# A WALKER'S GUIDE TO THE lafitte greenway

LafitteGreenway.org
504.462.0645
info@lafittegreenway.org
2017

FRIENDS OF lafitte greenway

Prepared by Nellie Catzen, Sophie Harris, and Annalisa Kelly

This book is your guide to the Lafitte Greenway—what it was, what it is, and what it could be.

To help shape what it becomes, visit lafittegreenway.org/membership

Charles London

*Before - 2009 Hike the Greenway*

GeorgeLong.com

*After - 2016*

# table of contents

# greenway history

**A Historic Transportation Route**

Referred to by many names over the years—the Lafitte Greenway, the Lafitte Corridor, the Old Basin Canal, the Carondelet Canal—this stretch of land has a long history of transportation and connectivity for the city of New Orleans. For over 200 years, it has served as a vital transportation route and an important component of the city's water infrastructure.

Early French explorers chose New Orleans' location because of its proximity to Bayou St. John, a marshy water outlet, much like a natural canal, that provided access to Lake Pontchartrain and the Gulf of Mexico. The mouth of the Mississippi is challenging to navigate by boat because it is a delta. Native Americans established an alternate route, and New Orleans' founder—French explorer Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville—learned from their example: goods could be transported from the Gulf of Mexico into Lake Borgne, then Lake Pontchartrain (both actually estuaries rather than lakes), then into Bayou St. John, and from there portaged across land to establish the new city (today's French Quarter) on the banks of the Mississippi River.

In 1727, French Governor Perier initiated the construction of a navigation and drainage canal to connect the nascent city directly to the Bayou St. John, but the project was halted a few years later when Louisiana was sold to Spain.

In 1794, New Orleans' Spanish Governor Francisco Luis Hector, Baron de Carondelet, successfully completed the six-foot wide, one-and-a-half–mile long canal using slave labor. The Carondelet Canal (later nicknamed the Old Basin Canal) began at Bayou St. John and ended at a turning basin for ships at what is today the Greenway's "Basin Street" Trailhead. The Carondelet Canal was crucial in New Orleans' early development, because it allowed for the transport of goods and supplies from the Gulf (via the Lake and Bayou St. John) into the city.


*1798 Spanish Map of New Orleans*

Following the Louisiana Purchase (1803), the New Orleans Navigation Company widened and deepened the canal. Their workers—Irish immigrants, convicts, and slaves—hand-dug the canal to 30 feet wide, five times its original width, between 1805 and the 1820s. They also added an embankment on each side known as the Carondelet Walk.

Though the Carondelet Canal's main purpose was navigation, it also served as a drainage conduit, carrying water out of the city. At that time, most of the New Orleans as we know it was uninhabitable swampland. The city existed only on the high ground near the Mississippi River and three ridges at modern Esplanade Avenue, Bayou Road, and Metairie Road. Digging canals allowed for water to collect, drying out some of the land nearby. Until the invention of the Wood screw pump in the early 1900s, this was how New Orleans managed water, and it was far from perfect. Standing water in open canals collected sewage and debris, and allowed for mosquitoes, carrying deadly diseases like yellow fever, to breed.

By 1899, the Carondelet Canal had become silted, polluted, and choked with weeds, its commerce reduced to shallow, draft oyster boats. The wider and deeper New Basin Canal about a mile west (the location of today's Pontchartrain Expressway) took its place as a primary commercial trade route. Additionally, it no longer served an important role as a drainage conduit because the newly founded Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans had begun to overhaul the city's drainage system. The Carondelet Canal was nearly obsolete. In 1927, the Canal was declared non-navigable.

In the 1930s, railroads were being built all around the country, replacing canals as the primary form of shipping within cities. A railway was built alongside the Carondelet Canal and extended past the canal's terminus into Lakeview. The canal was eventually filled in in 1938, and this land became strictly railroad corridor. By the 1950s, much of the railroad tracks were decommissioned and the land sat vacant for almost half a century.
From its history as a canal, to a railroad, to today's bike and walking trail, this land has always played a crucial role in transportation, commerce, and connectivity.

Bart Everson

*The 4th Annual Hike, Spring 2008*

# the origins of a greenway

In early 2005, a couple of friends watched workers pull up ties on the long-abandoned railroad line running through their Mid-City New Orleans neighborhood, and it sparked an idea: to transform this vacant land into a new park and path for their community, a "rails-to-trails" project. Several months later, Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans. Returning home to New Orleans after the storm, community members living along the Lafitte Corridor, the six neighborhoods that are connected along the current Greenway (the French Quarter, Tremé/Lafitte, Tulane/Gravier, Mid-City, Faubourg St. John, and Lakeview), were concerned about how the city would revitalize the area and were disappointed by the short-term political decisions being made in the wake of the storm. What began with a group of friends and neighbors grew into a non-profit and community-wide advocacy initiative to create a new public space that would connect people to the great outdoors and to each other and engender economic, environmental, health, and cultural benefits for New Orleans.

*Lafitte Greenway Ribbon Cutting, November 2015*

Friends of Lafitte Greenway developed the first vision for the Greenway in 2007, building upon concepts developed in the 1970s by Clifton James and Rudy Lombard. The City embraced this vision and secured $11.6 million in Disaster Community Development Block Grants (federal Hurricane Katrina recovery funds) to plan and develop the Lafitte Greenway. Friends of Lafitte Greenway was the City's and community's partner in developing the 2013 Lafitte Greenway Master Plan—the plan that guides the Greenway's development.

On November 6, 2015 the City of New Orleans opened the Lafitte Greenway—a 2.6-mile bicycle and pedestrian trail connecting historic New Orleans neighborhoods from Armstrong Park to City Park. The greenway features sports fields, grassy lawns, 500 newly planted trees, energy-efficient lighting, and innovative stormwater management features.
Today, Friends of Lafitte Greenway is the community's nonprofit partner working to ensure that the Lafitte Greenway is a safe, vibrant, and active community asset. Our mission is to build, program, and promote the Lafitte Greenway as a great public space.

# points of interest

## BASIN TO N CLAIBORNE

**Louis Armstrong Park & Congo Square**

Louis Armstrong Park was built in the 1970s following a controversial 1960s "urban renewal" project that demolished a section of Tremé, including the area that had been Congo Square. The vacant land stood empty for nearly a decade until construction of the park began. The 32-acre park is home to the New Orleans Municipal Auditorium, the Mahalia Jackson Theater of the Performing Arts, Congo Square, and part of the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park. It was home to the first New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival in 1970. The park was closed for many years after Hurricane Katrina, and reopened in late 2011. It is now home to many community and cultural amenities including a free outdoor concert series and several annual festivals.

