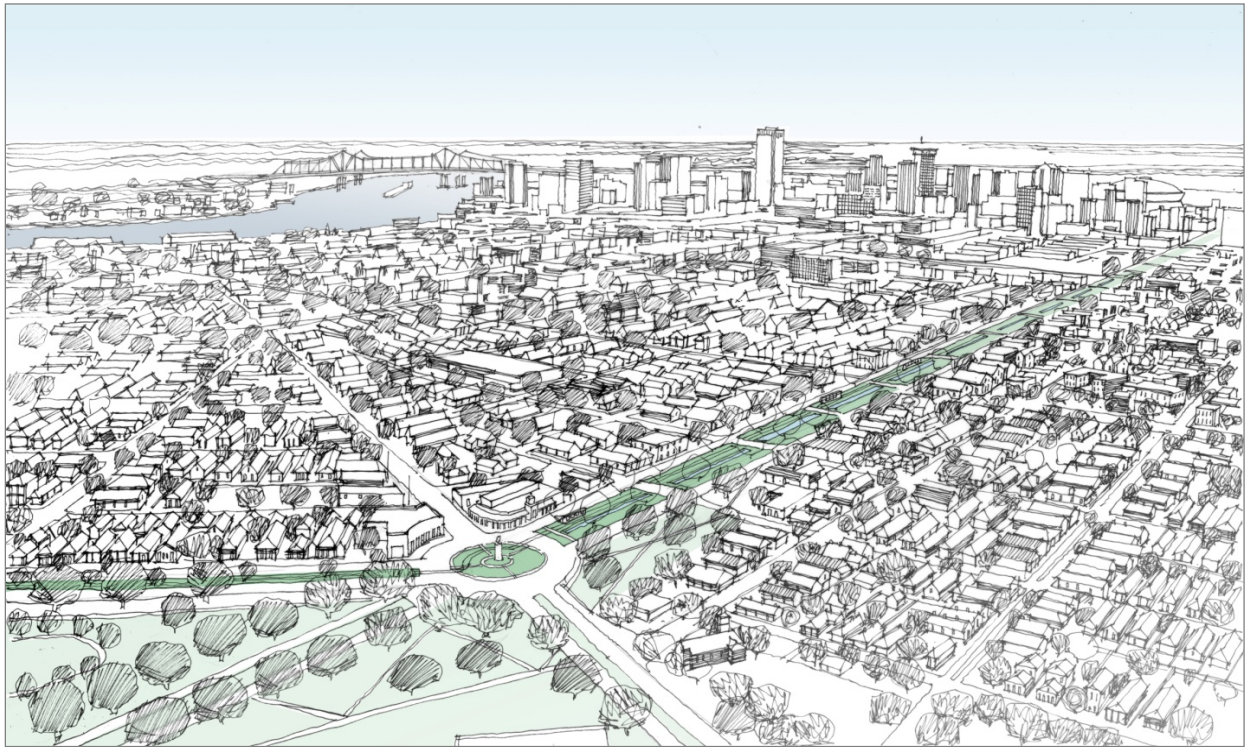

Restoring Claiborne Avenue

Alternatives for the Future of Claiborne Avenue



A Report to the Claiborne Corridor Improvement Coalition and
Congress for the New Urbanism

Prepared by Smart Mobility Inc. and Waggonner & Ball Architects

15 July 2010

CLAIBORNE CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT COALITION

The mission of the Claiborne Corridor Improvement Coalition is to plan and advocate for the transformation of the Claiborne Corridor into a healthy, vibrant boulevard that will not only serve as an anchor for the Corridor's neighborhoods, but for the whole city of New Orleans.

This report is the result of the efforts of the Coalition to gather information and inform the community about the alternatives for the Claiborne Avenue/I-10 Corridor. The Coalition was formed by NEWCITY Neighborhood Partnerships, a coalition of developers, funders, neighborhood organizations, service providers, churches & faith-based groups, schools & universities, and government agencies focused on educational, economic, health, and housing development in the Tremé/Lafitte and Tulane/Gravier neighborhoods. The report has been prepared for the Coalition by the Congress for the New Urbanism, a national leader in promoting walkable, neighborhood-based development as an alternative to sprawl, with assistance from the National Endowment of the Arts and the Ford Foundation.

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Cover Illustration:

The intersection of the surface-level Claiborne Avenue with St. Bernard Avenue could be restored to a traffic circle. At right existing conditions are shown. (See page 28)

Drawings by Mac Ball, Waggonner & Ball Architects, 2010



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ATTACHMENTS

- UNOP District 4 Plans for Claiborne Avenue
- Future Land Use Map for the City of New Orleans
- Examples of Urban Freeway Removals

View of the Claiborne Corridor



Possible Future for the Claiborne Corridor



By Mac Ball, Waggoner & Ball Architects, 2010

CLAIBORNE CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES STUDY

This report has been commissioned for the Claiborne Corridor Improvement Coalition by the Congress for the New Urbanism, to explore future alternatives for the elevated Interstate-10 (I-10) Claiborne Expressway corridor. The mission of the Claiborne Corridor Improvement Coalition is to plan and advocate for the transformation of the Claiborne corridor into a useful, vibrant boulevard that will serve as an anchor not only for the Corridor's neighborhoods but for the whole city of New Orleans. The Coalition's work for a better Claiborne is a continuation of efforts that stretch as far back as 1976, when Clifton James, Dr. Rudy Lombard, and the Claiborne Avenue Design Team published a master plan report funded by the Louisiana Department of Highways with detailed analysis and recommendations for improving Claiborne and its adjacent communities. The Claiborne Corridor Improvement Coalition was formed by NEWCITY Neighborhood Partnerships. NEWCITY is a coalition of developers, neighborhood associations, funders, service providers, churches & faith-based groups, schools & universities, and government agencies that strives to be an engine for educational, economic, health, and housing development in the Tremé/Lafitte and Tulane/Gravier neighborhoods. The elevated I-10 Claiborne Expressway presents one of the greatest and most complicated challenges to this vision. Far beyond its relation to the issues of future economic development, smart transportation investments and the overall quality of life in its surrounding neighborhoods, the construction, maintenance and future of the Expressway also touches on many important and highly sensitive issues of social, economic, and environmental justice. The elevated I-10 Claiborne Expressway has been detrimental to the vision of a renewed Claiborne Avenue. Before any investments are made to repair or rehabilitate this aging facility, it is important to consider alternative investments that could better address the needs of the people who live and work in this corridor—their transportation needs, social needs, and business development needs.

Once a thriving commercial corridor, the area defined by Claiborne Avenue suffered serious decline following the construction of the I-10 expressway in the 1960s. Pushed through over the wishes of the area's largely disenfranchised African-American population, it was intimately tied to the overall decline of the neighborhood, replacing a lively strolling street, oak-covered neutral ground and business corridor with an eyesore that made Claiborne Avenue both a physical and symbolic barrier between the area's neighborhoods.¹



*View of North Claiborne at Esplanade Avenue, March, 1955.
Source: Historic New Orleans Collection*

Considering the proximity of nearby businesses, hospitals, affordable housing, schools, parks and greenways in the area, the Claiborne Corridor Improvement Coalition sees an opportunity to restore the Claiborne commercial corridor as a beautiful mixed-use boulevard. The benefits of and possibilities for such a transformation are many. The Coalition recognizes, however, that the project must be considered with a full examination of all of the consequences of conversion to a boulevard. The goal of this report is to start the process of gathering expert opinion and community input to inform future discussion of this concept. By bringing together community,

¹ Samuels, Daniel. 2000. "Remembering North Claiborne: Community and Place in Downtown New Orleans." M.U.R.P. thesis, University of New Orleans

experts and local, state and federal governments, the Coalition hopes to secure a bright new future for the Claiborne commercial corridor.

The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) is assisting the Coalition as part of its Highways to Boulevards initiative, which seeks to improve the urban environment by replacing aging elevated freeways with surface streets and transit facilities in appropriate locations. Together, CNU and the Coalition have secured the professional consultant services of Smart Mobility, Inc., for a transportation study of the Claiborne Corridor area surrounding I-10. The goal of the study is to inform future deliberation on replacement of the I-10 Claiborne segment with a restored Claiborne Avenue. The concept of a surface-level replacement for the elevated expressway has been considered often in post-Katrina planning, notably in the Unified New Orleans Plan and in the city's current Master Plan draft.

This preliminary transportation study provides an analysis of a surface boulevard replacement as an alternative to the current elevated structure to help inform future stages of review by local and city residents and by other local and regional decision-makers. In anticipation of eventual large-scale and comprehensive transportation and infrastructure analyses of the elevated structure by governmental entities, this preliminary study illustrates how a surface boulevard would perform under the actual conditions of today's New Orleans.

This is not a full engineering feasibility study, but rather describes the concept of converting the Claiborne Expressway to a boulevard, including several alternative design schemes. Issues that will need further technical review in a subsequent feasibility study are identified.



Photos by R. Diaz

BASELINE CONDITIONS

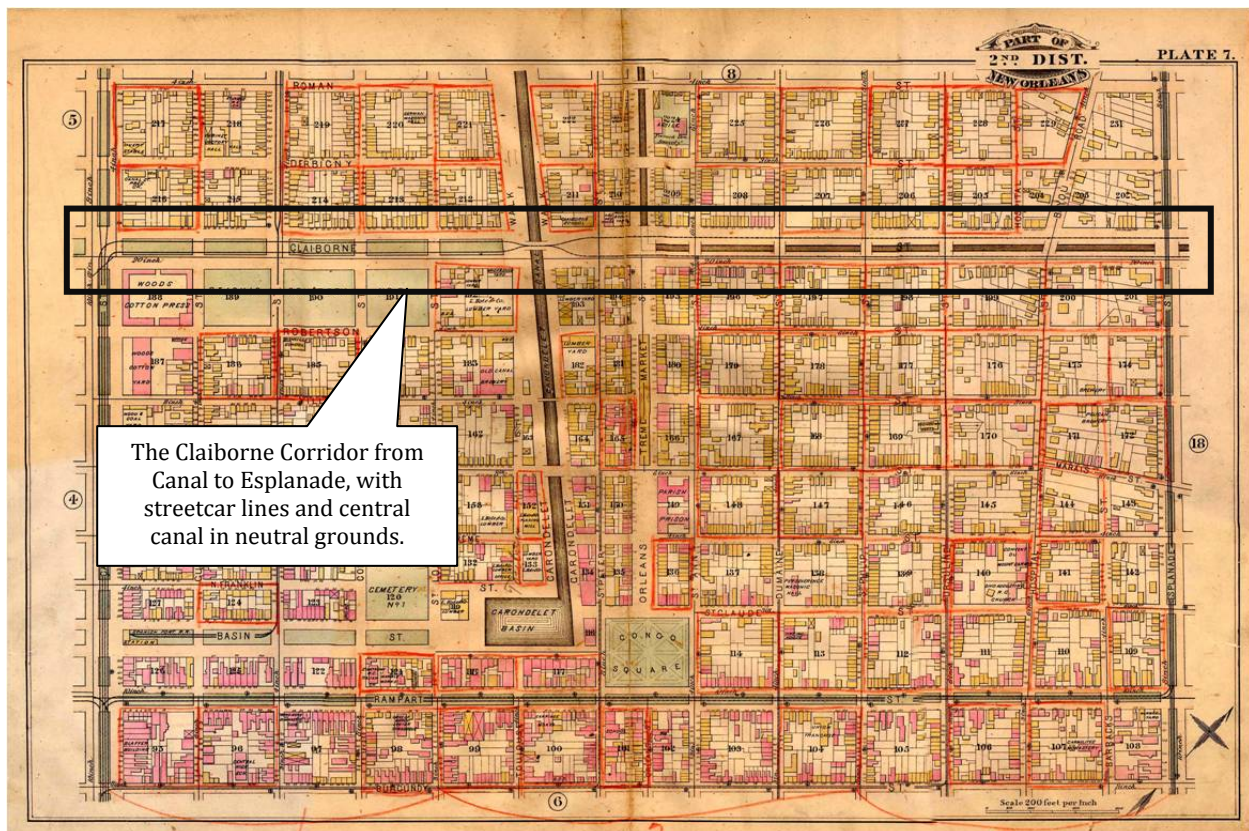
The Claiborne Expressway is an aging interstate that runs through the center of New Orleans. Structurally, it is nearing the end of its useful life and beginning to deteriorate. When it was first

constructed, it divided the Tremé and Seventh Ward neighborhoods, and its impacts of noise and blight either caused or significantly contributed to substantial economic decline along Claiborne Avenue. Because of the highway's age and deterioration, it is appropriate to proceed with the discussion about its future begun in post-Katrina planning efforts. The purpose of this report is to describe the function and infrastructure of the corridor as a basis for considering future alternatives for the Claiborne Corridor.

NEW ORLEANS' STREET NETWORK

New Orleans' street network has evolved under the city's unique geography and history. It is notable for its network of broad boulevards, which remain valuable and effective corridors for a variety of functions. The general form of the street network is a shifting pattern of streets that generally run both perpendicular and parallel to the ever-twisting Mississippi River. This pattern evolved in part because of early land ownership and subdivision patterns, which emphasized long strip lots that provided access to the river.

The Robinson Atlas provides a more detailed view of the historic street network. The figure below shows the central area of the Faubourg Tremé and Claiborne Avenue. The boulevard configuration of the Claiborne, Rampart, Canal, and Esplanade corridors includes broad medians, or neutral grounds (in some cases with canals), and streetcar lines. Claiborne, like Canal Street, is wider than most New Orleans boulevards. While there is a well-connected network of local streets between these boulevards, there are a few interruptions where streets intersect with canals or railroad lines.



Source: Robinson's Atlas of the City of New Orleans, 1883, New Orleans Notarial Archives, www.notarialarchives.org

Below are views of Claiborne Avenue before expressway construction, showing transit, canals, and landscaping.

Historic Views of the Claiborne Corridor



South Claiborne Avenue at First Street with canal and streetcar in corridor.
Source: New Orleans Public Library Special Collections

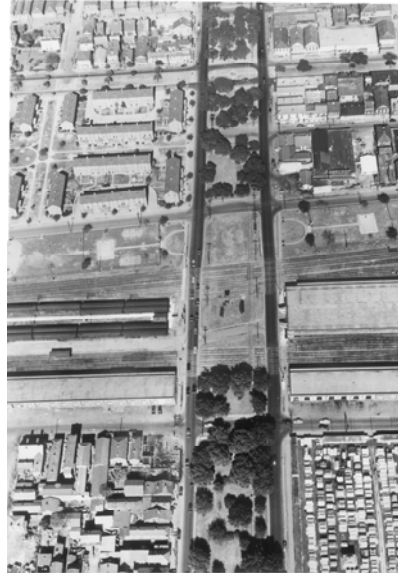


North Claiborne Avenue Oak trees on the neutral ground (exact location not known)
Source: New Orleans Public Library Special Collections

The following aerial photos show Claiborne Avenue in survey photos taken prior to expressway construction in the 1960s.



South Claiborne at Melpomene (now Martin Luther King Boulevard)



Claiborne between Conti and St. Ann Streets



Claiborne between Canal Street (top) and Tulane Ave (bottom).

Source: New Orleans Library Special Collections

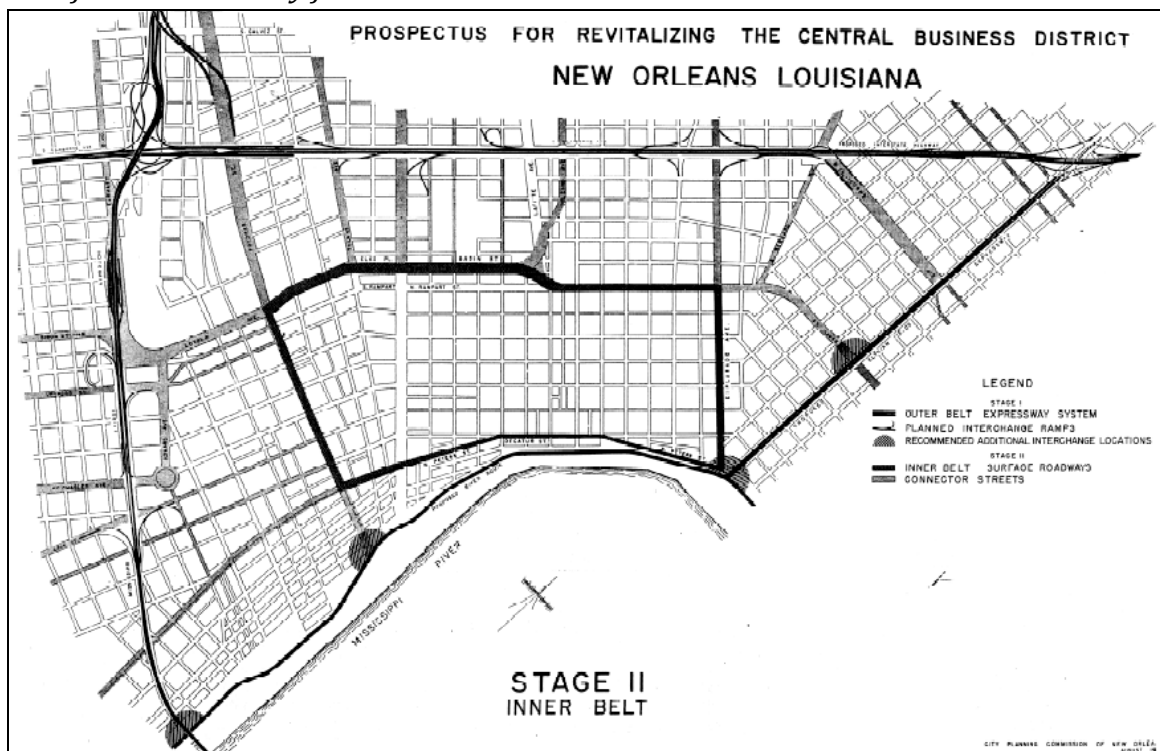
CONSTRUCTION OF I-10

For decades, interstate highways were extended directly into cities with the goal of improving access to the city with *high speed, limited-access routes*. While the intention was that easy automobile access would maintain a vibrant central city, the results 50 years later in the Claiborne corridor and in cities across the country indicate that the expressway brought great harm to the surrounding neighborhoods. Among the many impacts are the following:

- Redirection of local traffic onto the expressway led to the commercial decline of a once-vibrant corridor along the boulevard as well as the destruction of the wide neutral ground long enjoyed for picnics, parades and community gathering.
- The expressway encouraged people to drive in (and out of) the city rather than use the public transit system or walking. This extended travel sheds well beyond the city's boundaries and the service area of its transit system. The long-term result was a disinvestment in urban public transit and urban businesses and more migration of households to suburban locations than would have happened otherwise.
- Street network connectivity was lost in the interchange areas, and where ramps access the elevated freeway. The interrupted street network leads in turn to more circuitous auto trips, increased traffic funneled onto arterials, and decreased connectivity for walking and bicycling.

The diagram below shows the early concept for the highway, noting its intention of the highway was to revitalize the Central Business District.

Plan for Inner Beltway for New Orleans



Source: City Planning Commission, 1957.²

² Samuels, Daniel. 2000.

IMPACTS OF I-10

Clearly the construction of the Claiborne Expressway resulted in an immediate, enormous physical impact, as shown below in before and after views. Over time, the expressway's impact was also felt on the economy, with the substantial decline in local businesses along Claiborne Avenue.

Views of Claiborne Avenue 1966 (left) and 1968 (right)



Source: Claiborne Avenue Design Team, 1976³

The table below is reproduced from data collected on the dwindling registered businesses on Claiborne Avenue. There was clearly a significant drop in the number of businesses along the Avenue after the construction of the freeway.

Business Registry of Claiborne Avenue

Block	1949	1960	1965	1971	2000
700	12	10	12	12	2
800	17	15	13	10	2
900	18	22	15	7	3
1000	16	13	14	4	2
1100	14	15	16	4	1
1200-1250	6	11	11	4	4
1413-1439	3	3	3	2	8
1441-1500	7	21	10	8	5
1501-1540	10	11	12	10	6
1543-1575	6	11	8	3	2
Total	109	132	114	64	35

Source: Polk's New Orleans City Directories: 1949, 1960, 1965, 1971 and 2000.

³ Samuels, Daniel. 2000.

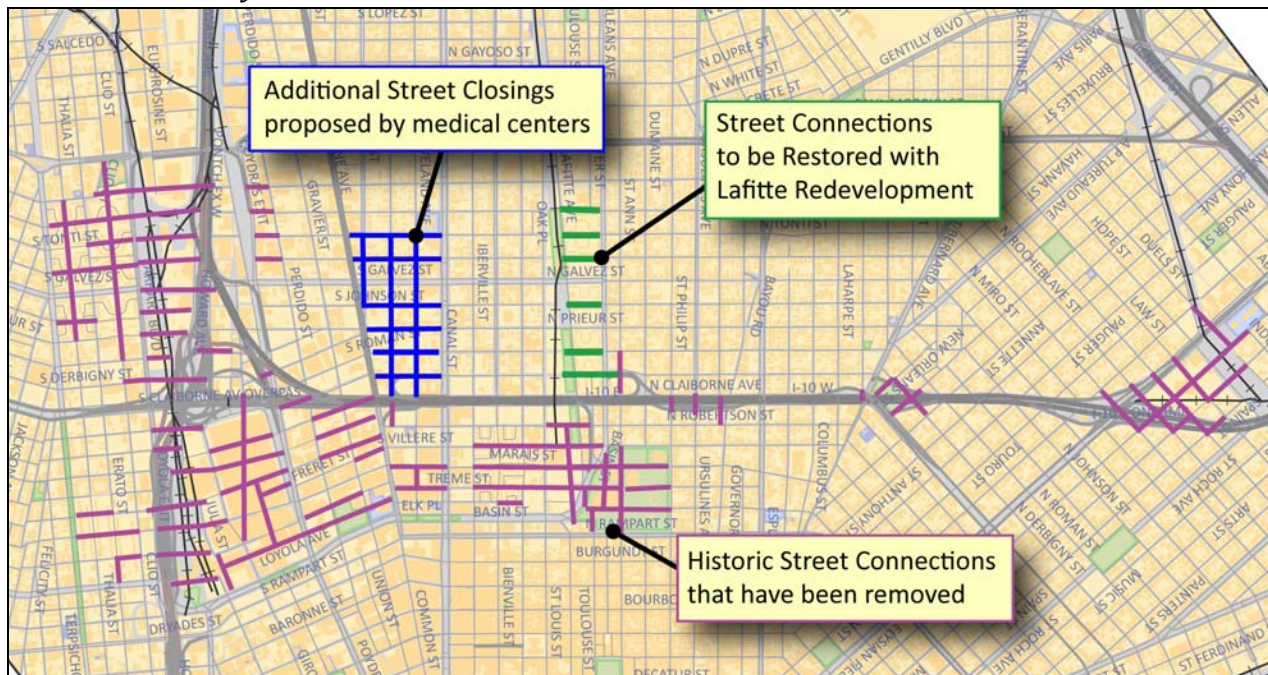
THE CLAIBORNE CORRIDOR TODAY

HIGHWAY AND STREET NETWORK CONNECTIVITY

In general, New Orleans' network of highly connected boulevards and streets has adapted well to meet today's needs for accessibility and mobility. The dense street network has also contributed to New Orleans' relatively high rates of bicycling, transit, and walking. However, there are areas where street connectivity has been diminished over time. The primary areas of traffic congestion, in fact, are in the vicinity of the interstate corridors, where the combination of higher volumes of interchange traffic and disrupted street connectivity combine to create congestion.

The interruptions in street connectivity resulting from the combination of I-10/Pontchartrain Expressway corridor, railroad corridor and facilities, public housing projects, and the Superdome have greatly restricted traffic crossings of I-10. Traffic crossings of the primary railroad and highway corridor are limited to Broad Street, Claiborne, and Rampart Street – which means traffic has been channeled onto these streets. With the potential street closures from the proposed LSU/VA medical complex, traffic will be concentrated on Galvez, which has neither a crossing nor interchange with I-10. Street connectivity is critically important to avoid the formation of traffic bottlenecks and constraint points. The lack of connectivity in this area of New Orleans is of concern, as it greatly restricts the overall capacity of the street network to carry traffic.

