From Vision to Reality:

New walking path shines in Gentilly

Serving Gentilly Heights East, Lower Gentilly, Oak Park, Sugar Hill, Virgil Park, Indian Village, Filmore Gardens and Gentilly Heights/Voscoville
Dear friends and colleagues:

The Dillard family is proud to walk with you as we continue our journey toward rebuilding this revered community. You are a part of this revitalization, and renewal of generations of progress. Your families have stood shoulder-to-shoulder to form a bond that has stood the test of time.

Dillard and Gentilly have survived in the face of the worst natural and human-made disaster in this country’s history. We have shocked the nation and the world with our resilience and fortitude. It is because we remained steadfast and determined to return to our homes, better and stronger than ever.

I am grateful to each of the neighborhood associations – Gentilly Heights/Voscoville, Gentilly Heights East, Sugar Hill, Virgil Park, Oak Park, Lower Gentilly and Indian Village – for its collective dedication to the Gentilly area. We must continue to move mountains.

Warmest regards,

Marvalene Hughes, Ph.D.
President
Dillard University

Welcome

This area is fortunate to have such vibrant neighborhood associations as the linchpin of Gentilly. I have been energized after meeting all of you during your general assembly meetings on Dillard’s campus. I am gratified and humbled by your dedication and perseverance.

From the NeighborWorks conference to the walking path initiative to the Night Out Against Crime, all of you have stood tall to revitalize your neighborhoods and bring the Gentilly area back in an orderly and effective way. I tip my hat to each and every one of you.

There is a bright new day visible on the horizon for Gentilly, and your efforts are aiding in rebuilding the infrastructure of this neighborhood. This is noble work, and your selflessness will mean a brighter future for this area.

I will look forward to hearing about all of the great projects that your associations are planning in the coming months.

Respectfully,

Walter L. Strong, Ph.D.
Executive Vice President
Dillard University

This is a warm ‘hello’ to all of my friends across the area. I can’t tell you how much I admire your dedication and love for this neighborhood. Your energy is boundless and I’m honored to know each and every one of you.

Our trip to Baltimore to attend the NeighborWorks conference was unforgettable. I learned so much and yet I realized that there’s a lot more work that must be done. It was clear that the true mission was renewed in Maryland. There was a new sense of strength and purpose on the plane ride back to New Orleans.

This newsletter is the beginning of a new communication chain. This publication will share information with the entire Gentilly area. Knowledge is power, and this will be an incredible tool to strengthen the bonds between neighborhood associations.

Again, I’m proud to be working with you at this critical juncture in Gentilly’s history. I foresee a whole lot of good things in the future.

Sincerely,

Nick Harris
Assistant Vice President
Community & Economic Development
Dillard University
Annie Avery, former president of the Sugar Hill Neighborhood Association, conceived the idea of a walking path in the community in 2004. Her perseverance and tenacity paid off when the first phase of the project, extending just beyond the I-610 bridge, began on July 3, 2007.

Avery enlisted the support of Sen. Edwin Murray, Sheriff Marlin Gusman and State Rep. Juan LaFonta to find funding for the project. Funds were allocated in 2005, but the groundbreaking was delayed due to Hurricane Katrina. After the disaster, neighbors began their slow, but steady return to the area and the association began to meet again on a regular basis.

The walking path was at the top of the agenda, with a plan to extend the path the length of St. Anthony Avenue beginning at Gentilly Boulevard and ending at Florida Avenue. The second phase is anticipated in the near future, and upon completion of landscaping, Gentillians can enjoy an area that is aesthetically rewarding and can be utilized for relaxation and exercise.

Ms. Avery has not returned to New Orleans due to illness and is residing with her family in Birmingham, Alabama, but her strong legacy is visible with the completion of the path’s first phase. Kudos to all who were instrumental in bringing this project to fruition. Special thanks to the Department of Public Works, Hardrock Construction, Steps, and Parks and Parkways.

Neighborhood association presidents from throughout the Gentilly area attended the NeighborWorks Community Leadership Institute (CLI) in Baltimore, Maryland in April. The presidents participated in workshops to aid in efforts to rebuild their neighborhoods.

The Dillard University Community Development Corporation (DUCDC) recently partnered with NeighborWorks of America, a national nonprofit organization created by Congress to provide financial support, technical assistance, and training for community-based revitalization efforts. NeighborWorks America creates opportunities for people to live in affordable homes, improve their lives and strengthen their communities.
Dillard University wants its neighbors in the Gentilly community to know that the institution is taking the reins to rebuild and recover the area. That was the sentiment echoed by Nick Harris, the university’s assistant vice president of Community and Economic Development, also known as DUCDC.