Congo Square's place in history cannot be overstated.  A musical gathering space and market for slaves and free people of color on Sundays, Congo Square was one of the few places in the antebellum United States where people of color openly practiced African musical traditions. Because of the freedom to play music openly and the mixing of various musical traditions, Congo Square fostered and preserved African-based musical styles that were ultimately instrumental in the creation of jazz and New Orleans brass, drumming, and R&B traditions.

**Basin Street Station**

Basin Street is named after the turning basin that was once located at this site—where ships would turn around at the end of the Carondelet Canal. Businesses such as P & J Oyster Company on the corner of Toulouse and Rampart streets sprung up around the turning basin to receive goods delivered by boat.

Today's Basin Street Station tourism and welcome center is a historical touchstone that remains in what was once the city's transportation crossroads, embodying the rare vestige of five railway stations and their associated buildings that served downtown New Orleans in the early 20th century.

Wikipedia Commons

*Carondelet Canal Turning Basin*


knowla.org

*Storyville, 1908*

**Bienville Basin/ Iberville**

Located just a block from the Greenway's Basin St. Trailhead, The Iberville Housing Project was built in the early 1940s as one of four housing developments built to serve poor white residents under segregation. Following Hurricane Katrina, it was one of the first public housing developments to reopen. The demolition of the original structures began in 2013 and the area has been redeveloped as Bienville Basin, a mixed-income affordable housing development. Several of the original buildings will remain on-site, as they were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2015.

This property occupies the footprint of the historic Storyville neighborhood. In 1897, through an ordinance by City Councilman Sidney Story to designate a controlled area in New Orleans for legalized prostitution, this area became the infamous red-light district of Storyville, whose boundaries were Iberville, Basin, St. Louis, and N. Robertson streets. The brothels and bordellos of the area, in addition to hosting up to 2,000 prostitutes, also became popular venues for jazz and ragtime music. Many well-known New Orleanian musicians, including Louis Armstrong, got their start in the jazz clubs of Storyville. In 1917 the Department of the Navy and the City forcibly shut down the establishments of the district, and the area was almost entirely demolished in the 1930s and 1940s to make way for the Iberville.

**Lemann Playground #1**

In addition to several other parks around the City, Lemann Playgrounds #1 and #2 along the Greenway were donated by the Lemann family when their son died in a tragic automobile accident. Lemann Playground #1 (located on the riverside of Claiborne Ave) was built in the 1930s to serve the white children of the Iberville Housing Development, while Lemann Playground #2 on the lake-side of Claiborne served black children from the Lafitte Development.


nola.com

*Claiborne between Canal and Pauger, 1966*

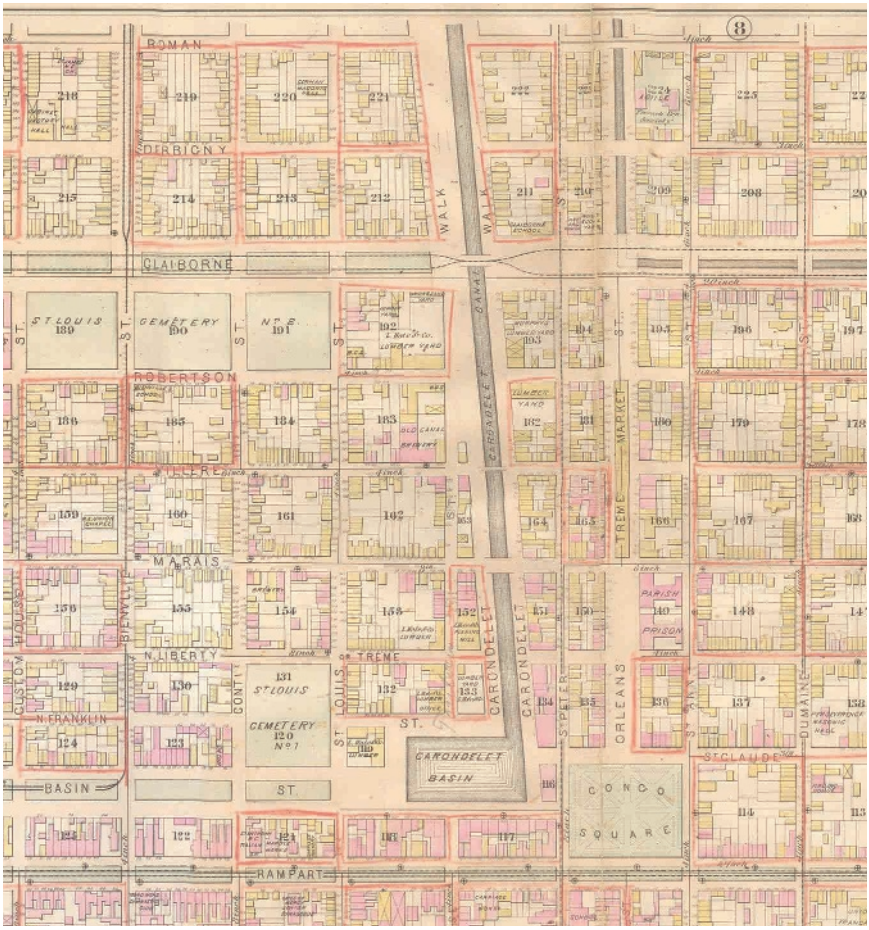
**Claiborne Avenue Crossing**

The safety of Greenway users is Friends of Lafitte Greenway's number one concern. The Greenway features rectangular rapid-flashing beacons at each major intersection. Greenway users should press the button to trigger the beacon. When the button is activated, flashing yellow lights warn drivers to stop. When a pedestrian is within a crosswalk, it is State law that drivers must stop to allow that person to cross. It is also illegal for drivers to pass cars that are stopped for a pedestrian at a crosswalk. However, the law is less clear when it comes to people on bikes trying to cross. We recommend that drivers stop for all trail users who have pressed the button.

**N Claiborne Avenue & the Claiborne Expressway**

North Claiborne Avenue was once a thriving commercial corridor, a center of New Orleans' African-American community, and home to the longest continuous stretch of live oaks in the country. Claiborne was bustling with commerce, which featured a majority of black-owned businesses. Known as the universal and free "front yard" of the 6th and 7th Wards, the Claiborne Ave. neutral ground was also a cultural hot-spot. During Carnival, Mardi Gras Indians would meet here. Families would gather to watch and listen to their songs or watch the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club parade by on Orleans Ave.

The neighborhood suffered major disinvestment in part because of the Claiborne Expressway, which was built over North Claiborne Avenue in 1960s, pushing many businesses to close. The construction of the Claiborne Expressway tore apart the cultural and economic fabric of this neighborhood and was devastating for many. The strength and resiliency of the communities along this corridor have managed to preserve and revitalize much of the culture that was threatened, and even form new cultural traditions under the expressway, with festivals, brass band battles, second lines, and other celebrations persevering.