Street Connectivity in the I-10 Corridor

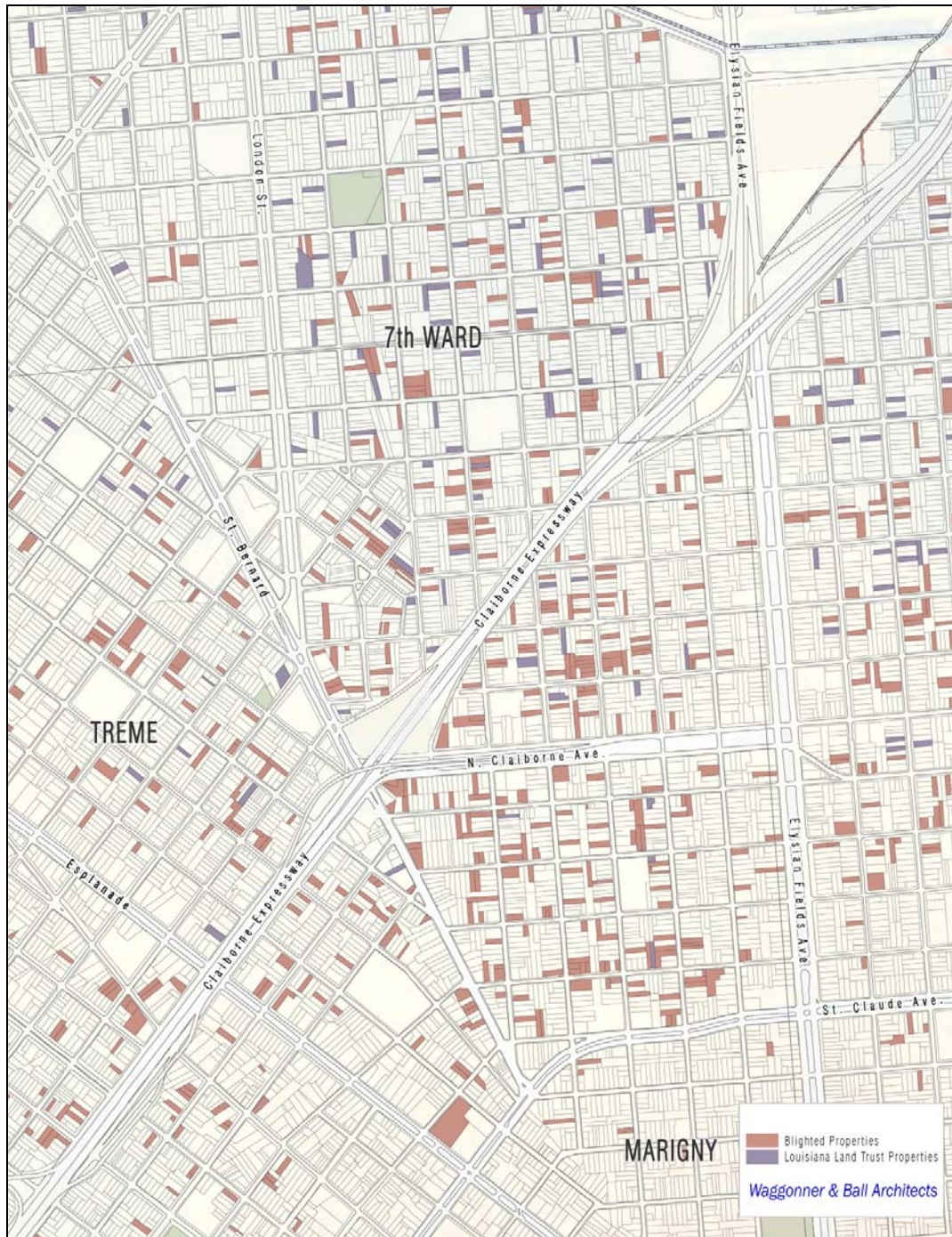


The Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP), recognizing the traffic benefits of street connectivity, suggests re-establishing street connections in several of the housing projects and also proposes to eliminate a number of ramps to the Claiborne Expressway as a short term, which would allow restoration of street connectivity. In addition, the UNOP includes a recommendation to fund a study for the removal of I-10 over Claiborne Avenue. The city's nearly completed Master Plan, as approved by the City Planning Commission, also calls for such a study.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The map below shows blighted properties in the vicinity of the Claiborne Expressway, as well as those registered with the Louisiana Land Trust, which have been purchased since Hurricane Katrina. There are numerous blighted properties in the Seventh Ward neighborhood, which has been significantly impacted by the expressway's presence. At the same time, it is notable that properties along Elysian Fields Avenue have much lower levels of blight, despite this corridor's high traffic volumes.

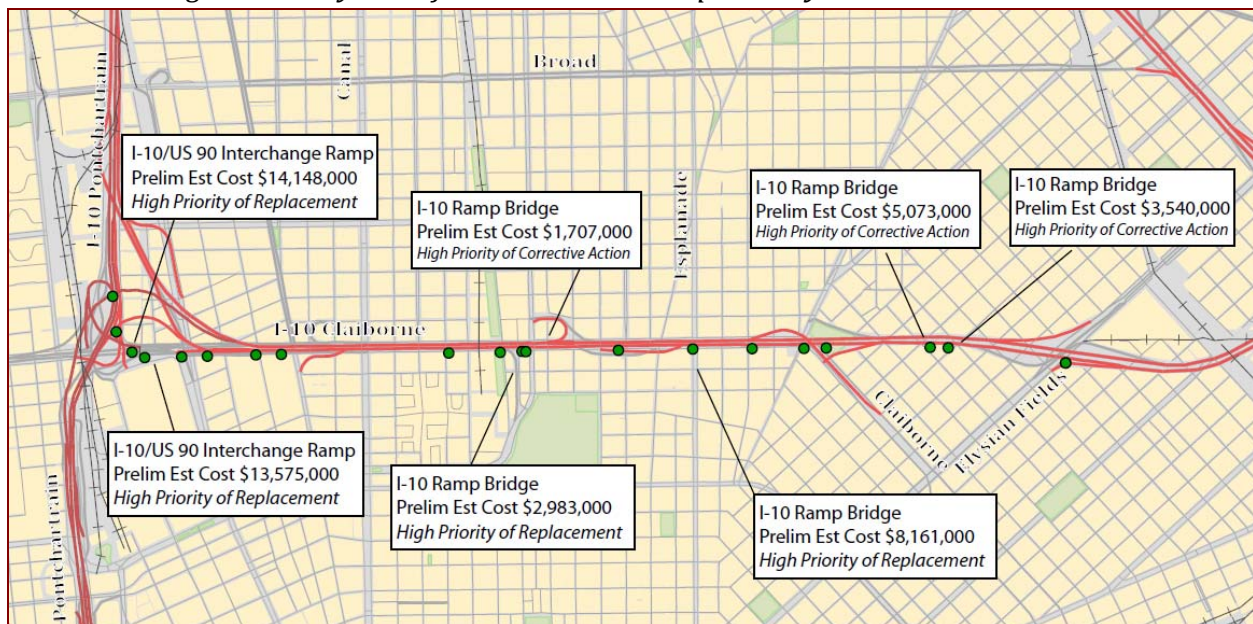
Blighted Properties in the Vicinity of the Claiborne Expressway



STRUCTURAL CONDITION

The elevated I-10 Claiborne Expressway was constructed in the 1960s. Its highway bridge structures are now nearly 50 years old, and approaching the end of their useful life. They will require more frequent maintenance, and possibly reconstruction, to carry traffic safely. In particular, several interchange ramps are deteriorating and will require over \$50,000,000 in critically needed maintenance investments, according to the National Bridge Inventory of the Federal Highway Administration. Three of the ramps for the Orleans/Esplanade interchange are in “critical” or “serious” condition, and several elements of the interchange with I-10, US 90, and the Pontchartrain Expressway/Crescent City Connection are in need of repairs and investment. The following map shows the locations of the bridges where inspection reports were available, along with estimates of the investment needed to maintain these structures. The bridges shown in orange or red are all interchange ramp bridges.

National Bridge Inventory Data for the Claiborne Expressway Structures

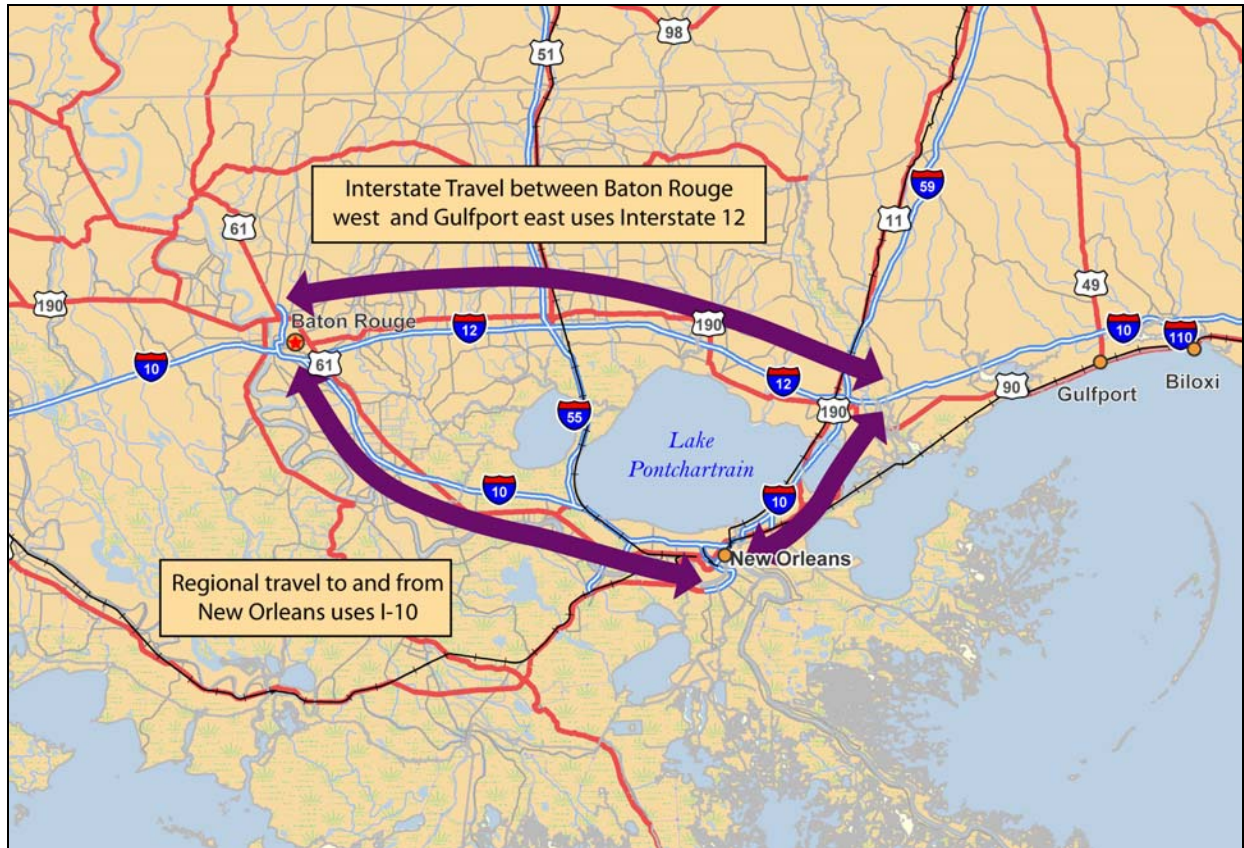


As these interchange ramps and structures carrying the elevated I-10/Claiborne Expressway age and further deteriorate, they will need investment to maintain safe operations. Before funds are spent to reinforce the presence of the elevated highway, it is critical to consider alternatives that may better serve today's New Orleans.

ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE CLAIBORNE EXPRESSWAY/I-10 CORRIDOR

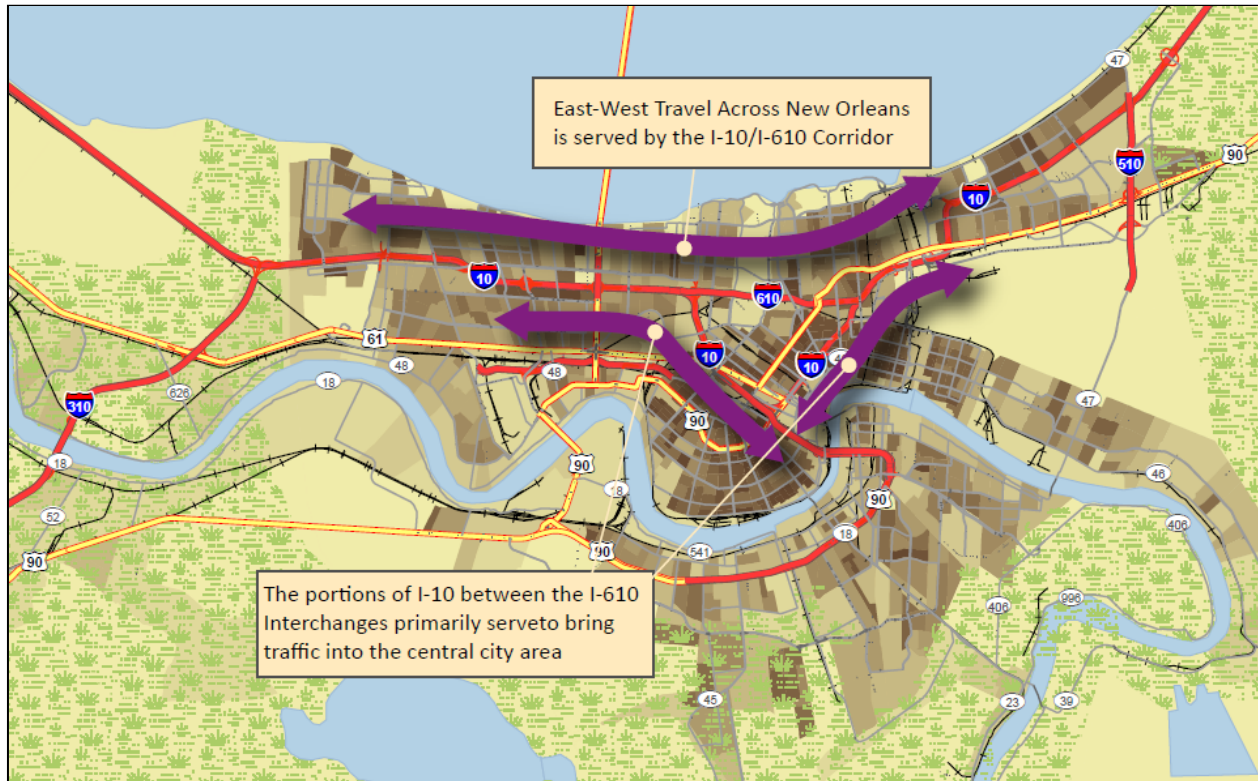
The Claiborne Expressway/I-10 corridor is a relatively short segment in the region's highway network. Looking at the broader picture of interstate travel, long-distance east-west traffic that is not heading to or from New Orleans uses the I-12 corridor between Baton Rouge and the east side of Lake Pontchartrain (see map below). Travel on I-10 between these two points is intra-regional, with origins or destinations within the New Orleans metropolitan area.

Regional Interstate Highway Network



New Orleans is a relatively compact urban area, constrained by water and wetlands, with relatively few freeway miles. Within the New Orleans metropolitan area, the primary east-west route for through traffic is I-610. The I-10 corridor between the two I-610 interchanges serves a traffic distribution function. The primary functions served by the Claiborne Expressway/I-10 corridor include connecting New Orleans East with the Central Business District, and connecting the West Bank and port traffic with I-10 for eastbound traffic.

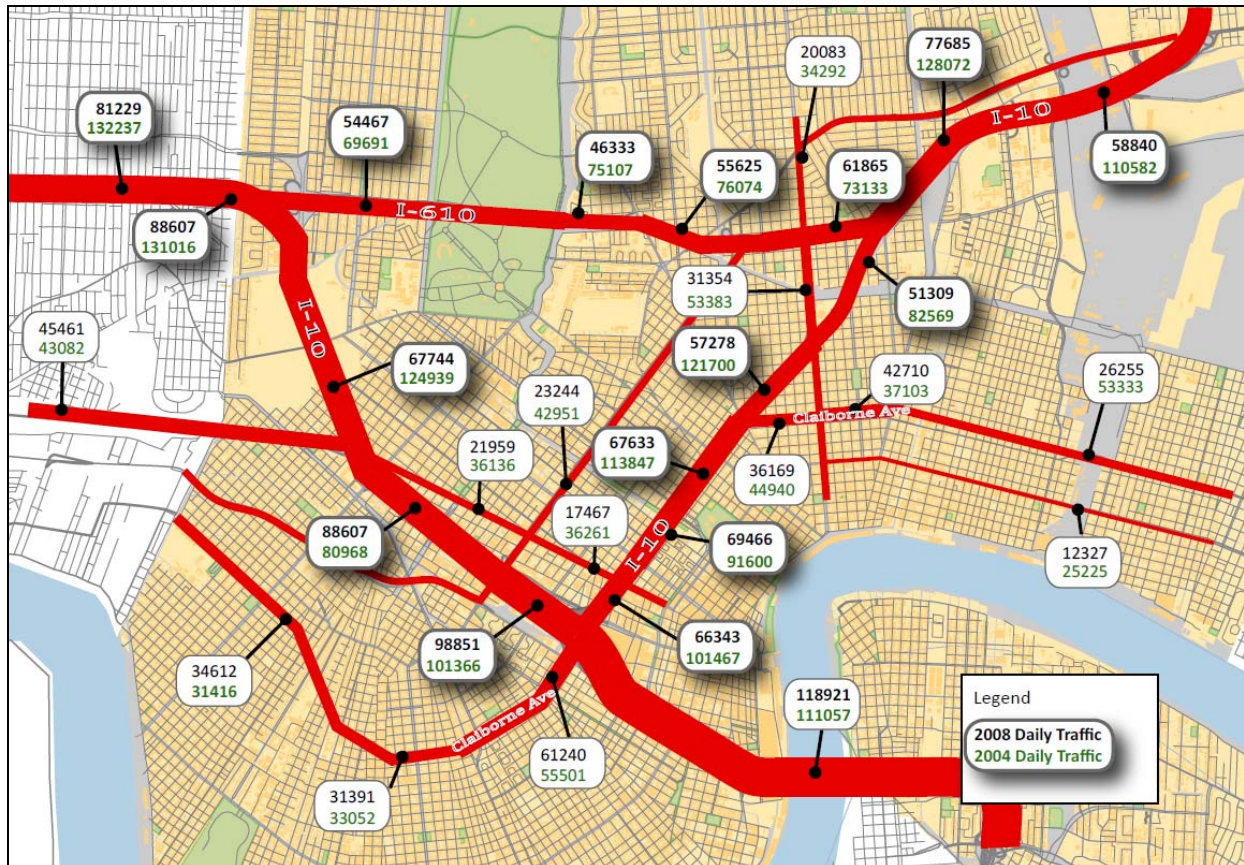
New Orleans Highway Network and Population Density



CURRENT DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUMES

Volumes on the Claiborne Expressway ranged from 51,309 to 69,466 vehicles per day in 2008, the most recent data available from the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD). Data on 2004 traffic show that the 2008 traffic volumes are well below those from the pre-Katrina period. The following map shows all the available traffic counts from LADOTD for the interstate highways and major surface thoroughfares in New Orleans.

Daily Traffic Volumes in New Orleans, 2004 and 2008



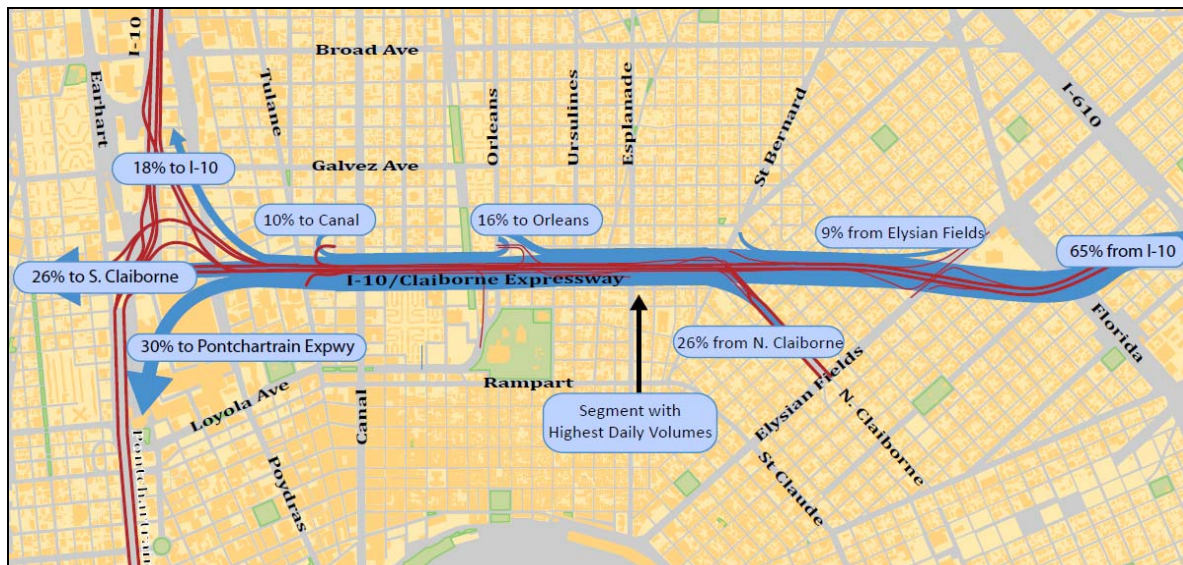
Source: Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

Traffic volumes on surface streets are well below pre-hurricane levels in the Claiborne corridor, indicating that substantial street capacity is available to absorb future growth. Also noteworthy is that Elysian Fields, Broad Street, and South Claiborne Avenue south of I-10 served high volumes before the hurricane, while still providing a pedestrian-oriented environment. These corridors have the proven capacity to serve substantially higher traffic volumes than are using them today, and provide a model of how a restored Claiborne Avenue might function.

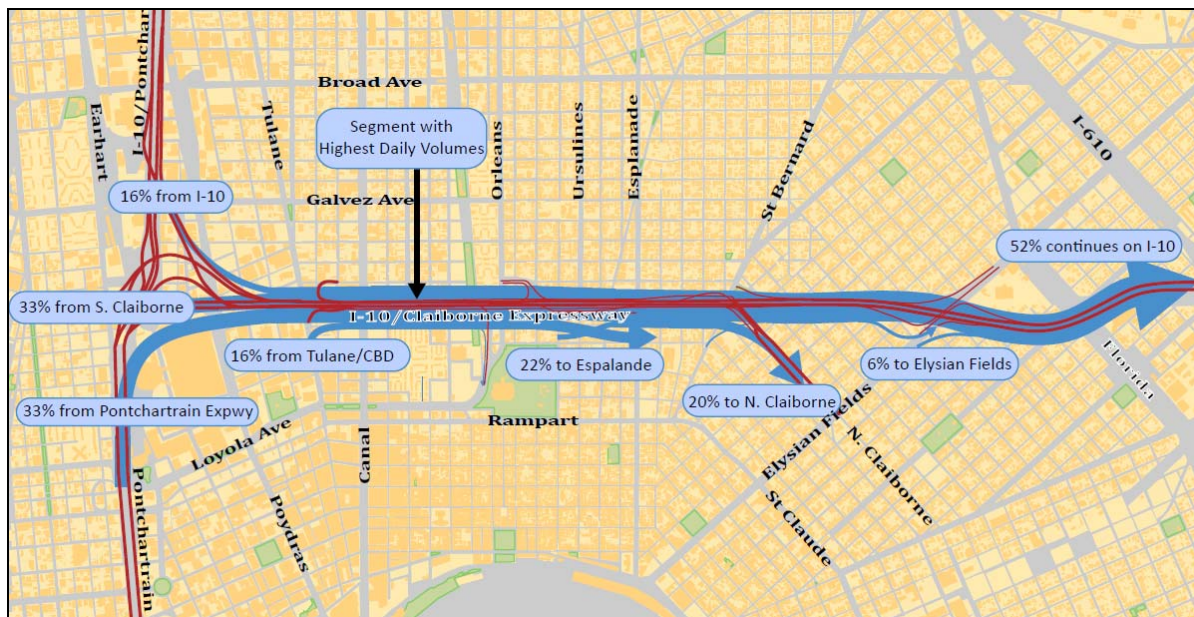
REGIONAL MODEL TRAFFIC PATTERNS

The New Orleans Regional Planning Commission maintains a travel demand model of the region that is useful for illustrating travel patterns. The model's traffic forecast cannot be considered entirely reliable in terms of absolute numbers, due to the huge demographic shifts since Hurricane Katrina. However, the volumes can be illustrative of traffic circulation patterns. The following graphics show the traffic origins and destinations on the Claiborne Expressway/I-10 corridor in the westbound and eastbound directions. Significantly, these graphics show that the I-10 corridor is not used as a through route. Most of the traffic using the Claiborne Expressway is coming from South Claiborne or from the Pontchartrain Expressway south of I-10. Only a fraction of its traffic approaches from the north on I-10 as an interstate through route.

Westbound Travel Patterns on the Claiborne I-10 Corridor



Eastbound Travel Patterns on the Claiborne I-10 Corridor



Because such a small portion of the Claiborne Expressway traffic continues westbound on I-10 to Jefferson Parish, this route's use does not match the intended function of an interstate highway.

