

January 28, 2002

HISTORIC DISTRICT LANDMARKS COMMISSION
Twenty-five Departmental Accomplishments of the Past Five Years

1. Facilities Improvement Program - The HDLC occupies a historic firehouse that dates from 1885. It was converted to office use in 1979, but had received little attention since then. In the past five years, more than \$160,000 was spent to improve and update the building, including a new roof, interior and exterior painting, a new air-conditioning system, and a new fire alarm system. The building suffered from a severe termite infestation, which was abated and a monitored Centricon system was installed. New window shades and blinds were installed to replace badly deteriorated shades. The restrooms were updated to meet ADA guidelines, and a new ramp was installed to facilitate handicapped access. These improvements were accomplished through the expenditure of capital and general funds.
2. Became a City Charter agency - Although the Historic District Landmarks Commission was established by ordinance in 1976, it had never been included in the City Charter and thus was susceptible to abolition by the City Council. In 1995, through the efforts of the Mayor Morial and a vote of the people, the HDLC was finally incorporated into the New Orleans City Charter.
3. Re-established the Architectural Historian staff position - After the position had been vacant for four years, a professional Architectural Historian was hired in May 1997. This vital position is responsible for conducting all research for both the New Orleans and Central Business District Commissions. The Architectural Historian advises these commissions, the staff, other agencies and the public on the appropriateness of proposed alterations and additions as well as the historic significance of structures, particularly those proposed for landmark designation or demolition.
4. **Celebration of the Pioneers in Preservation** - To celebrate the 21st anniversary of the HDLC, a ceremony was held on November 6, 1997 at the New Orleans Museum of Art to recognize the pioneers of preservation in the City of New Orleans, the early leaders who were instrumental in the adoption of the enabling legislation for the establishment of Historic District Landmarks Commission and additional historic districts outside of the Vieux Carre. Also honored were craftsmen whose fine work has preserved these historic structures. Each pioneer was presented with a custom-made glass column, the logo of the HDLC, made by artisans at a local glass studio.
5. Training for New Orleans HDLC Commissioners - In 1998, the staff set up a training session for New Orleans Commissioners. This was the first time in the history of the HDLC that historic district commission training and education were made available to

HDLC Commissioners. Staff members from the Main Street Division of the State Historic Preservation Office came to New Orleans to conduct this training. The session lasted a full day and covered design guidelines for new construction, facade improvements, the federal Restoration Tax Credit program, and other important topics.

6. Reinstatement of the Architectural Awards for the New Orleans Commission - Once an annual event, the Architectural Awards for the New Orleans Commission had not been held since 1990. Beginning in 1999, the Awards were re-established in a ceremony held at St. Elizabeth's on Napoleon Avenue. These awards recognize the best renovations, restorations and new construction in local historic districts and local landmarks, and also acknowledge those who perform outstanding maintenance on their historic buildings. Good Neighbor Awards are also given to recognize those who perform exceptional renovation, restoration or new construction outside of local historic districts.
7. Established a partnership with the Masters in Historic Preservation Program at Tulane University School of Architecture - Working with Dr. Eugene Cizek, the staff of the HDLC has formed a partnership with the Masters in Historic Preservation program at Tulane University School of Architecture. Through this partnership, graduate students in Historic Preservation are exposed to different aspects of professional preservation through hands-on projects. These projects have included field surveys of potential local historic districts, zoning analysis and proposals for historic neighborhoods, design guidelines for new construction in historic districts, analysis of building types and land uses in historic neighborhoods, and photographic documentation of historic landmarks citywide.
8. **Training for Central Business District HDLC Commissioners** - In 1999, the staff set up a training session for CBD Commissioners. This was the first time in the history of the HDLC that Historic District Commission training and education were made available to CBD Commissioners. Barbara Bacot from the State Historic Preservation Office came to New Orleans to conduct this training. The session covered design guidelines for new construction, facade improvements, the federal Restoration Tax Credit program, rooftop additions, adaptive re-use and other important topics.
9. Designated **Local Historic Landmarks** - The staff researched and presented reports to the New Orleans Commission on numerous properties nominated for landmark studies. Several of these properties had been under nomination for many years. After presentation by the staff at public hearings, 18 new local historic landmarks were designated by the Commission. Designation certificates on these properties were then filed with the Register of Conveyances, so that the buildings are protected in perpetuity and the landmark designation goes with the title of the property.
10. Nominated Local Historic Landmarks - Requests from property owners, Architectural Review Committee members, Commissioners, the Preservation Resource Center, and local residents, as well as staff suggestions, resulted in the nomination of 189 new local landmarks in nearly all areas of the City. These nominations are then placed under the

jurisdiction of the HDLC for the duration of the study period. Once the study is completed, they are then considered by the Commissions for landmark designation.

