Louisiana Landmarks Society Announces the 2016 New Orleans’ Nine Most Endangered Sites– Hilary Somerville Irvin

For the eleventh year Louisiana Landmarks Society has named its New Orleans’ Nine Most Endangered Sites list. In doing so, we hope to focus attention to historic places that may be threatened by demolition, neglect, or bureaucracy. Our goal is not to chastise but to stimulate creative solutions. The naming of the New Orleans’ Nine follows a citywide call for nominations from individuals, neighborhood associations, and historic and architectural organizations. The final choices are based upon selection criteria such as historic, architectural, and cultural value, the severity of the threat, and the degree of community commitment to save the feature.

This year’s list encompasses a broad spectrum of locations and rich assets. Continued on page 6
A Message from the President

Recent collapses of the Canal Street underground tunnel are a vivid reminder of how close we were to having an elevated expressway in front of Jackson Square, irrevocably harming a national historic landmark and viable community. By digging the tunnel, officials believed they could seal the deal, with no turning back on an expressway that would forever sever the Vieux Carré from the Mississippi River. Today, it is a huge sinkhole reminding us of the important role we preservationists play in protecting what is precious and unique about New Orleans.

Louisiana Landmarks Society has been a preservation leader since its founding in 1950. Much of the cherished historic fabric of our city still exists today because of our efforts. Landmarks not only helped stop the Riverfront Expressway but also the proposed Napoleon Avenue bridge, the approach of which would have sliced Uptown New Orleans in half; the “sound and light” show in Jackson Square; and the helicopter port at the Governor Nichols Street Wharf. Without Landmarks’ heroic efforts, notable and beloved buildings like Carrollton Courthouse and Gallier Hall would now be leveled, and high rises would be jutting through low-scale historic streetscapes. The historic architecture and neighborhood authenticity people flock to New Orleans to experience could have been destroyed.

Landmarks’ home—the 18th-century Creole style Pitot House—is a physical manifestation of our commitment to preservation. Saving this landmark from demolition by its move to the present location was a significant effort. And maintaining and preserving this treasure is a continuing goal.

As Landmarks Society embarks on a new term of officers, we should take a moment to express our gratitude to our recent president, Stephen Chauvin. Abruptly thrust into the role when then president Casey Stuart became ill, Stephen quickly rose to the challenge and provided calm, steady stewardship. We thank him for his efforts and all he brought to our organization.

We were extremely fortunate to have Walter Gallas as our Executive Director for the last three years. Walter’s professionalism, depth of knowledge and keen sense of priorities helped us realign with our mission. Landmarks is grateful to Walter for laying the groundwork for a stronger future. We wish Walter the best in his career as Preservation Planner for the City of Baltimore.

And this year we are off to a great start. We recently added terrific new members to our Board of Trustees—rich and diverse in skills and knowledge of the community and state. And we are very pleased to have Carol Gniady join us as our new Executive Director. Carol’s experience, knowledge, and professionalism promise to strengthen our foundation for continued success.

The role of preservation doesn’t get easier in time; protecting the historic character of our city never ends. But Louisiana Landmarks continues to stand ready, willing and able to pursue our role. With your support, we will build on our past and further our work—education, advocacy, and operation of the Pitot House. Be a part of our future. Become a member, encourage others to join, and volunteer. We need and welcome you.

Sandra Stokes, President

Inside the Pitot House: Karen Snyder

The Pitot House Museum experience is memorable not just because of the exquisite building and period furniture, but because of fantastic, knowledgeable docents who make the House come alive with historical information and storytelling. Karen Snyder is one of these unique, dedicated individuals. She comes one day a week to give tours of the House and engage in lively discussions with visitors about Louisiana history. She is retired from a career in non-profit fundraising and grant writing, and also worked for the Louisiana State Museum. She’s originally from the Detroit area and has lived in New Orleans for the past 40 years.

When asked why she likes (loves!) being a docent with us, Karen said she was drawn to “the spirit of the place, and I wanted to actually be here a few hours every week.” She is also impressed with the quality of visitors that come for tours, that they’ve made a special effort to visit, are truly interested and they spark lively conversations. And her favorite places? She loves the parterre garden “because it’s filled with native plants like when the Pitots were here, and it changes with every season.” Also the upstairs gallery, “especially at sunset, you can feel more like you’re back in the day...It’s magic.”

