

### **Overview**

The Riverfront Vision 2005 Plan takes advantage of the unique opportunity to open up the riverfront to the public, better utilizing it as a resource for both adjacent neighborhoods and the entire City, and helping restore New Orleans' historical connection to the river. Throughout the planning process, the community expressed a strong desire for greater access to the riverfront, envisioning a network of public spaces complemented by strategically located development. As the Port consolidates its operations, the increasing availability of riverfront property, along with a growing demand for nearby urban and riverfront real estate creates an opportunity to guide new development in a way that realizes the community's vision for the riverfront.

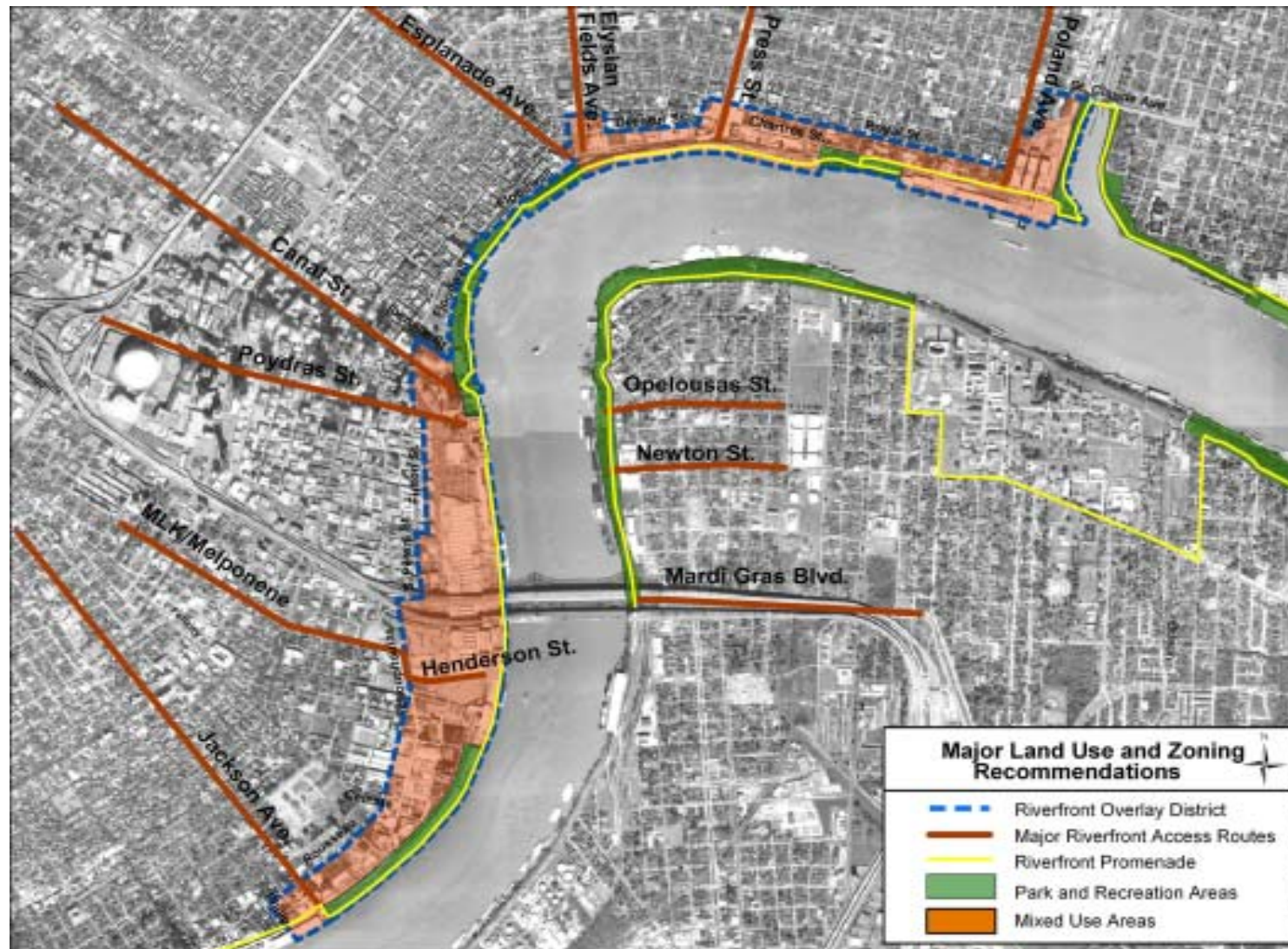
While the Uptown, West Bank and Lower 9th Ward portions of the riverfront maintain a balance of broad open space with recreational opportunities and maritime uses, the Central Riverfront, from Jackson Avenue to Industrial Canal, is envisioned as a mix of open public space, river-oriented development such as Tulane's proposed RiverSphere research and educational facility, and cruise ship terminals, as well as residential, neighborhood commercial and celebratory and cultural attractions such as museums, amphitheatres and public art installations.

In addition to Woldenberg Park anchoring the center of the riverfront, two other large parks are envisioned; one upriver, providing connection to the Lower Garden District and the other downriver, opening up the riverfront to the Bywater/Marigny neighborhoods. These connections to the river provide needed recreational opportunities to neighborhoods where these resources are scarce. The parks are separated by medium density, mixed-use areas at major access points such as Canal/Poydras St., Esplanade/ Elysian Fields Avenues, and Press Street. Commercial activities are concentrated at these nodal points while preserving important vistas and view corridors and leaving a greater amount of green space open for recreation along the river.

The entire Central Riverfront is tied together with a continuous promenade along the river linking the neighborhoods and activity nodes, attracting people to the riverfront from throughout the city. This promenade is mirrored on the West Bank with an extension of the Jazz Walk of Fame and improvements near the levee at Algiers Point. Consistent design standards ensure that all proposed projects respect the character of the riverfront and unify their common aspects. Taken in whole, this vision for the riverfront reflects the desires of the New Orleans community and takes advantage of the opportunities provided by riverfront redevelopment.

This plan also provides analysis of the issues and opportunities along the riverfront, making specific recommendations and devising a course of action to achieve the goals and vision expressed by the community.

## Land Use and Zoning Recommendations



### Recommendations

The Plan's recommendations support the goals for the riverfront in such areas as land use, zoning, transportation, access, design, identity, management and agency coordination. The recommendations strive to improve public connections to the riverfront and manage the intensity of new developments. The recommendations also suggest sources of funding for public infrastructure, investments, and other improvements. A more detailed account of these recommendations is as follows.

### Land Use

#### General

1. Encourage an appropriate mix of compatible land uses with appreciation of the distinct character and intensity of development along different segments of the riverfront.
2. Encourage medium to high density residential development in the MU-A area between the floodwall and Religious Street, bounded by Jackson Avenue and the Pontchartrain Expressway. Also encourage medium to high density development at the Poydras/Canal Street and Henderson Street major nodal points.

3. Encourage medium density development at the Press Street and Poland Avenue major nodal/access points.
4. Encourage low to medium density development at minor access/nodal points throughout the riverfront and major nodal access points on the West Bank and Uptown in order to provide pedestrian activity at convenient access points for adjacent neighborhoods. Also encourage low to medium density development at the Jackson Avenue, and Esplanade/Elysian Fields Avenues nodes.

#### Residential Neighborhoods

1. Maintain the historic scale and character of the riverfront neighborhoods, including neighborhoods along Leake Avenue, the Lower Garden District, Vieux Carré, Faubourg Marigny, Bywater, Holy Cross, and Algiers Point. Setbacks and height limitations for new development should relate to adjacent properties

#### Park and Recreation Uses

1. Increase the open/green space uses along the riverfront.
2. Develop two new public parks on the waterfront from:
  - A. The wharf areas from Jackson Avenue to Orange Street (the Trust for Public Land park);
  - B. The batture areas and adjacent green space between the floodwall and Chartres Street from Piety to Pauline Streets.
3. If maritime uses are relocated, extend the Moonwalk along the Governor Nichols Wharf, and maintain the existing park and open space along the Vieux Carré riverfront.
4. Improve the green space along the Press Street corridor.

#### Commercial and Mixed Uses

1. Encourage mixed-use development, which could include a mixture of open space, commercial, residential, office, educational, performance, culture, and tourism uses, at the following locations:
  - A. the Entergy Street Power Plant site;
  - B. The Tulane Riversphere site;
  - C. the Hilton/Riverwalk parking lot;
  - D. the parking lots in the upper Vieux Carré;
  - E. the Marigny/Bywater riverfront areas including the Esplanade, Mandeville, Press, Louisa, and Piety St. Wharves;
  - F. the properties in the Bywater along Chartres Street and;
  - G. the East Bank Naval Support Activity base.
2. All developments should provide adequate parking facilities while maintaining ground floor commercial uses.
3. At some of the mixed-use areas described above, accommodate the selective development of entertainment venues including a riverfront amphitheater. Ensure that any commercial use is compatible with the neighborhoods by addressing parking, traffic, and noise issues.
4. Consider the reduction of surface parking riverside of the floodwall in the French Market area in favor of open, green space, with perhaps a low parking structure with open space or a pedestrian promenade on the roof. Consider mixed use facilities with commercial parking and ground floor commercial at the French Market parking lots on Elysian Fields Avenue.