Harris hosted a partner’s breakfast last month on campus. He gave an overview of the CDC’s mission, accomplishments and future plans to revitalize the area.

“This non-profit organization has the daunting task of improving housing conditions and courting major stores and shops to the area,” Harris said. “We can do this as long as we continue partnering with the community and business stakeholders.”

Seven Gentilly neighborhood association presidents representing Gentilly Heights East, Gentilly Heights Voscoville, Indian Village, Lower Gentilly, Oak Park, Sugarhill and Virgil Park said they are excited about this collaboration.

“Harris has done a remarkable job,” said Lower Gentilly Neighborhood Association President Lemona Chandler. “He’s brought in people and partners and stakeholders that could help us to quickly move a little faster than what we have. We have been struggling the past two years but since the CDC has tied in with the community, it has brought a whole lot of smiles on a lot of faces.”

The association presidents watched Dillard University’s President Marvalene Hughes transform the 55-acre campus that sustained $400 million dollars worth of damage from Hurricane Katrina into a renewed estate.

“Clearly, she and the administration have developed a blueprint worth following,” said Peggy Braud, Virgil Park Neighborhood Association president.

Braud who grew up in Gentilly reminisced about riding her bike across the campus when she was a little girl. She remembers the serene scene yet knew the university was a force to be reckoned with.

“Dillard has always been a beacon for the community,” she said. “If anyone can be instrumental in helping us get back on our feet, it’s the university.”

Braud has a vested interest in her home and a need for businesses. “We’d like to see more of the commercial aspect get underway because we’re tired of running to Metairie. We’d like to keep our money here in the city and in our community.”

Harris shares that sentiment and managed to recruit the following agencies and businesses to help with that endeavor: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; Whitney Bank; Volunteers of America – Greater New Orleans; Iberia Bank Mortgage; Johnson Controls; Neighborworks America; Horizon; Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Greater New Orleans, INC.; Entergy New Orleans, INC.; Excelth, INC.; Cops for Kids; Beacon of Hope; Blue Cross Blue Shield; City of New Orleans; FDIC; Hilton Riverside Hotel; Hands On New Orleans.

The CDC plans to distribute newsletters periodically — informing the community of the latest developments. Harris said the newsletter is crucial because people want to know about their property, schools, code enforcement, zoning and other issues.

“But more importantly, it’s good to know that people in this community care,” he said. “I get the impression that Gentilly has always been a family-oriented neighborhood; a neighborhood wounded, but not wiped out and one that will certainly be a family again.”
NEW ORLEANS, LA (October 2, 2007) - The City of New Orleans has posted on the City's website a Request for Proposals for Demolition and Debris Removal and another for Project Management Services for Demolition and Household Hazardous Waste Management Services.

The advertisements are part of the City's forward movement in its management of demolition and debris removal programs as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ends its mission in New Orleans. The City began advertising the RFP on its website Wednesday. Ads are slated to run in the Times-Picayune newspaper this week.

"The firms that are chosen to manage and implement these projects will be integral to the recovery of our city," said Dr. Edward Blakely, Executive Director of Recovery Management. "We are eager to see proposals from strong, viable contractors who are interested in partnering with us as we move forward."

The Demolition and Debris Removal contractor will be responsible for structural demolition, debris removal and site clean-up of residential buildings. According to the RFP, the successful bidder for the project management contract will "manage and support the oversight of demolition/debris removal. The Project Management Firm shall be capable of supervising, monitoring and documenting, in accordance with FEMA guidelines, the collection, temporary staging and final disposal."

The Corps of Engineers began handling demolition and curbside debris removal in New Orleans immediately after Hurricane Katrina and the flooding that followed. The services are paid by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The Corps curbside debris pickup mission ended on August 30 and the demolition mission ended on September 30. FEMA will continue to fund eligible storm-related demolitions and the removal of debris produced by them indefinitely. All other debris is considered reconstruction debris and is not eligible for cost reimbursement by FEMA.

Approximately 14 million cubic yards of storm debris was removed during the Corps mission in New Orleans. As of September 7, 8,907 houses had been demolished since the storm, including 5,338 that were demolished by FEMA.
Neighborhood News you can use...