Karen has been volunteering with the Pitot House since 2014. Her work is instrumental to our success and is much appreciated!

Would you like to be a docent?

All you need is the desire to tell our story at our beautiful, historic Pitot House Museum. We are currently seeking docents to volunteer on Fridays and Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Split shifts are also available.

For more information, call us at (504) 482-0312.
Meet Our New Board Members

Southwest Louisiana native Carol Allen made New Orleans her home in the early 1980’s. After more than two decades in Paris, France, Carol returned home. A former superintendent of schools and university professor, Carol has run a nonprofit in Paris, organized international conferences and written three books (including the biography of Chef Leah Chase). She has served Vieux Carré Property Owners, Residents and Associates in many capacities including as president. She is a member of French Quarter Citizens and Patio Planners, and a fundraiser for the Mahalia Jackson Early Childhood & Adult Learning Foundation. Carol has been vigilant in safeguarding, preserving, and protecting first the French Quarter and now the remainder of the city.

New Orleans native Michael Duplantier has shared his time generously as legal counsel for such preservation agencies as the Historic Faubourg St. Mary Corporation, Vieux Carré Commission and the Historic District Landmarks Commissions. He has been engaged in preservation advocacy in New Orleans for four decades, serving on the board and as president of Save Our Cemeteries and on the Louisiana Landmarks board in the early 1990s and in 2001-2002. Michael received the Harnett Kane award in 2014 in recognition of his outstanding commitment to preserving the best of the city. He serves as president of the Rotary Club of New Orleans. Along with his wife, Bettye, he lives in Lafayette Square historic neighborhood in an 1860’s Henry Howard designed townhouse.

Nathan Lott has been Coordinator for the Greater New Orleans Water Collaborative since the fall of 2015. Prior to that, he lived in Virginia where he served as Executive Director of the Virginia Conservation Network and also as Public Relations Specialist for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. Nathan is the author of a guidebook, 60 Hikes within 60 Miles: Richmond, published in 2005 and revised in 2010. Having completed a B.A. in Journalism and Mass Communications, cum laude, from Samford University, Nathan completed his Masters of Preservation Studies from Tulane University in 2015. He is married to Elizabeth Mangham Lott, senior pastor of Saint Charles Avenue Baptist Church.

Amanda McFillen is the Associate Director of Museum Programs for The Historic New Orleans Collection. In her eight years there, she has worked as a curator on many exhibits including the current Voices of Progress: Twenty Women Who Changed New Orleans. She also produces public events for The Collection such as the annual history symposium, the most recent of which covered preservation and architecture in New Orleans. Amanda has a Master’s degree in Museum Studies from the University of Toronto. Formerly on the board of the Emerging Philanthropists of New Orleans, she currently serves on the advisory committee for Festigals and volunteers with the New Orleans Film Society.

Mary Price Robinson, granddaughter of legendary preservationist and founding member of Louisiana Landmarks Society Martha Gilmore Robinson, continues the family tradition of community activism. She owned and managed Beaucoup Books, Inc., which for twenty-three years was a beloved destination in its Upper Magazine Street district. She worked to ensure that the design and footprint of the Magazine Street Whole Foods development would be an optimum asset for its location. Currently she is concerned with threatened historic, small-scaled architecture in her Faubourg Avart neighborhood. Possessing a background in accounting/finance, she professionally serves as a bookkeeper/daily money manager and senior money manager for private clients. Mary Price received her Bachelor of Arts from Hollins University.
Louisiana Landmarks Society’s 2016 Annual Meeting held Monday, May 9 at the Pitot House

Thank you to all members who joined us for this year’s Annual Meeting. It was a lovely evening on Bayou St. John, and the Pitot House provided the perfect setting for this gathering of preservationists, Landmarks members, and honorees.

Landmarks awarded this year’s Harriett Kane Award for lifetime achievement in preservation to David L. Campbell. David served as the ninth president of Louisiana Landmarks Society in 1974-76, the period immediately after the completion of the Pitot House restoration. During that period and under David’s leadership, the Pitot House was first opened to the public. David was an early advocate for preservation and reuse of buildings in the Warehouse District, and was also a leader in the battle to prevent the destruction of Uptown neighborhoods by the proposed construction of a new Mississippi River bridge at Napoleon Avenue. Today, David lives in Folsom, where he is completing his memoirs for publication later this year.