11. Jazz Landmarks - At the request of the Jazz Commission and the African-American Heritage Council, the Commissions nominated for landmark study several buildings associated with the cultural and social history of jazz. In the CBD, these nominations included some of the last historic buildings on South Rampart Street - the studio of Florestine Perrault Collins, New Orleans' first black female professional photographer, and the last corner of buildings from New Orleans' historic Chinatown area. The New Orleans Commission nominated ten buildings for their association with jazz history, including the Jackson Avenue home of musician Kid Ory, and the last three remaining buildings from Storyville.
12. Established Treme as a local historic district - The Treme neighborhood was included as part of the large Esplanade Ridge Historic District when it was designated in 1978. Because of its significance in the development of the City of New Orleans, the residents and property owners of Treme felt that this area warranted its own individually recognized local district. Treme has a unique history and culture and is much older than most of Esplanade Ridge. A separate district would recognize its distinct identity and allow Treme to have its own representative on the Commission. The staff researched the history of the neighborhood and established what the historic boundaries would have been. The City Council then passed an ordinance establishing the Treme Local Historic District and the Mayor appointed a Treme property owner and resident as the first Treme representative on the HDLC.
13. Conducted mail surveys of five neighborhoods for potential local historic districts - The HDLC frequently receives requests from neighborhoods to be studied for inclusion as potential local historic districts. At the request of the Mayor, every effort is made to ensure that the majority of residents and property owners in a given neighborhood are in favor of historic district status. To this end, between 1999 and 2001, five neighborhoods were surveyed by mail to determine whether or not the residents and property owners favored a historic district study. The neighborhoods were Gentilly Terrace, Irish Channel, Carrollton/Riverbend, expansion of Esplanade Ridge, and Faubourg Franklin/St. Roch. The mailings included information on the HDLC and on how to become a historic district. A prepaid postcard was included for the recipient to check whether they were in favor, not in favor, or in need of further information. Four out of five of the neighborhoods surveyed were overwhelmingly in favor of a local historic district for their area.
14. Surveyed and recommended the Irish Channel as a local historic district - At the request of the Irish Channel Neighborhood Association, a study committee was appointed to work with the staff to study the Irish Channel area as a potential local historic district. Although it had been a National Register Historic District since 1976, the neighborhood had no local protection and had suffered from a large number of demolitions and blighted properties. A thorough and complete study of the area was completed, along with a

photographic survey of every lot of record and a color-coded map of the district. The completed study was met favorably by the HDLC, the Study Committee members and the neighborhood residents. It was forwarded to the City Planning Commission, where public meetings were held and the CPC recommended approval of the local district. The Irish Channel Local Historic District now awaits ratification by the City Council.

15. **Administrative Adjudication** - The administrative adjudication process was implemented in July 2001 to establish a more effective procedure to address violations and demolitions by neglect. This process has proven more efficient than the conventional trial court process. Fines can be levied against violators and owners of blighted properties, and they can be forced to remedy the blight and/or the violation within a specified amount of time. So far, 104 cases have been heard through the adjudication process, 44 fines have been levied, 23 properties have removed violations or corrected blighted conditions.
16. **Conducted Workshops for the Public** - The HDLC recognizes the great importance of regular maintenance in preserving historic buildings and neighborhoods. In an effort to help the public become better informed on how to maintain their historic properties, the staff of the HDLC partnered with preservation contractor Dr. Jack Stewart to host two free Saturday seminars at the HDLC offices on pertinent maintenance issues. The first was on "How and When to Perform Exterior Painting," and the second was "How to Repair Wooden Screens." In addition, the HDLC staff participates each year in the Preservation Resource Center's "Great Neighborhood Sell-ibration." As part of this event, the Director of the HDLC gives a free Saturday seminar, which includes information on HDLC rules and regulations, historic district guidelines, and general preservation issues.
17. **Published Brochures on the HDLC** - In addition to re-working the existing HDLC informational handouts and compiling them in a bound booklet, the HDLC staff has written and published two new brochures. In light of the increasingly high demand of requests for new historic districts and landmarks, more information was needed in an easily understandable format. "How to Become a Local Historic District" and "Introduction to the Historic District Landmarks Commission" are free and available to the public. The first pamphlet details the steps that are necessary for an area to become a local historic district. The second answers the most frequently asked questions about the HDLC and dispels the most prevalent myths. Since their initial publication, which was done in-house by the staff, these brochures have been given to members of the public, neighborhood associations, students, and realtors, and used in potential historic district surveys.
18. **Adopted Guidelines for Rooftop Additions** - Rooftop additions to historic buildings are a common way to increase square footage in redevelopment projects. By the year 2000, they were so common in New Orleans that the National Park Service wrote guidelines to address what they would consider acceptable for Restoration Tax Credit projects. The CBD HDLC also wrote and adopted similar guidelines to address the issue in local

downtown historic districts. The CBD HDLC guidelines outline the basic tenets of size, scale, mass, and proportion, including floor to ceiling height, setbacks, and roof type. These guidelines take into consideration the size and the color rating of the existing building. They also clearly proscribe the submission standards for rooftop additions, so that applicants and their architects know well ahead of time what is expected in the application, such as sight line studies and a massing model. The guidelines have been used extensively since their adoption by the Commission in 2000.