Robinson's Atlas of the City of New Orleans, Louisiana, 1883

*Carondelet Canal & Walk Map, 1883*

## N CLAIBORNE TO N GALVEZ

**Carondelet Walk**

The Carondelet Walk crushed stone walking trail is a modern expression of the pedestrian promenade that once bordered the historic Carondelet Canal.

**Lemann Playground #2**

Though nearby Lemann Pool and Lemann #1 have reopened since Hurricane Katrina, the former Lemann Playground #2 has not. The Greenway now features athletic fields (football, baseball, and soccer) on the former Lemann #2. The New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC) operates recreation programs on these fields. Lemann #1 has long been home to a robust football program for the kids in the neighborhood. There is a NORDC Booster Club that raises money to buy equipment and supplies for extended programming on this space.

**LIFT Parcel**

The LIFT parcel, so named for the Louisiana Institute of Film Technology that once planned to locate there post-Katrina, hosted FEMA trailers immediately after the hurricane. The City sold the site to LIFT, jeopardizing early plans for the development of the Lafitte Greenway on this site. After LIFT was investigated for money laundering, fraud and tax evasion, and its CEO and co-founder, Malcolm Petal, pleaded guilty to charges of bribery in 2009, the organization became defunct and plans for the site fell by the wayside. In 2010, with help from the Trust for Public Land, the City bought the site back for $4 million (from the $11.6 million allocated for the Greenway).

This is the widest portion of the Lafitte Greenway, so without this land, completing the vision for the Lafitte Greenway would not have been possible. The sale of this land to LIFT spurred community and Friends of Lafitte Greenway into action to advocate for the preservation of this land as public space.

Advocate Photo by Sophia Germer

*Lemann Pool Mural Painting, 2016*

**Lemann Pool**

This public pool is operated by NORDC and is open to the public in the summer months. In 2016, a group of youth called the Young Artists Movement (YAM) worked with the Welcome Table New Orleans Mid-City Circle, Prospect New Orleans, and the Arts Council of New Orleans to create a 5-wall mural on the outside walls of the pool. The mural is focused on racial reconciliation, and its design was driven by a series of dialogues with diverse community members. The lead artist of the murals is Keith Duncan.

**Meadows**

There are 4 acres of native meadows planned for the Greenway. The meadows will consist of native flower plants. The area between Prieur & Galvez is the largest planned meadow area on the Greenway.

**The Carver Theater**

The Carver Theater opened in 1950 as one of the most modern black movie theaters in the country. In 1980, the theater became a medical clinic. Following major damage in Hurricane Katrina, it remained vacant for many years. It reopened in 2014 after an $8 million restoration, and today is a venue for events, concerts, plays, and film screenings. It is recognized in the National Register of Historic Places. The Carver is located on Orleans Avenue and its marquee is visible from the Greenway trail at N Johnson Street.

**Gardens**

The Lafitte Greenway has long been a site for growing food. This area was home to one of the largest urban farms in the city in the mid- to late-1900s, known as the Lafitte Gardens. The Lafitte Gardens were privately operated by community members, chief among them Mr. Kitestick, and were a great source of fresh and healthy food for some of the nearby residents. After Hurricane Katrina, the gardens were not re-established. In the community input process for the Greenway Master Plan, neighbors were passionate about restoring gardens for the neighborhoods along the Greenway. The Master Plan includes 3 acres of gardens, but the Greenway's 2015 build-out did not include any. Friends of Lafitte Greenway is working with community members and growers to bring gardens to the Greenway.

## N GALVEZ TO N BROAD

**Bioretention Cell**

Known colloquially as a rain garden, the storm drain on the lake side of Galvez St. is a bioretention cell designed to store, divert, and delay water from entering the drainage system. While most storm drains are covered by pavement and direct water from the street to the drainage system, this bioretention cell will be home to tall hydrophilic, or water-loving, plants that will slow the drainage of the water and ease the pressure on the storm drain in heavy rainfall events. There is another bioretention cell on the river side of the Greenway's intersection with N Carrollton Ave.

C Hardy S Williams Municipal Government Photograph Collection, HANO Series

*Lafitte Housing Development, 1950s*

**Faubourg Lafitte Community**

The original Lafitte Public Housing Development was built in 1941, and housed black residents during segregation. After sustaining damage from Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the site was closed and demolition and redevelopment began in 2007. When fully complete, the new Faubourg Lafitte Community will consist of 1,500 homes and apartments, many of which are scattered throughout the surrounding neighborhood. The first residents returned to the site in January 2011. You can see the old architecture in the three historic buildings that remain on-site. Two buildings serve as a Head Start Center, and the remaining building will be renovated as an administrative building and community space.

Many New Orleans musical legends are from the Tremé & Lafitte Neighborhoods: the Andrews Family—Glen David Andrews and his sons Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews and James Andrews—Uncle Lionel Batiste, Alphonse Picou, Kermit Ruffins, Lucien Barbarin, and Shannon Powell, as well as members of the Soul Rebels Brass Band, Tremé Brass Band and Rebirth Brass Band, and many more.

**Sojourner Truth Neighborhood Center**

The Sojourner Truth Neighborhood Center was founded and built by the Housing Authority of New Orleans to connect Lafitte residents to supportive services. In the summer of 2012, Providence Community Housing took over the management of the Sojourner Truth Neighborhood Center and now offers a variety of programs and services including after-school programming, senior activities and programs, a computer lab, résumé and life skills workshops, and health programming.

**FitLot**

This free outdoor fitness park opened on the Lafitte Greenway in March of 2017. This is the first outdoor fitness park developed by FitLot, a nonprofit organization committed to helping communities find the resources they need to plan, build and program outdoor fitness parks.

**Mr. Fred's Garden**

Though the Lafitte Gardens were not re-established after Hurricane Katrina, there is one community member who has been growing food on this space in the decade since, Mr. Fred, and he is still growing today.

*Mr. Fred Sipps, Urban Farmer, 2015*

**The Water Cycle & Green Infrastructure**

The Greenway is home to several sustainable stormwater management features, also know as "green infrastructure." In order to understand how and why green infrastructure works, it is important to understand the natural systems upon which the infrastructure is based. The water cycle is the natural system of movement of water, in all its forms, throughout the earth. When it rains, much of the rainwater seeps into the ground (at different rates depending on the soil composition). Some of the water runs off above ground into lakes, rivers, ponds, puddles, etc. Some of that water evaporates and makes its way back to the atmosphere, where it cools, condenses, and falls as rain.

Plumbing, drainage, and paving interrupt the natural water system and are known as "gray infrastructure." "Green infrastructure" describes a system (or series of systems) that interrupts the natural cycles as little as possible, and instead works with the natural systems.