Also recognized at the Annual Meeting were the wonderful volunteers that Landmarks is lucky to have. Volunteer docent, Jamie Barker and Fête du Jardin Committee Chair, Margot Hammond were present and accepted floral bouquets in acknowledgment of their service. Absent, but also recognized were volunteer docents, Karen Snyder and Meagan Pryor.

Landmarks welcomed five new board members: Carol Allen, Michael Duplantier, Nathan Lott, Amanda McFillen, and Mary Price Robinson. We are excited for this impressive group addition to our Board of Trustees.

UPDATE: 518 Eleanore St.

One year ago we reported in Landmarks Préservation that this circa 1860 Creole cottage, named to the 2015 New Orleans Nine, was going to be saved and restored through the cooperative efforts of its owner, Councilmember Susan Guidry and the Audubon Riverside Neighborhood Association.

After acquiring the historic property in November 2014, the owner applied for demolition to make way for new construction on the site. This request was reviewed and denied by Neighborhood Conservation District Advisory Committee and forwarded to the City Council, which considered the matter on July 9, 2015, where Guidry’s motion to deny the proposed demolition of the original house but to approve the removal of the later additions was approved. The entire exterior envelope and the existing roof line of the cottage were to be retained with new construction at the rear of the spacious lot. At the request of the neighborhood association, a proviso was added that the house be properly braced and weatherproofed to secure it during the demolition process.

After many months, however, no work has begun; and only on April 22, 2016 was an application submitted to the Department of Safety and Permits for a work permit, which was issued on May 18, 2016. Neighbors are concerned with the continuing deterioration of the building and with the lack of efforts so far to secure the property. Vines are attacking the weatherboard siding; a window is missing, screens are dislodged and gallery soffit boards are collapsing. Evidently the property has not been cited by the City’s Code Enforcement. The building needs to be secured and work begun on its restoration immediately so that this previously announced “big New Orleans 9 win” will come to fruition.

(Photographs June 5, 2016 by Hilary Irvin and Jeff Katz)
Master Plan Amendment Process has begun.

Deadline for submitting amendments: July 29 - Sandra L. Stokes

According to the City Planning Commission website, The Plan for the 21st Century: New Orleans 2030, commonly referred to as the Master Plan, is a City Charter mandated planning framework for the core systems that shape New Orleans’ physical, social, environmental and economic future. The Master Plan reflects the values and priorities that emerged through an eighteen month long community participation process and is grounded in information assembled for the first time in one place.

As one of the requirements in the Home Rule Charter, the city’s Master Plan can be reviewed not more than once a year, but must be reviewed at least once every five years. We are at the five year anniversary of the Master Plan and the review process has begun. The process started with organization outreach, which occurred from January 1 through April 24, 2016. We are currently in the second phase, during which applications for changes to the Master Plan will be received and processed by the City Planning Commission. The application period runs from April 25 through July 29, 2016. All proposed amendments must be received by July 29 in order to be considered. The third phase is the Charter-mandated review and approval period, which runs from August 1, 2016 through July 15, 2017.

The central thesis or concept behind the Master Plan charter amendments is that citizens have the right to be involved in defining the environment in which they live. The Plan is necessarily citizen-driven, and based on community input. With this in mind, we were surprised to learn that proposed changes to the Land Use chapter requested by citizens require an application fee. Text changes to the Land Use portion of the Master Plan (Chapter 14) require a $1500 fee; while changes to the Land Use Map range from $1000 to $4000, depending on the size of the lot. Applications for changes to the Land Use Map can be made only by the owner of the property, the City Planning Commission, a member of the City Council, or the mayor.

We are concerned that these requirements and restrictions are too burdensome and go against the concept of all citizens being able to be meaningfully involved in the planning process.

As residents, neighborhood organizations and non-profits try to help guide the direction of their community, the ability to have an equal voice without constraints is essential.