#### Maritime (Port) Industrial Uses

1. Support further modernization and expansion of the Port's containerization cargo facilities in the Uptown area.
2. Support redevelopment of underutilized warehouse and light industrial facilities into compatible neighborhood mixed uses.
3. Accommodate new cruise ship terminals at the Erato Street and the Poland Avenue Wharves.

### Zoning

#### General

1. Create a Riverfront Overlay District in the central riverfront areas to guide development and provide a higher level of project development quality.
2. Ensure public input in the development review process.

#### Park and Recreation Zoning

1. Establish P-Park and Recreation zoning for the following locations. Modify the district to permit existing maritime industrial facilities and require new maritime uses to be conditional.
  - A. All non-industrially used portions of the levee and batture area upriver of Audubon Park;
  - B. The Holy Cross/Lower Ninth Ward levee and batture area from St. Claude to Flood Street; and;
  - C. The Algiers Point levee and batture area up to the West Bank Naval Support Activity base.
2. Apply a Riverfront Overlay District that will support an array of recreational, cultural and commercial activities of various intensities for areas proposed for riverfront parks, including:
  - A. The wharf areas currently zoned LI-Light Industrial and HI-Heavy Industrial from Jackson Avenue to Race Street (Trust for Public Land Park).
  - B. The natural batture riverfront from Piety Street to Pauline Street and the adjacent open space between the floodwall and Chartres Street.
3. Implement a new zoning district or overlay district that will better maintain the rural and wooded character of the Lower Coast Algiers area.
4. Consider a Waterfront Park zoning district in future revisions of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance that will address the unique activities within waterfront parks including maritime uses, etc. while recognizing the need for revenue generating commercial uses within these parks in order to keep them financially solvent.
5. Amend the height limit of the VCP District from 50 ft. to 35 ft.

#### Commercial, Mixed Use, and Industrial Zoning

1. Restrict industrial uses, allowing only maritime uses as industrial uses on riverside of the floodwall in the central riverfront areas from Jackson Avenue to the Industrial Canal.
2. Evaluate existing zoning designations and current land uses and modify zoning if necessary for the pockets of LI-Light Industrial Districts and HI-Heavy Industrial Districts on the lakeside of Leake Avenue and Tchoupitoulas Street upriver of Jackson Avenue, in the Holy Cross/Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood, and in the Algiers Point area from Teche Street to the levee to reflect existing conditions and encourage redevelopment. Ensure proper buffering between the residential neighborhood and the industrial riverfront.
3. Apply a Riverfront Overlay District along the existing LI-Light Industrial, HI-Heavy Industrial, HMLI-Historic Marigny Light Industrial, and MU-A Mixed Use districts from Jackson Avenue to the Industrial Canal (including the wharf areas) to accommodate the range of desired land uses.
4. Change height limitations of MU-A district to allow for tall residential structures along the riverfront, and lower ones adjacent to the existing residential neighborhoods

*Transportation, Access, and Design Recommendations*

**Transportation and Access**

**Riverfront Access**

1. Establish access points to the riverfront at all intersections of major streets and the river. Floodgates should be created at these access points where none are available. The riverfront should be accessible by both parallel and perpendicular connections where possible, retaining the original street grid.
2. Require all projects along the water's edge to provide for a continuous pedestrian and bicycle Riverfront Promenade. The design should ensure emergency access and Port security.
3. Improve at-grade pedestrian and bicycle access to the riverfront and promenade across railroad tracks by creating crosswalks, crossing signs, stop signs, and/or stop lights, where appropriate.
4. Clearly mark pedestrian and bicycle routes and connect them with neighborhood riverfront access points.
5. Finalize a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between the City and the Port of New Orleans in order to ensure continuous riverfront access at cruise ship facilities.
6. The City, the Public Belt Railroad, and the Orleans Levee District should cooperate to ensure adequate and safe access through the floodwall and over at-grade crossings of the railroad tracks.
7. Ensure that riverfront projects increase public space and access by creating public space in front of, or adjacent to, new and existing developments. Where appropriate, improve access opportunities to wharves where redevelopment will take place.
8. Modify the existing design review process to include standards for riverfront access and promenade.

**Traffic and Parking**

1. Develop a comprehensive Transportation Plan for the riverfront between the Lower Garden District and the Central Business District. Include data for trucks traveling along Tchoupitoulas to/from facilities upriver of Jackson Avenue.
2. Closely review required traffic impact analyses for proposed large riverfront development projects in all areas along the riverfront such as Uptown, French Quarter, Marigny/Bywater and the West Bank requiring improvements to transportation infrastructure where necessary.
3. Provide adequate parking facilities for riverfront uses. Parking garages are preferable to surface lots for optimization of land use. Discourage parking on the riverside of the floodwall.

**Transit**

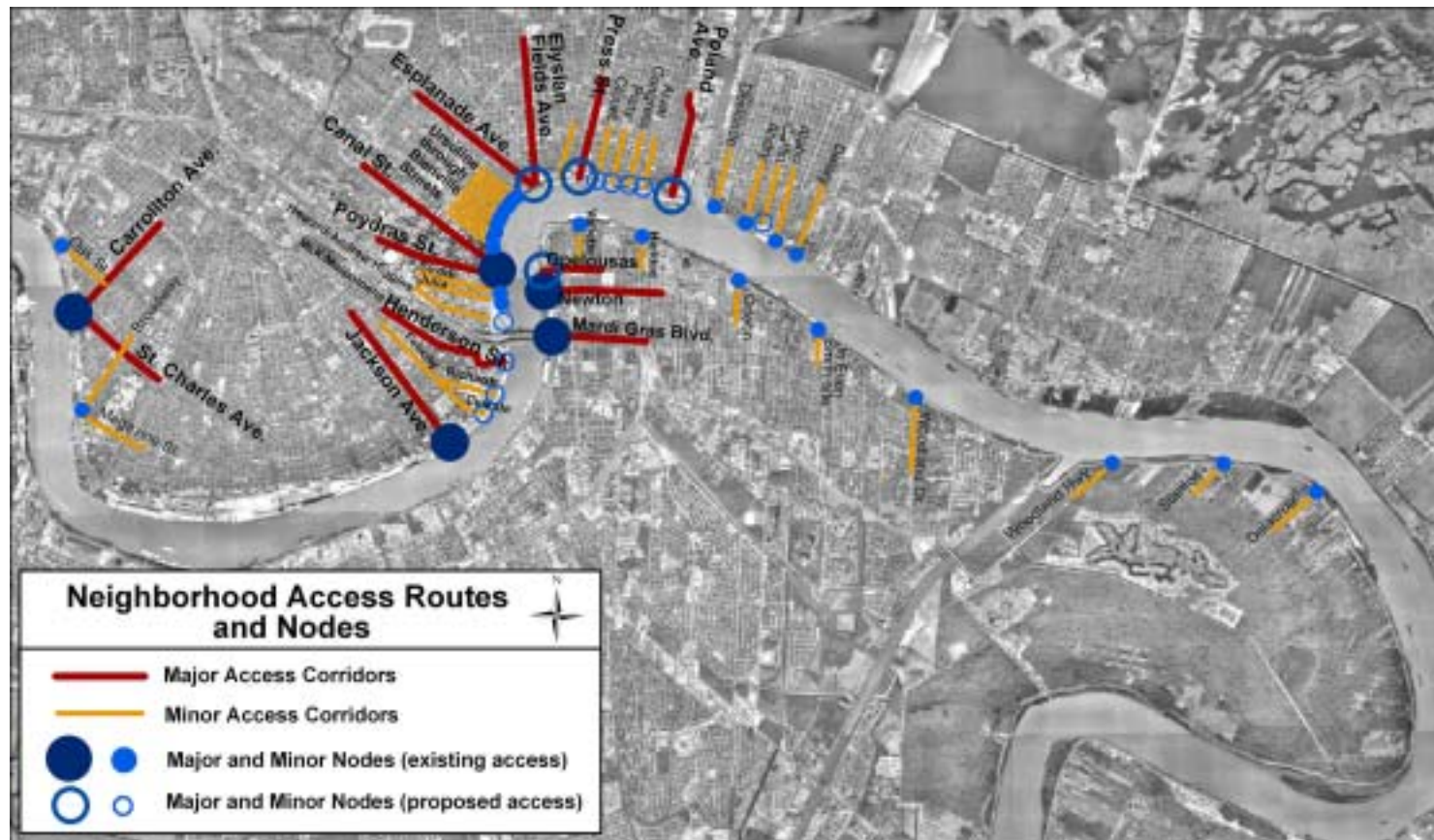
1. Continue to support and explore the feasibility of up and down river extensions of the Riverfront Streetcar (to Jackson and Poland Avenues respectively). Consider loop connections to the St. Charles line upriver and St. Claude Avenue along Poland or Elysian Fields Avenues downriver.
2. Improve other transit options for the downtown area to relieve parking and traffic pressure on the Lower Garden District, CBD, and the Vieux Carré.