Founded on swampland and surrounded by the Mississippi River, Lake Pontchartrain, and Lake Borgne, New Orleans sits in a region where water is abundant—sometimes overly abundant. General practice has been to pump water out of the city to reduce flooding. This system has allowed a city to flourish on once uninhabitable swampland, but it has significant drawbacks; pumping the water out of the city without recharging the groundwater causes the land (and the city, on top of the land) to sink, or "subside." Consider the land as a sponge. When full of water, a sponge is at its full, expanded size. As it dries out, however, it compresses and shrinks. As we pump water out of the city, the land compresses, and the surface sinks. The more water we pump out, the more the land will continue to sink. Subsidence is a major contributor to road, building, and infrastructure damage in New Orleans, and is estimated to cause $2.2 billion in structural damages over the next 50 years.

Despite our substantial drainage system, street flooding from rain events is expected to cost the city $8 billion in damages over the next 50 years. In the Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan, engineers, architects, and others have begun to look toward systems that work with the natural water cycle, saving money, increasing the city's resiliency, and improving water quality and quality of life for residents.

*Student learns about bioswales in Greenway Explorers Program*

**Bioswales**

One of the highest impact stormwater management features of the Lafitte Greenway is hiding in plain sight—the bioswales. The Greenway can hold up to 1.45 million gallons of water above ground; that's more than two Olympic-sized swimming pools. This water is stored in the landform itself (called a bioswale), everywhere where there are areas of lower elevation. These areas were designed not only to hold water, but to release it slowly back into both the earth and the city's drainage system, thereby preventing flooding and subsidence. The Greenway's swales are designed to handle a 10-year storm on-site.

The landscape architects at Design Workshop and Dana Brown and Associates designed the Greenway's landscape and infrastructure to work together carefully. In each swale, there is a drain located at the lowest point,

which allows excess water to drain into the City's drainage system. The soil makeup and infrastructure below it are designed to make sure that any water that collects here is not stagnant for more than two days to prevent mosquitoes from breeding. (A mosquito would need five days.)

The swales also allow the water that sinks through the soil to filter naturally before it arrives back in the lake, river, or groundwater, improving water quality. The water that goes through this storm drain (and any other drain in the city) is pumped directly to the lake without being treated.

The plants that are growing in these swales are called sedges. Sedge is a family of plants that are hydrophilic, meaning they love water. These sedges can also tolerate drought. A wide variety of sedges were planted along the swales on the Greenway. As the plants grow in, they will distribute in the best areas for their survival. Those species that enjoy a lot of water will naturally tend toward the deepest points, while those that prefer less water will grow on higher ground. The Lafitte Greenway features five acres of sedges. The sedges, as well as all of the other plants on the Greenway, excluding the grass on the playing fields, are native plants. Native plants not only require less maintenance, they also support the local ecology. Native plants, birds, butterflies, beneficial insects, and other interesting critters are made for each other.


*Mookie Square*

*Permeable Pavement Demonstration at 2016 Hike*

**Permeable Pavement**

The Greenway's permeable walkways, light-gray in color, also contribute to its stormwater management capacity. Ordinary pavement does not allow water to penetrate through into the soil, causing water that lands on impermeable surfaces to either run-off into storm drains or to pool, causing flooding. The Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan estimates that flooding will cause about $8 billion in structural damage over the next 50 years.

When water falls on the roofs, roads, and parking lots that cover much of New Orleans, it runs off into storm drains, where it is pumped through a system of pipes directly into Lake Pontchartrain without being cleaned. This system is often overloaded during heavy rainstorms, causing the flooding of streets, cars, and even homes and businesses. Therefore, any water that goes into the soil, or is slowed in its path to the drainage system, helps prevent the system from being overwhelmed and reduces flooding.

Permeable pavement allows the water to seep through into the soil below it, rather than running off. Most of the walkways that cross the Greenway trail are permeable. While a great benefit for flooding reduction, one of the challenges associated with permeable pavement is maintenance. This pavement can get clogged with dust and debris, and needs to be vacuumed about twice a year to remain fully functional.

**NOPD Refueling Station**

The New Orleans Police Department and other public service departments use this station to refuel their vehicles.

**Broad Street**

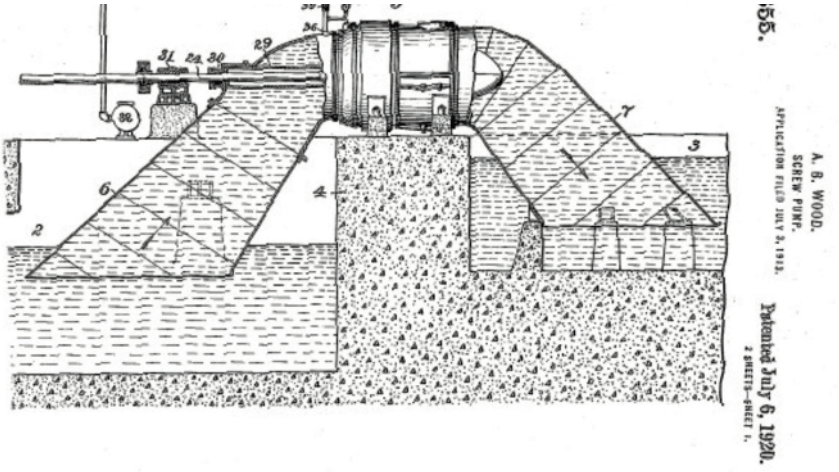
Broad Street is the border between the Tremé and Mid-City neighborhoods and is one of the key transects along the Lafitte Greenway. Broad is one of New Orleans' four State-designated Main Streets and has the most active transit lines in the city. The Greenway complements other post-Katrina developments along Broad, including the ReFresh Project at the old Schwegmann's Building at Bienville Street anchored by Whole Foods Market, the Ruth Fertel Tulane University Community Health Center at Broad and Orleans, the Broad Theater, and more.