All Across Gentilly

Oak Park Civic Association –

* founded 1950

**Boundaries:** Mirabeau Avenue, Paris Avenue, Robert E. Lee Boulevard, St. Bernard Avenue

**Area:** Park-like setting with live oak trees and green space

**OPCA meetings** – first Monday of the month

- OPCA is the primary communication vehicle (via e-mail and newspaper notices) to a neighbor database of over 100 residents.
- OPCA has participated in park and school clean-up efforts, held a Christmas Social and a Meet the Candidates session, and provided Road Home and other rebuilding informational speakers and brochures to residents.
- OPCA was active in the historic landmark determination process that allowed for the development of Holy Cross School, and averted the possibility of 20 acres of blight in the neighborhood.
- Proposed future activities will include replacing Oak Park sign on median, repair and restoration of playground equipment, reducing blighted housing and overgrown grass in the neighborhood, lobbying for access to improved public schools in the area, assisting residents in rebuilding, plus social and civic activities for the association (coffee shop socials, potluck dinners and block parties).

Lower Gentilly Neighborhood Development Association

**Boundaries:** On the north by Gentilly Boulevard, on the east by Clematis Street, on the south by Humanity Street, and on the west by Elysian Fields Avenue.

LGNDA is a family-oriented Gentilly neighborhood characterized by stability, homeownership and low crime. In fact, we have one of the lowest crime rates in the city. Our mission statement is to improve the quality of life in our community by developing better schools and educational programs to meet the needs of our youth, and improving health care, housing, and jobs for the future.

Ghena – Gentilly Heights East Neighborhood Association

**Boundaries:** Mirabeau Ave to Gentilly Blvd and St. Anthony to Elysian Fields Ave.

**GHENA Meetings** – 3rd Monday of every month at Dillard University. Please join us for our meetings. For additional info email us at ghena2b@yahoo.com

Is dedicated to restoring our Community; by focusing our attention and efforts on Safety, Aesthetics, and Environment. We work closely with the Mayor’s Office, City Council, NOPD Crime Prevention and Quality of Life Officers. Additionally, we are partnered with the Dillard University CDC which is supportive of our efforts, and has developed a couple of key projects based on our community needs. We look forward to working with these resources and more in bringing about changes for a wholesome Family oriented environment that we can all appreciate and be proud to call home.

Virgil Park

**Boundaries:** London Avenue canal along Gentilly Boulevard to Paris Avenue, Paris Avenue to Virgil.

**Meetings:** Second Friday of the month at 6:30 p.m.

- Virgil Park has completed its first Neighborhood Watch training since Hurricane Katrina. The training was conducted by Officer Tran from the New Orleans Police Department.
- Virgil Park has two community gardens. There is space available for anyone interested in starting a vegetable garden. Contact Peggy Braud at (504) 214-3664.

Gentilly Sugar Hill

**Boundaries:** Gentilly Boulevard to Elysian Fields Avenue to Florida Avenue

**Meetings:** Third Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m. St. Leo the Great Catholic Church auditorium, 2916 Paris Ave.

- Quintus Jett, Ph.D., a professor at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, and his students have been collecting data to determine the rate of population return to the Gentilly area and using a color-code system to label houses as either occupied, gutted, under construction, blighted or demolished. Sugar Hill residents assisting with the survey are Stanislaus Rachal, Debra Joseph, Iris Beck and Tony Dalgo.

Indian Village Neighborhood Association

**Boundaries:**

- Residents of Indian Village are committed and our goal is to make sure that we bring back the neighborhood association to an even greater level. We believe the best approach will be “neighbors watching out for one another.” Before Hurricane Katrina, we were a close-knit community and are striving to develop opportunities to become closer.
- Block captains have been established for every street. The captains are responsible for monitoring activities on their block and sharing information. A captain will also ensure that the elderly and needy are taken care of should another weather event occur. Brady Skinner, vice president of IVNA, is the captain for the entire neighborhood. Please contact him if you would like to become a Block Captain.
- Indian Village will soon have a link to the Gentilly Civic Improvement Association. This will be a good source of information for residents and former residents who want updates on rebuilding efforts.
- Thanks to the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary for providing a meeting location and allowing Wanda Gregg to assist us with projects, including a major clean-up at the beginning of the year.
- Thanks to guest speakers who attend our meetings and are making a difference in the area. Councilwoman Cynthia Morrell, Sheriff Marlin Gusman, Entergy representatives, and others have been involved in helping us to bring our neighborhood back.