Louisiana Landmarks Society’s hosting of the City Planning Commission’s presentation on the Master Plan Amendment Process on June 22, 2016 is an opportunity to ask questions about the process as well as to ensure that protecting our unique environment is a key component of a revised Master Plan.

For more information on the Master Plan visit http://www.nola.gov/city-planning/master-plan/ or the Master Plan amendment process at http://www.nola.gov/city-planning/mpamendments/

Short Term Rental Legislation
Carol Gniady

Google “Short-Term Rentals” and you’ll find hundreds of articles from around the globe reporting on the rapidly growing trend of illegally renting private residences for short-term stays, and how government and citizens are trying to deal with an explosive, unregulated practice. Here in New Orleans, there are approximately 3,621 illegal short-term rental (STR) listings on Airbnb, just one of several internet platforms advertising STRs. In Orleans Parish (source: insideairbnb.com) there was a 54% increase in the number of those listings from 2015 – 2016.

There are several major issues surrounding STRs, and top of this list is a dwindling supply of affordable and available housing across the city. With a sizeable number of housing units in New Orleans now in use as STRs there is a correlating reduction in options for full-time residents, both in the market to buy homes and to rent. While supply and demand market driven rates are driving purchase prices and rents up, the number of available houses and apartments is declining. Investors, many of whom already own multiple properties, are generally willing to pay more than the asking price because the revenue potential for STRs can be as much as four times greater than long term lease income.

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New Orleans’ Nine

Continued

Included are citywide Parks and Open Spaces, threatened by privatization, specialization and commercialization; 1505 St. Bernard Avenue, a ca. 1927 commercial building once part of the thriving St. Bernard Market community, now threatened by owner requested demolition and neglect; Fort Macomb in New Orleans East, abandoned military ruins threatened by neglect; 636 Royal Street; one of the city’s few remaining structures from the Spanish colonial period, threatened by demolition by neglect; 468 St. Joseph Street, a once elegant Greek revival townhouse located in the popular downtown warehouse district, also threatened by demolition by neglect; the Bywater Neighborhood, a community of small -scaled residences and businesses now threatened by exploitative tourism, accompanied with out-of-scale development; the Lakefront Airport’s Fountain of the Four Winds, artist Enrique Alférez’s extraordinary sculpted work threatened by deterioration and neglect; all New Orleans Monuments threatened by possible removal; and 2501 St. Claude Avenue, a potential lost renovation opportunity for its community, threatened by owner requested demolition and neglect.

Louisiana Landmarks announced this year’s Endangered Nine at a press conference held at the Pitot House, May 26. R. Stephen Chauvin, outgoing Landmarks President and Chair of the 2016 New Orleans Nine Committee; Sandra Stokes, incoming Landmarks President and Carol Gniady, Landmarks Executive Director welcomed the attendees. Special guests and speakers included Debra Howell, President of Save Audubon Park; Brian Luckett, Bywater resident and member, Riverfront Alliance; King Mallory, former Executive Director and CEO of Aspen Institute, Germany; and Dr. Tlaloc Alférez, internist and infectious disease specialist and daughter of renowned sculptor Enrique Alférez.

Noting that his Bywater “neighborhood is threatened by the demolition of industrial buildings, approval of out-of-scale new development, and by having its narrow streets overwhelmed by traffic,” Luckett warned that the “culture that has sustained Bywater as a true neighborhood is now being transformed by an influx of transient oriented businesses.”

He continued “there is more to preservation than old buildings, there is also the culture that the historic districts have fostered and, in turn, sustains them” and repeated Winston Churchill’s words “We shape our buildings and afterwards they shape us.”

Speaking in opposition to the removal of New Orleans’ historic monuments, Mallory said that “Removing them dishonors our Southern ancestors who made the ultimate sacrifice for a system that was fatally flawed” and “erases a testament to the persecution and terror perpetrated by the institution of slavery in the South.” “Removing any monument,” he offered, “does nothing to alleviate and resolve the fundamental underlying issues of race in America.” In conclusion, he suggested that rather than “effacing our Southern heritage by removing a series of symbols, what is needed – in the South in particular – is a wide-ranging and long overdue dialogue between all stakeholders on issues of race.” Such a dialog should include “discussion of means by which to redress poverty, advance social mobility, eliminate iniquities in our criminal justice system and ensure that every life in African-American communities across our nation not only matters, but finds a peaceful, natural end.”