NON-MOTORIZED AND TRANSIT PATTERNS

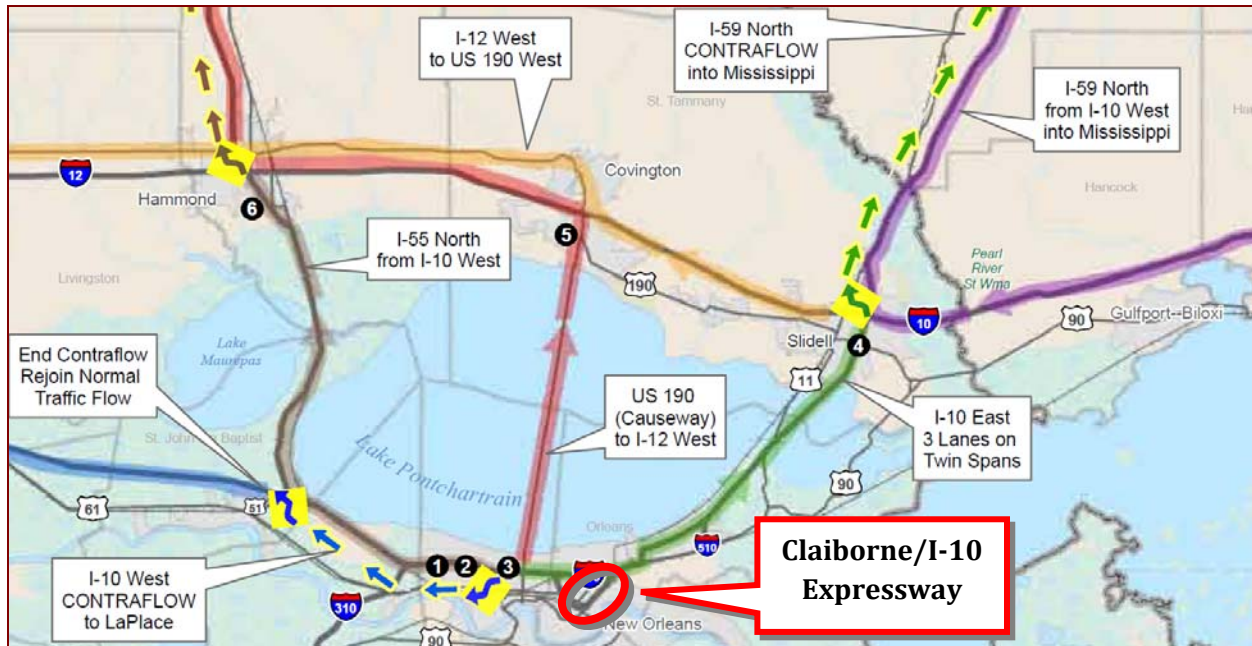
Data for other modes using the Claiborne/I-10 corridor is limited. Several transit routes use portions of the Claiborne-I-10, including several commuter routes from New Orleans East. While bicycling and walking occur at surface-level on Claiborne Avenue, there are few attractions along the route that would generate pedestrian activity, and no data is available. In general, several city-wide trends are worthy of consideration:

- **Transit planning.** Transit ridership and service are currently well below pre-hurricane levels. This decrease in service is of particular concern for future travel patterns. Once transit service declines, many residents will adapt by using other modes, especially cars. As households adapt to commuting by car, it becomes more difficult to switch back to transit once service is renewed. There is interest in exploring a longer-distance transit corridor on Claiborne Avenue running beyond the city's borders, which should be considered in future plans for the Claiborne Expressway/I-10 corridor.
- **Pedestrian safety.** Pedestrian safety was evaluated in the recent Regional Bicycle Pedestrian Plan, which found that several intersections along the I-10 corridor were among the areas that had a higher than average number of pedestrian accidents.
- **Bicycle use.** New Orleans has relatively high proportion of bicycle travel, most likely due to the city's high levels of intersection density and connectivity, despite having limited infrastructure devoted to bicycling. There is great interest in improving the infrastructure and increasing the bicycle mode share further, and this should be a consideration in future planning for the corridor.

HURRICANE EVACUATION ROUTES

The Claiborne Expressway is not a designated evacuation route, nor is it planned to operate as a contraflow corridor during evacuation⁴. With the expressway's elimination, its important role in collecting and distributing traffic during evacuations would be readily supplied by the restored boulevard. The figure below shows the major evacuation routes and contraflow sections (where all lanes of the freeway flow outbound for evacuation).

Hurricane Evacuation Plan



CURRENT FREIGHT TRAFFIC

There is a substantial amount of freight traffic generated from the Port of New Orleans, which accesses the interstate system primarily at Tchoupitoulas Street. While freight traffic to or from the east of New Orleans likely uses the Claiborne Expressway, most traffic from the west uses the Pontchartrain Expressway. No data on truck traffic volumes or percentages was available from the Louisiana DOTD.

Any further study of these alternatives for the Claiborne corridor must consider the implications for freight traffic in more detail. While there may be excess traffic capacity on the street network to absorb diverted freight traffic, the impacts of this to both the freight industries and surrounding neighborhoods should be better understood.

⁴ Louisiana Citizen Awareness & Disaster Evacuation Guide SOUTHEAST, undated, <http://www.lsp.org/pdf/HurricaneGuideSE.pdf>

BASELINE ASSUMPTIONS

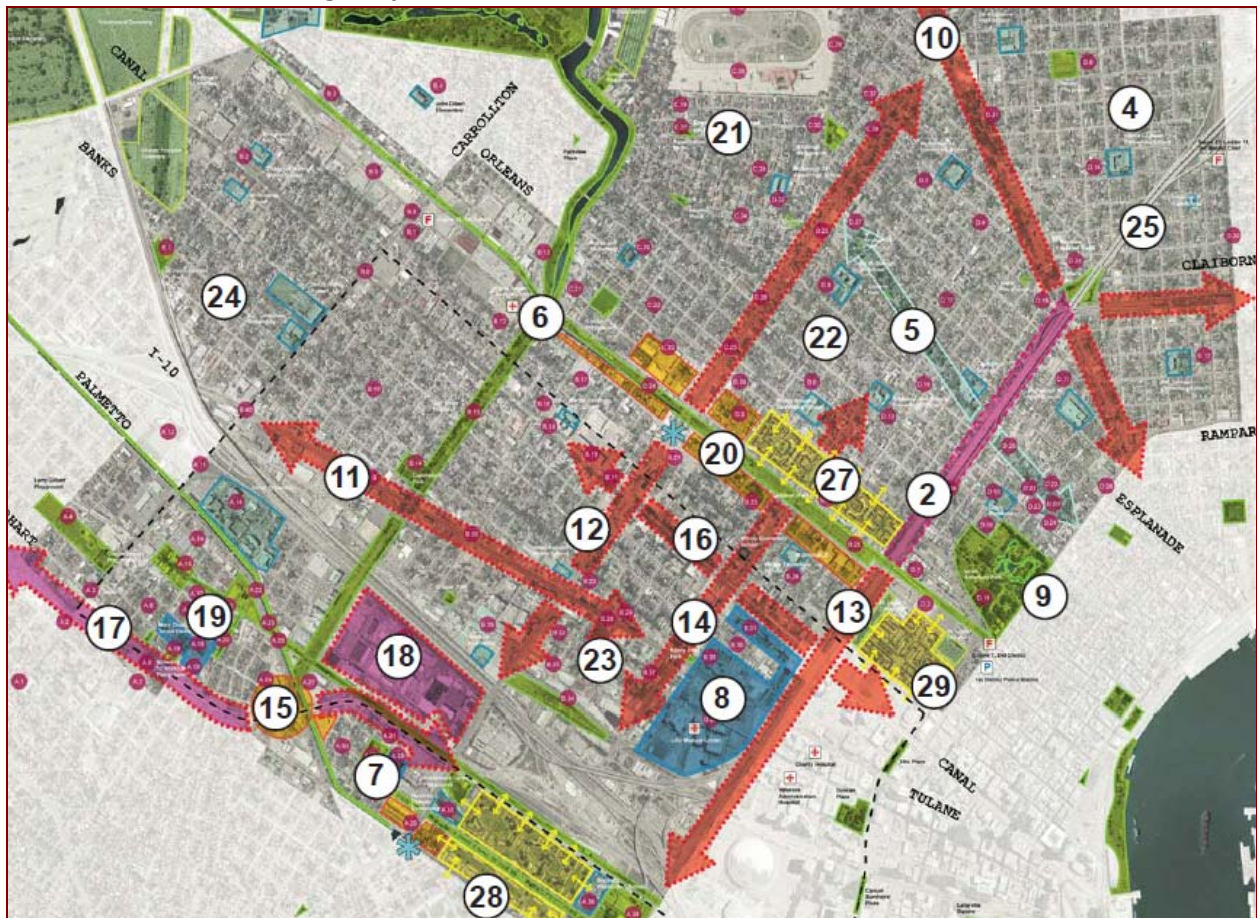
The following are key conclusions that can be reached based upon a review of the above information.

- **Capacity is available to absorb redistributed traffic.** The Claiborne Expressway traffic is 30% or more below the pre-hurricane levels, at about 65,000 vehicles per day in its highest volume location. Surface street volumes on parallel and intersecting streets are also substantially below pre-hurricane volumes, indicating that capacity is available to absorb redistributed traffic.
- **Retaining the expressway would entail substantial new spending.** The elevated I-10 expressway bridges are nearing 50 years in age. As time goes on, deterioration of the structures will increase, as will the funding needed to maintain them in safe condition. Of particular concern is the condition of some of the exit ramps, most of which are far below current geometric standards. If reconstructed, the ramps would require a larger footprint to meet modern engineering standards – potentially demolishing more urban fabric, decreasing available tax base, and/or further reducing surface street connectivity.
- **Current street connectivity is inadequate.** Connectivity in the Pontchartrain Expressway I-10/Claiborne Avenue I-10 interchange area is limited, especially for routes connecting downtown and uptown destinations. Repair of street networks, in particular connecting Galvez across Pontchartrain Expressway I-10, could significantly relieve Claiborne Avenue of its role as primary connector across the Pontchartrain Expressway.
- **Public transit options would be improved by expressway removal.** An important consideration for the future of the Claiborne Expressway will be how it affects commuters from New Orleans East. This area is currently underserved by public transit, a condition that has likely increased auto commuting into the downtown area. Travel time for these commutes might be affected by expressway removal, although this will likely be offset by improved circulation, accessibility to the street network, and expansion of public transit services to provide more commuting options.
- **Freight routes need to be planned.** Freight traffic circulation should be a consideration in planning for the reconfiguration of the Claiborne, as it serves port traffic that is headed eastbound on I-10.
- **Evacuation routes would not be affected by expressway removal.** Claiborne is not part of the hurricane evacuation route, and serves a role as a collector/distributor. This role could be served as well as or better by a surface boulevard.
- **Bicycle and pedestrian issues need to be addressed.** Bicycle facilities along Claiborne are non-existent, and there is evidence of some safety concerns for pedestrians along the corridor. This is not unusual in areas where freeway traffic suddenly enters city streets where pedestrians are frequent.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF THE CLAIBORNE EXPRESSWAY

Since the hurricane, numerous ideas for renewing neighborhoods and the transportation system have been generated, including studying the removal of the elevated Claiborne Expressway and replacing it with a boulevard. Other initiatives include new transit and streetcar routes, a more robust and developed bicycle network, and economic revitalization. The map below, from District 4, shows priority recovery projects from UNOP. The plans focus on revitalization of a number of street corridors that currently have much lower traffic volumes than before Katrina. Streets that are planned for revitalization include (10) St. Bernard, (11) Tulane, (12) Broad, and (14) Galvez. These streets could all be reconfigured to efficiently absorb some of the traffic that might be redistributed with the removal of the Claiborne Expressway, and would benefit from increased activity and exposure from this traffic as long as appropriate, pedestrian-oriented urban street design techniques are used. Project (2) is the study of the removal of the Claiborne Expressway, and (13) is the Claiborne Avenue Revitalization Plan.

UNOP District 4 Planning Projects



Pages of the UNOP documents related to Claiborne Avenue are attached to this report, along with information on the current Future Land Use map.

TRAFFIC ASSUMPTIONS

Currently, the Claiborne Expressway carries between 57,000 and 69,000 vehicles per day on the elevated portions. No traffic counts are available for the existing surface-level Claiborne Avenue, but based on the regional model the avenue can be assumed to carry 10% of the expressway volume, bringing the total corridor volume to about 76,000 vehicles per day at its maximum. The segment between Elysian Fields and the Pontchartrain Expressway interchange is about 2.2 miles, and the average trip length in this section is 1.6 miles, based on traffic patterns in the regional model.

If the expressway is removed, traffic volume in this corridor will drop significantly, since it is the high-speed corridor that now draws traffic to this route. Many trips will divert to other routes through New Orleans that are more attractive. In cities that have replaced freeway with at-grade boulevards, traffic volumes have been reduced to *less than half the former traffic*. For our planning purposes, it is assumed that a restored Claiborne Avenue would have traffic volumes of up to 50,000 vehicles per day, which assumes that about 33% of the freeway traffic disperses onto other routes. This is a relatively conservative assumption based on experience in other cities.

ALTERNATIVES FOR THE CLAIBORNE CORRIDOR

As the existing elevated Claiborne Expressway deteriorates, investment will be needed to maintain a structurally safe highway. As an alternative to that plan, the elevated freeway can be removed altogether and Claiborne Avenue restored as a both functional and attractive boulevard. The following sections describe how this could happen and what the likely impacts might be for traffic, economic development and the environment after removal of the expressway. First is a section on the possible changes to New Orleans' transportation network. Following that is a segment-by-segment description of possible reconfigurations of this corridor for consideration.

NEW ORLEANS REGION INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM CHANGES

The removal of the elevated Claiborne Expressway would need to be accompanied by a number of changes to the New Orleans freeway system. While it is beyond the scope of this study to develop a full system model, the following changes are recommended for consideration in a more detailed study of this concept.

- **Interstate designations** would be changed to reflect the new system. I-610 would be re-labeled as I-10. The Claiborne Expressway would be replaced by a restored Claiborne Avenue. The remaining portion of the current I-10 from Elysian Fields to the current I-610 interchange would be re-designated as a state highway or local route number. "The current Pontchartrain Expressway I-10, from the I-610 western interchange to the Pontchartrain Expressway/Claiborne Avenue interchange could be relabeled as a spur interstate (such as 710), or as a federal or state route number (i.e., US 90A). There would be some advantage in terms of design flexibility to take this portion off of the interstate highway system, such as for adding new interchanges or crossings.
- **Freeway interchanges** would need to be redesigned to handle the new traffic flows, especially for freight transportation. In particular, the western interchange of I-10/I-610 would require an additional flyover ramp to allow traffic to travel north on the current I-10 to I-610 eastbound. A cloverleaf ramp takes I-610 eastbound to I-10 southbound which should be considered for an upgrade to a flyover ramp in the next phase of study.
- **A new interchange** of Broad Street with the current I-10/Pontchartrain Expressway should be considered to further encourage the dispersal of traffic onto alternate routes. This interchange would also provide greatly improved access for the planned biomedical district.

A more prominent role of Broad Street for traffic circulation could assist in this corridor's planned revitalization.

- **Connectivity between uptown and downtown** is hampered by the I-10 and railroad corridors. Establishing Galvez as a through route across the I-10 corridor could relieve Claiborne Avenue from its dominant role in connecting uptown and downtown. It would also substantially improve access to the biomedical district from uptown and contribute to the planned revitalization of this corridor.

The following figure shows these suggested freeway system and connectivity improvements.

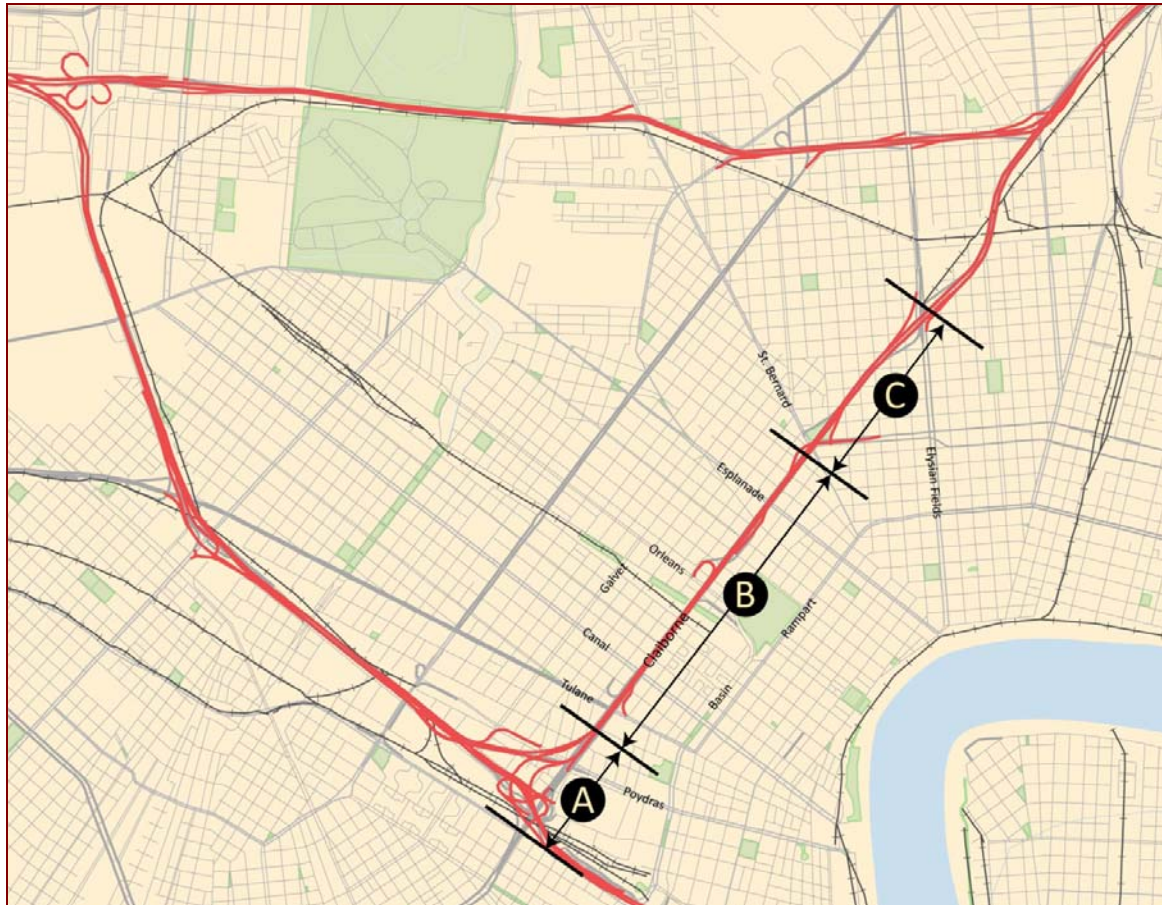
Freeway System Improvement Considerations for the Removal of the Claiborne Expressway



POTENTIAL CLAIBORNE CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives for the future Claiborne corridor are organized by segments in the following map. Segment A includes the interchange with I-10/Pontchartrain Expressway/North Claiborne Avenue. Segment B includes North Claiborne Avenue from the interchange to St. Bernard Avenue, where North Claiborne Avenue diverges from the I-10 corridor. Segment C is where the elevated expressway crosses the 7th Ward neighborhood, between St. Bernard and Elysian Fields.

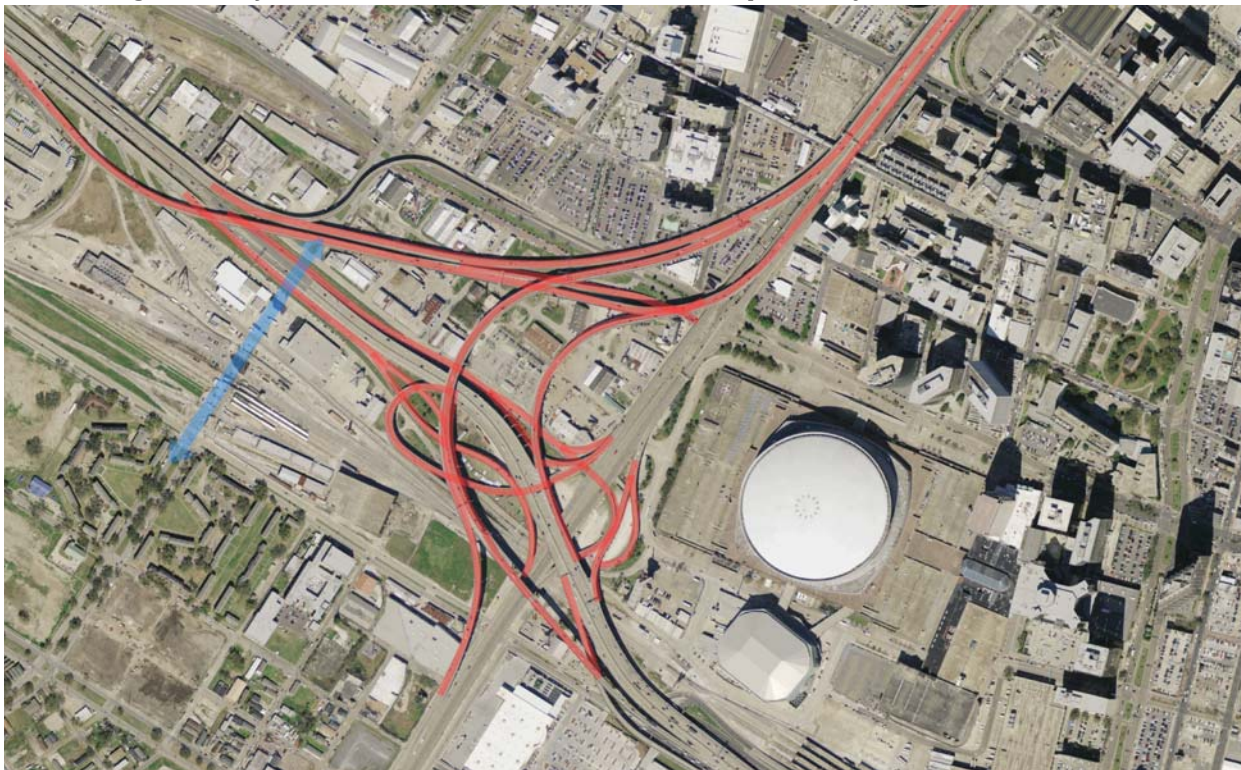
Claiborne Expressway Removal Segments



SEGMENT A: PONTCHARTRAIN EXPRESSWAY INTERCHANGE ALTERNATIVES

The Pontchartrain/Claiborne Expressway interchange is extremely complex and consumptive of land because it was designed to provide high speed connections for three high speed freeway legs, in addition to numerous connections to local destinations such as the Superdome, North Claiborne and Poydras. There is tremendous opportunity to reduce the complexity and area of this interchange if the Claiborne Expressway is replaced with a restored Claiborne Avenue. There would be only one high speed corridor, the Pontchartrain Expressway, which can provide connectivity to the urban street network with more traditional urban diamond interchanges. The graphic below shows the existing high speed ramps that make up the interchange with the I-10/Claiborne Expressway, all of which could be removed and replace functionally with a diamond interchange with Claiborne Avenue. In addition, the proposed new crossing of the Pontchartrain is shown in blue, which would greatly reduce the volumes crossing the Pontchartrain at Claiborne.

Interchange Area of the Pontchartrain and Claiborne Expressways



While a more detailed engineering feasibility study will be required to develop a conceptual design, the following elements can be considered.

- Remove the high speed ramps that carry I-10 onto the Claiborne Expressway. From the review of traffic conditions, these ramps carry the least amount of traffic of any of the key connections to Claiborne, and their function can be replaced by an urban diamond interchange with I-10 and Claiborne.
- Consider the necessity of the high-speed flyover ramps to and from the south on the Pontchartrain Expressway to the Claiborne. These ramps carry substantially higher volumes than the other ramps in this system. Additional traffic engineering will be required to determine the feasibility of replacing them with a diamond interchange.
- Consider a new interchange design as an urban diamond with Claiborne Avenue, which would allow additional connections to Earhart Boulevard and Julia Street.

SEGMENT B: CLAIBORNE AVENUE FROM THE I-10/PONTCHARTRAIN TO SAINT BERNARD

The Claiborne Expressway is removed between the I-10 interchange and St. Bernard Streets and is replaced by a grade-level restored Claiborne Avenue. The restored Claiborne Avenue would have three travel lanes in each direction to provide sufficient capacity for traffic, and a wide median that can be landscaped or put to other public uses. Parallel parking, sidewalks and bicycle paths would also be accommodated. The design speed of the restored Claiborne Avenue would be between 30 mph and 35 mph. There would be signalized intersections as frequently as every other block (i.e., spacing of 600 feet or greater) to allow access to and from other streets and to provide protected pedestrian crossings. Intersections will have left turn lanes where needed, and in other locations median left turn lanes will be provided for turns onto minor streets so that through traffic is not interrupted. It is anticipated that actual average travel speeds on the new boulevard will be about 30 mph during off-peak periods and 20 mph during peak traffic periods due to more delay at intersections.

