

Garden District Association

**POST OFFICE BOX 50836
NEW ORLEANS, LA 70150-0836**

September 7, 2010

Mr. Keith Twitchell
Committee for a Better New Orleans
4902 Canal Street, Suite 300
New Orleans, LA 70119

Re: CPP

Dear Keith:

The Planning Advisory Group for the Garden District Association met earlier this week to review and discuss the most recent New Orleans Citizen Participation Program Draft Guidelines and Standards. The consensus of the group was that we all agree with the merits of a citizen participation process, but the program set forth is premature – too cumbersome for it to be successful, too restrictive to the existing active neighborhood organizations and too costly for it to be a realistic solution in today’s City Hall.

While the Garden District Association has long been a vocal advocate for changes to the city’s planning and zoning systems, specifically as they relate to earlier notification and resident input, the suggested rules here seem only to set into place a certain air of distrust, and many more layers of bureaucracy between residents, resident-led groups and the elected and/or appointed officials. The result of such a system would no doubt be more time-consuming, expensive and laden with red-tape for all parties – particularly neighborhood associations and developers.

And while we fully support efforts towards capacity-building in the many neighborhoods that need such help, we believe that the intricate regulations in the proposed CPP model would hamper the ability of long functioning organizations such as ours to effectively meet the needs of our neighborhood residents.

We suggest that the New Orleans Citizen Participation Program Draft Guidelines and Standards be withdrawn and replaced with a simpler, less costly CPP model that phases in the basic steps towards enhanced community involvement that would include:

- Earlier notification to all neighborhood groups and interested parties directly impacted by a project or zoning change;
- A variety of outreach methods (not just electronic) employed by the city and the organizations to notify neighbors.

- Ample opportunity for neighborhood groups to have input with the City Planning Commission staff on the project prior to a staff report being prepared.
- Formalized positions presented to the city agency handling the issue by the neighborhood organizations impacted by the issue at hand.
- Creation of a simple web based information system that covers all matters relating to planning, permitting, and zoning that is easily and always accessible to all citizens to follow the progress of a case or docket, and means for those without internet access to receive the same information.

We appreciate your efforts in preparing this document, but believe that its complexity is premature, and that a citizen participation plan would be more successful ultimately if it started simple, and phased in bureaucracy as needed.

Sincerely,

Shelley Landrieu
GDA Executive Director

cc Mayor Mitch Landrieu
City Council Members
City Planning Commission Members
City Planning Commission staff
GDA Planning Advisory Group
Neighborhood Planning Network
Algiers Neighborhood Improvement Assoc.
Lafayette Square Association
Central City Partnership
Central City Renaissance Alliance
Hollygrove Neighbors
Lakeview Civic Improvement Association
Vieux Carre Property Owners Association
Irish Channel Neighborhood Association
Touro Bouligny Association
Baronne Street Neighborhood Association
St. Charles Avenue Association
Preservation Resource Center
Coliseum Square Association
Audubon Area Zoning Association
Upper Hurstville Association
Audubon Riverside Neighborhood Association
Broadmoor Improvement Association
Hurstville Neighborhood Improvement Association
Gentilly Civic Improvement Association
Midcity Neighborhood Organization

Old Algiers /Riverview Association
Carrollton Riverbend Neighborhood Association
The New Freret
Fauborg Marigny Improvement Association
French Quarter Citizens
Hoffman Triangle
Treme Neighborhood Association