**Port and Rail**

1. Discourage railcar parking that blocks access across the Public Belt railroad, particularly from St. Claude to the River along the Press Street Corridor, by moving the railcars to industrial areas on Port property.
2. Discourage railcar parking in residential areas such as along Leake Avenue uptown.

**Design**

1. Provide focal points, as well as development opportunities and attractive neighborhood links at access points, nodes, and gateways to the riverfront. For example, develop an urban design plan for the foot of Esplanade and Elysian Fields Avenue that would create a clearer connection to the riverfront (once the Port's operations are relocated) and the French Market, enhance aesthetics, and improve traffic safety. Higher intensity uses may occur at some of the identified nodal points, while maximizing view corridors to the river.
2. Avoid "Superblock" development in order to retain all view corridors toward the river. Development proposals desiring to build across streets right of way or their extensions should have adequate public review.
3. Improve the pedestrian environment along the levee, by installing landscaping, benches, small monuments, and appropriate lighting. Ensure that adequate signage clearly marks riverfront access points and parking facilities.
4. Maintain height and massing restrictions that are compatible with existing nearby development. Allow for greater building heights and density at locations along the Lower Garden District and CBD sections of the riverfront and at identified activity nodes. Regulate building heights in mixed-use and commercial districts in close proximity to residential neighborhoods to ensure that these low scale residential areas are adequately buffered.
5. Require existing parking lots along the entire riverfront to comply with the current landscaping and design requirements as outlined in the parking sections of the CZO Design Standards for Parking Lots in the Vieux Carré Service District.
6. Emphasize the presence of the City's arts community with locally-produced public art incorporated into urban design.
7. Control batture vegetation to improve vistas at various locations, particularly on the West Bank.
8. Conduct further discussions focusing on the West Bank of New Orleans, and other riverfront areas not included in the 2004 Riverfront Charrette. Incorporate key recommendations into an addendum to the Riverfront Vision 2005.
9. Consider implementing recommendations of the Algiers Economic Development Foundation ongoing riverfront study where appropriate
10. Develop a detailed Urban Design Plan for City owned property along the riverfront.



The terminus of Wilkinson Row with Jax Brewery Development maintaining view corridor

**Zoning (continued)**

5. Re-evaluate the Light Industrial and Historic Marigny Light Industrial zoning in the Bywater within the proposed Riverfront Overlay District. Prohibit specific industrial and commercial uses that are incompatible with the adjacent residential areas. In the HMLI District, consider authorizing parks, single and two family dwellings, and certain cultural and commercial uses as permitted.
6. Re-evaluate the zoning for vacant riverfront and landside industrial sites between Flood Street and Jackson Barracks to facilitate green space, neighborhood-oriented mixed uses or residential development. Create buffers between any remaining industrial and residential uses.
7. Modify the existing C-2 General Commercial zoning at the tip of Algiers Point to ensure compatible development with the adjacent historic character.
8. Revitalize the former Todd Shipyards by incorporating the facility into an expanded Naval base, attracting new shipyard business or demolishing the vacant structures. Consider rezoning the HI-Heavy Industrial zoned vacant parcels to facilitate reinvestment.
9. Consider implementing recommendations of the Algiers Economic Development Foundation ongoing riverfront study where appropriate.

**Riverfront Overlay Zoning District**

In order to ensure that land use, transportation, access and design recommendations in this Plan are adhered to, the creation of a Riverfront Overlay Zoning District is proposed. The proposed overlay will establish enforceable standards for height, density, access and open space, while allowing flexibility for suitable development and creative design. The purpose and intent of this overlay is four-fold:

- To support and guide appropriate redevelopment of the riverfront in a way that enhances the economy of the City and the quality of life of its residents;
- Improve traffic conditions and infrastructure and maximize public access, open space and public use of the riverfront;
- Ensure consistency, continuity, and quality design for riverfront development;
- Provide a forum for public input on major development projects along the riverfront.

As proposed, the overlay standards will apply to all properties publicly and privately owned along the East Bank of the Mississippi River between Jackson Avenue and the Industrial Canal and into the industrial and commercial areas bounding riverfront neighborhoods. (In the Vieux Carré, the Overlay District covers only the area from the floodwall to the River.) (See map on page 48.) This area of the Central Riverfront, as discussed in detail in the previous chapter, has a great number of underutilized riverfront and industrial properties for potential redevelopment. This, combined with the inadequacy of current standards for guiding redevelopment in such a complex and important area, necessitates a tool that can better address changes along the riverfront.

**Preliminary Outline of the Riverfront Overlay District**

While more in-depth analysis and final determination of the elements of the Overlay District will be a part of the zoning text amendment, the following is an outline of the key elements of what the district should contain. The special regulations of the Overlay District should include provisions for access along major corridors and nodes, as well as site design requirements and standards. The Overlay District should incorporate zoning mechanisms that support and help implement the recommendations contained in the Riverfront Vision 2005 Plan. These recommendations are designed to:

- Maximize public access to and along the riverfront;
- Create of a minimum 25 foot wide Riverfront Promenade servitude for properties fronting the river;
- Strengthen linkages between the riverfront and adjacent neighborhoods;
- Ensure a public input and review process for major development proposals;
- Create development standards that will support and enhance the unique identity of the riverfront and its distinct segments;
- Maintain a strong maritime/port presence along the riverfront;

- Provide a wide range of transportation options along the riverfront, including streetcars, ferries, transit connections, and bicycle and pedestrian paths;
- Create mechanisms that will ensure the coordination of development projects;
- Guide riverfront development to accommodate a diversity of uses, from passive parks to vibrant cultural attractions; and
- Preserve view corridors and enhance landscaping and natural settings.

The riverside of the floodwall is an important public space and warrants greater attention. In addition, areas riverside of the floodwall are also subject to navigational and environmental hazards that demand greater levels of examination for potential projects. Therefore, the proposed development standards should be more restrictive on the riverside of the floodwall than on the landside. Standards should be subject to waiver only through the conditional use process.

**Land Uses**

The industrial zoning currently regulating most of the riverfront permits a number of uses that may not be compatible with the community's vision. The proposed Riverfront Overlay Zoning District is recommended as a means of modifying the type and intensity of permitted uses, while encouraging new mixes of activity that will promote the City's vision for the riverfront. The Overlay District will not alter the permitted uses in the Vieux Carré or CBD, however it may suggest modifications to the list of permitted uses for other segments of the riverfront.

To ensure consistency with established goals for the riverfront certain uses should be discouraged within the proposed Overlay District. These may include:

- Big Box retail development, trash and recycling facilities, large manufacturing and industrial facilities, open storage of building materials, truck stops, scrap metal and tire collection, automotive retail and stockyards, animal husbandry, surface level parking lots, distribution centers, t-shirt shops, and adult establishments.

Other uses should be encouraged within the proposed Overlay District. These include:

- Parks and playgrounds with small accessory commercial uses, restaurants and cafes, commercial retail and office space, educational and learning facilities, museums, small music or movie studios, studio and art space, maritime or marina uses, light manufacturing, and residential uses.

Some of these uses may be encouraged only on the riverside of the floodwall, while others should be promoted on the landside only. All uses should be subject to development standards. Some uses may be permitted as-of-right, while others may require planned development district review or conditional use approval.

The chart to the right proposes the key components of the Riverfront Overlay District.