Aerial View of the Restored Claiborne Avenue at St. Bernard



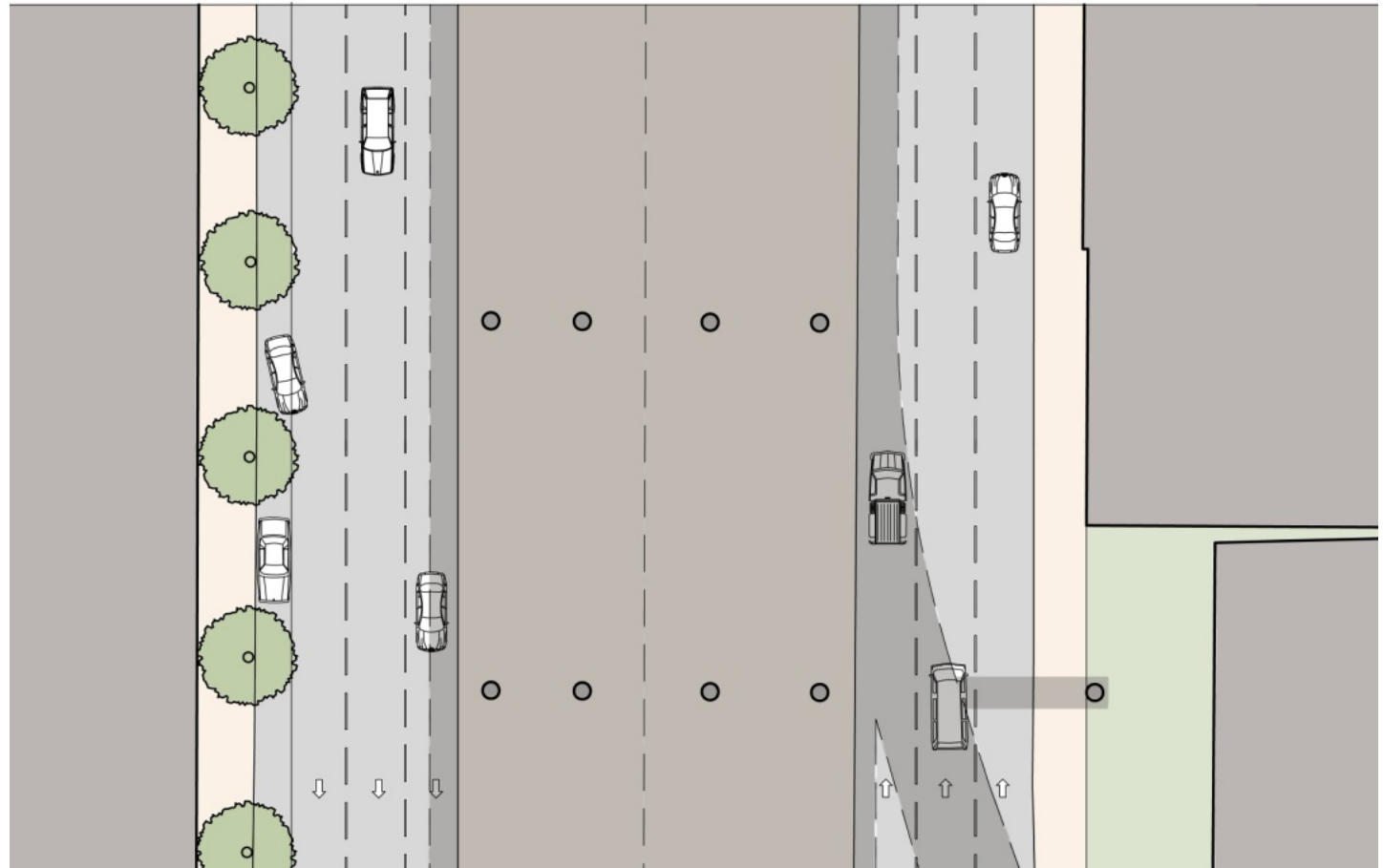
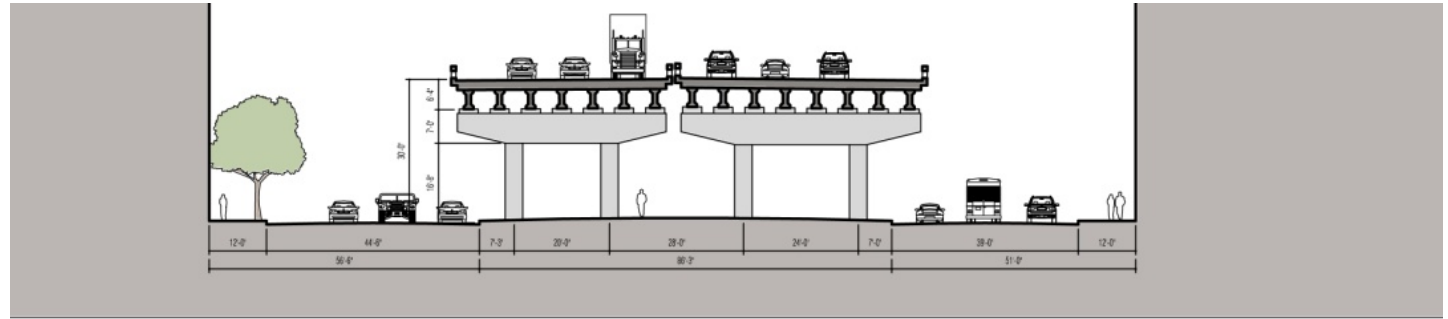
Drawing by Mac Ball, Waggonner & Ball Architects, 2010.

POSSIBLE CROSS SECTIONS OF A RESTORED NORTH CLAIBORNE AVENUE

The following figures show possible cross sections of Claiborne Avenue. The resulting corridor would be similar in design and function to other New Orleans boulevards such as South Claiborne, Elysian Fields, or Canal Street. The generous width of the street right-of-way (between 160 and 180 feet) would allow for fixed-guideway or high-capacity transit, such as a streetcar, light rail transit or bus rapid transit (BRT), to be incorporated into the street cross section. In addition, there is room for other enhancements such as a bicycle path or water retention canal. All of these features are shown in the following figures, but not all are required for a functional boulevard.

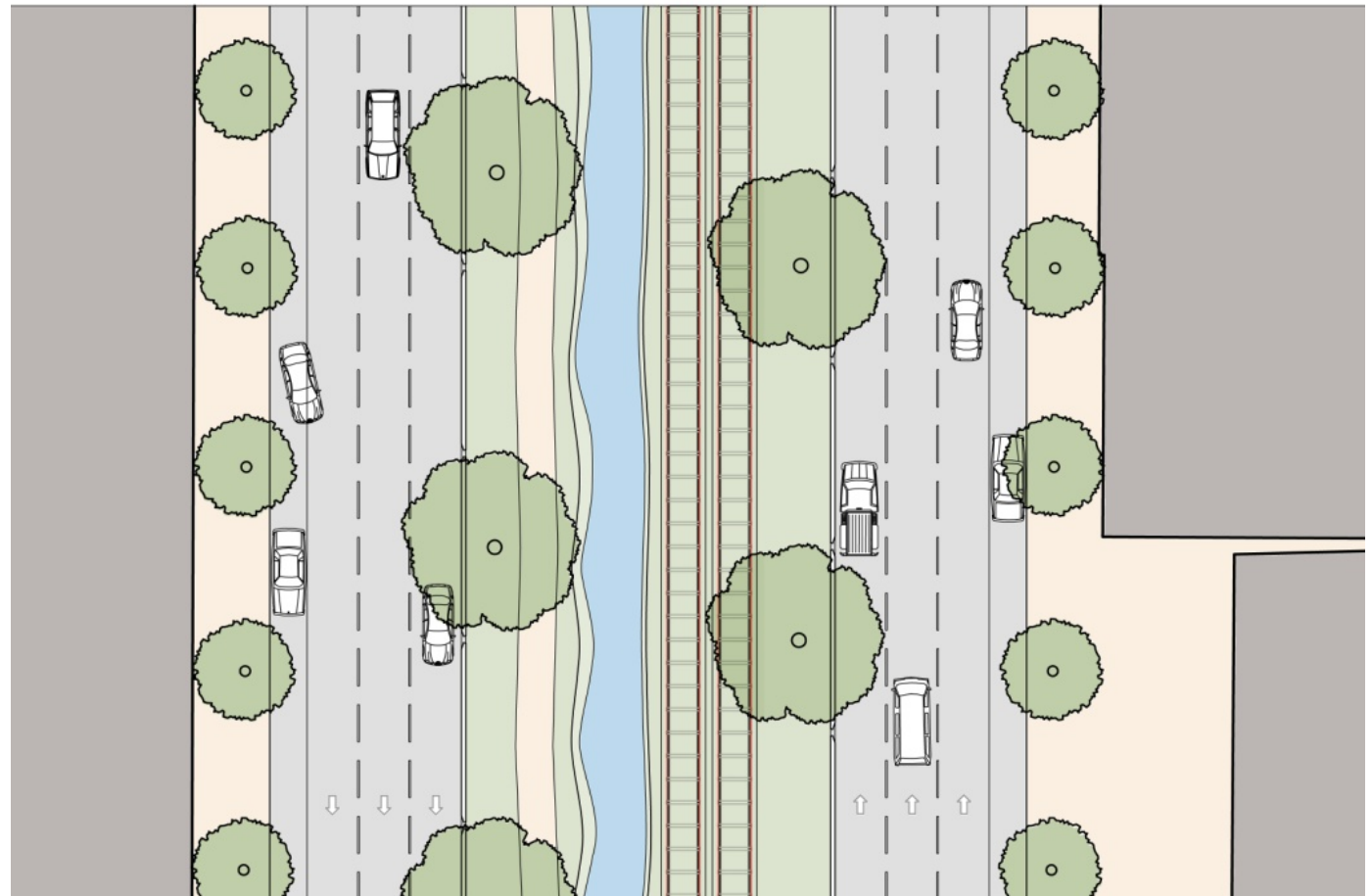
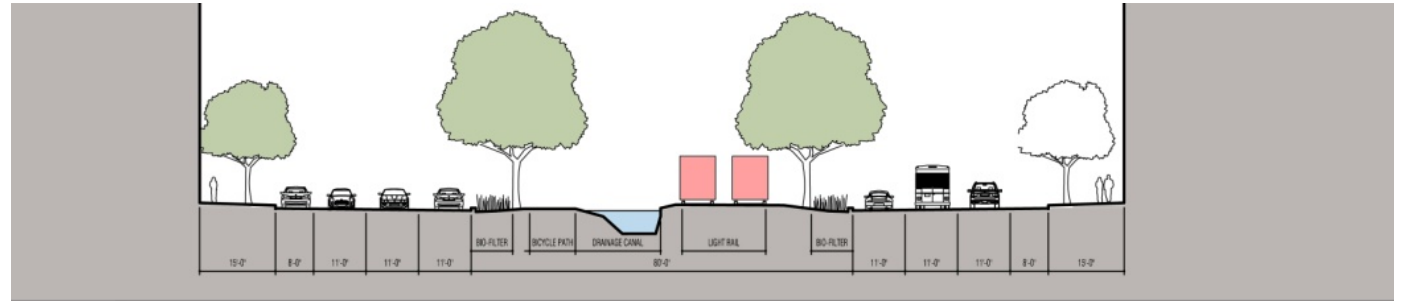
EXISTING CONDITIONS: CLAIBORNE AT CANAL STREET

Claiborne Avenue at Canal Street is heavily shadowed by the elevated expressway. Building heights reflect the more central location and intense land uses of this part of the corridor. There is on-street parking only on the north side of Claiborne Avenue.



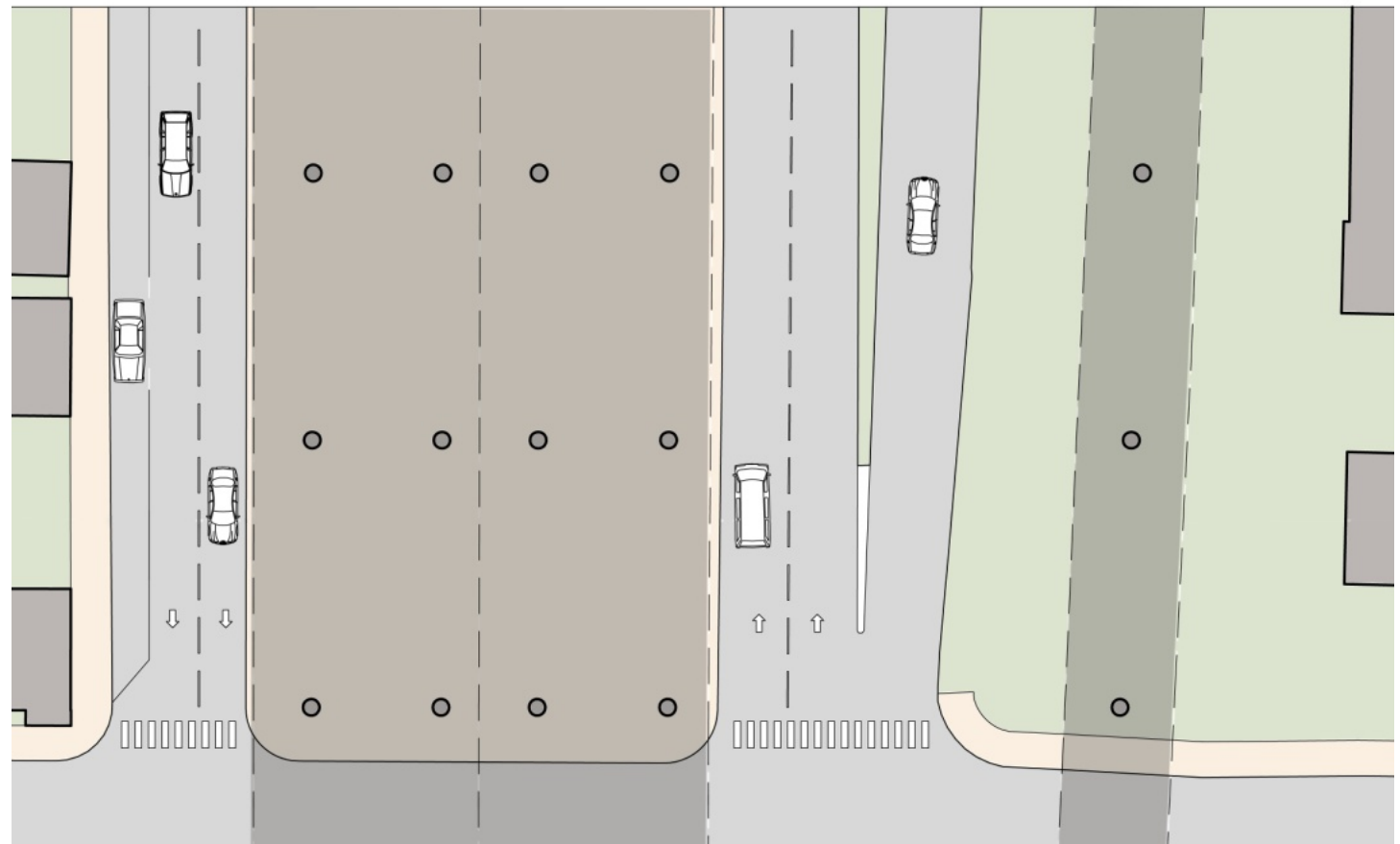
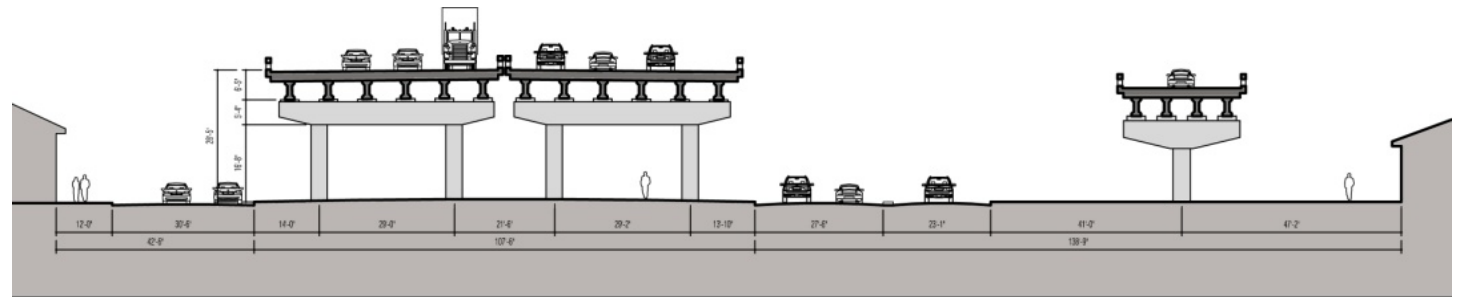
RESTORED CLAIBORNE AVENUE AT CANAL STREET

A possible cross section and plan view for a restored Claiborne Avenue is shown to the right. There are three lanes of traffic in each direction, parallel parking is provided on both sides of the street, and the wide median provides room for a number of uses. Shown to the right are a bicycle path, canal for water retention, and light rail transit lines.



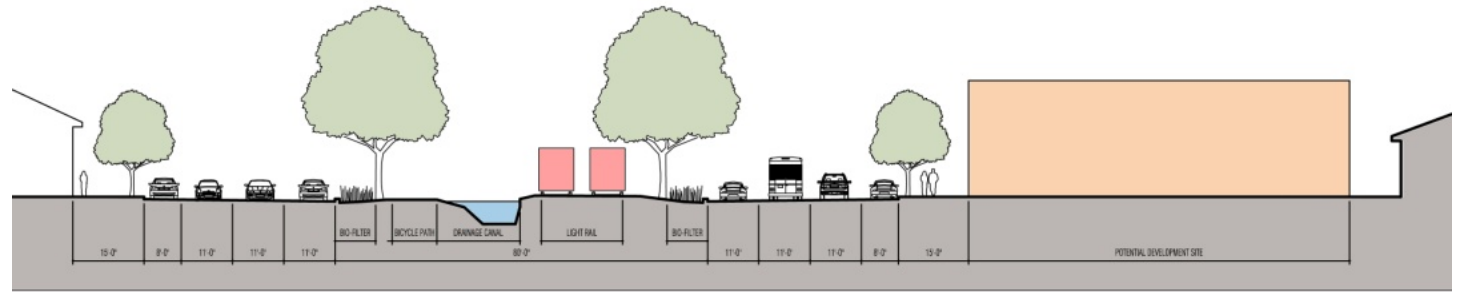
EXISTING CONDITIONS: CLAIBORNE AT URSULINES

The existing cross section of Claiborne Avenue at Ursulines has two through traffic lanes in each direction, plus parallel parking in some locations. This south side of this section is dominated by the footprint of the scissor ramps to I-10.

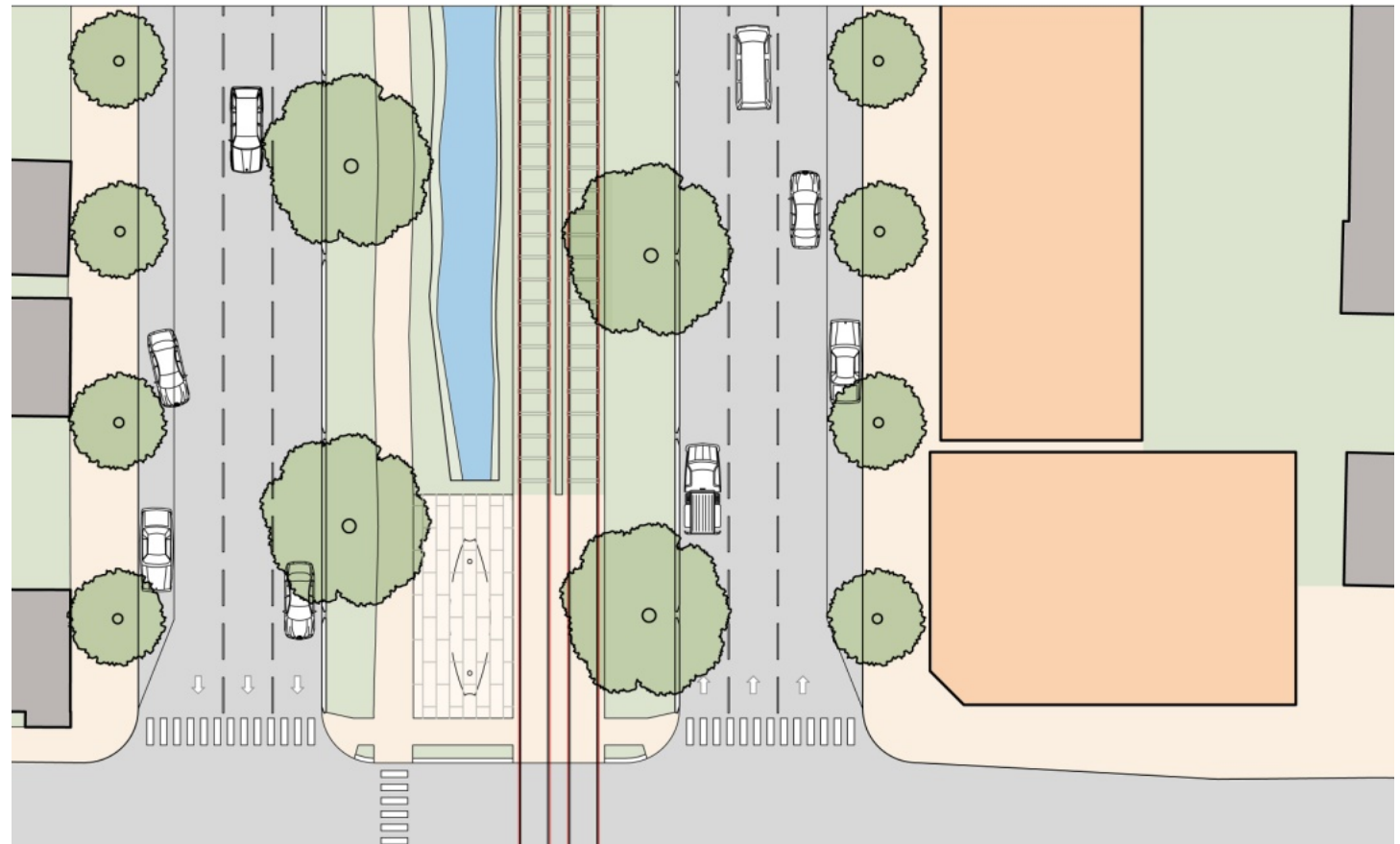


CLAIBORNE AVENUE RESTORATION ALTERNATIVE

This restored Claiborne cross section continues the multimodal features that was established at Canal Street. Three lanes of through traffic, parallel parking on both sides, and a median with a bicycle path, water retention canal, and light rail transit are included.

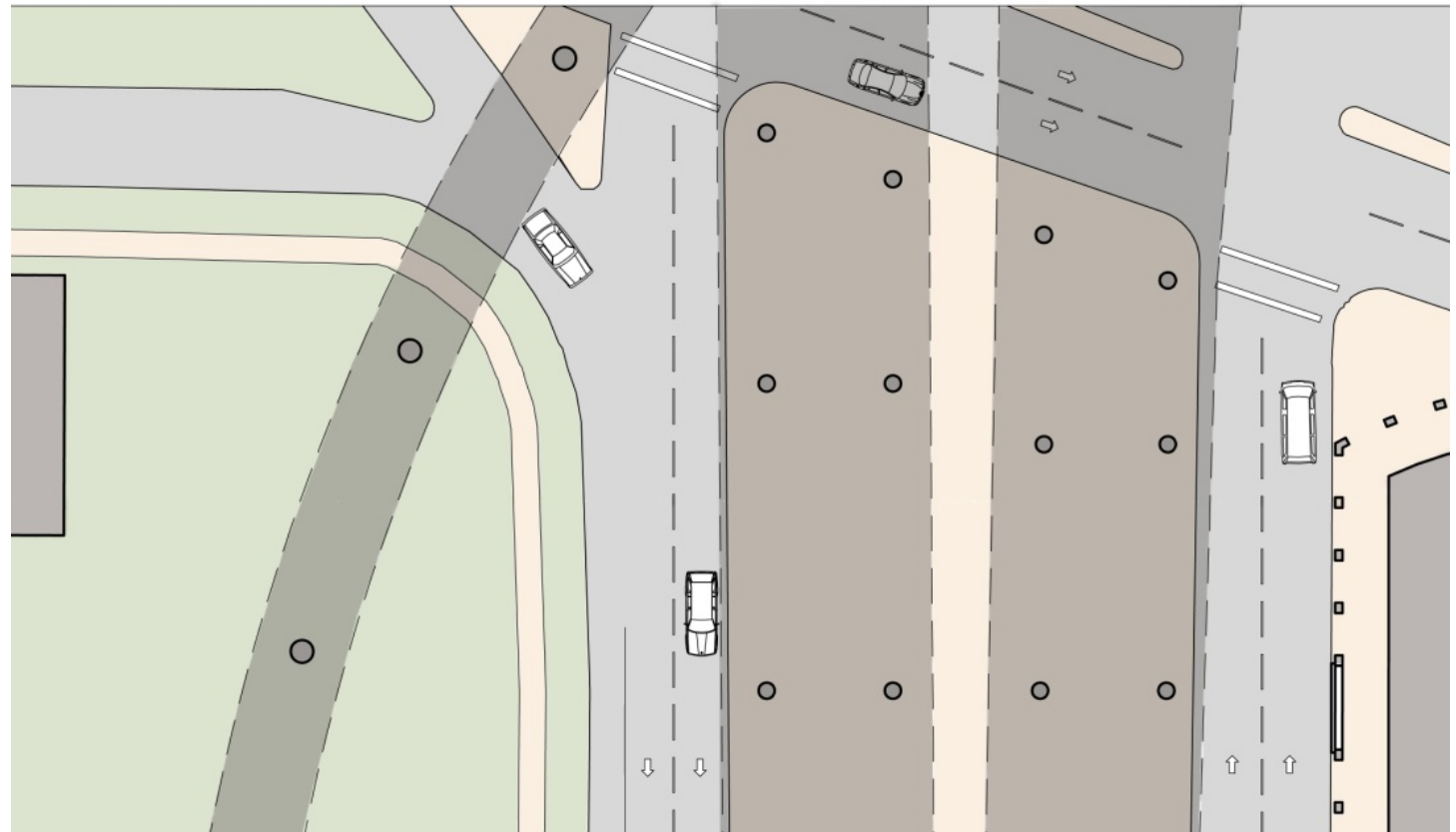
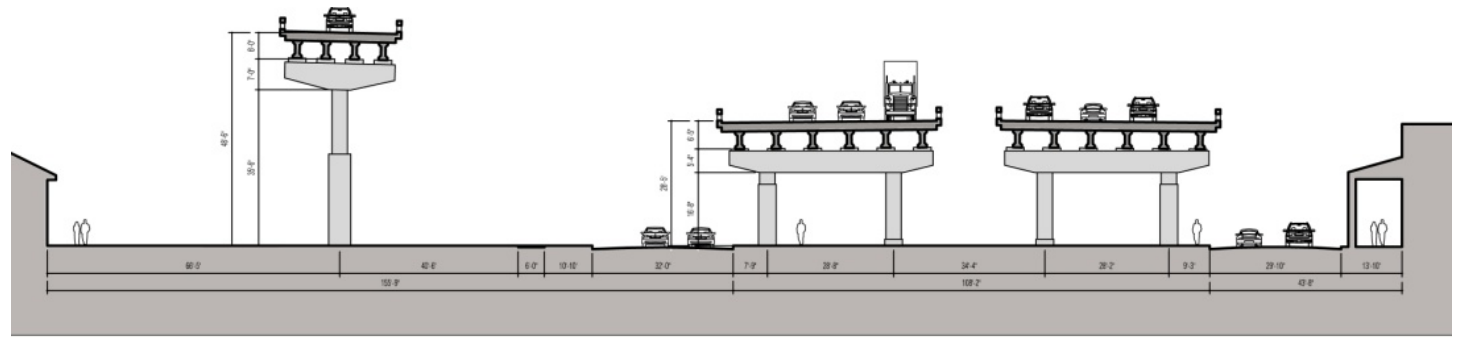


The character of the development is of lower intensity in this area. Appropriately scaled redevelopment (shown in orange to the right) can occur on the property formerly occupied by the I-10 eastbound ramps at Ursulines, greatly increasing the economic value in this part of the corridor and providing a more visually appealing, balanced street cross section.



