



# North Rampart Main Street, Inc.

NEW ORLEANS

## NRMSI Annual Report As of June 30, 2010

North Rampart Main Street (NRMSI) was created in late 2006 to partner with the North Rampart community businesses and residents following the award of an Urban Main Street grant. The NRMSI Board established four traditional committees for Main Street programs: Design, Economic Restructuring, Organization, and Promotion, utilizing the Four Points Approach® as established by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. North Rampart Main Street is recognized as a nationally accredited Main Street.



The initial four years for NRMSI have been successful, though challenging. Our accomplishments have centered on our collaboration endeavors with numerous organizations, festival events, economic rehabilitation efforts, the re-opening of Armstrong Park and the Mahalia Jackson Theatre, initiating a farmer's market on North Rampart, gaining a Cultural Products District designation for our corridor, completing a market study, participating in the City of New Orleans' Master Plan and the Streetcar Initiative for the North Rampart Street Corridor.

### **Rebuilding North Rampart: New Businesses**

In 2008, Discoveries Furniture and Finds, 318 N. Rampart, opened in the spring, and the Bar Tonique, 820 N. Rampart, opened in the fall. The Texaco station, at Governor Nichols and North Rampart was closed after Hurricane Katrina. In 2008 they re-opened as a Key's Fuel Mart gas station and convenience store, and boasts to have the best fried chicken in the neighborhood!

In 2009, The Decadence Shoppe & Café, 806 N. Rampart opened as the little neighborhood place to fulfill your sweet tooth or grab a quick sandwich. NRMSI assisted the owners in working through the maze of obtaining the proper permits. We also worked with City Works and Sherwin Williams Paints to donate more than 18 gallons of paint assisting the decadence Shoppe with the costs of opening a new business.

Also, in 2009, local hotelier Blake Miller purchased and renovated the French Quarter Courtyard, 1101-13 North Rampart. Mr. Miller performed a substantial makeover, repainting all the rooms, varnishing the wood floors and adding new landscaping and patio furniture for the pool and brick courtyard areas. The French Quarter Courtyard has 51 guest rooms.

In April 2010, Tom Wood announced plans to open an Ace hardware store in the 700 block of North Rampart. The old French Quarter Mary's Hardware is relocating from Bourbon Street. NRMSI staff worked with the Louisiana State tax incentive division to help process the application for Historic Tax Credits. The two buildings are being renovated, and should be open in the coming year, bringing new retail traffic to North Rampart.



French Quarter Citizens, Inc. (FQC) and the Vieux Carre Property Owners, Residents, and Associates (VCPORA) maintain their offices on North Rampart. The New Orleans Athletic Club has completed a well designed, landscaped and secure parking area next to their building, replacing the unsightly and abandoned Goodyear Tire store.

### **Economic Rehabilitation Initiatives: Facade Grants**

In cooperation with Louisiana Main Street, NRMSI has awarded five facade grants since its inception in 2006. The grants are aimed at improving the appearance of the North Rampart corridor by encouraging good design and sound preservation practices. The facade grants, totaling \$17,000, combined with the matching funds, have produced more than \$100,000 in improvements.

The grants recipients:

- o **St. Mark's United Methodist Church**, 1130 N. Rampart Street
- o **Meauxbar Bistro**, 942 N. Rampart
- o **Wolfe's**, corner of N. Rampart and Dumaine Streets
- o **Dr. Mike's Animal House**, 1120 N. Rampart Street (see before and after photos below)
- o **The Old Funky Butt building**, 714 N. Rampart Street



Before



After

### **Cultural Products District**

NRMSI was instrumental in gaining Cultural Products designation for our corridor from the City and the State. This will provide tax credits for historic preservation and state sales tax relief, by not having to pay sales tax on any art deemed original and one-of-a-kind. It allows income and corporate franchise tax credits for eligible expenses for rehabilitation of owner-occupied or revenue generating historic structures in a Cultural District.

### **Marketing Study**

The marketing study was prepared for NRMSI and coordinated by Todd Barman, Program Officer of the National Trust Main Street Center with assistance from Sarah Benoit, Louisiana Main Street, and Brian Furness, NRMSI Economic Restructuring chair.

The report was funded by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It was based upon meetings and interviews with a varied cross section of individuals and groups; tours of North Rampart, the French Quarter, and the Faubourg Tremé neighborhoods. An extensive on-site evaluation of the commercial district and examination of background materials resulted in the final market study.