Riverfront Overlay District – Proposed Key Components		
	RIVER SIDE OF FLOOD WALL	LAND SIDE OF FLOOD WALL
<b>Overlay Boundaries</b>	From Jackson Avenue to the Industrial Canal encompassing the industrial and mixed use areas between the River's edge and the residential neighborhoods (See map on Page 45)	
<b>Permitted Uses</b>	Existing industrial uses, maritime cargo uses, parks with accessory commercial uses under 5,000 sf, transit stations, and utilities	Parks, single and two family residential uses + underlying zoning district permitted uses under 50,000 s.f.
<b>Conditional Uses</b>	Any other permitted or conditional use authorized in the underlying zoning district, and any use exceeding the height limit.	Any permitted use authorized in the underlying zoning district > 50,000 s.f., any conditional use authorized in the underlying zoning district, and any use exceeding the height limit.
<b>Prohibited Uses</b>	New non-maritime industrial uses, big box retail, trash and recycling facilities, automotive retail and stockyards, non-accessory surface parking lots, distribution centers, t-shirt shops, adult establishments, and package liquor stores	Certain industrial uses, big box retail, trash and recycling facilities, automotive retail and stockyards truck stops, scrap metal and tire collection/transport, open storage of building materials, animal husbandry, adult establishments
<b>Development Plan Review <sup>1</sup></b>	New construction and redevelopment involving modification of the site plan are subject to development plan review. Redevelopment within an existing building envelope and complying with the height limit is <b>not</b> subject to CPC review.	New construction and redevelopment involving modification of the site plan are subject to development plan review. Redevelopment within an existing building envelope and complying with the height limit is <b>not</b> subject to CPC review. Single and two family dwellings complying with the height limit are <b>excepted</b> .
<b>Riverfront Promenade Servitude</b>	Minimum 25 foot wide servitude is required for properties directly fronting the Mississippi River (May be greater if deemed necessary due to location of underlying "box levee") – the design shall ensure emergency access & Port security	None Required
<b>"Superblocks"</b>	No construction across nodes or the extension of a street perpendicular to the river	No construction across existing streets or spanning more than one city square
<b>Height Limitations</b>	Base height limit of 35 feet, except as noted below. <sup>2</sup>	Base height limit of 50 feet, except as noted below. <sup>2</sup> Development at certain major nodes may be built to a maximum of 75 feet subject to established standards and review process.
<b>Open Space &amp; Floor Area Ratio (OSR) (FAR) Requirement <sup>3</sup></b>	Proposed park areas shall maintain an OSR of 75% or greater. Proposed mixed use areas shall maintain an OSR of 50% or greater. Potential Floor Area Ratio requirements will be further studied.	Potential Open Space Ratio and Floor Area Ratio requirements will be further studied.
<b>Traffic Impact Analysis</b>	Required if the development proposal exceeds 50,000 s.f.	Required if the development proposal exceeds 50,000 s.f.

<sup>1</sup> Developments must submit a Riverfront Access Plan as part of their review. The Overlay District will not affect HDLC or VCC review.  
<sup>2</sup> Heights in the CBD Districts will not be changed by the Overlay District. Heights in the Lower Garden District on the landside of the floodwall will be modified as part of revisions to the MU-A Mixed Use District. On the riverside maximum height of 50 or 75 feet may be considered at certain nodes. For heights in specific segments, see details on page 52. To qualify for heights above the base height limit at nodal points, developments must provide exceptional design, a combination of additional public open space and amenities, contribute to public infrastructure improvements, and enhancements to the pedestrian environment.  
<sup>3</sup> OSR and FAR requirements for the VCP and CBD Districts remain unchanged.

**Design Standards**

The Riverfront Overlay District will set standards to ensure that development proposals meet the desired goals of the Plan. Certain general guidelines may apply to all projects requiring review under the Overlay District. Additional standards may be applied to projects within designated riverfront nodal areas.

**General Design Standards**

All developments within the Overlay District should have to follow certain design guidelines in order to ensure high design quality. These guidelines should address desired improvements including, but not limited to, the following:

- Sidewalk enhancements;
- High quality and unified paving;
- Improved street lighting and landscaping;
- Signage enhancement and installation of public art;
- Rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings;
- Requirement of minimum 25 foot wide pedestrian promenade along the water's edge that also ensures emergency access and Port security; and
- Sustainable development design

**Nodal Area Design Standards**

In addition to the general design standards, additional standards will be established for developments within nodal areas. These will ensure their prominence as gateways to the riverfront and improve the pedestrian environment. Some of these standards will be required, while others may be encouraged. These standards include, but are not limited to:

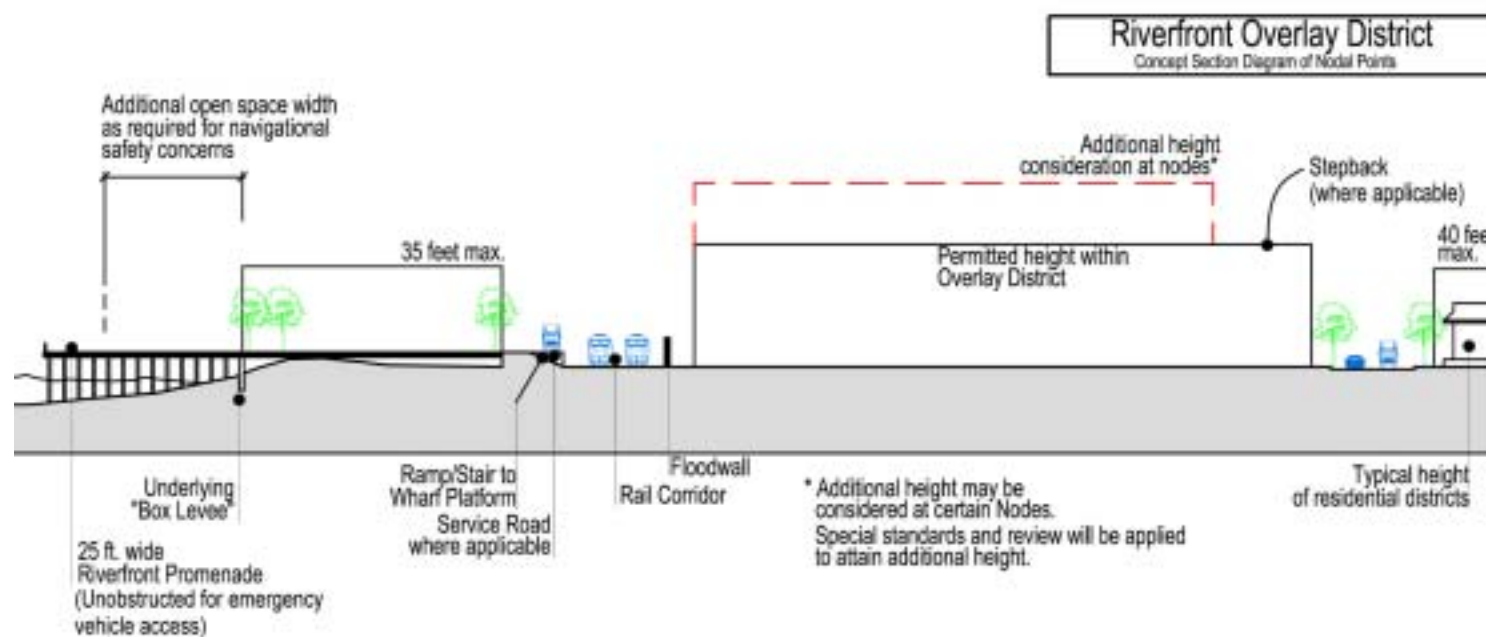
- Buildings should generally be built along the property lines along the major access corridors (These corridors are generally wide and should retain their urban character and help frame gateways to the riverfront);
- Pedestrian and main entrances should be located on the major corridor; Curb cuts should be on the side streets.
- Developments should contain ground floor commercial uses;
- Building facades should contain variation in façade materials, offsets, fenestration, etc. in order to eliminate a "wall" effect;
- Development should contribute to new floodwall openings, rail crossings, or other access improvements to the riverside of the floodwall;
- Developments should create improvements to traffic signaling or lane striping as necessary;
- Developments should provide transit shelters, canopies, and other weather protection devices;
- Open space and public plazas, sidewalk cafes, and other desired commercial uses should be encouraged;
- Developments should utilize energy efficient design and/or other innovative design characteristics;
- A sufficient amount of public parking should be provided. Parking should be located on the interior of the lots or in structured parking above the first floor; and
- Historic buildings should be retained and reused to the greatest extent possible.