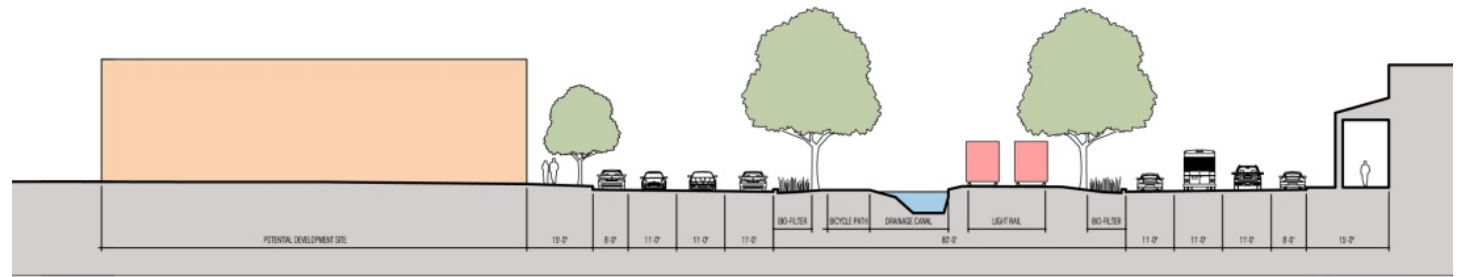
EXISTING CONDITIONS: CLAIBORNE AT ST. BERNARD

This portion of the corridor is dominated by flyover ramps connecting the expressway with North Claiborne Avenue, leaving a large footprint. The site was formerly a traffic circle with a landmark public market, which still exists (see bottom photo).

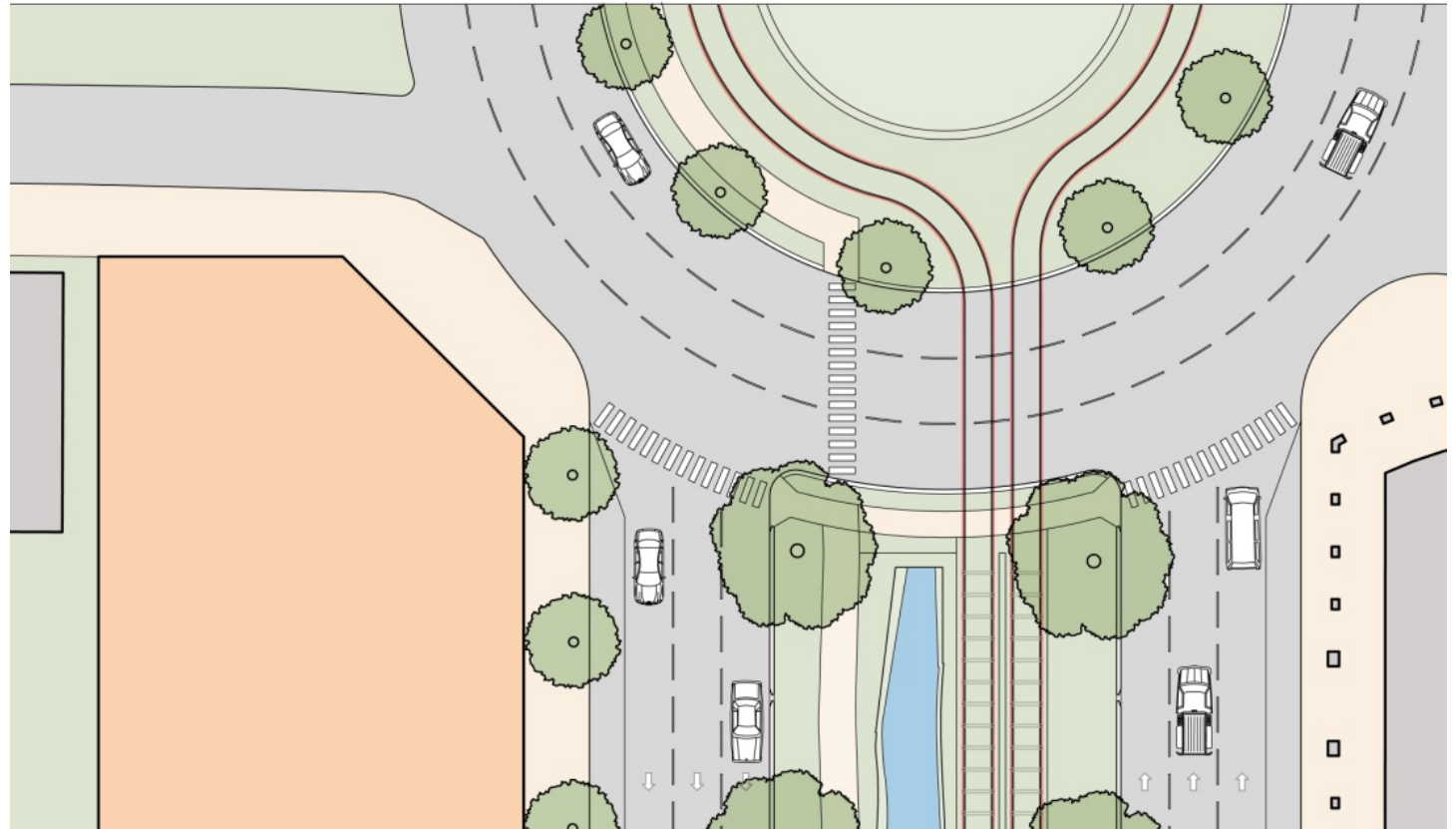


CLAIBORNE AVENUE RESTORATION ALTERNATIVE

A restored Claiborne Avenue would provide numerous opportunities for redevelopment (shown in orange to right) on land made available by removal of the flyover interchange ramps. The cross section continues the same elements as shown in previous sections, with a bike path, water retention canal and light rail line.



The expressway removal provides a great opportunity to restore the historic St. Bernard Circle (see following page). The circle could function as a three lane modern roundabout, or as a more traditional traffic circle, possibly with signals to control traffic. This would function similarly to many of Washington DC's traditional traffic circles.



RESTORING ST. BERNARD CIRCLE

The restoration of Claiborne Avenue provides an opportunity to bring a former landmark location back to life, St. Bernard Circle. The former traffic circle at St. Bernard and Claiborne Avenue was a focal point in the neighborhood, and the site of a major public market, which still exists.



New Orleans Land Use Map, 1929

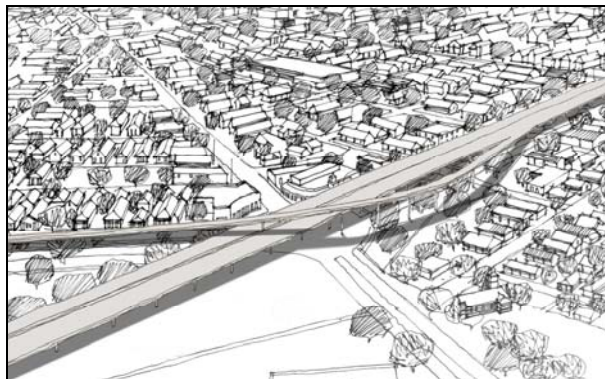


St. Bernard Public Market and St. Bernard Circle (circa 1945)
from the Historic New Orleans Collection



Aerial view of St. Bernard Circle, from the New Orleans Public Library Special Collections

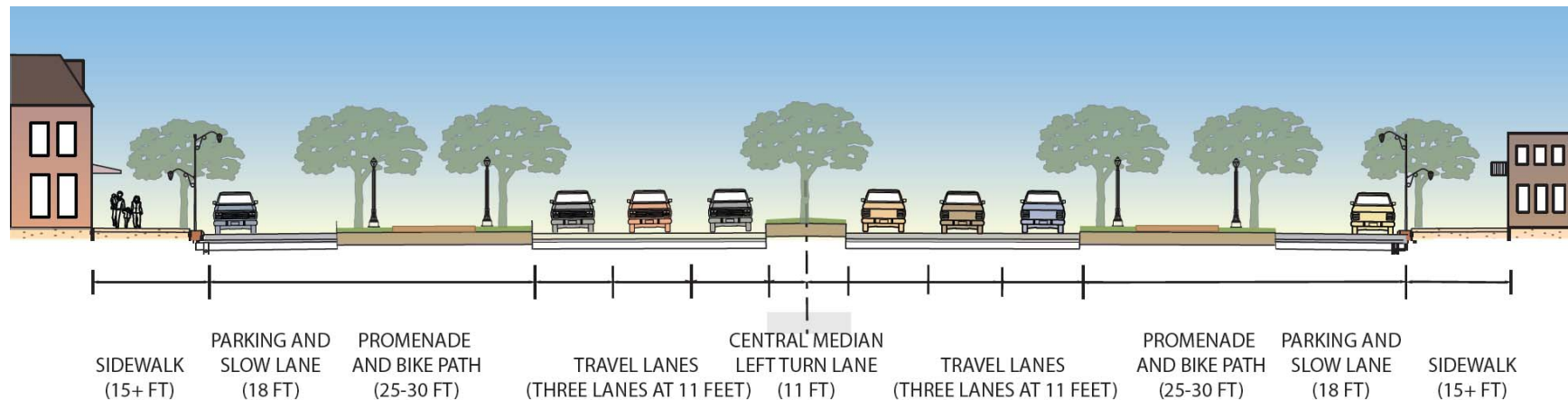
St. Bernard Circle With and Without Claiborne Expressway



Rendering of St. Bernard Circle Before and After Claiborne Expressway Removal, by Mac Ball, Waggoner & Ball, 2010.

MULTIWAY BOULEVARD ALTERNATIVE

Another possible cross section for segment B is a multi-way boulevard, a design that is more common in Europe but gaining popularity in the United States. Through-travel lanes are in the center of the right-of-way, allowing for a one-way “local” street on each side of the corridor, lined with parallel parking. They are separated from the higher speed, higher volume through travel lanes by a promenade with a bike path and landscaping. In this option, the street-fronting land uses and pedestrian realm are buffered from the higher volume through lanes. This option provides higher traffic capacity, as there are no conflicts with parallel parking maneuvers that would impede through traffic.



SEGMENT C: SAINT BERNARD TO ELYSIAN FIELDS

Several alternatives are possible for this segment, which is unique because the elevated structure was not constructed over an existing right-of-way but built diagonally over residential blocks. While the elevated expressway could remain in place, its negative impact can be seen throughout the neighborhood. Two options for this area are presented below.

OPTION C1: REPLACE ELEVATED HIGHWAY WITH URBAN PARKWAY/BOULEVARD

This alternative would create a new at-grade boulevard through the Seventh Ward between St. Bernard and Elysian Fields, in the path of the elevated freeway. The cross section would include three lanes of traffic in each direction, a landscaped median, and a parallel bicycle path. Intersections can be provided at street crossings in a manner that will best serve the needs of the neighborhood. The diagonal path of the freeway through this street network will create challenges in terms of efficient intersection design and urban redevelopment along the edges of the corridor.

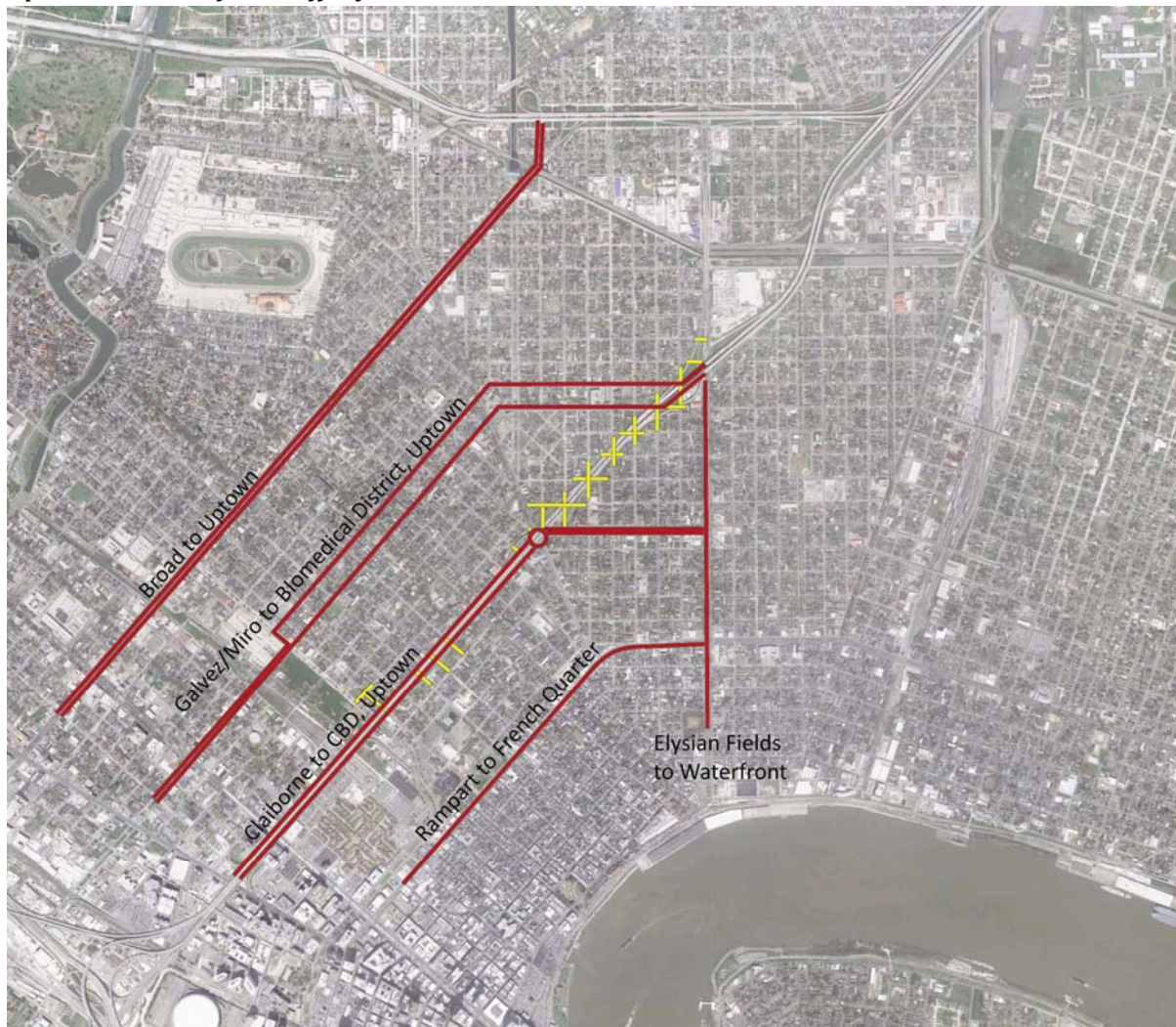


OPTION C2: RESTORATION OF THE SEVENTH WARD STREET NETWORK

In this option, the expressway would be removed from Elysian Fields to St. Bernard, but not replaced with a boulevard. Rather, traffic circulation and access to several alternative corridors would be improved to encourage dispersal onto the street network. This would allow the Seventh Ward neighborhood to be revitalized and reconnected with the removal of a substantial barrier and source of noise and blight. It would also release many acres of developable property that could be used in a manner compatible with the neighborhood context and vision.

The following map shows some of the routes where traffic would be redistributed. From the end of the current I-10 at Elysian Fields, traffic could turn either left on Elysian Fields to head toward the river, or travel by the Galvez/Miro one-way pair, providing access to the planned biomedical complex. Traffic that is heading uptown can either take the current I-610 to Broad Street or take Elysian Fields to Claiborne Avenue. The existing street network in this area has many alternate routes which have the capacity to absorb and distribute any traffic diverted by the closure of the elevated Claiborne/I-10 Expressway.

Optional Routes for Traffic from I-10 East



ANALYSIS OF CLAIBORNE AVENUE ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives for the Claiborne Corridor as described above will have a number of important consequences both for the region's transportation system and for the neighborhoods along the corridor. While a full analysis will require a more detailed feasibility study, the following discussion of the potential impacts is based on both existing data and on experience in other cities that have undertaken similar freeway-to-boulevard conversions.

IMPACT ON TRAFFIC CIRCULATION

The traffic circulation impacts of these changes can be assessed in detail through a feasibility study that may incorporate travel-demand modeling. However, based on a review of existing data, the region's travel demand base model, and experience in other cities, the following effects are anticipated:

- Traffic on the restored Claiborne Avenue is projected to be reduced to 70% or less of the current expressway volume. This is based on numerous examples from other cities where traffic on former freeway corridors was reduced to as little as 50% of the freeway volumes. These include San Francisco, Milwaukee, and New York City, as described in more detail in an appendix.
- Accessibility along Claiborne Avenue to reach the French Quarter, Louis Armstrong Park, and other destinations will improve substantially with a better connected street network. While travel times may increase slightly for through traffic, many vehicles that are headed to downtown locations will have more direct connections through the street network.
- Some traffic that is now using the Claiborne Expressway as a through route will divert to the I-10 portion of the Pontchartrain Expressway and I-610, resulting in an increase in volumes on these corridors. However, the expected order of magnitude of this would be an increase of less than 10% of existing volumes.

IMPACT ON CORRIDOR TRAVEL TIME

Travel times along the Claiborne Expressway corridor from I-610 to the Pontchartrain Expressway are compared before and after the freeway removal. These travel times assume that the restored Claiborne Avenue will have a 30 mph design speed, and also account for traffic signal delays.

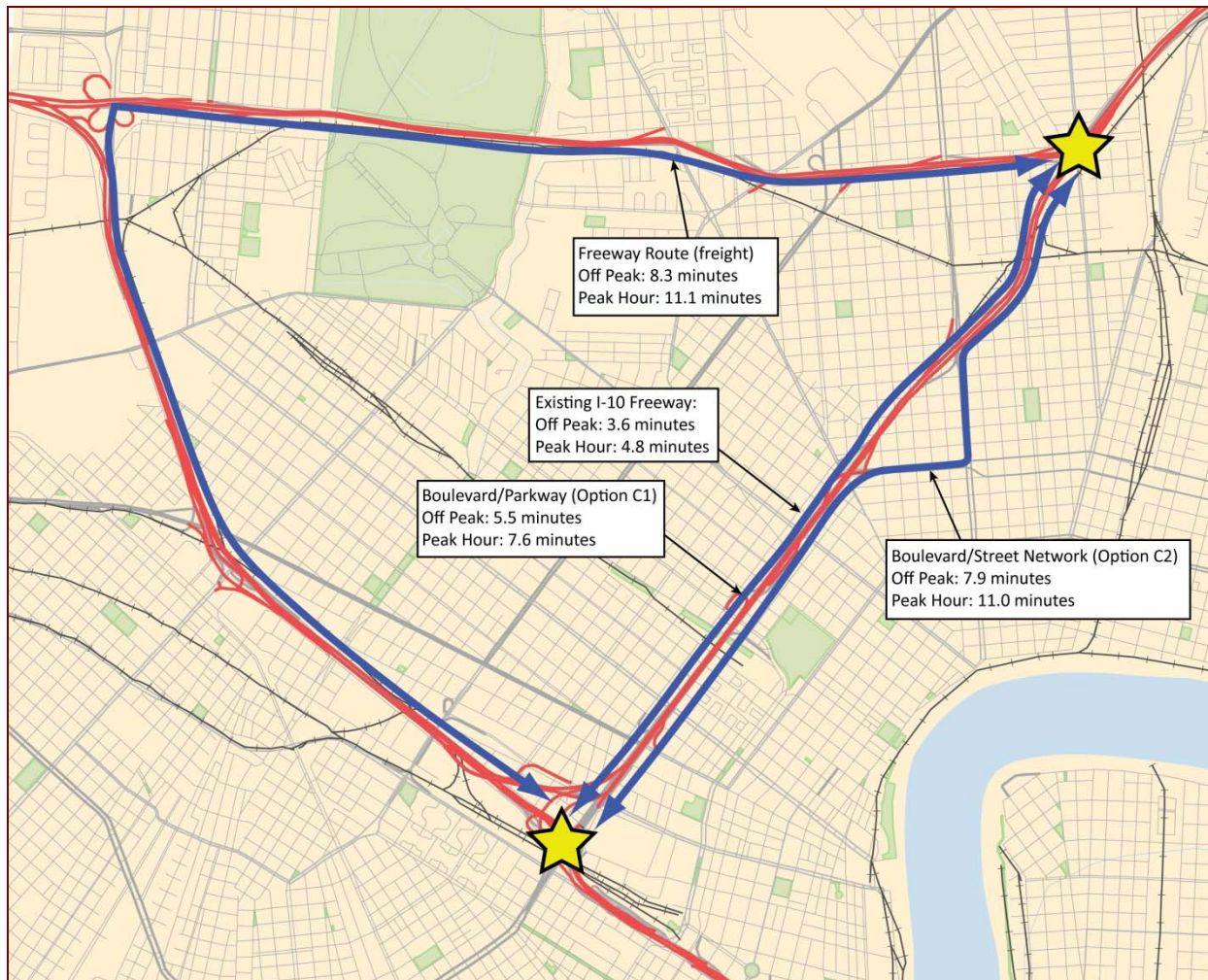
Travel Times on Claiborne Expressway and Restored Claiborne Avenue

Assumptions:

Average Travel Speeds (mph)	Off Peak	Peak
Freeway	60	45
Boulevard	35	25
Travel Times (min)		
Scenario	Off Peak	Peak
Existing	3.6	4.8
Option C1	5.5	7.6
Option C2	7.9	11.0
Freeway Alternative for freight*	8.3	11.1

* This option involves traveling on the existing I-610 and I-10 (Pontchartrain Expressway) to the Claiborne Avenue interchange

Travel Times on Claiborne Corridor for existing conditions and restoration alternatives



The travel time would be lengthened by two to four minutes during off-peak hours and by three to six minutes during peak hours for most vehicles. Eastbound heavy freight traffic would be routed on the Pontchartrain Expressway to the current I-610, which would increase travel times by as much as 6 minutes. Travel times for the restored boulevard scenarios are all less than using the Pontchartrain Expressway /I-610 route, so little diversion onto I-610 is expected beyond freight use.

IMPACT ON MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITIES

The conversion to a boulevard will bring significant changes and opportunities for improvements in several modes of transportation. Claiborne Avenue has one of the most generous right-of-way widths, making it ideal to serve as a complete, multimodal street. The following changes to various modes of transportation can be anticipated from conversion to a boulevard.

- Pedestrians.** The freeway poses several challenges for pedestrians in its current configuration. In many locations the freeway restricts street connectivity, especially in interchange areas where ramps coming to grade level require street closures. This makes the interchange areas particularly challenging and unsafe for pedestrians, as both cars and pedestrians are funneled onto single crossing points. Traffic that was traveling at high

speeds has an abrupt transition to an urban street, just at the same location where pedestrian crossings are concentrated. The New Orleans Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan⁵ found that pedestrian crashes were relatively frequent along the Claiborne corridor. While freeway removal will require that pedestrians encounter higher volumes of at-grade traffic, the street design can reinforce slower speeds, traffic dispersal onto the street network and safer pedestrian design. These factors will mitigate the potentially greater conflicts from bringing the corridor to grade level. Also, the freeway removal will allow for improved street connectivity, which is critical in shortening pedestrian travel distances.

- **Bicyclists.** Currently, the Claiborne Corridor does not provide good bicycle transportation. All of the alternatives described in this report include a separated bicycle path in the corridor, which will result in a substantial improvement in conditions for this mode of transportation. Bicycle travel is gaining mode share in New Orleans, and the changes in the Claiborne Corridor as described in this report could further encourage this positive trend.
- **Public Transit.** The corridor alternatives in this report are all fully capable of serving city bus transportation, but can also be readily adapted to a fixed route or high-capacity transit system, such as bus rapid transit or light rail/streetcar. There have been discussions in the community about establishing high-quality transit service on the Claiborne corridor, which would need to be the subject of a more detailed, focused study. Any of the alternatives described in this report could be adapted to a variety of transit technologies.

