is being strongly considered in the planning for the Claiborne Corridor Program, at a location that is on the Greenway Corridor. Since a number of positive market opportunities are already being considered by respective parties, the participants decided not to spend extra energy the following day working on markets but to focus attention on the vision, mission, planning, management and operations of a variety of potential garden operations in multiple areas of the corridor.

## Mission and Vision for the Lafitte Greenway Community Gardens Action Planning Committee

Following the workshop, a subcommittee met to write a mission and vision statement for the work of the Lafitte Greenway Community Gardens Action Planning Committee. They reviewed all the visioning and values information presented at the workshop and synthesized the feedback into the following Mission and Vision statements. Once all of the members of the Action Planning Committee are established, the Mission and Vision statements will be reviewed to ensure that they accurately reflect the feedback from everyone in the group.

### Mission of the Action Planning Committee

To advocate for and create community gardens along the Lafitte Greenway, which will improve health outcomes of local residents, strengthen neighborhood bonds, support environmental stewardship education, and foster economic growth in the Lafitte Corridor.

### The Vision for the Lafitte Greenway Community Gardens

To improve community health and vitality:

- **Physically:** by increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables, providing educational classes for all ages on nutrition and sustainable growing practices, and increasing opportunities for physical activity.

- **Socially and Culturally:** by creating a space for families and neighbors to come together to exchange ideas and share traditions while acknowledging the history of gardening on the land, fostering multi-generational relationships, creating opportunities for local residents of all ages and ethnicities, displaying community assets, and reclaiming the native food culture.
- **Environmentally:** by planting native species, utilizing good storm water management practices, growing produce sustainably, recapturing food waste, creating a space for biodiversity to naturally flourish, and creating environmental stewards through education and practice.
- **Economically:** by creating new economic opportunities for Lafitte Corridor residents, supporting the development of a sustainable local food system, improving community resilience, and improving food security for Lafitte Corridor residents.

## Action Plan

The primary product of the workshop is a strategic action plan to guide implementation. The plan is composed of goals, with lists of potential actions to meet those goals. The workshop purpose was to further clarify, prioritize and define roles and responsibilities for moving forward; and specifically, to propose how gardens and markets could be organized in the corridor, understanding that the City owns and manages the property and would have ultimate authority over implementation. The goals and actions represented in this plan are therefore a framework for community desires and recommendations for a potential use for select parts of the corridor. This workshop and the action plan are a first step in what will be an on-going community dialog on improving local food access along the Lafitte Corridor. The goals and actions of this proposed next steps plan are summarized below and are contained in their full detail in **Appendix A**.



Figure 7 - Working group completing action plan tables

**GOAL 1:** Based on Local Foods, Local Places Community Workshop input, literature review, guidance from local and national experts, and consultation with local community, develop Lafitte Greenway Community Garden Action Committee guiding documents: (1) Mission and Vision, (2) Community Action Plan, (3) Oral History, and (4) Sustainability Report.

- Action 1.1: Draft a vision and mission statement for the Community Garden Action Committee. Define purpose, statement, overarching values, and drivers.
- Action 1.2: Refine community input into Local Foods Local Places Community Action Plan.
- Action 1.3: Develop Sustainability Report to document best practices in Community Garden Sustainability.

- Action 1.4: Map out oral history and document community elders' stories of old Faubourg Lafitte gardens to help develop vision for future while respecting and paying homage to the past.

### GOAL 2: Form a Community Action Committee to lead action plan implementation and advocacy, and sustain momentum.

- Action 2.1: Build an inclusive Community Action Committee that represents all community areas and interests. At initial meeting, review and adopt guiding documents and define committee member expectations.
- Action 2.2: Consult with organizations/model gardens locally and from different cities for meeting and advising.

### GOAL 3: Through subcommittees, develop a plan detailing principles for management, design, programming, and funding resources.

- Action 3.1: Establish a Management Subcommittee to create a management and use plan for equitable inclusion in garden management and garden activities.
- Action 3.2: Establish a Design Subcommittee to lead site analysis for the community gardens and create site plan/build-out specifics.
- Action 3.3: Establish a Programming Subcommittee to create a program design for the community gardens.
- Action 3.4: Establish a Finance Subcommittee to Identify funding for implementation of community gardens.

### GOAL 4: Committee presents recommendations to the City and works collaboratively to develop implementation plan.

- Action 4.1: Bring the plan to City government with options and alternatives.

### GOAL 5: Subcommittees plan out and implement key elements of the community gardens.

- Action 5.1: Form or identify a management entity to manage the garden, gardeners, and other users of the space. They will draft guidelines and rules for the gardens.
- Action 5.2: Prioritize space in gardens for community residents.
- Action 5.3: Engage locals and youth in management of gardens.
- Action 5.4: Develop plans for job creation, internships, and volunteer opportunities in the gardens.
- Action 5.5: Partner with existing organizations and implement resource and information sharing.

## Implementation and Next Steps

Three follow up calls were held after the workshop to keep momentum going and discuss the documentation of the plan and the next steps for implementation. Listed below are some key activities and next steps that took place.

- A Mission and Vision Subcommittee, led by Kelly Bond of Friends of Lafitte Greenway, reviewed the workshop feedback and drafted a mission and vision statement for the Lafitte Greenway Community Gardens Action Planning Committee. The drafts were reviewed at the follow up calls and are included above. This serves as a starting point for the work of the future Action Committee. They are targeting Thursday, August 20<sup>th</sup> for a community meeting (evening) to review the action plan, draft mission and vision and talk about next steps.

- Councilmember Guidry and Friends of Lafitte Greenway are coordinating on future potential dates for a presentation to be given to the appropriate City Council committee.
- Friends of Lafitte Greenway developed a Sustainability Report to document best practices in community garden management based on a literature review and consultation with local experts.
- Friends of Lafitte Greenway developed an Oral History report, working with community members to document the rich history of urban growing the Lafitte Corridor neighborhoods.

## Appendices

- Appendix A – Implementation Action Plan Tables
- Appendix B – Workshop Exercise Results
- Appendix C – Workshop Photo Album
- Appendix D– Workshop Participants
- Appendix E – Funding Resources
- Appendix F – References
- Appendix G – Workshop Presentations
- Appendix H– History of the Lafitte Gardens
- Appendix I – Recommendations for Sustainability of the Lafitte Greenway Community Gardens