As a beginning to address the fact that “our open park space is disappearing at an appalling rate...and to save our parks,” Howell suggested that the new Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance should be amended so that commercial uses in our public parks are not “permitted” uses and would require “public hearings and oversight from the City Council and Planning Commission that conditional uses require.”

An exhibit featuring these properties will be open to the public at the Pitot House, 1440 Moss Street, New Orleans, Wednesday through Saturday from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, May 26 through September 1, 2016.

For more about these nine endangered sites, visit our website www.louisianalandmarks.org.
From the Executive Director
Carol Gniady

I am honored and excited to join Louisiana Landmarks Society as your Executive Director, a position I’ve held at other organizations including French Quarter Citizens, Delgado Community College, and the New Orleans Film Society. Preservation is my passion. Fortunately, I already have experience with Louisiana Landmarks through work with Walter Gallas, Sandra Stokes and other Landmarks’ board members on a number of preservation issues in my last position. I have always been very impressed with their knowledge, professionalism, and commitment to Landmarks’ mission.

Leaving French Quarter Citizens for Louisiana Landmarks was a difficult decision, only made easier knowing that I will continue working with my colleagues on some of the same issues while also embracing new opportunities to make a difference beyond the Vieux Carré. I’m also thrilled to manage the Pitot House and I am impressed with the many board members, staff members, volunteers, docents, and members who are responsible for this precious place.

What do you need to know about me? I am driven by purpose and devoted to my hometown, New Orleans. That I’m now here at Louisiana Landmarks is deeply satisfying, and I am grateful for this opportunity to serve you.

Farewell Walter!

Louisiana Landmarks Society wishes Walter Gallas a fond farewell and best wishes as he embarks on his new position as Preservation Planner for the City of Baltimore. The organization has made great progress during his tenure as Executive Director. We are deeply thankful for his leadership and guidance, which has helped to lay the groundwork for a promising future.

New Orleans’ loss is certainly Baltimore’s gain. He will be missed greatly by all.

Short Term Rental
Legislation Continued
New Orleans Short-Term Rentals, 2015

Ultimately, these higher sales prices drive comparable sales prices up, subsequently causing tax increases for surrounding neighborhoods. The new “highest and best use” commercial property values, rationalized with STR uses, make it much harder for the average person to afford to buy in traditional neighborhoods, much less compete in a bidding war.

Illegal STRs also present an un-level playing field for legitimate hospitality industries, including our local bed and breakfast operators who pay commercial rates for insurance, utilities, and taxes. And, where bed and breakfast establishments must, by law, have an owner on site, STRs may not, particularly if “Principal Residential” non-owner occupied whole house rentals are permitted. Beyond the concern for whole house STRs, there is no enforcement, which is integral to protecting neighborhoods from a proliferation of quality of life issues and chaotic zoning violations.

Please voice your concern to the New Orleans City Council in advance of forthcoming legislation. The Council will receive the CPC STR Study June 23, then use the approved Study to craft an ordinance for a Council vote at either the July 14, July 28 or August 11 meeting, depending on when it appears on the zoning docket. Subsequently, between July 28 and November 3, the Council will introduce a “companion” ordinance that would amend the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO). The Council will vote to adopt the STR CZO ordinance between August 25 and December 3, and it would go into effect January 1, 2017.

Celebrate at the Pitot House!

Enjoy the unique setting of the Pitot House on Bayou St. John for your wedding reception, next party or business meeting.

Call 504-482-0312 to schedule a site visit today!
Renew Your Membership Today!

JOIN LANDMARKS AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE!
Your membership helps Louisiana Landmarks Society promote historic preservation through education, advocacy, and operation of the Pitot House.

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS
- $25 Loyalist individual
- $40 Advocate household
- $100 Supporter
- $250 - 499 Guardian
- $500 - 999 Protector
- $1000 - 4999 Sustainer

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!
As always, if any of our members have an item of interest or an idea for something they would like to see in Préservation, please let us know! Leave a message at the Pitot House at 504.482.0312, email info@louisianalandmarks.org, or email our editor Hilary Somerville Irvin at hilaryirvin@gmail.com.