**Building Heights**

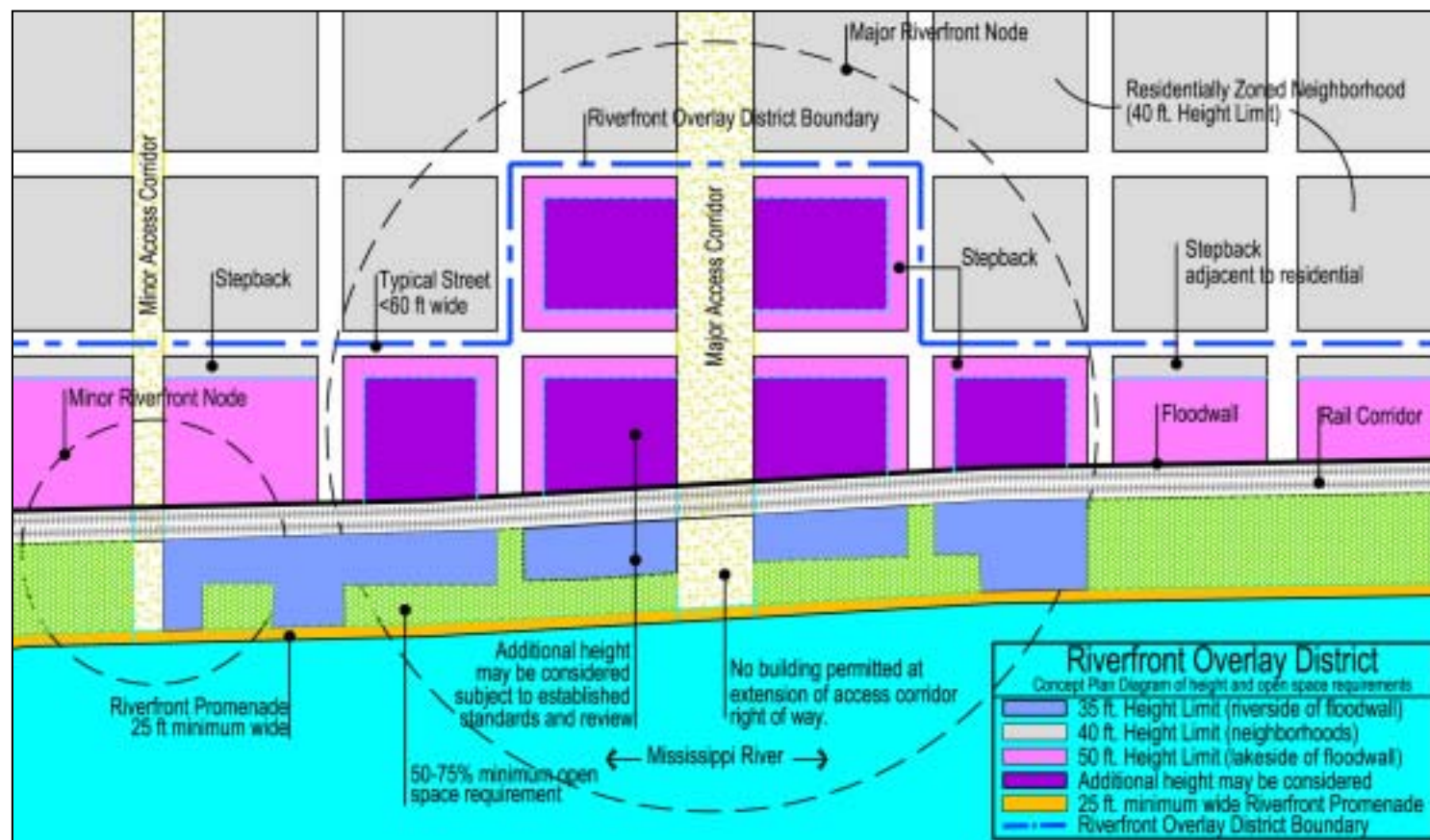
Development within the overlay district should maintain a scale related to that of the adjacent neighborhoods. Except in CBD Districts where height limits would remain unchanged on both sides of the floodwall, the limits should follow the Riverfront Overlay District recommendations. Development standards would provide for protection of view corridors to the river, and maintain a proper scale of development in relation to each respective surrounding area, while still allowing new development to take advantage of river views.

On the riverside of the floodwall, height limits will generally be set at 35' which corresponds to the average height of the existing wharf sheds. On the landside, height limits will vary from neighborhood to neighborhood: 50 feet for the Vieux Carré, Marigny, and Bywater, and 55 to 200 feet for the Lower Garden District. (See details on next page).

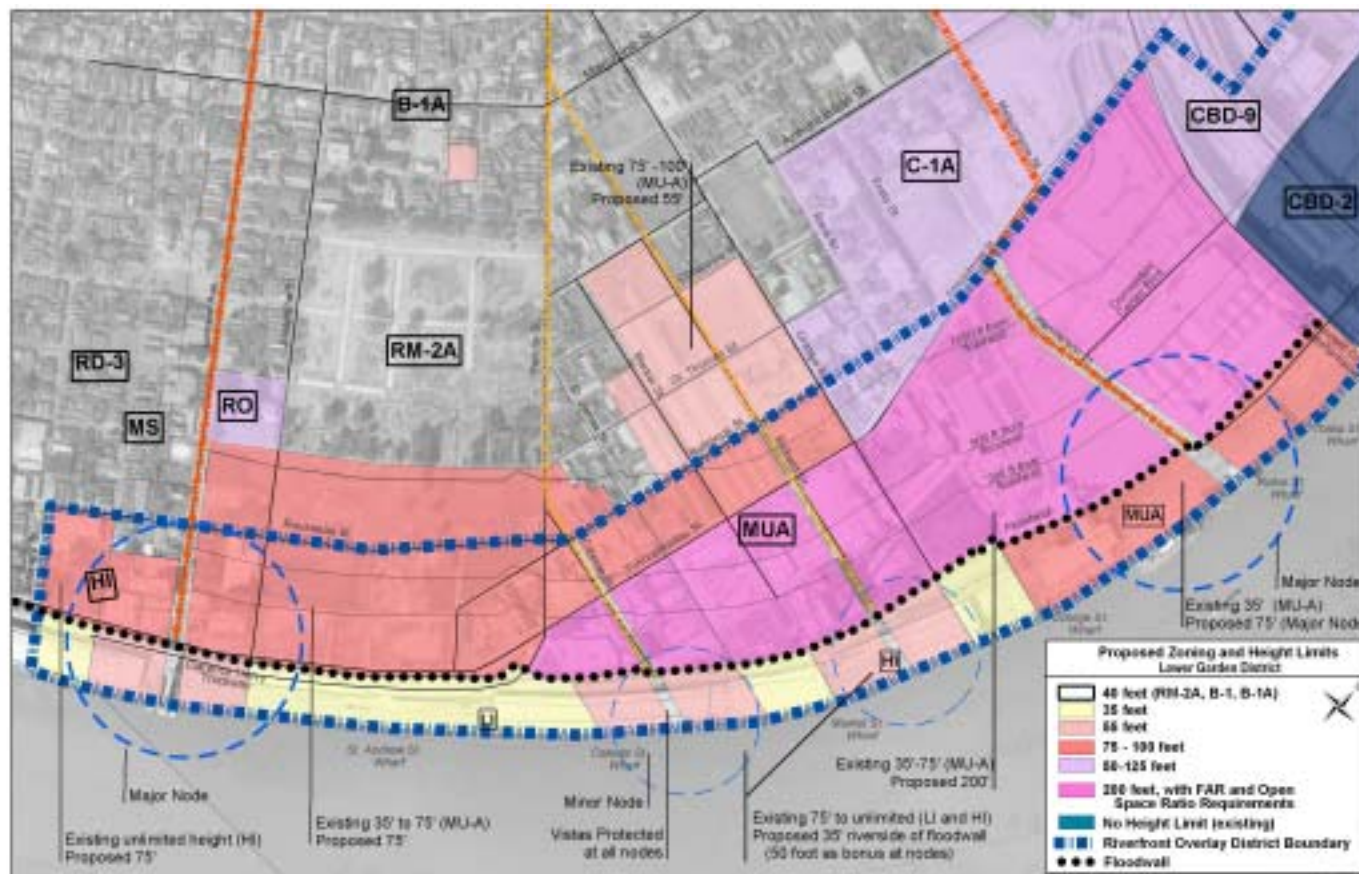
Additional height may be considered at certain nodes. The size and availability of this increased height, as well as the size of the nodal area, will vary according to the neighborhood characteristics. In general, activity nodes will have effect in a two-block direction from the identified access node. Potential height increases will be evaluated through planned development district review or the conditional use process where required by the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. These heights will be granted only if the project meets the established criteria.



Concept Plan and Section for Riverfront Major Nodes



Riverfront Overlay Zoning District



Lower Garden District

Design Standards (continued)

Lower Garden District (See diagram, left)

The Riverfront Vision Plan recommends that the MU-A District be modified with the following height limits:

- Between the floodwall and Tchoupitoulas Street, bounded by Felicity and the Pontchartrain Expressway, maximum height is proposed to be 200ft, with at least 30% open space.
- Between Tchoupitoulas and Religious Streets and between Felicity and Soraparu Streets, heights are proposed to be 75 ft. (100 ft. with a strong residential component).
- The remainder of the MU-A, closer to the residential areas on the landside of Religious St., would have a height limit of 55ft.
- Heights on the river side of the floodwall in the Lower Garden District would be 35 ft. Areas within the Celeste and Richard Streets and Jackson Avenue nodes may rise to 55 feet if certain provisions are made. At Henderson Street, where more intense development already exists, additional height of up to 75 ft. can be considered. Nodal development and proposed heights should be evaluated through planned development district review or conditional use process.

Central Business District

Corresponding the density and intensity of the Central Business District riverfront, no changes are proposed to the existing height limits. Heights will be governed by existing zoning.