OTHER IMPACTS

Freight Transportation: Freight traffic between the Port of New Orleans and destinations east on Claiborne Avenue I-10 will be diverted to the Pontchartrain Expressway I-10/I-610 corridor, or use surface truck alternatives. The magnitude of this potential impact can be identified in a subsequent feasibility study, using origin/destination data from the Port of New Orleans.

Improved Connectivity Effects: The alternatives described in this report all have great potential to increase street connectivity in the I-10 and Claiborne corridor areas, which will bring numerous benefits to both drivers and pedestrians. In the immediate Claiborne Avenue neighborhoods, the existing ramps result in hampered connectivity and force pedestrians to use the same streets where there are also freeway interchanges.

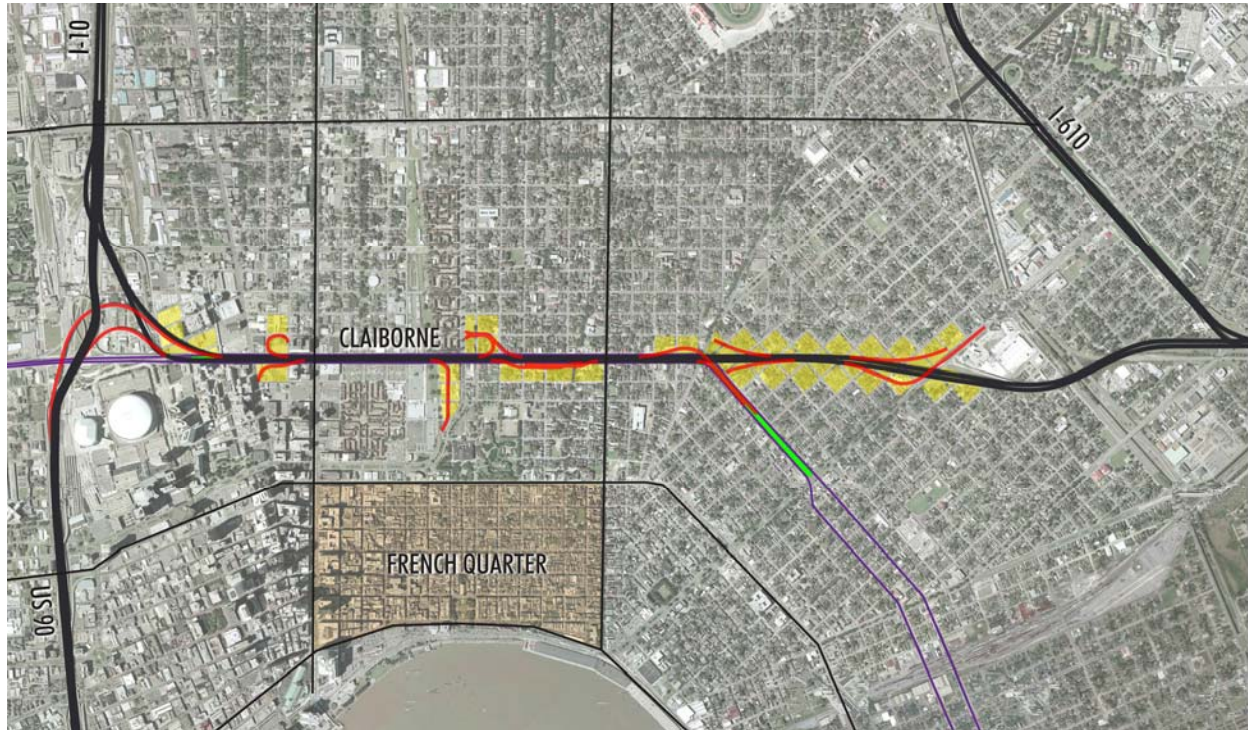
Environmental Effects: The freeway conversion to a boulevard would improve neighborhood noise levels, air pollution, and opportunities for storm water retention. While a more detailed environmental analysis can be conducted as part of a corridor feasibility study, it is anticipated that air pollution and water quality/retention would be improved. Noise levels may increase due to higher traffic volumes at the street level but could be somewhat mitigated by use of porous pavements and by the lower speeds.

Economic Impacts: Existing data and case studies suggest that there will be positive economic development effects resulting from the conversion to a boulevard. Local property values, accessibility due to improved connectivity, and redevelopment opportunities will result from the conversion. Significant acreage will become available for redevelopment, with improved accessibility, visibility and environment. (see figure below) Several important case studies provide compelling evidence as to how corridors can be revitalized when a freeway is replaced with a

⁵ 2005 New Orleans Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan; Regional Planning Commission-Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard and St. Tammany Parishes; September 2006.

boulevard, in particular San Francisco, Milwaukee, and New York City. More information on these is included in the appendix.

Blocks for Potential Redevelopment with Removal of Claiborne Expressway



CONCLUSIONS

The following are key conclusions regarding the potential for removal of the elevated Claiborne Expressway and its replacement with a restored boulevard.

- High speed freeway travel through urban downtowns is not necessary for urban mobility, due to the close proximity of destinations. A highly connected urban street grid provides a better way to move traffic to the complex array of destinations in a city. Distributing traffic to a street network, rather than concentrating on a freeway, reduces the impact of traffic. The potential for the removal of the Claiborne Expressway is further reinforced by the excess capacity in New Orleans' surface street network.
- Removal of the Claiborne Expressway would allow the re-establishment of an attractive, high capacity, multi-modal boulevard, would have numerous benefits:
 - A restored North Claiborne Avenue would improve accessibility of important downtown locations such as the French Quarter,
 - Conditions for other modes of transportation (bicycles, pedestrians, and transit) would be dramatically improved.
 - A restored Claiborne Avenue would be very attractive and would enhance the economic potential of the immediate Claiborne Avenue corridor.
 - Neighborhood connections would be restored.

- Policy and decision makers should consider the appropriate balance between travel time for some through freeway users and the benefits to the neighborhood, the economy, and for other modes of transportation that would result from freeway removal.
- The real benefits of removing a downtown urban freeway borne out by several cases of urban freeway deconstruction in New York City, San Francisco and Milwaukee. Among the key lessons from these case studies are:
 - Traffic is adaptable. Urban traffic (i.e., drivers of motor vehicles) is highly adaptable and will divert to the best route available, especially when there is a highly connected grid of streets. When a high-speed urban freeway is available, traffic is drawn to that corridor due to the higher speeds. In cities that have experienced a freeway removal, either planned or through a catastrophe, traffic has quickly adapted and redistributed itself to other routes.
 - Economic benefits result from removing elevated freeways. The localized economic harm that has resulted from the Claiborne Expressway is obvious, documented by the low property values and decline that the corridor has experienced since the freeway was constructed. Several compelling recent projects show the great benefit that can result by removing elevated freeways and replacing them with well designed, multimodal urban streets.

ATTACHMENTS

- Excerpts from UNOP Report on the Claiborne corridor
- Future Land Use Map of New Orleans, City Planning Commission
- A summary of three cases of urban highway removals is attached to this report, which provides real world examples of how other cities have addressed the impacts of elevated urban highways.

Fund Study and Removal of I-10

Type of Project:	High Recovery Value
Category:	Transportation Development
Area of Project Impact:	Regional / Citywide / Neighborhood
Project Location:	District 4

Project Description:
Construction of the elevated I-10 expressway above Claiborne Avenue in the 1960s inflicted enormous physical destruction and transformed this corridor from a cultural and neighborhood asset into a physical barrier separating communities on either side. The tremendous loss of cultural heritage in the African-American community and the elimination of the beautiful oak tree canopy along the neutral ground are wounds which have yet to heal. In recent years, many cities across the country have taken steps to remove/reconfigure portions of the interstate system in downtown areas, thereby repairing previous destruction and reinvigorating the urban core. The I-610 spur, together with the current underutilized capacity of many of the downtown’s major streets, could provide alternative solutions to the expressway if further developed through a comprehensive study. The study would address transportation, housing, economic, and cultural impacts relative to the removal of an approximately 2-mile stretch of I-10 along this corridor, with removal of designated entrance and exit ramps as Phase I. In order to maintain access to the CBD, French Quarter and medical district, a reconfigured traffic distribution network would be developed. This is a highest priority project both for planning and economic development interests and should be coordinated with public transportation and open green space networks.

Anticipated Outcomes:
The removal of the elevated I-10 expressway would have considerable positive impacts by re-connecting neighborhoods and restoring what was once a beautiful tree-lined avenue. Traffic redistribution would provide economic development benefits to corridors ripe for more volume and commercial redevelopment.

Existing Conditions

The physical barrier that the I-10 expressway created is shown here, above right, where an off ramp slopes down to ground level converting a block of Ursulines Avenue into a dead end.

Below right, neighborhood residents have decorated some of the columns supporting the elevated I-10 to add color and artistic flair to an otherwise drab space.

Adjacent Uses

Even well-known establishments along Claiborne Avenue have to contend with non-stop noise and traffic from the interstate, as is the case with Ernie K-Doe’s Mother-In-Law Lounge at 1500 N. Claiborne, top left. Most of the space under the elevated I-10 is available for public parking. Large portions, however, go unused much of the time. One example shown in the panorama below is the area under I-10 between Orleans Avenue and Lafitte Street.

The City of New Orleans operates a vehicle impound facility where illegally parked cars are towed, located along Claiborne Avenue at Bienville Avenue, top right.

Ramps

Ramps feeding on and off the elevated I-10 slice through neighborhoods, in some instances cutting off traffic from what used to be through streets that connected neighborhoods.



Ursulines Ave. at I-10



1500 N. Claiborne Ave.



Under I-10 along N. Claiborne Ave. in Tremé



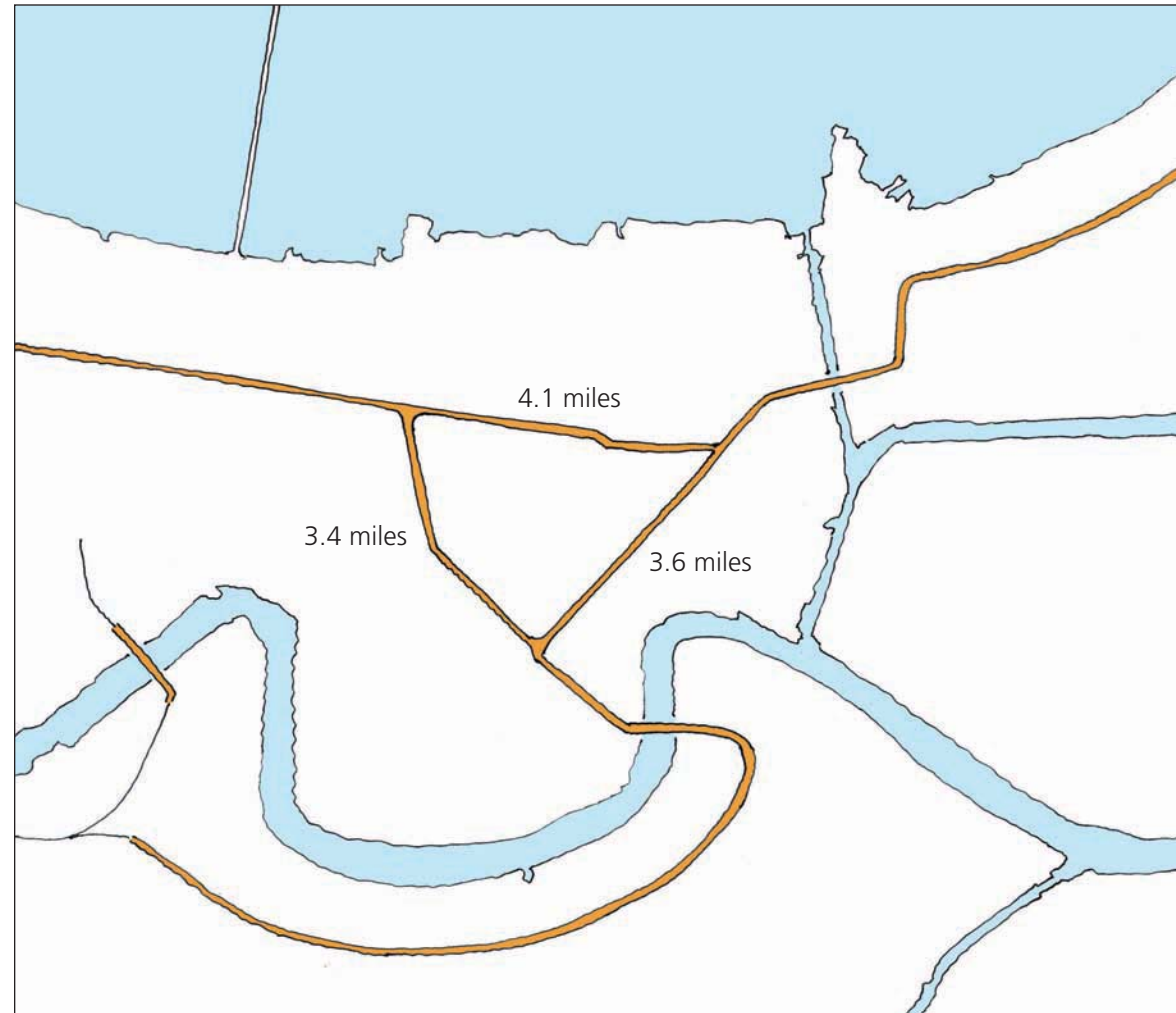
Under I-10 along N. Claiborne Ave.



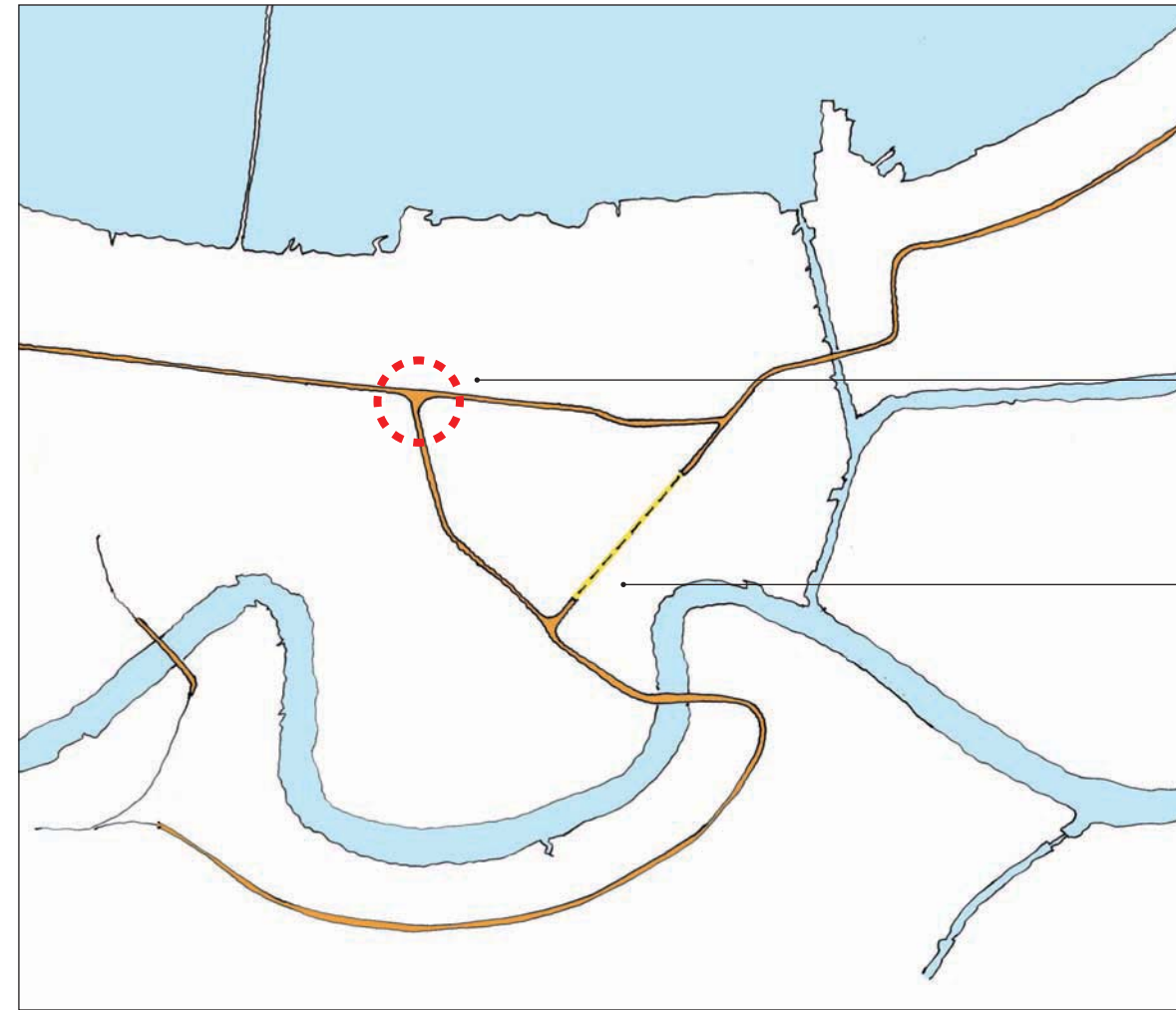
New Orleans impound area at N. Claiborne and Bienville



Dumaine St.



Existing Conditions



Proposed Adjustments

Provide I-610 eastbound access from Pontchartrain Expressway westbound.

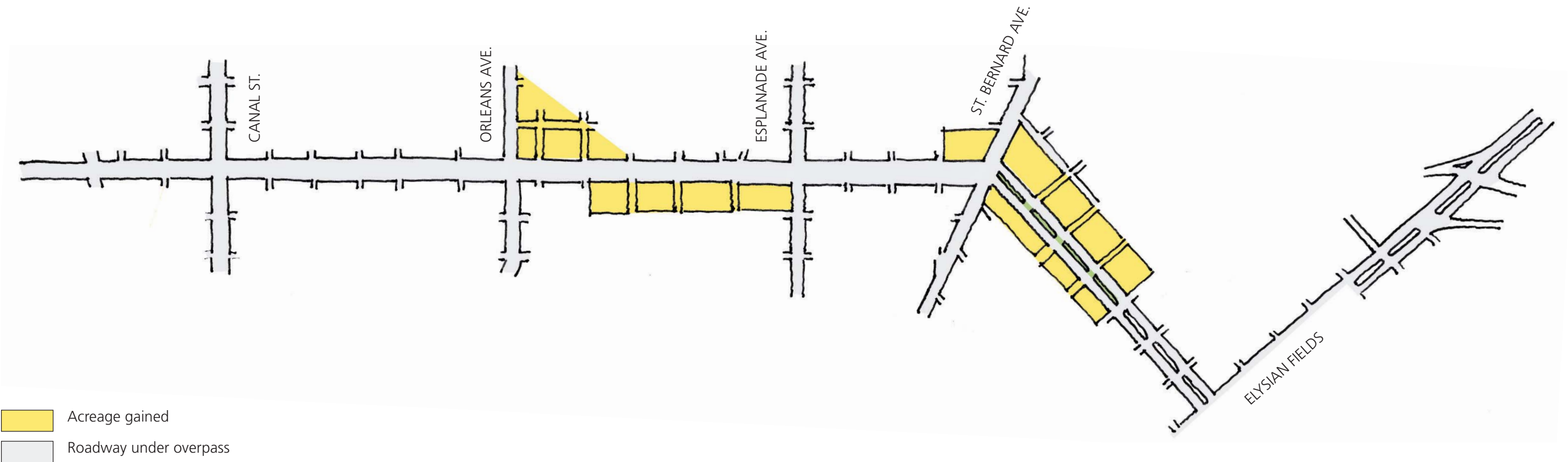
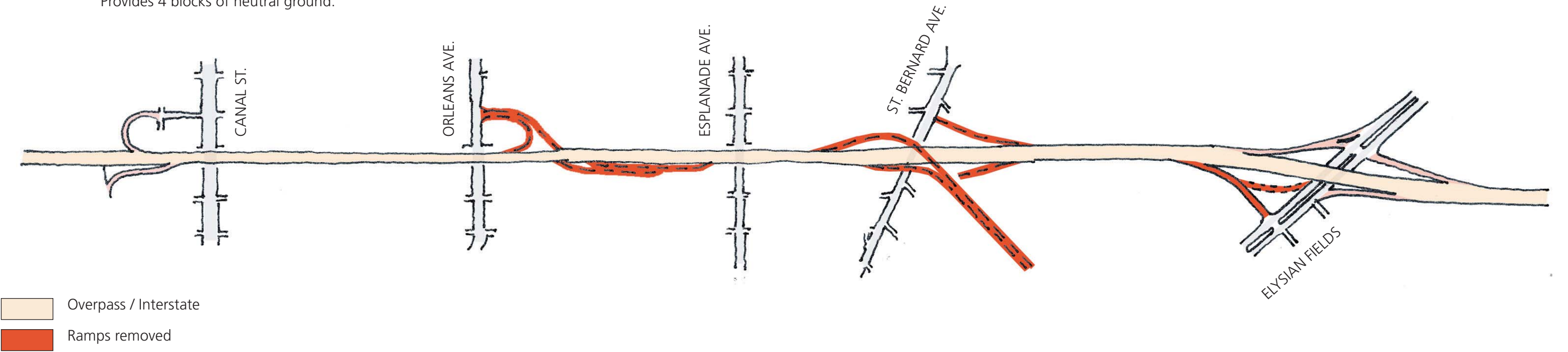
Remove I-10 overhead and ramps from Elysian Fields Ave. to Tulane Ave.



Under I-10 between Orleans Ave. and Lafitte St.

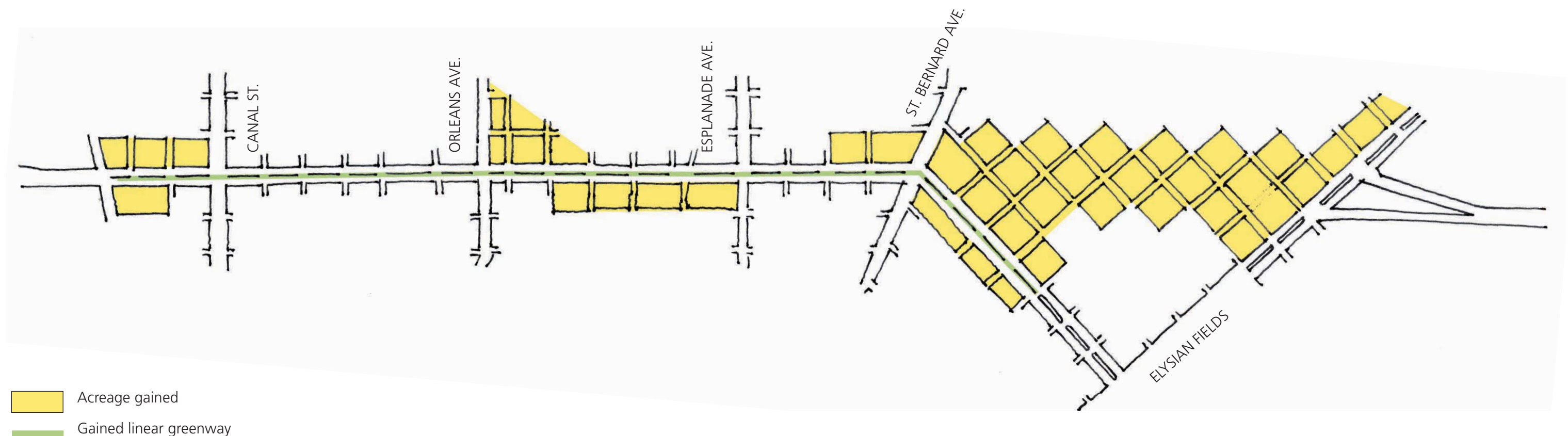
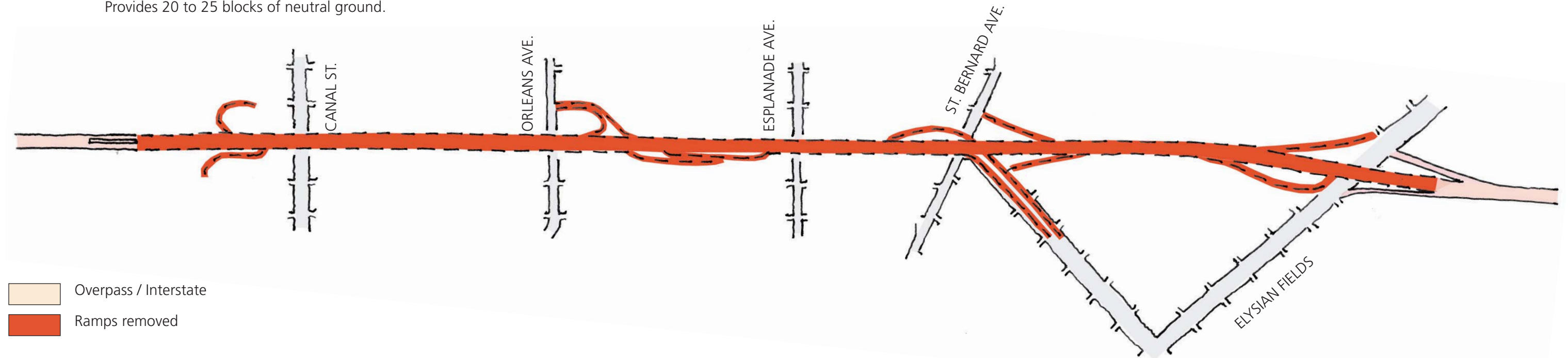
Option 1: Partial Removal (Ramps Only)

Summary: Removes 8 individual I-10 ramps.
 Provides 12 to 15 revitalization blocks.
 Provides 4 blocks of neutral ground.