The market research interpretations and applications for NRMSI are organized according to the Four Points Approach©. NRMSI is using many points of the survey in yearly work plans for all of the committees.

### **Armstrong Park & Mahalia Jackson Theatre**

After more than three years the rebuilding efforts to the Mahalia Jackson Theatre were completed and opened to the public with spectacular results. The combined efforts of the New Orleans Opera Guild, the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and the New Orleans Ballet Association produced events which began in January 2009 and are still continuing to this day.

Phase I of repairs to Armstrong Park have been completed. This included landscaping, installation of better lighting, the restoration of the Armstrong Arch at the entrance to the park on North Rampart and finally, the refurbishment of the brick sidewalk along the promenade of the Park along North Rampart.



Phase II brought the Park up to the ADA Standards and restored the walking bridge to glorious splendor. Phase III was expedited to open the Roots of Music Cultural Sculpture Garden in April 2010. However, after the opening, serious construction problems were discovered, the City of New Orleans removed the current contractor and a new contractor will have to complete this Phase over the next year. This delay is disappointing, but collectively these improvements created a renewed interest in the activities along North Rampart and there has been an increase in foot traffic around the park, as well as inquiries about available properties.

### **Streetscapes**

NRMSI is working with the City to repair the light standards on the neutral ground from Canal Street to Esplanade Avenue and replace the broken globes and bulbs. By doing so, a safer

atmosphere has been created with the additional lighting. This is an on-going program.

Covenant House has provided and maintains neutral ground plantings in front of their property, that improve the street's appearance. In 2008 we participated in a City-Works project to "light-up" businesses and residences on the street during the holidays and we are likely to bring back this same program for the 2010 holiday season.

NRMSI worked with the city to assure that the new plantings along North Rampart from Canal Street to Esplanade Avenue, and beyond, conformed to the plantings already located along the neutral ground. Each block on the neutral ground received approximately three to four large palms and crepe myrtles. The NRMSI Design Committee also worked with the City's contractor to mark and remove any unsightly or damaged plantings, as well as plantings that may have created line of sight problem traffic. This planting has given the neutral ground and the entire street a much "softer" look.

### **The Marketplace at Armstrong Park**

NRMSI worked with Covenant House and the Historic Faubourg Treme Association to initiate a Farmer's Market at Armstrong Park on North Rampart Street, at the corners of St. Peter and North Rampart. This collaboration was an effort of many groups along the North Rampart corridor. *(Follow the Marketplace's progress in the photos posted on the North Rampart Main Street facebook page.)*

The first market on July 9, 2010, was considered a huge success. The market provides fresh food, cultural products and



music to an area that does not have access to a fresh food grocery store. The Marketplace is scheduled every Friday from 3:00-6:00 p.m. and will include educational programming for the youth.



**Fundraising Activities** On June 19, 2010 NRMSI sponsored a fundraiser/party event at the historic New Orleans Athletic Club on North Rampart. *A SpeakEasy Affair! A Benefit for a Swell Cause!* We had many co-sponsors and partners, and the event was a huge success, netting NRMSI over \$10,000. We are moving forward to have this fundraiser become an annual event.

### **Festivals**

On Saturday November 21, 2009 we orchestrated the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual North RampART Festival to promote the creative arts (music, painting, photography, music, and the culinary arts) in and around Armstrong Park on North Rampart. RampART was well planned; the weather was uncooperative, leading to the re-organization for the 4<sup>th</sup> annual RampART event.

The Promotions Committee is currently in the planning phase of the 4<sup>th</sup> RampART Festival celebration for November 13, 2010, as part of the Main to Main program.

Through the RampART program, which directly affects the youth in our corridor, we are able to provide art supplies to McDonogh #15 in the French Quarter, Craig Elementary in the Historic Faubourg Tremé, and the North Rampart Community Center. This program includes an art show competition, an exhibit where all of the art will be displayed in a prominent area for one month, and an awards luncheon, honoring their accomplishments. Our goal is to work closely with these young artists to instill and develop entrepreneurial skills as a foundation for their growth.

The Board of Directors of North Rampart Main Street feels that it is important to work closely with other organizations and collaborate on projects throughout the year. We plan that once the Park re-opens (proposed for 2011) and the Satchmo SummerFest returns to Armstrong Park, NRMSI will once again be a sponsor of the Louis Armstrong's birthday celebration.