Vieux Carré

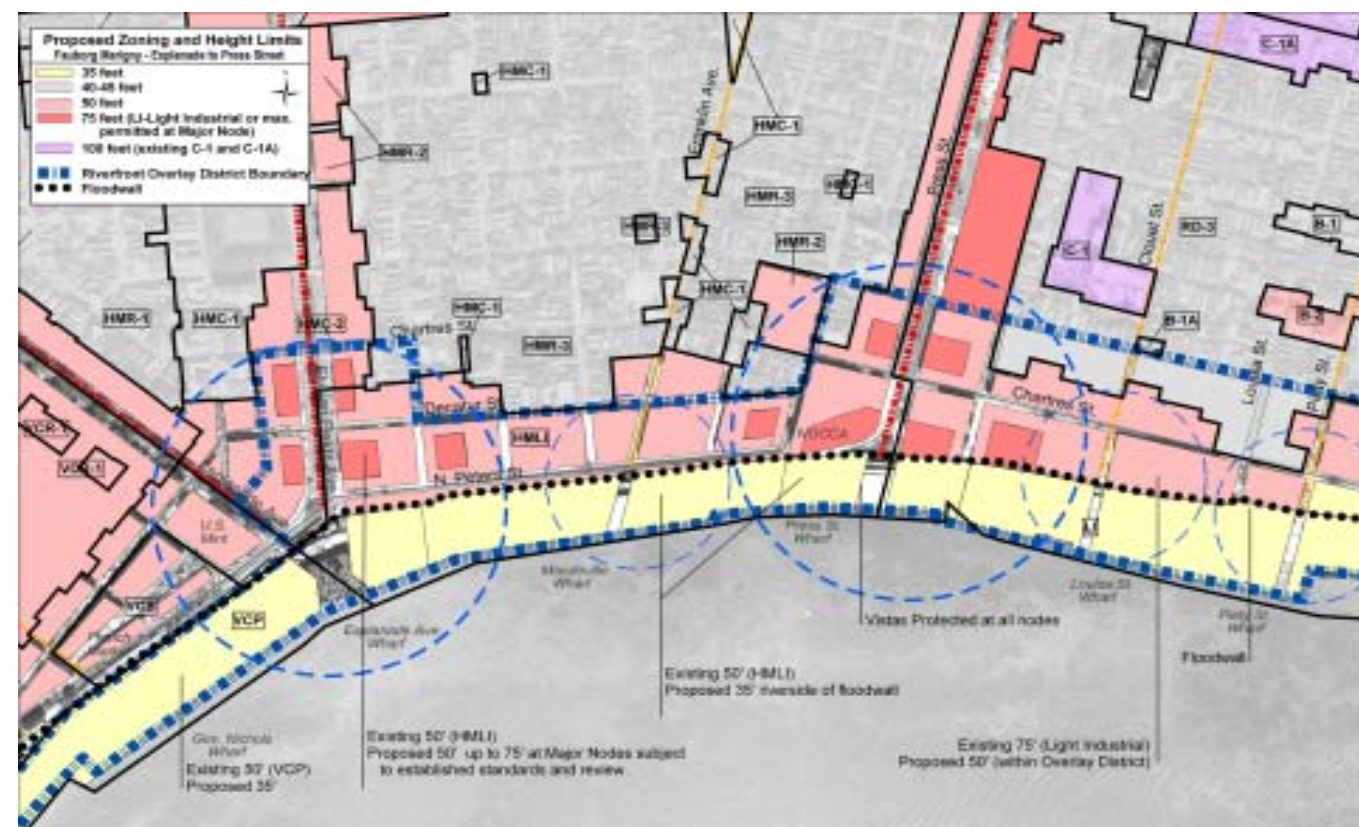
To be consistent with other segments of the riverfront, maximum height within the VCP District on the riverside of the floodwall is proposed to be to 35 feet.

Faubourg Marigny (See diagram, below left)

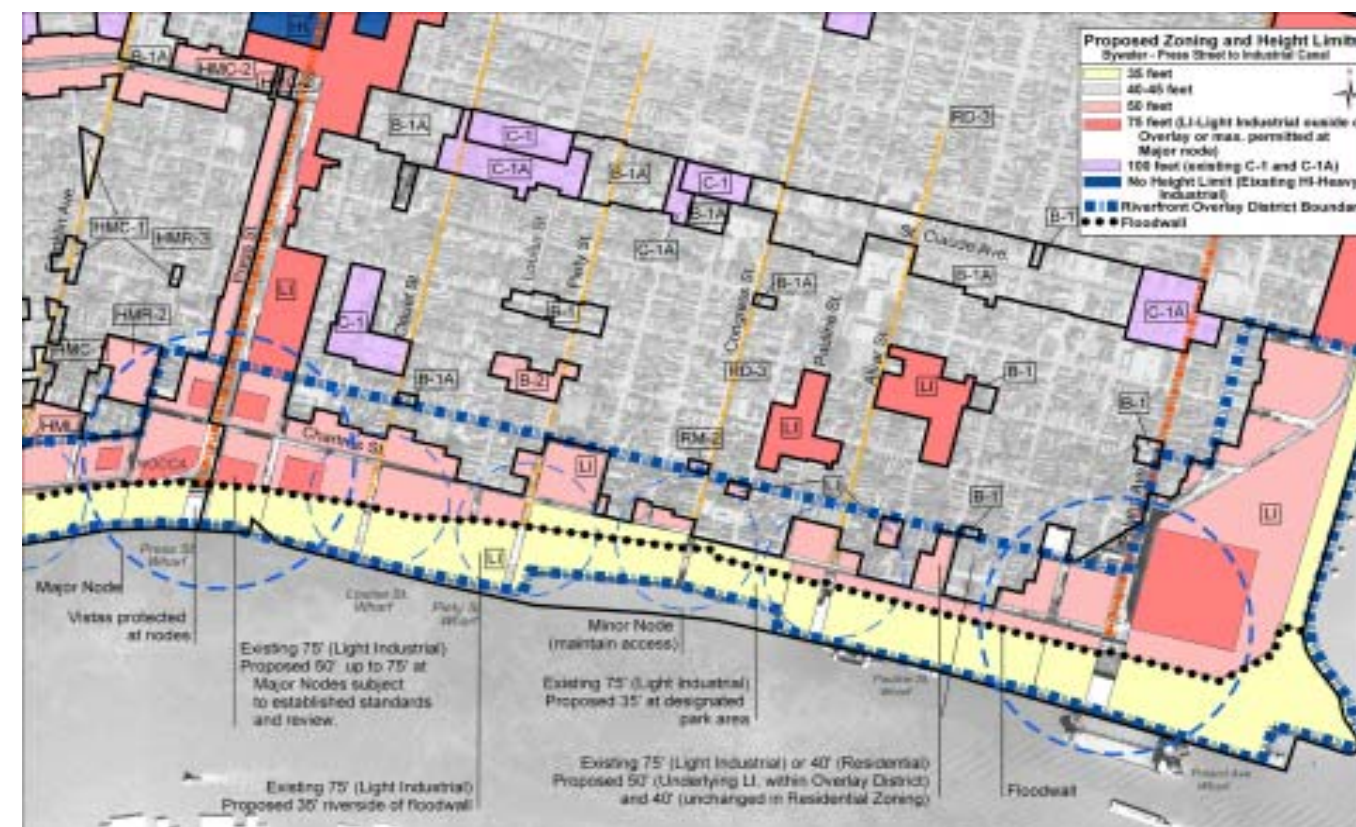
On the landside of the floodwall, the current Historic Marigny Light Industrial (HMLI) zoning dictates a height limit of 50 feet with no uses classified as permitted. Under the proposed Overlay District, the list of encouraged uses mentioned on page 50 should be considered as permitted uses within the overlay. Development at major nodes (Elysian Fields/Esplanade Avenue and Press Street) should allow a maximum height of 75 feet provided they meet development criteria as established in the Overlay District Text Amendment. Development proposals failing to meet the defined criteria would be subject to conditional use or other planned development district review. On the riverside of the floodwall, the height is proposed to be reduced to 35 feet, which corresponds to the average height of the existing wharf sheds.

Bywater (See diagram, below)

On the landside of the floodwall, developments in the area currently zoned LI-Light Industrial will be limited to 50 feet. Residentially zoned areas will maintain their current height limits. At the designated major nodes (Press Street and Poland Avenue) developments may reach a maximum height of 75 feet provided they meet development criteria as established in the Overlay District Text Amendment. These developments may be subject to planned development district review or conditional use. Consistent with the rest of the Overlay District, heights on the riverside of the floodwall will be limited to 35 feet.