Option 2: Full Removal (Ramps Only)

Summary: Removes 2 miles of I-10 overhead.
Removes 12 ramps.
Provides 35 to 40 revitalization blocks.
Provides 20 to 25 blocks of neutral ground.



New Open Space Connections with- in Network (including Bike Paths)

Type of Project: High Recovery Value
 Category: Community Facilities
 Area of Project Impact: Citywide / District-wide
 Project Location: District 4

Project Description:
 Throughout its history, New Orleanians have identified and planned networks of greenery as pathways throughout the city. Neighborhoods were connected by linkages that included linear parks like the Jefferson Davis neutral ground, neighborhood parks like Hardin Park, and City Park that extends from Bayou St. John to Lake Pontchartrain. Current greenspace planning suggests that ideally, all residents should be within 1/3 of a mile from a park or green space. Most of the neighborhoods in Districts 4 are far from that ideal.

To remedy the lack of green space, open lots should be consolidated and converted into neighborhood parks through voluntary sale and/or exchange programs, and the landscaping of neutral grounds should be improved to make them more inviting and useable. Neighborhood parks which were converted to temporary FEMA trailer sites must be restored and replanted. As capital improvement projects are undertaken throughout the city (especially utility repair and road replacement), work efforts must be integrated and coordinated so as to minimize disruption.

Anticipated Outcomes:
 Creating new open spaces will provide a higher quality of life for residents and attract visitors and potential investors. Increasing green space also offers more drainage capacity during heavy rainfall events. Linking green space throughout the city not only improves aesthetics, but also facilitates alternative transportation routes.



Areas of District 4 within 5 Minute Walk of Existing Parks

District 4 Parks and Recreation Facilities Inventory

Map Number	Park	Classification	Acreage	Owner	Administering Authority	Type of Use	Facilities Description
1	Louis Armstrong Park	Regional	29.23	City	Parkway	Passive	Congo Square, Municipal Auditorium, Theater for the Performing Arts, National Jazz Historical Park, lagoons
2	Capdeville Place	Pocket	0.14	City	Parkway	Passive	--
3	Carondelet Canal Park	Neighborhood	3.00	City	NORD / Parkway	Active	Playground equipment, tennis, basketball, community garden
4	Comiskey Park	Neighborhood	2.25	City	NORD	Active	Playground equipment, basketball, multi-purpose field, baseball, booster club, lights, rest-rooms, NORD supervision
5	Cuccia-Byrnes Playground	Multi-Neighborhood	4.37	Private long-term lease	NORD	Active	Basketball, multi-purpose fields, baseball, booster club, lights
6	Jefferson Davis Playground	Neighborhood	3.50	City	NORD	Passive	Playground equipment
7	Desmare Playground	Neighborhood	2.06	City	NORD	Active	Playground equipment, basketball, multi-purpose field, baseball, booster club
8	Easton Playground	Neighborhood	2.37	OPSB	NORD	Active	Playground equipment, basketball, multi-purpose field, baseball, booster club
9	Esperian Playground	Neighborhood	2.50	City	NORD	Active	Playground equipment, multi-purpose field, school supervision
10	Alcee Fortier Park	Pocket	0.39	City	Parkway	Passive	--
11	Gayarre Place	Pocket	0.07	City	Parkway	Passive	Monument, benches
12	Gert Town Pool	Center	1.00	City	NORD	Active	Pool
13	Golden Age Center	Center	0.18	City	NORD	Passive	Senior citizen programs, NORD supervision
14	Gravier Park	Pocket	0.43	City	Parkway	Passive	Multi-purpose field
15	Willie Hall Playground	Neighborhood	1.84	City	NORD	Active	Playground equipment, multi-purpose field, baseball, lights, NORD supervision
16	Hardin Playground	Neighborhood	2.47	City	NORD	Active	Basketball, multi-purpose field, baseball, lights, NORD supervision
17	Hunter's Field	Neighborhood	1.90	State Highway Department	NORD	Active/Passive	All-purpose field, NORD supervision
18	Kennedy Place	Pocket	0.25	City	Parkway	Passive	--
19	Kruttschnitt Place	Pocket	0.14	City	Parkway	Passive	--
20	Lemann Playground I	Neighborhood	2.31	City	NORD	Active	Playground equipment, basketball, restrooms, NORD supervision
21	Lemann Playground II	Neighborhood	2.17	City	NORD	Active	Playground equipment, pool, restrooms
22	Lewis Playground	Pocket	0.22	Arcdiocese	NORD	Active	Playground equipment, basketball
23	Pershing Place	Pocket	0.35	City	Parkway	Passive	Monument
24	Rosenwald Center	Neighborhood	4.23	HANO	NORD	Active	Playground equipment, basketball, multi-purpose field, gym, pool, lights, restrooms, NORD supervision
25	St. Patrick Playground	Neighborhood	1.80	City	NORD	Active	Basketball, lights
26	Stallings / Gentilly Playground	Neighborhood	2.16	City	NORD	Active	Playground equipment, basketball, multi-use field, baseball, pool, lights, restrooms, NORD supervision
27	Norwood Thompson Playground	Neighborhood	1.30	City	NORD	Active	Playground equipment, multi-purpose field, baseball, lights, restrooms, NORD supervision
28	Treme Center	Center	1.76	City	NORD	Active	Playground equipment, gym, pool, NORD supervision
TOTAL	TOTAL AREA	--	74.39	--	--	--	--

Courtesy of New Orleans City Planning Commission, Master Plan, 2002

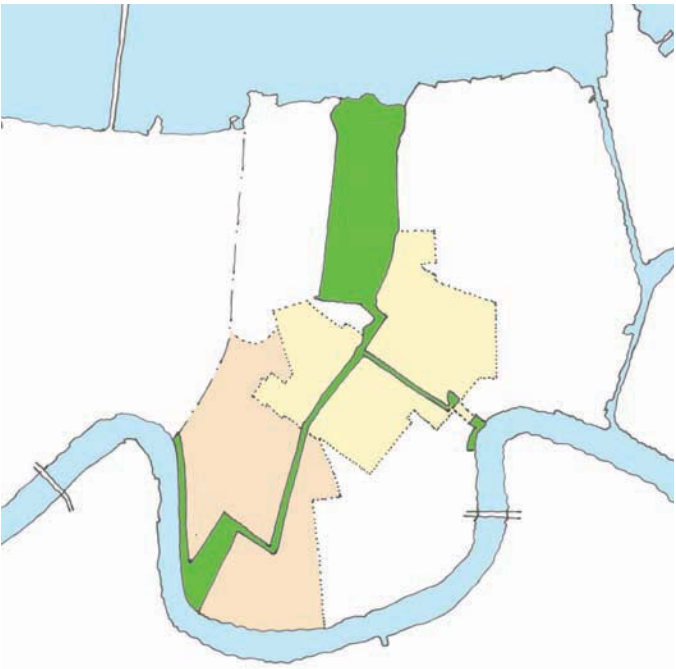
Bicycle paths have enormous value as recreational assets and serve as important transportation alternatives for residents. Creating a network of bicycle paths along existing streets will encourage ridership and bicycle safety. As part of the City-wide street reconstruction and repairwork, adequate space for bike paths should be reserved and upgrades to sidewalks, crossings and curbs should be made a priority to encourage pedestrian usage. This work should incorporate design standards from the Louisiana Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, the AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities and recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Component of the City's 2002 Master Plan.



Pocket Park at Esplanade Ave, Grand Route St. John and Mystery Streets

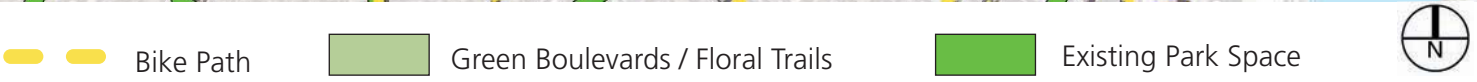


Existing Conditions of the Lafitte Corridor.

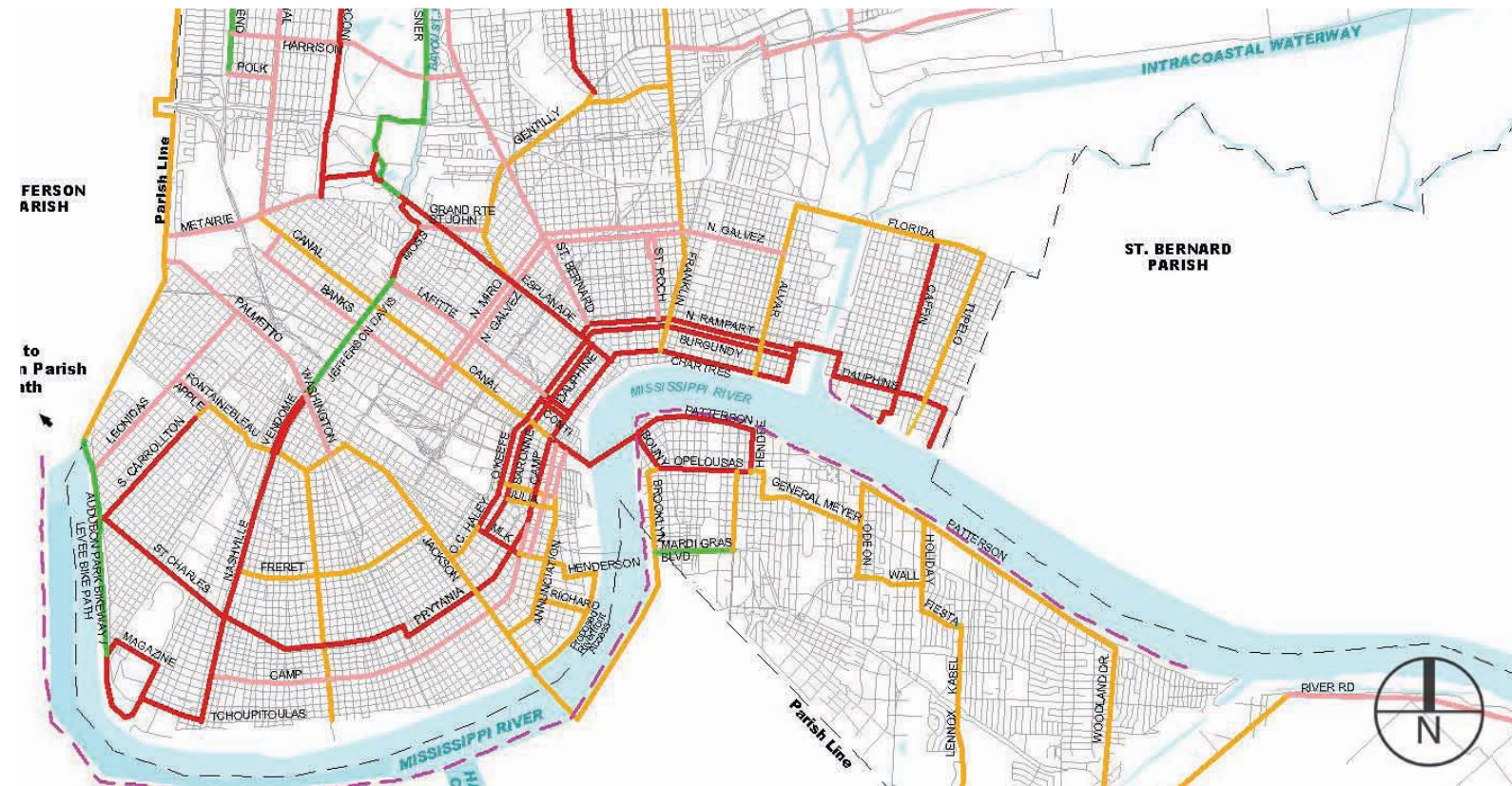


Proposed Bike Connection from River to Lake

Map of Open Spaces and Proposed Bike Paths and Floral Trails



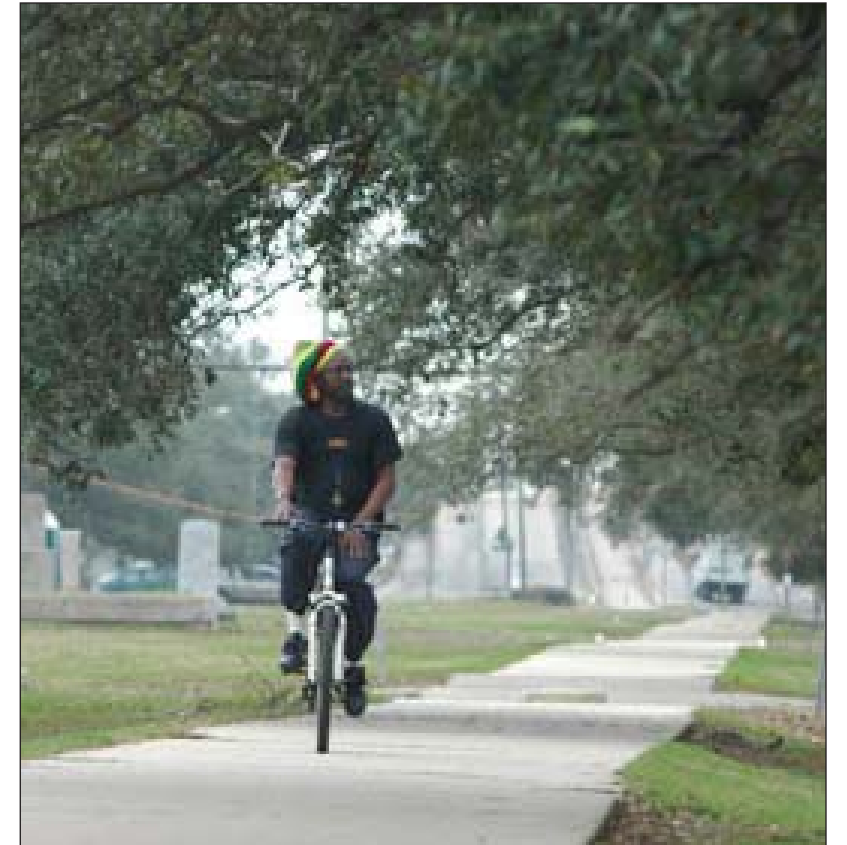
Phases of Proposed Bike Paths



- Existing Bicycle Path
- Proposed Phase One
- Proposed Phase Two
- Proposed Phase Three

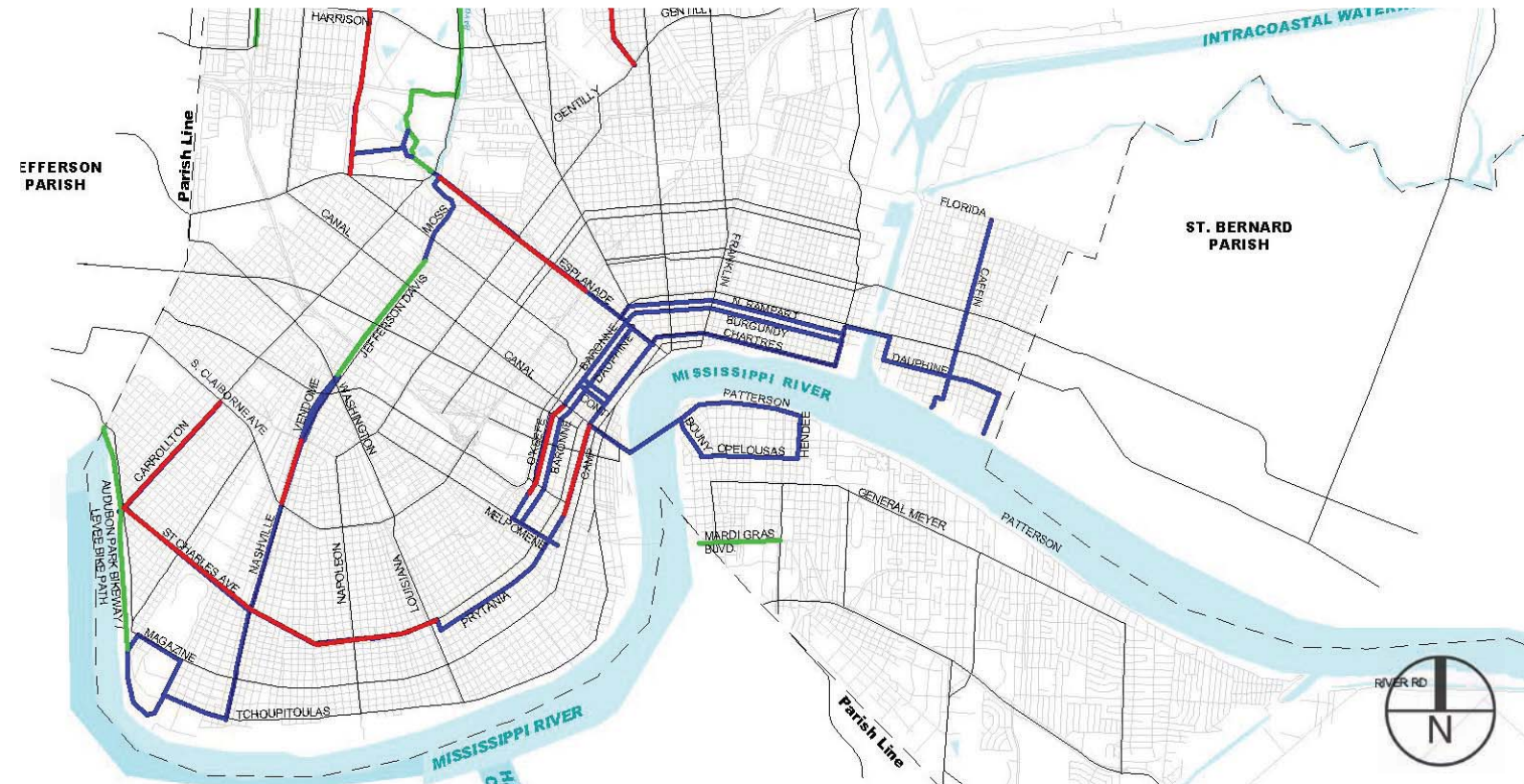
City of New Orleans Proposed Bike Routes:
Map indicating the selection of and the prioritization of bicycle routes throughout the city.

Map courtesy of New Orleans City Planning Commission, *Masterplan 2002*.



Cyclist on Jeff Davis Parkway bike path.

Designation of Proposed Bike Paths



- Existing Bicycle Lane
- Exclusive Bicycle Lane
- Signed Shared Lane

City of New Orleans Proposed Bike Routes:
Map indicating the selection of and type of lane designations for Phase One of the City Planning Commission's Masterplan.

Map courtesy of New Orleans City Planning Commission, *Masterplan 2002*.



Hardin Park, currently a site for FEMA trailers

North Claiborne Avenue Corridor Study

Type of Project: High Recovery Value
 Category: Economic Development
 Area of Project Impact: Regional / Citywide
 Project Location: District 4

Project Description:
 The Parish-to-Parish connection makes the commercial revitalization of this corridor vitally important, a keystone for the entire City’s recovery. The removal and / or modification of the I-10 expressway will create opportunities for the redesign and streetscaping of Claiborne Avenue, which will attract commercial development and community involvement. Most importantly, this will reconnect the Upper and Lower Treme neighborhoods, and return Claiborne to its former pre-expressway role as a key commercial artery and historical center of the African American retail and cultural experience. With the corridor redesign and streetscaping work, the intersection of Claiborne and Orleans, whose original urban fabric remains intact, becomes an excellent opportunity for commercial reinvestment.

The residential neighborhoods surrounding the Municipal Auditorium have lost nearly all their grocery, pharmacy, banking and retail services. Redeveloping the Municipal Auditorium into a multi-use, commercial and retail facility serving Treme, the 6th and 7th Wards and the French Quarter would bring much needed services and encourage the return of displaced residents. Existing functions at the Municipal Auditorium such as Mardi Gras balls can be relocated to other facilities such as the Arena, major hotels and the Convention Center. A covered bus transfer station could also be created on-site with a shuttle bus to the hotels of the CBD, Medical District and French Quarter.

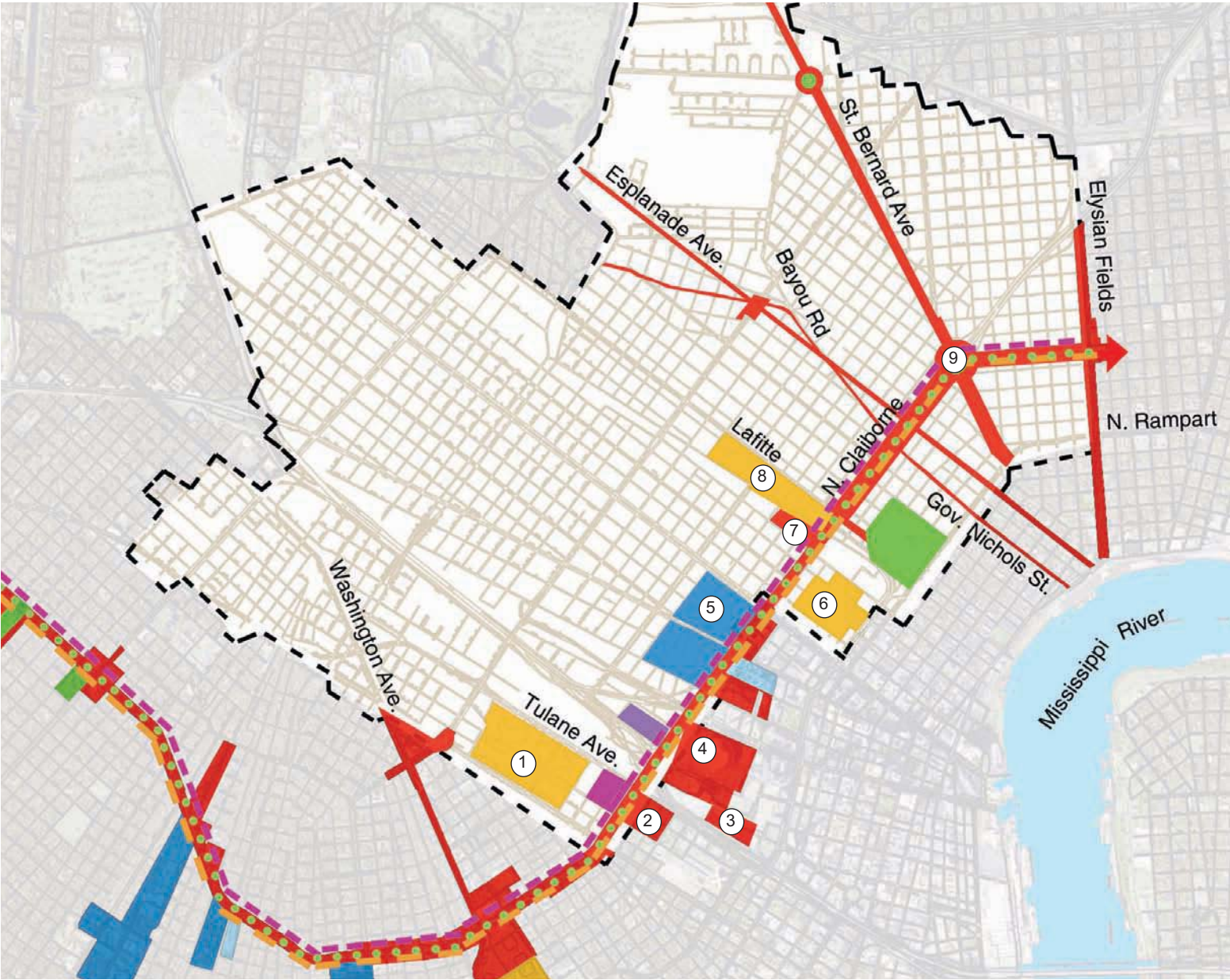
Converting the auditorium to a neighborhood service and transportation complex could be done without the use of local tax dollars. The public ownership of

the land, together with Federal tax credits and low interest Go-Zone bonds will make this an attractive development opportunity which will anchor and stabilize this key location at the heart of the city.

Anticipated Outcomes:
 The goal of the project is to create strategies for commercial reinvestment and building community pride for a neglected corridor, which once had great civic and cultural importance. Vacant or underutilized land along the corridor could be brought back into viable, income-producing service. General recommendations for Claiborne Avenue include:

- Traffic signalization repair and synchronization
- Retail development along Commercial Corridor
- Zoning overlay to protect adjoining residential neighborhoods
- Light rail transit artery extending from Jefferson Parish to St. Bernard Parish
- Development guidelines to address pedestrian, vehicular and environmental design
- Improved landscaping and tree canopy

Important Sites along Claiborne Ave.