**Pumping Station #2**

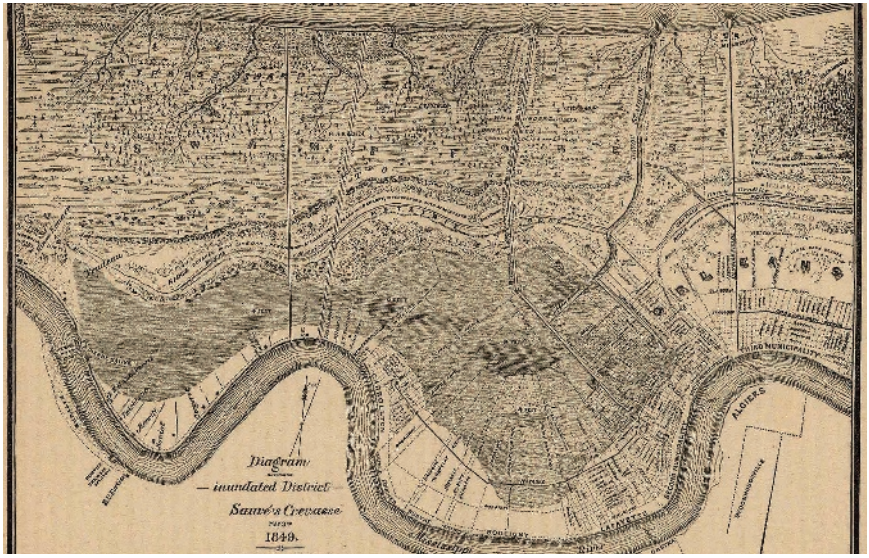
This intersection is also home to one of the city's major pumping stations, Station #2, which drains the city and pumps water into Lake Pontchartrain during flood events. This pumping station is tri-directional. It receives water from the French Quarter, Broadmoor, and Gentilly, and pumps out to the Lake via another pump station.

This system plays an instrumental role in New Orleans' ability to stay dry despite its location on  former swampland. The system has the ability to pump water out of the city at over 50,000 cubic feet per second (1/10 of the flow rate of the Mississippi River as it passes New Orleans). It could fill an Olympic swimming pool in 1.5 seconds. This system enables the city to handle significant flood events. However, this system of pumping water out of the city causes subsidence—the gradual sinking of the land—which is expected to cause an estimated $2.2 billion in structural damage over the next 50 years.

Water is an essential and ever-present component to life in New Orleans, and a deep understanding of how it works and how to manage it will be crucial to the city's survival here. For more information on the way we live with water, consult the GNO Urban Water Plan.




*Wood screw pump patent*




lib.utexas.edu

*1849 New Orleans Flood Map - Backatown*

**"Backatown"**

Until the early 1900s, this area of the city was uninhabitable. It was known as "Backatown," a nickname for its location at the "back of town," and was completely covered in lowland swamps. These swamps, combined with a nonexistent sewerage system, gave rise to typhoid fever, yellow fever, cholera, and other diseases, which decimated the population at regular intervals. By 1893, it became apparent to city leaders that the city's growth would depend on their ability to keep New Orleans drained, adequately supplied with water for drinking and fire protection, and provided with a sanitary sewerage system. Planning for the three systems began that year. In 1899, the city formed the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans, and over the course of the next decade they tried several methods of moving the water along existing canals, including early steam and windmill-powered pumps.

By 1913, the system could pump out 2.5 billion gallons of water per day (less than 5% of today's rate). Officials celebrated this revolutionary system for its merits in improving the health condition of the city, and beginning to drain the back swamps. Still, the city faced major flood risks. The system's inadequacies came to light when the city saw record-breaking rainfall in 1913—22 rain storms that year surpassed the 20-year rainfall record. The

areas that were fully supported by the new system were spared from destructive flooding, but other areas still relying on canals faced disastrous floods, and paved roads were still not a worthwhile investment for most of Backatown.

The successful drainage of the swamps is owed to the invention of the Wood screw pump (named for its inventor Albert Baldwin Wood, the elected General Superintendent of the Sewerage and Water Board at the time) in New Orleans in 1913. The Wood screw pump allowed for 25,000 acres, or about 39 square miles, to be developed in just two years—including "Backatown". This allowed the city to grow tremendously; its population almost doubled from 16,000 in 1899 to 30,000 by 1925.

As we walk the Greenway, we are tracing the historic development pattern of the City of New Orleans—you can see this in the changing architectural styles and building uses.

## N BROAD TO JEFFERSON DAVIS PARKWAY

**St. Louis Canal**

Visible along the St. Louis St. edge of the Greenway between Bayou St. John and North Broad St. is the St. Louis Canal, part of New Orleans' municipal stormwater system. (Note that this open canal is not a remnant of the Carondelet Canal, which ran adjacent to what is now Lafitte St.) .

Developed in the early twentieth century, New Orleans' stormwater system played a crucial role in the city's growth and development. This "gray infrastructure", which relies on a system of massive pumps and outfall canals, is the reason the city is able to exist on such low ground. The only natural high ground is the river banks, the lakefront, and three ridges at Esplanade, Metairie Rd., and Gentilly Rd. While a necessary component of New Orleans' stormwater management system, gray infrastructure's negative impacts are increasingly evident: subsidence, high energy costs, and the contaminating effects of untreated runoff on Lake Pontchartrain.

New Orleans' drainage systems have the capacity to drain 1 inch of rain during the first hour of a storm, and 1/2 inch per hour after that, meaning the system is often overwhelmed during major rain events, causing flooding. The experts calling for change advise a mixed approach using both green and gray infrastructure, so that we can reintroduce water into the soil to prevent subsidence, reduce flooding, and reduce our reliance on gray infrastructure.

In 2010, Friends of Lafitte Greenway commissioned local architects Waggonner + Ball to study the potential for the integration of more sustainable stormwater management design approaches into the design of the Lafitte Greenway. In 2012, Waggonner + Ball was selected to lead a team of planners and engineers to develop a Water Management Strategy for the entire metropolitan area. This work, which includes more advanced development of concepts for the Lafitte Greenway, can be followed at the project's website: livingwithwater.com

*DPW's Sign & Signal Shop*

**Sign & Signal Shop**

Though the Greenway no longer serves the important industrial function it did as a canal or later as a railroad, post-Katrina, it was still home to a few industrial relics. The City's Sign & Signal Shop was located immediately lake-side of Broad Street—a facility that manufactured traffic signals and road signs for the City of New Orleans—that is undergoing redevelopment into parkland.

**Lopez St. Bridge**

The Lopez Street Bridge has long been a connection from the neighborhood on the St. Louis St. side of the Greenway to the Lafitte St. side, and many neighbors used it every day. When the City began construction on the Greenway, the bridge, which had fallen into disrepair, was blocked off for safety. The City of New Orleans is working to develop a new bridge at N. Lopez Street, and plans to build additional bridges across this canal in the future.

*Volunteers paint Brake Tag Station on Katrina 10-Year Anniversary, 2015*

**Brake Tag Station**

Once a facility at which people would have their cars inspected and receive their brake tags (inspection stickers), the Lafitte Greenway Master Plan shows it repurposed as a market or community pavilion. The City of New Orleans is moving forward with plans to redevelop this facility for public use.