### **Living on North Rampart**

Four new condominium developments – one in the 200 block, the Jazz Condo Association, one in the 600 block (see before and after photos below), one in the 1300 block, the Colonial Condo Association, and the Krauss Condos nearby on Basin Street – are now mostly occupied. Together these residential developments have added many new residents and expanded demand for retail stores and services.

Many of the businesses located along the North Rampart corridor are mixed-use, with commercial space on the first floor and residential space on the upper floors. This is a long standing tradition in our New Orleans culture.



NRMSI will continue to work with Vieux Carre Commission and the City of New Orleans to stimulate efforts to improve properties along North Rampart by working with property owners regarding façade grants, identifying prospective tenants, applying for tax credits or other assistance programs, in hopes of improving buildings that are in need of maintenance or may be in stages of deterioration.

### **North Rampart Streetcar Initiative** **COMING SOON!!!!**

NRMSI is working with the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and many other organizations to promote a street car line along North Rampart. RTA is now optimistic that a French Quarter loop route (with a spur along St. Claude to Press St.) will be funded and work could begin as early as next year (2011). A new streetcar line along the corridor will have a tremendous impact on the redevelopment of North Rampart. We have requested that



Proposed N. Rampart streetcar route and bike lane. (Image courtesy of Alan Drake)

RTA include in the project cost the replacement of modern light standards with the historic ones that already line more than half of the corridor.

NRMSI has met with the consultants, engineers and architects involved in the streetcar expansion to insure our input in the design of the line, stops and shelters, as it corresponds with the historic charm of our community. We will continue to work with RTA and their consultants until this program is complete.

NRMSI is also working with City and State officials to have North Rampart de-designated as a truck route. This may decrease the amount of unnecessary heavy vehicular traffic on the street due to the reduced speed limit for trucks (10 miles per hour less than automobiles) and it should reduce the vibration damage to our historic buildings. These efforts will make the street more pedestrian friendly.

**Saenger Theatre Re-opening**  
**COMING SOON!!!!**



Built in 1927 at the corner of Canal and North Rampart streets, the Saenger Theatre was known as an ornate movie house before a 1979 makeover transformed it into the city's showcase for touring theater companies. The Saenger Theatre has been closed since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Renovations are slated to begin soon for the re-opening of this magnificent theatre in 2011.

**NRMSI Partners and Supporters:**

- Louisiana Main Street Association (LMS) – Supports the Main Street initiatives
- National Main Street Association (NMS) – Member of the associations, they also support Main Street initiatives and is responsible for certifying Main Streets.
- State of Louisiana Office of Culture, Recreation & Tourism (CRT)
- The Brown Foundation
- The Keller Family Foundation
- French Quarter Citizens (FQC) – Supports NRMSI mission and provides financial support
- Vieux Carre Property Owners & Residents Association (VCPORA) – Supports NRMSI mission and provides financial support
- French Quarter Business Association (FQBA) Supports NRMSI mission
- Esplanade Ridge & Treme Civic Association (ERTCA) Supports NRMSI mission
- Historic Faubourg Treme Association (HTFA) Supports NRMSI mission
- Organization for the Renaissance of Rampart (ORR) Supports NRMSI mission

- New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation (NOJHF) Our organizations work together on special events and they support our mission
- Downtown Development District (DDD) NRMSI is the only Main Street in Louisiana that has been invited to be part of the DDD (Louisiana statewide) Coalition
- Whitney Bank – Community sponsor and supports NRMSI Mission
- Covenant House of New Orleans – Our organizations work together on the weekly farmer’s market
- The Arts Council of New Orleans
- City Works Organization - Supports NRMSI mission
- New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation - Supports NRMSI mission

**Board Overview:**

Laurie Toups, Executive Director (Paid Staff)

**All board members are volunteers:**

David Speights, Co-President/Treasurer (VCPORA)

Susan Klein, Co-President (FQC)

Lori Herbert, Vice-President, Organization Committee Chair (ORR)

Edith Dunn, Secretary & Alternate

June Rogers, Design Committee Chair (ERCTA)

Naydja Bynum, Board Member (HFTA)

Leslie Perrin, Board Member & Alternate

Blake Miller, Representing (ORR)

William More, Representing Businesses on Rampart

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