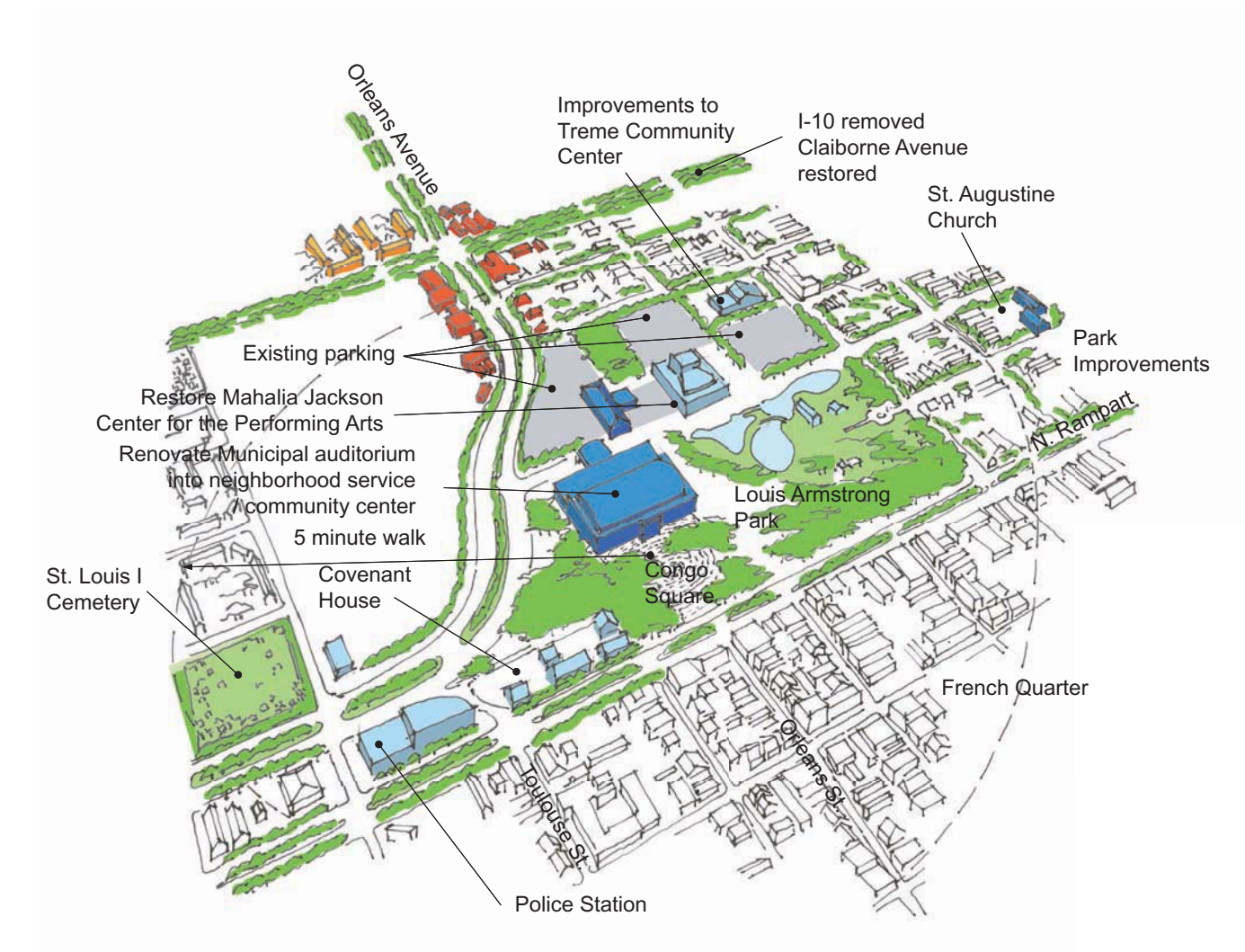
1. B.W. Cooper Housing (HUD / HANO)
2. Home Depot
3. Union Passenger Transit Terminal
4. Louisiana Superdome / New Orleans Arena
5. Proposed LSU/Tulane/VA Medical District.
6. Iberville Housing (HUD / HANO)
7. L.I.F.T Film Factory
8. Lafitte Housing (HUD / HANO)
9. Traffic Circle at Claiborne Avenue & St. Bernard Avenue should be restored.

 Light Industrial	 Park / Green Space
 Commercial	 Bus Route
 Public Housing	 Landscape Improvements
 Private Institutions	 Streetcar Line
 Public Institutions	 Commercial Corridor

Proposal to Restore St. Bernard Ave. Circle



Proposal for Louis Armstrong Park



Louis Armstrong Park located in Tremé is home to two performance centers, the Morris F.X. Jeff, Sr. Municipal Auditorium, above, and the Mahalia Jackson Center for the Performing Arts.



North Claiborne Avenue alongside and underneath the elevated I-10.



Oak trees provide shade along North Claiborne Avenue's grassy neutral ground between Elysian Fields Avenue and where I-10 begins its elevated position.



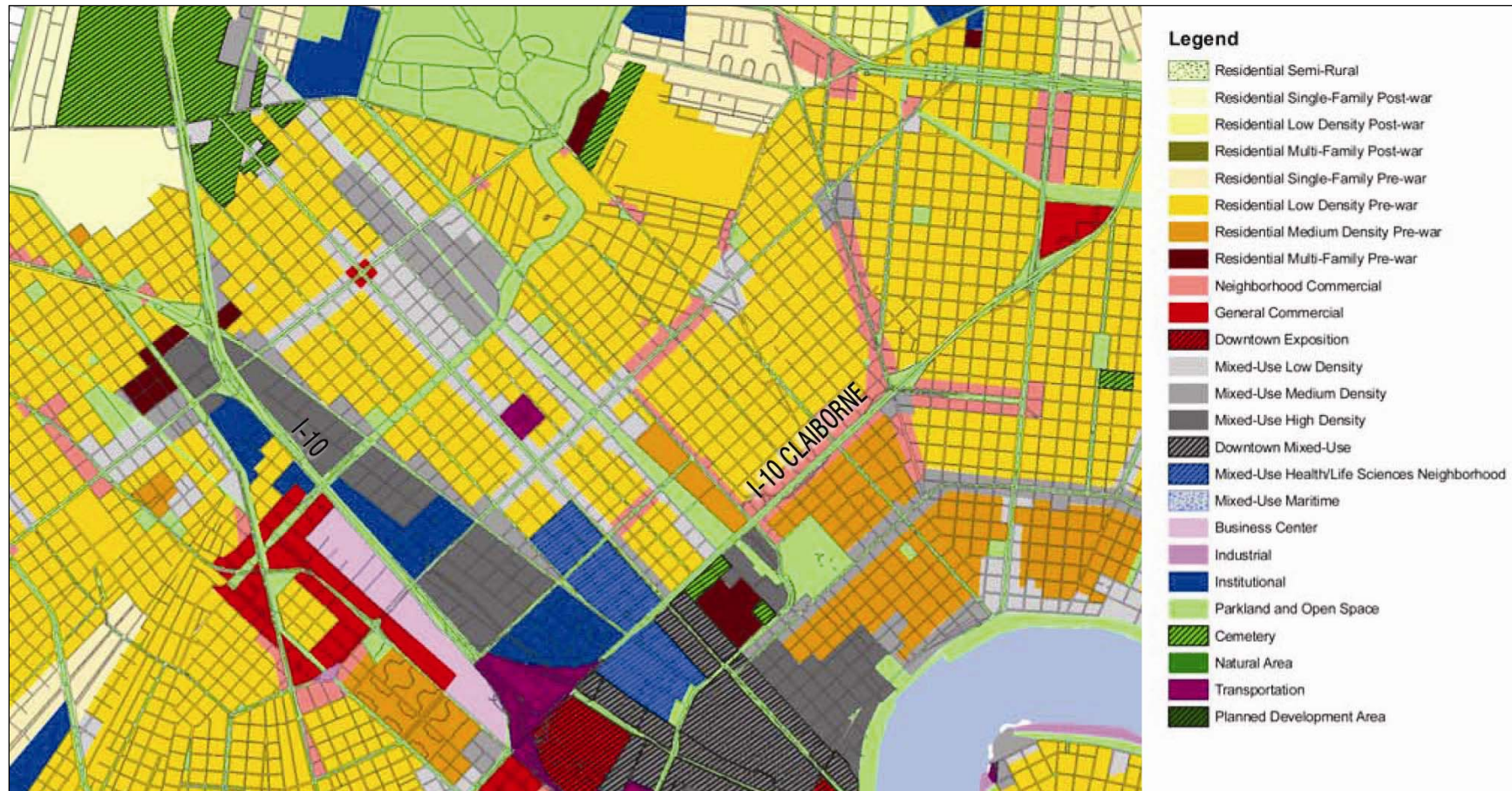
Circle Food Store at N. Claiborne Ave. and St. Bernard Ave.



Mahalia Jackson Theater for the Performing Arts in Louis Armstrong Park

FUTURE LAND USE FOR THE CLAIBORNE CORRIDOR

The New Orleans future land use map identifies a variety of different characteristics along the length of the Claiborne Corridor. The southwest end, near the I-10/Pontchartrain interchange, shows future land uses as institutional and medical. Major centers of employment are here and more are planned, which would ideally be easily accessed by public transit. The remaining length of the corridor is planned for continued residential and neighborhood commercial, much like what existed before the elevated expressway was constructed. As noted earlier in this report, these commercial uses declined substantially following the highway construction. Below is the most recent future land use map from the City of New Orleans Planning Commission.



New Futures for Aging Urban Freeways

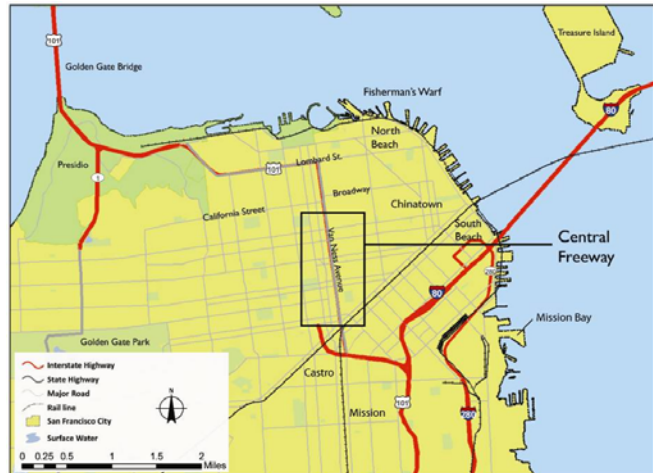
Freeways have been constructed through the downtowns of many cities across the United States, intended to ensure economic viability in an era when suburban growth, along with car ownership and use, was accelerating. It was feared that without such direct highway connections urban downtowns would die. In hindsight, there are serious concerns that these freeways have done more harm than good. We now know that urban freeways have brought huge collateral damage in the form of environmental, social, aesthetic, and economic harm to cities, and have generally contributed to further decline in already declining areas.

Many of these urban highways are now over fifty years old and in need of major investment. In some cities, this has been viewed as an opportunity to address the negative impacts associated with the first generation of highway construction and to reconsider the future infrastructure and mobility needs of their regions as well as their local communities. Some cities in the US are considering removing their aging urban freeways altogether. This report presents three instructive examples of removal, reviewing the traffic-flow and economic consequences that resulted from converting urban freeways into boulevards.

Central Freeway, San Francisco

The Central Freeway was an elevated highway that towered over the moderate-income Hayes Valley neighborhood.

It was intended to eventually cross the city of San Francisco as a through route, but the movement that arose in opposition to urban freeways prevented its completion. Therefore, the Central Freeway functioned as a spur, although it carried significant traffic volume--over 90,000 cars per day. Damage from the Loma Prieta earthquake forced this highway to close, and public support for demolishing it rather than rebuilding it gradually took hold. As time passed, drivers adapted to the loss of the freeway, and it became apparent that its closure had many positive effects on the neighborhood, such as lower noise levels and less traffic. Despite this, the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) proceeded with plans to rebuild the elevated freeway, which was re-opened in 1996 with a single deck serving two directions (rather than the previous double-deck design).



Two attempts to tear down the highway were made through ballot initiatives by the San Francisco Neighbors Association between 1994 and 1999. A competing ballot measure was introduced by organizations representing



neighborhoods to the west, which feared that the freeway's removal would cause unbearable congestion. During this time, a proposal by Alan Jacobs and Elizabeth MacDonald of UC Berkeley to replace the freeway with a multi-way boulevard gained support. Finally, a referendum vote in 1999 had two conclusive results: measures were approved both to tear down the freeway and to build Octavia Boulevard as a replacement. The freeway was demolished in 2002, in 2005 Octavia Boulevard was opened. The boulevard now carries 45,000 cars per day.



Octavia Boulevard (Credit: Bill Lieberman)

A recent study³ of property values and other effects of the freeway-to-boulevard conversion reached the following conclusions:

- Property values within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of the freeway have risen significantly since the opening of the new multi-way Octavia Boulevard.
- Daily traffic on Central Freeway was about 90,000 vehicles, and on Octavia Boulevard it is now about 45,000 vehicles. Surveys of commuters who formerly used the freeway indicate that most drivers who no longer use the freeway are simply using another route into the city and that very few switched to public transit.
- The traffic congestion that was predicted from the freeway's closure never materialized.

The project has successfully addressed the need for traffic capacity, with nearly half of the prior traffic volume finding other routes or changing modes. The city has conducted traffic counts of neighborhood streets surrounding the boulevard, and has not found any significant increases from the diversion. The neighborhood around the new boulevard has seen increased residential and commercial investment. The boulevard is considered largely successful, although some design issues continue to require refinement, particularly conflicts at intersections between side access roads and cross-street traffic.

A great deal can be learned from this San Francisco project. It offers an example of the ability of traffic to re-route itself in an urban network and adapt to a highway capacity reduction. A survey of downtown workers conducted by the University of California Transportation Center⁴ indicates that most previous Central Freeway drivers switched to other driving routes and very few switched to public transit. The project also shows that a multi-way boulevard can carry significant traffic volumes and still provide a friendly edge for an urban, pedestrian-oriented development. The urban environment in the neighborhood adjacent to this freeway was dramatically improved by the project, through both a reduction in noise and traffic and improvement for other modes in the corridor. Even though there are still over 40,000 cars per day traveling on Octavia Boulevard, they drive at a slower speed. In addition, redevelopment of newly available property will bring additional revenue to the city.

It needs to be remembered that the process of replacing the freeway with this boulevard was highly politicized, requiring three different ballot votes and including conflicting views from different neighborhoods. The planning process did not result in a consensus decision.

Park East Freeway, Milwaukee

The Park East Freeway was a one-mile elevated spur connection between I-43 and downtown Milwaukee. It was originally intended to continue through downtown, but was never completed. The impacts of this freeway caused a great deal of controversy such that the extension plans were abandoned, and eventually the old right-of-way intended for this highway's continuation became the East Pointe mixed-use development. In 1972, Mayor Henry Maier vetoed funding to continue the freeway, saying: "America is the only nation in the world to let her cities ride to bankruptcy on a freeway My city has discovered that the freeway is not free." Because of its short length, the Park East Freeway was never heavily used, carrying about 40,000 vehicles per day, well below its capacity.



As the elevated freeway was deteriorating, the Wisconsin DOT proposed spending about \$100 million to reconstruct it. The City of Milwaukee sought alternatives that would both be sounder investments and allow the reclamation of some of the land that was blighted by the freeway. The resulting project involved demolishing the freeway in 1999. Since then, there has been significant redevelopment of the former Park East corridor, with substantial private real estate investments contributing to downtown Milwaukee's revitalization.



It was the success of the East Pointe redevelopment in the 1990s that helped lead to the consideration of removing the remaining underutilized and deteriorating Park East Freeway while it was still slated for reconstruction. The funding to eventually remove the freeway came from a combination of Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency

Act (ISTEA) federal highway funds and Tax Increment Financing through the City of Milwaukee. The total construction cost was about \$25 million, which included demolishing the freeway and reconnecting the surface streets to absorb the former freeway traffic. The freeway's removal freed up 26 acres of downtown land, much of it on the Milwaukee Riverfront, for redevelopment. After the removal, land uses changed and values increased substantially. The City of Milwaukee has established the Park East Corridor development area, with a master plan for mixed-use urban redevelopment that is gradually unfolding.

The Park East corridor before and after the freeway removal



Park East Corridor in 2006, with street network re-established.

Source: City of Milwaukee

The process of removing the elevated Park East Freeway was led by then-mayor John Norquist. As mentioned earlier, the idea for removing the freeway was inspired by successful urban redevelopment in nearby neighborhoods and triggered by a Wisconsin DOT-initiated plan, proposed in the mid-1990s, to reconstruct the deteriorating freeway. With Mayor Norquist strongly in favor of highway removal and traffic analysis reports indicating that reconnecting the street network would provide sufficient capacity to replace the freeway, other agencies were encouraged to join in support of the idea of removal. While it was not without controversy, overall community leadership at all levels solidly favored the removal concept. In 1999, the city council agreed on the removal option by a unanimous vote, and the county board of commissioners approved the freeway removal proposal by a very large margin. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) required that additional traffic studies be completed before agreeing to fund the project, partly because FHWA was concerned about the threat of lawsuits by opponents of the removal. The highway was removed in 2003.

The removal project set the stage for highly successful urban redevelopment, which is ongoing today. Traffic congestion predicted by some as a result of the removal never materialized. Economic development has been encouraged, vacant property has been redeveloped, and property values and tax revenues have increased substantially since the freeway was removed.

A number of important things can be learned from this case of urban freeway removal. The street network was easily able to absorb the freeway traffic, despite limited transit alternatives in the city. Traffic congestion did not noticeably increase after the freeway was removed. The benefits of opening up underutilized land in the center of the city and along the Milwaukee River for redevelopment seem to have outweighed any negative economic effects from the loss of convenient highway access. The removal of the Park East Freeway has been




The Flatiron Building, City of Milwaukee

accompanied by a significant increase in investment in downtown Milwaukee, and it was tied to an economic revitalization plan for the Milwaukee Riverfront that has been successful. Support for the freeway's removal was built through a political process, rather than in a formal planning and public involvement process. Strong political leadership at many levels was necessary for this project to be implemented.


Park East Corridor Redevelopment Projects

**Proposed, Planned and/or Under Construction Projects
within the Park East Corridor**




Manpower (Block 9)

Construction of the new world headquarters for Manpower Inc. was completed in fall 2007. The \$87 million development employs 1,200 people and includes a parking structure, public plaza, and extension of the Milwaukee Riverwalk. The building is the recipient of the 2007 Midwest Construction Award and the 2007 Real Estate and Construction Review Building of America Award. Gilbane Building Company was the general contractor.



North End-Phase 1 and 2 (Blocks 23, 24, & 27)

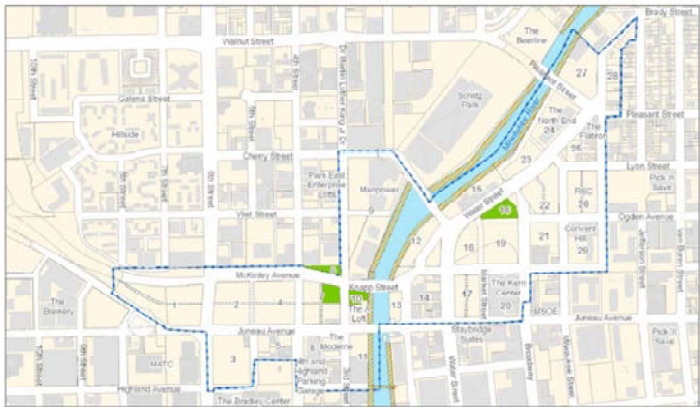
A \$175 million project developed in phases over the next 5-7 years is expected to become a neighborhood within itself with a variety of housing options and supportive retail services. Construction began earlier this year on phase 1: a 5-story apartment building featuring 83 apartments and 12,000 sq ft of 1st floor neighborhood retail (Block 24 on the Park East map.) Construction of phase 2 is planned to begin later this year (Block 23) and will consist of two 5-story apartment buildings that will offer 130-160 apartments, a new RiverWalk segment, public plaza, and new road. KBS is the general contractor.




Platiron (Block 25)

Mixed use project developed by Legacy Real Estate Partners, LLC with ground level retail, a corner public plaza, and 38 condominiums. This project was completed in Fall 2007. Currently, there are remaining condo units for sale and the retail space remains for lease. Altius Building Company was the general contractor.


Park East Redevelopment Corridor






MSOE Kern Center (Block 20)

A \$26 million investment completed by MSOE in 2005. The development includes a 210,000 sq ft. facility with a fitness center, 3 classrooms, 1,600-seat hockey arena, 1-200 seat basketball arena, field house, running track, wrestling area, offices, facilities associated with athletics, counseling and health services.




The Aloft (Block 10)

A 5-story, 160-room hotel development with 3,200 square feet of ground floor retail, a Riverwalk, and public green space. Total investment equals approximately \$24 million.




The Moderne (Block 8)

Owned by Milwaukee Moderne LLC. This will be a 30-story development to include 14 condos (priced between \$258,000-\$2.8 million), 203 high-end executive residences for lease and 7,200 sq ft retail (spa and restaurant). Total private investment will be \$72 million. Hunzinger is the general contractor.



Park East Square-Phase 1 (Block 26)

Although there are over 4 blocks that have been optioned by Milwaukee County, this is the first block within the Park East corridor that has been officially sold by Milwaukee County. RSC & Associates has purchased the property and is proposing a hotel with ground floor retail and outdoor seating.



Convent Hill (Block 29)

Senior housing owned and operated by the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee. Phase 1 of the transformation of a former 120-unit, high-rise building into 182 on-site and 20 off-site housing units occurred in 2006. The new high-rise is a green, LEED certified building with mixed income units and a garden roof top.

Source: City of Milwaukee Economic Development

West Side Highway, New York City

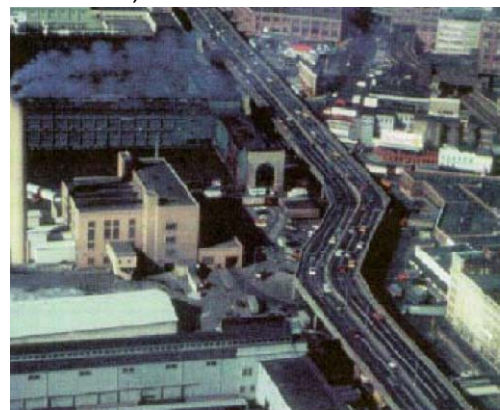
In 1973, a section of the West Side Highway, which ran along the Hudson River, catastrophically collapsed. While a detour route provided for through-traffic through local streets, it took many years and the study of a variety of options before the City developed its replacement. A detailed traffic-count program was established to trace the cars diverted from the highway, and it found that most of the traffic truly disappeared into the street network with no traffic congestion ever materializing from the freeway collapse. The new West Side corridor is a boulevard with a parallel riverfront bicycle path. Economic development and property values have both increased substantially since the new boulevard was constructed.



The West Side Highway was the first elevated highway in the U.S. when it was built in the 1920s. It ran along the Hudson River shoreline from 72nd Street to the southern tip of Manhattan. It was not designed to modern highway standards but had very narrow lanes and sharp turns at exit ramps. It carried up to 140,000 vehicles per day in the early 1970s between midtown and lower Manhattan. On December 15, 1973, the northbound lanes between 12th and Gansevoort Streets collapsed under the weight of a dump truck which, ironically, was carrying asphalt for highway repairs. Traffic had to be immediately diverted onto adjacent streets, which resulted in the traffic throughout this route dropping to less than half its former volume. At 60th Street, for example, daily traffic decreased from 111,000 vehicles per day in 1973 to 51,000 in 1975. However, there were no perceptible increases in traffic on other parallel corridors. An interview with Sam Schwartz, former Chief Engineer of NYCDOT, provided some history on how the collapse affected the area's traffic conditions:

“One of my first assignments was racing out to the West Side Highway when it collapsed. This was an elevated platform that fell to the ground. We were hired to measure the impact on

traffic. I put traffic counters all across the avenues and traced the diversion; it went to the FDR Drive and to the West Side avenues. But over time, we didn't see any increase in traffic: the other avenues absorbed it and we weren't able to trace it.”



West Side Highway (FHWA photo)

Designing a Replacement

Because the collapse of the freeway was an unexpected catastrophe, there were no plans in place for a replacement facility. Although the highway had been closed for years, alternatives for upgrading the corridor to the “Westway” were finally studied in the late 1980s. These included:

1. A “no build” proposal that would have reconstructed the collapsed highway under the prior configuration,
2. A family of alternatives that included an at-grade boulevard with some improvements to access points, and
3. A fully grade-separated expressway.

These alternatives all included parallel bicycle and pedestrian facilities. After seven years of review and discussion, a variation of alternative (2), which community board members called the "Lessway," was approved in May 1993. Construction began in 1996, and the Joe DiMaggio Boulevard was opened in 2001 to replace the West Side Highway.

The failure of the West Side Highway presented a unique environment for decision-making. As has been the case in several other freeway collapse situations, traffic was able to adapt to the street network. The longer people lived without the highway, the more they became convinced that they didn't need to replace it. This made it easier to reach consensus on alternatives. A variety of alternatives were considered in the official decision-making process, with ample involvement of community stakeholders. Cost, as well as lack of support for the reconstruction of an elevated freeway, was a factor in the final decision. Tunnel options were eliminated as they were found to be excessively costly.



Endnotes:

³ Cervero, R., J. Kang and K. Shively, *From Elevated Freeways to Surface Boulevards: Neighborhood, Traffic and Housing Price Impacts in San Francisco*, University of California Transportation Research Center.

⁴ *Freeway Deconstruction and Urban Regeneration in the United States*, Robert Cervero, University of California Transportation Center, 2006.