**Jefferson Davis Parkway**

Jefferson Davis Parkway marks the intersection of the Lafitte Greenway with another major spine of the City's off-street bike network. Jefferson Davis Parkway provides a connection to Uptown New Orleans. The Wisner trail, reached via Bayou St. John and City Park, connects to the lakefront.

greenerbayoustjohn.org

*Bayou St. John, 1937*

**Bayou St. John**

Bayou St. John, a small natural waterway of about 3.5 miles, extends from Lake Pontchartrain into the central Mid-City area. This waterway (known originally by the Native American name "Bayouk Choupic") was an important trading artery for Native Americans, who showed French explorers Iberville and Bienville that it offered a convenient link between the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico via Lakes Pontchartrain and Borgne. It was this waterway and portage road, in fact, that prompted Bienville to develop New Orleans at its current location. This intersection is where the Carondelet Canal stopped when it met the Bayou St. John.

For many years, the floodgate between the Bayou and the Lake was closed, but it was opened in late 2014. It will remain open except in the event of major storms or flood risks. In part due to this connection, the Bayou has seen incredible improvements in water quality, and can now support several species of fish and other wildlife (there are rumors of alligator sightings). In 2015, experts declared the Bayou's water quality safe for swimming.

## JEFFERSON DAVIS PARKWAY TO N ALEXANDER

**A Catalyst for Development**

In this section of the Greenway, you can see a neighborhood actively in transition. Former industrial buildings and warehouses, many of which have sat vacant for decades, are undergoing redevelopment into commercial, residential, and mixed-use buildings. This has always been one of the goals of the Lafitte Greenway: to stimulate the revitalization of its surrounding neighborhoods to support the development of walkable, bikeable, healthy communities. The zoning along the Greenway allows for higher-density development, which promotes bike- and walkability, and activates the Greenway with people. Friends of Lafitte Greenway supports the development of affordable housing along the Lafitte Greenway.

**Lindy Boggs Medical Center**

This hospital was founded as Mercy Hospital in the 1920s as a 187-bed facility offering a variety of medical and emergency services. In the 1990s, it merged with Southern Baptist Hospitals and became Mercy-Baptist Medical Center. It was later taken over by a new company and renamed after former Congresswoman and Ambassador Lindy Boggs. The Lindy Boggs Medical Center has been closed since Hurricane Katrina. So far, plans have not been announced for its redevelopment.

**500 N. Carrollton**

A Home Depot opened on this site after Hurricane Katrina, a source for supplies in the rebuilding and recovery effort. After the Home Depot closed, the property sat vacant until 2016 when a new retail development opened on the site, anchored by Petco, Marshalls, and CVS. The developers built a bridge over the swale to welcome Greenway users, and installed two bike repair stations, water fountains, and covered bicycle parking.
Mid-City Market

Formerly Bohn Ford dealership, this was redeveloped into retail and restaurant plaza managed by Stirling Properties, with lessees including Winn Dixie, an Ochsner clinic, Five Guys Burgers and Fries, Felipe's, Jefferson Feed, and more. The $38-million project was completed in 2013.

## N ALEXANDER TO CANAL BLVD

**Railroad Tracks**

Rail was once active along the entire length of the Lafitte Greenway; today, only the tracks on the portion above N Alexander St. remain in service. Norfolk Southern operates the railroad that delivers materials to Masonry Products, a locally owned business on N. Alexander St. The current Greenway trail goes only as far as N. Alexander St. due to the ongoing legal discussions between the City and Norfolk Southern involving the railroad right-of-way. Currently, the Greenway trail is 2.6-miles. In the Lafitte Greenway Master Plan, the trail continues another half-mile, crossing City Park Avenue and ending at Canal Blvd. Friends of Lafitte Greenway is working to advocate for the trail's extension.

*To get to City Park from the N. Alexander trailhead, turn right and walk 5 blocks.

**Delgado Community College**

Delgado Community College provides professional and vocational training, and is the oldest and largest community college in Louisiana. Though it has multiple campuses today, the campus on City Park Avenue was the first.

**Holt Cemetery**

Holt Cemetery was established in 1879 as a potter's field for the poor and is one of the few below-ground cemeteries in New Orleans. Located next to Delgado's City Park Campus, it is the final resting place for many people who could not afford above-ground tombs, including cornet player Buddy Bolden (often credited as the father of jazz) and R&B singer Jesse Hill (most famous for his song, "Ooh Pooh Pah Doo"). The cemetery is owned by the City of New Orleans and families can purchase plots from the City for the cost of the burial.

Delgado Community College

*Higgins Boat Factory*

**Higgins Boat Factory**

Located at City Park Ave and St. Louis St, the Higgins Boat factory was famous for the amphibious landing crafts it manufactured during World War II. "Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel" (LCVP), better known as "Higgins Boats," were designed by Andrew Higgins based on Louisiana swamp and marsh boats, and were key to the success of the Allied invasion of Normandy on D-Day. In a 1964 interview, President Eisenhower remarked, "Andrew Higgins is the man who won the war for us. If Higgins had not designed and built those LCVPs, we never could have landed over an open beach. The whole strategy of the war would have been different."

The Higgins Boat Factory is a major reason for the National WWII Museum's location in New Orleans. At its height, the Higgins Boat Factory employed more than 20,000 people. Higgins, a Nebraska native, scandalized the segregated South by giving black workers responsible jobs and paying them the same as white workers. He pioneered equal pay for women, the disabled and the elderly when most young, able-bodied men had been drafted into the military.

Atlantaintownpaper.com

*Atlanta BeltLine*

# what are other greenways like?

No two greenways are alike. Each reflects the best of its community, from neighborhood events and celebrations to opportunities for fresh food and physical activity. Communities across the country are using trails and greenways to create better places to live. Other greenways include New York City's Highline, Metropolitan Branch Trail in Washington, D.C., the Atlanta BeltLine, Minneapolis' Midtown Greenway, and many more.

**Trails and Economic Development**

Trails build strong, economically vibrant communities. According to a National Association of Homebuilders study cited by the New York Times, trails are the number one amenity potential homeowners cite when they are looking to move into a new community. Trails provide communities with a valuable amenity that translates into increased housing values. For example, along Minneapolis' Midtown Greenway, developers have invested $200 million in the past decade to construct 1,200 apartment units. Per acre, those 6-story apartment buildings generate more than 6 times the tax revenue of big-box developments nearby. Trails build local businesses.

In 2010, 34% of houses located within ¼ mile of the Lafitte Greenway were vacant, so the Greenway presents significant opportunity for sustainable growth that supports the local communities and small local businesses. The Lafitte Greenway zoning overlay in the City of New Orleans Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance further promotes walkable, trail-oriented development.

GeorgeLong.com

*Lafitte Greenway*

**Active Transportation and Health**

Childhood obesity has become a major problem for the United States, as the youth of our nation today is the first generation to have a life expectancy shorter than that of their parents. The obesity rate has doubled for children and tripled for adolescents since 1980. Obesity contributes to approximately 300,000 deaths a year in the U.S.