Faubourg Marigny



Bywater

**Design Standards** *(continued)***Stepback Requirements**

Stepback requirements call for the “stepping back” of the building structure beyond a certain height in order to maintain a proper relation of the structures to the street and adjacent existing buildings. A stepback helps keep the street open to the sky, thus avoiding a “canyon effect” of taller structures on a narrow street (see diagram on page 51). Stepback requirements also help preserve the view corridors from the upper floors of surrounding structures.

In some areas within the Overlay District, a structure higher than 50’ will be required to “step back” 40’ from the property line before achieving a greater height in an activity node area. If directly on a designated access corridor, that side of the structure will not require a stepback, as it would be adjacent to a minor street or a residential area. In areas not within an activity node, a 40’ stepback will be required when a property abuts a district with a lower height limit.

**Open Space, and Floor to Area Ratio (FAR), and Access**

Part of the goals of the Riverfront Vision 2005 Plan is to enhance public open space along the riverfront and increase access to it. With this in mind, the overlay district includes large open space ratios (75% or greater) in areas designated for park use, and somewhat smaller, but significant ratio of 50% or greater for proposed mixed-use areas along the riverfront. Floor to area ratio (FAR) is an additional tool that regulates development density. More detailed analysis of FAR will be included in the further analysis of the zoning standards for the Overlay District.

Access to and from the water’s edge and the riverfront promenade at major and minor identified neighborhood access routes will also be required. Building over access corridors, and the existing streets rights-of-way to create “superblocks” shall not be permitted. Extensions of street rights of way to the waters edge of major and minor access corridors will also be required to remain open.

**Development Plan Review**

Development plan review will be necessary to ensure that the design and development standards proposed in this plan are followed. The review will consider riverfront access, location and spacing of land uses, building heights, landscaping, paving and lighting plans, traffic flow and parking, as well as other factors that will bring a site into concordance with the Riverfront Vision Plan and any standards established as a part of the Overlay District Text Amendment. A traffic impact analysis will have to be submitted for projects over 50,000 sq.ft.

New construction or redevelopment involving modification of the site within the Riverfront Overlay District will be subject to development plan review. Certain low-intensity park, recreation, commercial and institutional uses are also permitted subject to plan review.

Renovations and developments within the existing building footprint and in compliance with height limits will be exempt from site plan review. Single and two family residential uses complying with height limitations will also be exempt from review.

**Conditional Use**

On the landside of the floodwall, a conditional use review would be triggered when the proposed development is over 50,000 square feet, when it exceeds the height limit, or is listed as a conditional use in the underlying zoning district. On the riverside of the floodwall, with the exception of maritime cargo uses, parks, and accessory commercial uses up to 5,000 square feet, most development would require a conditional use.

As a part of the conditional use review procedure, and in addition to review by the Planning Advisory Committee and the Design Advisory Committee, developments may be reviewed by the Riverfront Development Advisory Committee (RDAC). The RDAC currently has no advisory review process, although the committee’s role could be formalized in order to help provide input from riverfront stakeholders. The standards outlined in the Riverfront Overlay District will provide quality redevelopment that respects the character of the riverfront and its adjacent neighborhoods and improve public use of the riverfront.

**Historic District Review**

The Riverfront Overlay District spans a variety of neighborhoods, many of which are designated as local and/or national historic districts. In addition, some buildings within the district and within designated major and minor nodes are of historical significance.

The design standards for the district will encourage adaptive re-use of existing buildings to the fullest extent possible. Examples of such development can be seen at NOCCA and Jax Brewery. In addition to the previously mentioned development plan review and conditional use process, projects within the overlay district will still be reviewed by the applicable local historic review commissions (HDLC, CBDHDLC, or VCC).

### Riverfront Managing Entity

One of the central challenges facing implementation of the Riverfront Vision 2005 Plan will be the definition of roles and responsibilities of various agencies. Within the city, a number of different offices and departments will be actively involved in riverfront development including the Mayor's Office, City Council, Office of Economic Development, City Planning Commission, Department of Public Works and the Department of Parks and Parkways. In addition, the Port of New Orleans will continue to be the major partner in riverfront planning and development efforts through its maritime servitude and ownership rights. Numerous other agencies, noted on page 12, will also participate through regulatory or other capacities.

Because of the complexity of jurisdictional authorities and ownership of the riverfront, the key challenge will be creation of a leadership and management structure that can work toward implementation of this Plan. Many cities have created special waterfront development entities to overcome these jurisdictional issues and have focused the attention on creating waterfronts that meet planning goals similar to those stated in this plan. In most instances these entities take various forms based on:

- The form of governance (public benefit corporations; private or quasi governmental non-profit corporation; existing departments and agencies on the local, state or federal level)
- The assigned scope (the entire city, waterfront, or segment of the waterfront, etc.)
- The assigned purpose (planning, developing, managing, fundraising, etc.)

The examples of the managing authorities based on the respective form of governance are:

#### Public Benefit Corporations

Memphis, Louisville, St. Paul (Minnesota), Toronto, Chattanooga, Philadelphia, and Brooklyn have created 501(c)3 non-profit development corporations, acting as public/private partnerships to implement waterfront development. Depending on the city, these entities have Board representation from various levels of government (city, county, federal). Other cities, such as Detroit, Portland, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Boston have redevelopment authorities that help waterfront developments, but operate on a citywide basis, not focusing solely on the waterfront.

#### Private Non-Profit Corporations

In Detroit, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Baltimore, a non-profit entity is created solely to create public access, including development of waterfront parks and/or promenades. These entities help create dedicated servitudes and easements for promenades and are helping secure funding for creation of improvements toward this purpose. They also work with the local planning department to create and review design standards for public improvements along the waterfronts. Their mission can also extend to creation of parks along these corridors. These entities usually operate alongside waterfront development corporations, who focus on specific project developments and infrastructure improvements.

### Governmental Departments, Agencies, and Commissions

Some cities assign coordination of waterfront development to governmental departments, or to collaborations of these departments. These cities include, Washington, D.C., which coordinates a working group of District and Federal departments to develop a *Framework Plan*. Portland, Oregon and Baltimore, Maryland created similar working groups. However, each of these cities recommended the further creation of a public development and management agency with a sole focus on waterfront development. Other models of management exist. The City of Miami created a Miami River Commission, which consists of representatives from all governmental entities having jurisdiction over the riverfront. While the entity is not charged with developing the riverfront, it creates a unified voice in how the development should be accomplished, and fosters coordination and communication between the agencies. The City of Cincinnati and the surrounding county recreated the Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority, whose purpose had been focused on brownfields redevelopment citywide, to include development of the central riverfront area.

#### New Orleans Riverfront Managing Entity

In order to ensure implementation of this plan, an agency having a primary focus on riverfront development is considered critical. At a minimum, an agreement such as a Memorandum of Understanding or Cooperative Endeavor Agreement should be created by all of the various City, State, and Federal entities to establish a working relationship to attain the vision and goals of this plan. Examples of these types of agreements can be found in other cities having multiple waterfront authorities, such as Washington, D.C. (see appendix F).

Earlier analysis of legal mechanisms available in Louisiana to create a public authority to manage the City's interests along a portion of the riverfront indicated that a public benefit corporation created specifically for riverfront development is one of the options available.<sup>1</sup> While citywide development corporations, as evidenced in other cities studied and noted above, can have a strong impact on the redevelopment of underutilized parcels along the waterfront, a concurrent entity focusing primarily on improving public access to the waterfront and ensuring continuity along these valuable city assets is often created.

<sup>1</sup> "Analysis of Alternative Legal mechanisms for creating a Riverfront Authority", Lynda Friedmann of Stone, Pigman, Walther, Wittman, and Hutchinson, April 16, 1992.

Based on a survey of cities in the U.S. and Canada, and with an understanding of the needs as presented in this plan, the key functions that a riverfront managing entity should perform are:

- Develop overall and specific area design plans in coordination with the local planning departments;
- Coordinate and facilitate land transactions, and negotiate leases of all city owned riverfront property;
- Create public/private partnerships, and attract private development and investment for projects along the riverfront;
- Secure public and private funds for infrastructure projects and public open space and recreation uses;
- Reinvest revenue generated from ground leases, property sales, bond issues, or other means to fund other riverfront projects; and
- Involve the general public in creating and promoting waterfront development.

The New Orleans Building Corporation (NOBC), the public benefit corporation created to develop and manage city owned property, has been suggested to take on this role. If the NOBC is to perform these expanded functions, its capacity should be evaluated and strengthened through additional funding and staffing. Furthermore, consideration should be given to the composition of the NOBC governing board, which should reflect the various riverfront interests, including public agencies and neighborhood and business groups. The current citywide focus of the NOBC is also worth reconsidering. Creating a specific riverfront arm of the NOBC may help focus the attention of the corporation on the riverfront and would allow for the appropriate representation of various riverfront stakeholders. Alternatively, a new managing entity may be created, similar to those in other cities. As indicated before, such an entity should have broad representation of agencies and other interests along the riverfront and perform the duties mentioned above.