- 19.** Instrumental in Preserving the former Bradford Furniture Building - Occupied by the Housing Authority of New Orleans for many years, the former Bradford Furniture Building at the corner of Howard Avenue and Carondelet Street is a 1915 Arts and Crafts style building by architect Leon Weiss that displays exceptionally fine brickwork and terra cotta ornament. Exterior metal panels installed in the 1960s covered much of the facade, but the beauty of the building remained underneath. When the Arts Council acquired the building and announced plans to demolish it for their Louisiana ArtWorks project, the HDLC contacted the Arts Council urged it to reconsider. The HDLC provided history on the building, copies of historic photographs and offering advice and assistance. As one of the signatories on the Section 106 Review Memorandum of Agreement, the staff of the HDLC worked with neighbors and neighborhood groups, the Preservation Resource Center, local and state leaders, the National Advisory Council and the National Endowment of the Arts to reach a compromise that saved the historic building and restored the important Carondelet Street and Howard Avenue facades. The staff also advised on the restoration of the St. Joseph Street warehouse, another part of the Louisiana ArtWorks project.
- 20.** Instrumental in Preserving the Amelia Cotton Press - The Amelia Cotton Press warehouse complex at 1899 Tchoupitoulas Street is the last intact building of its kind in the City of New Orleans and very possibly in the entire South. It occupies an entire block and although it has suffered from some alterations and additions, it remains remarkably intact. It was nominated for landmark status on November 9, 1999, due to its architectural, historical and cultural significance. In July 2001, the new owners applied for demolition to provide a larger parking lot for a new retail development. The staff worked to raise the public awareness of the importance of this building through public meetings and a letter writing campaign. They also worked with the National Advisory Council and the State Historic Preservation Office to re-open the Section 106 Review process to reconsider the significance of this site. After meetings with the staff, the Architectural Review Committee and the Commission, the applicant finally agreed to withdraw his demolition application. The owner is now working to find a new use for this historic cotton warehouse complex that will complement the neighborhood and the rest of the new development.
- 21.** Instrumental in Preserving the former Cumberland Telephone Building - Originally built as the Cumberland Telephone Building at 820 Poydras Street, this is one of the few historic buildings left on Poydras Street. In 1996, owner Bell South, Inc. applied to demolish this 1917 multi-story building with its ornate terra cotta facade. The CBD

HDLC nominated it for landmark status based on its architectural and historical importance. The Commission denied the demolition, and the appeal was upheld by the City Council. The building was then sold to new owners who completely renovated the building as a Drury Inn and Suites. Today it is a successful hotel on Poydras Street and has won an architectural award from the HDLC.

22. Study of the Expansion of CBD **Historic Districts** - Ordinance #19885 M.C.S., dated October 5, 2000, established an Interim Zoning District (IZD) for the area between the existing local historic districts and the Pontchartrain Expressway, to O'Keefe Avenue. This area is under study for the possible expansion of the Warehouse and Lafayette Square Historic Districts. A photographic survey of the area has been completed by the staff and a study committee has been requested by the neighborhood associations. As soon as the study committee is appointed by the mayor, the staff will prepare a study of the area and analyze its potential for inclusion into the existing local historic districts. The completed study would then be forwarded to the City Planning Commission, and from there to the City Council. If approved by the Council, the area between St. Joseph Street and the Pontchartrain Expressway, from Convention Center Blvd. to O'Keefe Avenue, down to the uptown side of Lafayette Street would be protected under the jurisdiction of the CBD HDLC. This area includes such important buildings as the Civic Theater, the Bradford Furniture Building, the Howard Triangle Building, and the last remaining shotgun houses in the CBD.
23. Surveyed the Garden District as a potential local historic district - When the original enabling state legislation was passed in 1975 to allow the establishment of the HDLC and local historic districts, the Garden District was excluded from any potential jurisdiction. With the passing years, the success of the local historic districts under the HDLC, combined with unfortunate demolitions and blighted houses within the boundaries of the Garden District, caused residents of the Garden District to reconsider their position. In 2001, the Garden District Association worked with the state legislature to have State Act 804 amended so that the Garden District area could be allowed to be considered for local historic district status, with limited jurisdiction. In 2002, the HDLC staff met with the Garden District Study Committee, appointed by the Mayor, and the students of the Tulane School of Architecture Master's in Historic Preservation Program. A study of the area was begun, as was a photographic survey of every lot within the designated boundaries. Once the survey, study and map are complete, they will be forwarded to the City Planning Commission.
24. Reinstatement of the Architectural Awards for the Central Business District Commission - Once an annual event, the Architectural Awards for the CBD Commission had not been held since 1990. Beginning in 2001, the Awards were re-established in a ceremony held at the Hampton Inn and Suites on Convention Center Boulevard. These awards recognize the best renovations, restorations and new construction in the local CBD historic districts and local landmarks, and also congratulate those who perform outstanding maintenance on their historic buildings. Good Neighbor Awards are also given to recognize those who perform exceptional renovation, restoration or new construction outside of the local

historic districts. Thirty-five awards were given out at the ceremony, which was followed by a reception.

25. Established “Partners for Historic Neighborhoods” - In 2001, a non-profit 501(c)(3) was established to aid the HDLC. The non-profit is served by its own board of directors. The “Partners” support HDLC programs and projects, such as the CBD Architectural Awards ceremony, through various fund-raising activities.