The lack of physical activity is a significant factor in the growing obesity epidemic. Daily walking and biking used to be an integral part of kids' lives. Today, however, only 14% of children walk to school, down from 50% in 1969. The Lafitte Greenway is a major public park in many of the neighborhoods it crosses through, and is a critical asset to the health of the residents. People who live near multi-use trails are 50% more likely to meet physical activity guidelines, and 73-80% more likely to bicycle. In Seattle, a 5% increase in the overall level of walkability of a neighborhood was linked to a 32%

increase in minutes of walking or biking and a reduction in Body Mass Index (BMI). As trail use increases, we expect to see similarly significant health improvements for the residents of Lafitte Corridor neighborhoods.

**Walking, Biking, and Climate Change**

Transportation is a leading source of climate pollution, representing approximately 30% of overall U.S. emissions in 2005. It is also the fastest rising source of $CO_2$ emissions.

Studies by the Center for Clean Air Policy show that though technology is improving, steady increases in vehicle use will negate improvements in fuel efficiency and alternative fuel use. Travel demand, with walking, biking and transit as key elements, must become a central part of the national strategy to manage climate change. Short trips under three miles represent nearly half of all trips nationwide, but cars are the still the dominant mode of transportation. With most trips within a 15- to 20-minute bike ride, many of these trips are ripe for conversion to walking and biking. Communities that invest in walking and biking have seen tremendous growth in the share of walking and biking trips. The Lafitte Greenway's bike and walking trail encourages New Orleanians to replace many of these short trips with a walk or bike ride.

**Walking & Biking As Everyday Transportation Choices**

Active transportation has the potential to carry a significant part of the transportation load. Current transportation statistics undercount walking and biking trips by focusing almost exclusively on work trips, which account for only 15% of all trips.  Expanding active transportation choices needs to be at the heart of the nation's long-term transportation strategy. The status quo practice of expanding roadway capacity is a recipe for gridlock. Communities with good walking and biking conditions can expect a 5 to 15% reduction in overall vehicle miles traveled.

Additionally, many New Orleanians face limited transportation options. In 2012, 19% of Orleans Parish families didn't have access to a vehicle. Access to quality active transportation options could significantly improve quality of life for Lafitte Corridor residents.

# get involved!

Friends of Lafitte Greenway is a community-driven nonprofit that works to build, program and promote the Lafitte Greenway as a great public space. Help us ensure that the Greenway remains a safe, vibrant, and active community asset by getting involved as a member or volunteer. Learn more at LafitteGreenway.org.

Tenbo Air

*Lafitte Greenway at Broad Street*

Quincy Coby

*Friends of Lafitte Greenway Founders*

# sources


Basin St. Station. Basin St. Station, LLC. Web. 3 March 2017. http://www.basinststation.com

Brister, Nancy."Storyville and the Birth of Jazz." Old New Orleans. Accessed April 30, 2014. http://www.old-new-orleans.com/NO_Storyville.html.

City of New Orleans, Design Workshop. Lafitte Greenway Master Plan. 2013.

Cornerstones, The Neighborhood Story Project, and Spyboy Productions. If Those Bricks Could Talk, A collaborative book and film dedicated to Lafitte Public Housing Development. New Orleans: The Center for the Book at the University of New Orleans, 2015. Print.

Corporation for Enterprise Development and Greater New Orleans Community Data Center. Assets and Opportunity Profile: New Orleans. 2012.

Drainage in New Orleans. Wikipedia. Wikimedia, n.d. Web. 20 Jan 2016. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drainage_in_New_Orleans

Duhe, Danielle. Dana Brown and Associates. Interview. October 2015.

Fisher, Thomas. "Streetscapes: Midtown Greenway spurs urban development, especially in Uptown." Star Tribune. Star Tribune, 9 May 2015. Web. 3 Feb 2016.

Ferrand, Casey. "Carver Theater reopens after $8 million restoration." WDSU New Orleans. WDSU, 1 May 2014. Web. 4 Feb 2016.

Friends of Lafitte Corridor. Lafitte Greenway Ambassadors Packet. 2013.

Haydel, Jennifer. "The Wood Screw Pump: A Study of the Drainage Development of New Orleans." Loyola University Student Historical Journal 17 (1996). http://www.loyno.edu/~history/journal/1995-6/haydel.htm

A Historical Look at the Sewerage and Water Board. Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans. Web. 3 March 2017. http://swbno.org/history_history.asp

Huston et al., Pierce et al., and Moudon et al. - in "Active Transportation: Making the Link from Transportation to Physical Activity and Obesity," Active Living Research research brief, 2009

Iberville Projects. Wikipedia. Wikimedia, n.d. Web. 6 March 2017. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iberville_Projects

Krewe of Zulu: About Us. Krewe of Zulu. Web. 3 Feb 2016. http://www.kreweofzulu.com/about-us

Lafitte Greenway Existing Conditions Report

Lawrence D. Frank et al. "Many Pathways from Land Use to Health: Associations Between Neighborhood Walkability and Active Transportation, Body Mass Index, and Air Quality." Journal of American Planning Association. 72 no. 1 (2006) 75-87

Louis Armstrong Park (New Orleans). Wikipedia. Wikimedia, n.d. Web. 3 March 2017. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Armstrong_Park_(New_Orleans)

Roberts, Jennifer. Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans. Interview. October 2015.

STPP (2004)

Treme (Neighborhood). Wikipedia. Wikimedia, n.d. Web. 20 Jan 2016. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trem%C3%A9U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001)