Please help us to be an active association by attending meetings, getting to know your block captain, and most importantly, getting to know your neighbors.
NeighborWorks America announces $300,000 in Community Building & Organizing Grants to Gulf Coast Partners

Biloxi, Mississippi – NeighborWorks America awarded $30,000 grants each to 10 nonprofit organizations to strengthen their capacity to engage Gulf Coast residents in local rebuilding efforts. Resident participation is critical to ensuring equitable and inclusive redevelopment that results in economically and socially vibrant communities.

The grants were awarded to the following organizations through NeighborWorks America’s Community Building & Organizing Initiative:

- Boat People SOS
- Broadmoor Improvement Association
- Dillard University CDC
- Gulf Coast Latin American Association
- Gulf Coast Community Services Center,
- Lafayette Restoration Center
- Mary Queen of Viet Nam CDC
- Housing 2010
- United Houma Nation
- Visions of Hope

Launched in 1995 to enhance the role of residents revitalizing communities, the NeighborWorks Community Building & Organizing Initiative provides grants, technical assistance, peer sharing and training opportunities to local NeighborWorks organizations and community-based partners to engage residents in community development. Initiative resources support resident leadership development and community building and organizing efforts.

NeighborWorks is one of the country’s largest housing and community development organizations and is actively engaged in Gulf Coast rebuilding efforts. NeighborWorks is supporting an array of rebuilding activities across the Gulf Coast to meet its rebuilding goals, including the development or rehabilitation of 10,000 affordable housing units and direct investment of $200 million to projects in the region.

NeighborWorks America CEO Ken Wade said, "Residents must have a seat at the table to ensure that rebuilding efforts meet the needs of all families. The job at hand is enormous, but I’m proud to say that NeighborWorks America, together with NeighborWorks organizations, other nonprofit groups and government agencies, has achieved positive early results for families devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita – we will rebuild the Gulf Coast region one project and one community at a time.”

Wade explained that NeighborWorks America and its partners have more than 4,500 affordable housing units in development or predevelopment.

Moreover, the corporation and its capital markets affiliate, Neighborhood Housing Services of America, have raised $96 million, nearly half of the $200 million goal.

NeighborWorks America is managing its Gulf Coast rebuilding efforts from two regional offices in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Jackson, Mississippi. The offices are staffed by James Ross and Wes Miller respectively.

About NeighborWorks America

NeighborWorks America creates opportunities for people to improve their lives and strengthen their communities by providing access to homeownership and to safe and affordable rental housing. To date, we have assisted nearly 850,000 low- to moderate-income families with their housing needs. Much of our success is achieved through our support of the NeighborWorks network by more than 235 community development organizations working in 4,400 urban, suburban and rural communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In the last five years, NeighborWorks organizations have generated more than $12.4 billion in reinvestment in these communities. NeighborWorks America is the nation’s leading trainer of community development and affordable housing professionals.
For the first time, Dillard University Community Development Corporation (DUCDC) and several neighborhoods pulled together to host the Gentilly “Night Out Against Crime” on Tuesday, August 7, 2007.

“The participation was outstanding,” said Nick Harris, assistant vice president of Community and Economic Development at Dillard University. “We were able to reach more people this way – particularly our youth through education and mentoring.”

The objective of the DUCDC, a non-profit organization, is to improve housing conditions, bring businesses to the area and improve quality of life in the Gentilly area.

Harris was responsible for bringing everyone together in an effort to deter crime. Members of the neighborhood associations — Gentilly Heights East, Gentilly Heights Voscoville, Indian Village, Lower Gentilly, Oak Park, Sugarhill and Virgil Park — were there to answer questions and offer advice on safety and rebuilding challenges.

The general consensus from those in attendance is that more must be done to engage young people in constructive activities. Big Brothers/Big Sisters, New Orleans Sheriff’s Office, Brotherhood, Inc., Boy Scouts of America, Crimestoppers and Cops for Kids shared information about their programs.

Bethany United Methodist Church, Dillard University Nursing Department, Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, Edgewater Baptist Church, FBI and Total Community Action were also in attendance, sharing information on health, the environment and housing.

Harris said about 300 people participated in the “Night Out” event. The next crime prevention outreach program is set for Saturday, February 23, 2008 at Dillard University and will be hosted by the university’s Greek organizations. For more information about the DUCDC, contact Nick Harris or Kimic Clay at (504)-816-4205.