#### Urban Design Plan

Once created, the riverfront managing entity, in conjunction with the City Planning Commission, should develop a detailed Urban Design Plan for the portions of the riverfront controlled by the City. This plan should:

1. Address the desire and need for public access, through a variety of neighborhood access routes and a continuous riverfront promenade;
2. Develop concepts that include riverfront areas of assembly, passive and active recreation, public amenities, and other attractions;
3. Identify key development components and develop conceptual design schemes for each;
4. Develop detailed financing strategies and proposed timelines for each selected component; and
5. Develop a specific strategy for implementation of these components.

### Interagency Agreements

The first step toward creating a riverfront managing entity is to recognize and support a unified vision and goals as expressed in this plan. Agreements between the key agencies within the City, State, and Federal Governments should be enacted from which the creation of a riverfront managing entity can evolve. These agencies should include, but are not limited to the City, the Port, the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad, the Orleans Levee Board, and the Army Corps of Engineers. The agreements would ensure cooperation and outline the responsibilities and contributions of each entity for riverfront development

#### City and Port agreement

A critical step in redevelopment of the riverfront is currently under way. The City and the Port are working on a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) between the two entities that will define ownership of riverfront property and authority over riverfront development. The CEA will initially address the riverfront segments from Jackson Avenue to the Industrial Canal. The agreement should include specifics regarding the non-maritime development within certain sections of the riverfront while maintaining the Port's maritime servitude along the water's edge for vessel berthing. Also, the agreement should establish a system of revenue sharing between the Port and the City derived from non maritime development that occurs there. The agreement should call for a joint planning process to ensure that existing and future development can coexist for the benefit of both entities and the public. Both entities should ensure that this agreement is enacted.

#### Riverfront Development Advisory Committee

Formalize the role of the existing Riverfront Development Advisory Committee (RDAC) to act as an advisory committee to the riverfront managing entity, the City Planning Commission and the City Council when reviewing projects within a proposed Riverfront Overlay District. The committee should also continue its role as a forum for information sharing and cooperation among agencies and stakeholders along the riverfront.

#### **Funding Public Investments**

Development of the riverfront will rely on both private and public investment. The Plan suggests various improvements in public infrastructure that would be needed in order to support and facilitate development along the riverfront. Funding these improvements will rely upon a number of funding sources and mechanisms.

After researching and reviewing funding sources and strategies used by other riverfront cities for similar redevelopment purposes (see appendix), it was shown that these cities had aggressively pursued public and private financing sources, and had used innovative sources for the capture of revenue streams. These funds were primarily used to improve public infrastructure to a state of readiness where private investment would then develop the area according to the needs set forth by the respective planning processes. In very few cases was the private development itself directly subsidized. Based on these examples the CPC presents a short list of possible funding mechanisms that could be explored by the city in order to help fund public infrastructure improvements, such as utilities, roads and green space, along the riverfront:

- Federal and State economic development funds
- Federal and State grants for historic restoration
- Brownfield and other environmental cleanup funds
- Dedicated property tax millage
- Revenue from lease of public property
- Revenue from local general obligation bonds
- Special Improvement Districts
- Tax Increment Financing Districts
- Public-Private investments
- Non-profit and foundation fundraising

Together these are important ways of generating funds for public infrastructure investment and maintenance. Federal and State redevelopment grants for historic restoration, brownfield and environmental remediation, economic development, and other project funding sources, though competitive, should be pursued aggressively. Also, in keeping with the recommendations of the City Planning Commission's 2002 Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, a dedicated millage could be established citywide to support the budgets of the Department of Parks and Parkways and NORD, allowing greater funding for green space in the city. Some of these funds could be used to expand parks and recreational opportunities along the riverfront. In lieu of a city-wide parks millage. A Special Improvement District, similar to the Downtown Development District, could be formed with its own dedicated millage for riverfront improvements. The city could also issue bonds for any public project along the riverfront to be paid out of the general fund, or the city could create a riverfront TIF district, creating a dedicated funding stream to help bond money for public improvements. At the same time, partnerships between public, private, and non-profit entities should continue to be pursued. Finally, the city could use proceeds from the lease of public riverfront property to help further fund improvements.

This Plan proposes creation of a Riverfront Redevelopment District to coordinate these sources in funding public improvements within the designated district boundaries (possibly coinciding with those of the proposed Riverfront Overlay District) and attracting private development in accordance with the Riverfront Vision 2005 Plan. This district would ensure that the goals for public open space, infrastructure improvements and recreational opportunities outlined in this Plan are met.

A specific cost estimate for public infrastructure improvements should be made a part of a detailed Urban Design Plan of city owned property along the riverfront, once the desired uses and their locations are established. This will help determine the level of funding needed for implementation, as well as the availability of funding sources.

#### **Public Process**

With the goal of creating a public waterfront, which is not necessarily one of ownership, but certainly one of access, the public role in the planning process should be strengthened. Several ways of accomplishing this are:

1. Include public review and input for major development proposals on the both sides of the floodwall. In most cases, conditional use review should be maintained where required by the underlying zoning district.
2. Include representation from communities and neighborhoods along the river within the riverfront managing entity and the Riverfront Development Advisory Committee.
3. Ensure public participation in future riverfront charrettes covering the West Bank and Uptown areas.
4. Involve citizens and neighborhood organizations in implementing the Riverfront Plan. Utilize the Master Plan's proposed citizen participation program.
5. Maintain the public input requirement that is part of the City's process for selling public property.

**Action Plan**

Implementation of the Riverfront Vision 2005 for the New Orleans riverfront is a complex undertaking that will require substantial cooperation between both the public and private sectors as well as between various branches and levels of government to succeed. To realize the improvements recommended in the plan, consensus on the major policy initiatives must be achieved. In particular, the role of the public sector must be structured to define clear leadership and specific responsibilities within that framework. The vision of the Plan will be achieved by defining priorities and keeping the short and long-term objectives in clear sight. This section suggests that implementation of the plan start as follows:

1. Enact a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) between the City and Port that will clarify ownership and authority over riverfront property. The CEA should address the riverfront segments from Jackson Avenue to the Industrial Canal. The agreement should include specifics regarding the release of the Port's control over certain riverfront segments while maintaining its maritime servitude along the water's edge for vessel berthing. In return, the Port would receive a portion of revenue derived from non maritime development that occurs there. The CEA must be approved by the City administration and the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans.
2. Upon enactment of the CEA, a comprehensive Urban Design Plan, as described earlier, should be developed for the portions of the riverfront controlled by the City. The designated riverfront managing entity, in cooperation with the City Planning Commission should be responsible for creation of the Urban Design plan, which should contain a specific implementation component.
3. Establish and apply the Riverfront Overlay District on properties from Jackson Avenue to the Industrial Canal, from the river's edge to the border between the commercial and industrial districts along the riverfront with the adjacent residential neighborhoods. A City Council motion will be required to start the process of amending the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and creating the new overlay zoning district. The motion will authorize the City Planning Commission to hold a public hearing(s) to consider creation and adoption of the overlay district. The City Council will then consider the City Planning Commission's recommendation and make the final decision whether to approve the new overlay district.
4. Change the underlying zoning of some segments of the riverfront. This should include the levee areas in the Riverbend, Holy Cross/Lower Ninth Ward and Algiers Point neighborhoods to be changed to P-Park zoning district.
5. Change the height limitations of the MU-A district to allow for high rise residential developments along the riverfront, while lowering potential heights near existing residential neighborhoods in the Lower Garden District.
6. Formalize the role of the Riverfront Development Advisory Committee to act as a reviewing committee for projects within a proposed Riverfront Overlay District. The committee should also continue its role as a forum for information sharing and cooperation among agencies and stakeholders along the riverfront. This authority may be granted by City Council action, perhaps in conjunction with adoption of the Riverfront Overlay District.
7. Conduct further discussions focusing on the West Bank of New Orleans, and other riverfront areas not included in the 2004 Riverfront Charrette. Incorporate key recommendations into an addendum to the Riverfront Vision 2005. The American Institute of Architects and the City Planning Commission should again cooperate in this endeavor.
8. The City should identify and manage its environmental liabilities by conducting Phase 1 and Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessments of property it owns or will acquire along the riverfront. Ideally, the city will prepare a liability assessment report that provides a realistic view of environmental liabilities and in the redevelopment area. Disclosure of contamination establishes a good base of credibility to attract competent developer knowledgeable of environmental liability.
9. The City should actively pursue brownfields economic legislation on the local and state level. The new legislation should include tax incentives for site assessments and clean-up of brownfields.
10. The riverfront managing entity and the Mayor's Office of Economic Development should take the lead and work on the development of funding strategies for the implementation of this Plan.



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 Honorable Renee Gill Pratt, Council District B  
 Honorable Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson, Council District C

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