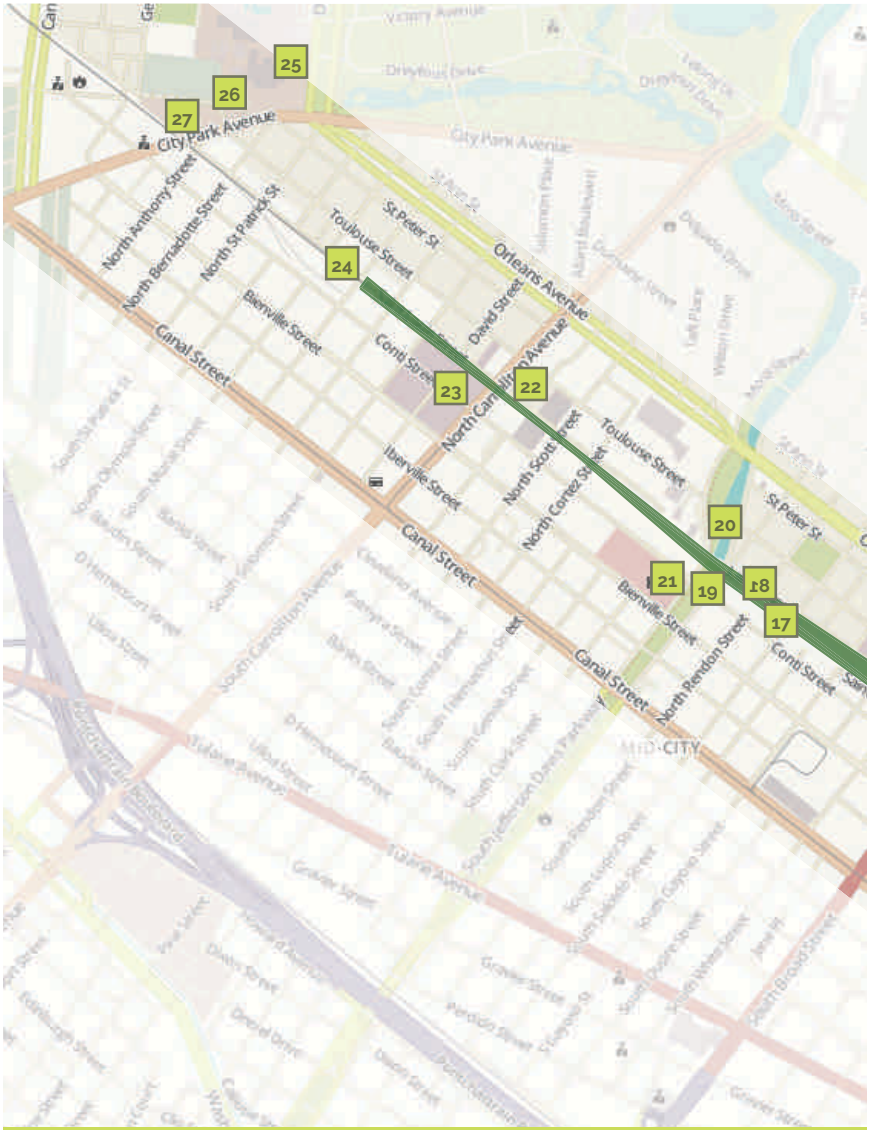
Waggonner and Ball Architects. Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan. 2013. www.livingwithwater.com/blog/urban_water_plan/reports


*Get Fit the Green Way: Yoga - 2016*

# acknowledgments

We offer sincere appreciation to the many people that shared their time and expertise to make this guide possible: Danielle Duhe of Dana Brown & Associates, Ann MacDonald and Hailey Bowen of the City of New Orleans Department of Parks and Parkways, and Jen Roberts and Bridget Tydor of the Sewerage and Water Board. We thank the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy for their support in developing the original Lafitte Greenway Ambassador Program. The Lafitte Greenway Walking Workshops and Program Guide were made possible thanks to generous support from Entergy.

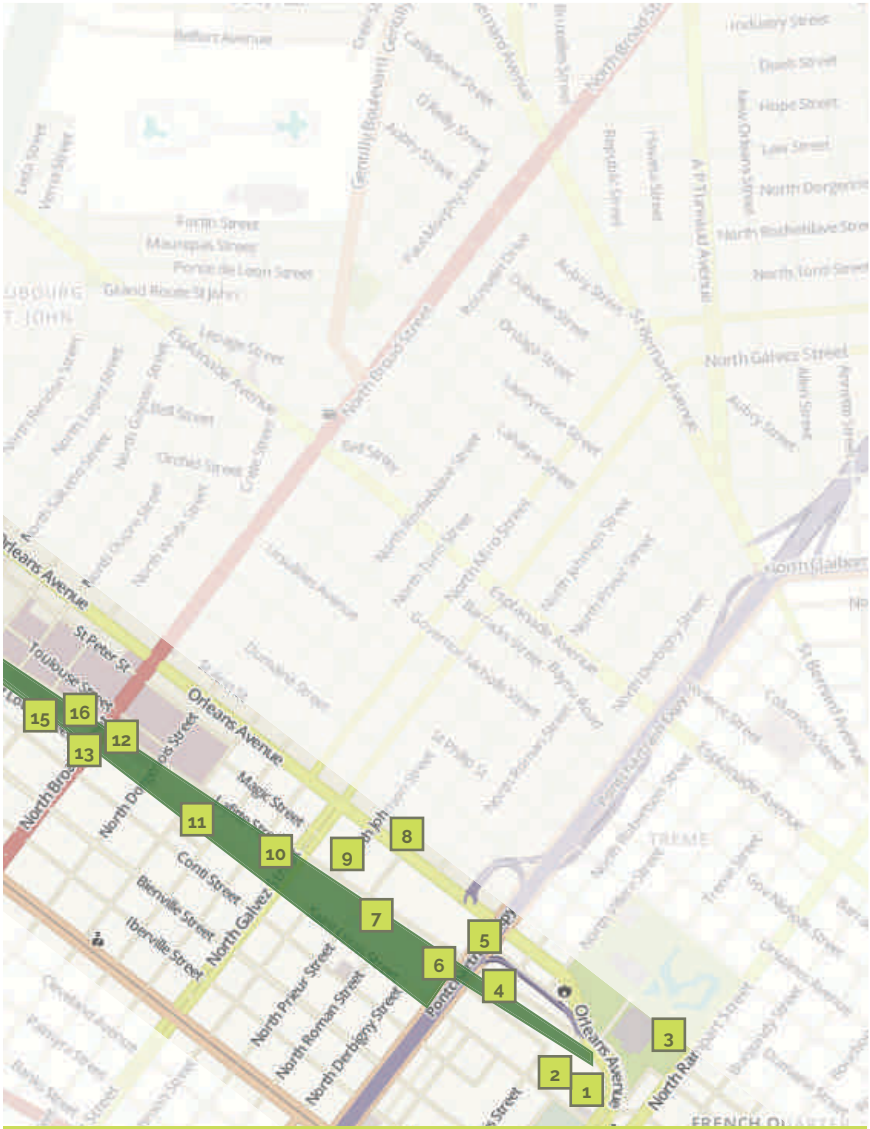
*Spencer Thayer*




# A WALKER'S GUIDE

## MAP

1 Basin Street Station
2 Bienville Basin/ Iberville
3 Louis Armstrong Park & Congo Square
4 Lemann Playground #1
5 N Claiborne Avenue
6 Carondelet Walk
Lemann Playground #2
LIFT Parcel
7 Lemann Pool
8 The Carver Theater




9 Faubourg Lafitte Community
10 Sojourner Truth Neighborhood Center
FitLot
11 Mr. Fred's Garden
12 NOPD Refueling Station
13 Broad Street
Pumping Station #2
15 St. Louis Canal
16 Sign & Signal Shop
17 Lopez St. Bridge
18 Brake Tag Station
19 Jefferson Davis Parkway
20 Bayou St. John
21 Lindy Boggs Medical Center
22 500 N Carrollton
23 Mid-City Market
24 Railroad Tracks
25 Delgado Community College
26 Holt Cemetery
27 Higgins Boat Factory