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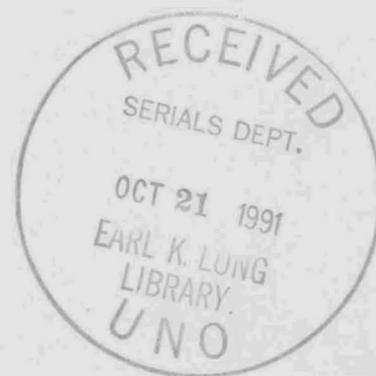
Cook, Christine C., "Improving public housing in the midst of political realities: a case study of the Iberville Development, New Orleans" (1991). *College of Urban and Public Affairs (CUPA) Working Papers, 1991-2000*. Paper 21.
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Working paper (University of New Orleans. Division of
Urban Research and Policy Studies)

**Improving Public Housing in the Midst of Political
Realities: A Case Study of the Iberville
Development, New Orleans**

Christine C. Cook



Working Paper No. 6

February 1991

Division of Urban Research and Policy Studies

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IMPROVING PUBLIC HOUSING IN THE MIDST OF POLITICAL REALITIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE IBERVILLE DEVELOPMENT, NEW ORLEANS

INTRODUCTION

Public housing in New Orleans is home to ten percent of the total population of the city. Population estimates for the ten developments and the 1,697 scattered sites, range from a low of 40,000 to upwards of 55,000 residents¹, making the New Orleans Housing Authority (HANO) the sixth largest in the United States (HANO, 1989; HANO, 1988). These developments, like many of their counterparts in other large, old cities, are suffering from lack of modernization funds, management problems, and spiraling rates of crime that are increasingly violent in nature². HANO has estimated its units need \$ 9.8 million in renovations (HANO, 1987b). Even after hiring a private management company in 1989, HANO is still considered among the nation's worst managed housing authority. A search is currently underway to replace the management again. According to a recent report, based on figures from Summer 1990, 32 percent of all murders in New Orleans occurred on public housing development sites (Philbin, 1990).

One public housing development, Iberville, has been the subject of particular interest among local developers, businesses, and city officials. Although there are several developments in far more need of attention, Iberville has been the target of much public debate because of its location -- adjacent to the French Quarter and Upper Canal Street, the city's major tourist and commercial districts. The Iberville site is prime real estate and dominant downtown business interests have pressured city officials to consider possible alternative uses.

This pressure by the locally powerful commercial interests in downtown New Orleans resulted in the formation of a Task Force and Steering Committee, convened by Mayor Barthelemy in 1988, to study the Iberville development and surrounds. The goal of the study combined two objectives, to "improve the quality of life" for residents and enhance the economic development opportunities in the area". When the members of the Task Force and Steering Committee met for the first time they were charged by the Mayor to develop strategies and recommendations that would result in an innovative model for public housing, creating a partnership of development interests, area residents, and the central city business community.

This paper describes the findings of the Iberville housing study and analyzes the politics surrounding its inception and completion. The organization and efforts of the Iberville Housing Development Corporation also are evaluated. The Development Corporation, a nonprofit, was the direct outgrowth of the study and ensuing report to the Mayor by the Task Force and Steering Committee. It was the mechanism recommended to ensure implementation of the goals and strategies, by the means and methods stated in the report. The formation of a development corporation to implement goals on behalf of a public housing development, composed of both residents and community representatives, is unusual. It has implications as a solution for other large, urban public housing authorities and developments that are attempting revitalization, instead of razing, of units.

While improvements in Iberville development may be possible through this mechanism, prevailing local interests and the politics of the Development Corporation itself will necessarily shape the initiatives undertaken on behalf of the residents and the commercial sector. Thus, a last concern of this paper is to speculate on how these interests and politics will affect the achievement of the overall goal of "improvement of

the quality of life for Iberville residents and enhancement of the economic development opportunities in the area."

The stage is first set by examining the business interests that have orchestrated the development of downtown New Orleans over the last decade³. A brief survey of the systematic isolation of the Iberville development and encroaching pressures on adjacent neighborhoods are examined to show the milieu in which the Iberville Task Force study was conducted and the Development Corporation is now operating.

BACKGROUND

DOWNTOWN INTERESTS "MANAGING GROWTH"

In 1975 a Growth Management Plan (GMP) was completed by the City of New Orleans and the Chamber of Commerce. "The cornerstone of the 1975 GMP was the recommendation to create a special taxing district which would strengthen the central business district ... " (GMP, 1987:160). The Downtown Development District, governed by a nine-member Board of Commissioners who are appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council, has as its primary responsibility preparation of an annual plan specifying the public improvements, facilities, and services proposed for the District along with projected costs. Subsequent to City Council approval, the District monitors the implementation of the plan. The DDD has at its disposal funds generated by a special ad valorem tax on real property in the CBD, amounting to \$975,000 in 1976, and \$3.5 million in 1987.

As early as 1975, it must have been clear to the business establishment of New Orleans that the Iberville housing development was deleterious to their interests. As

Figure 1 shows, the taxing district, under the auspices of the DDD, has as its eastern boundary, Iberville street -- the western boundary of the Iberville housing development. Establishing the boundaries in this way effectively closed off merchants on Rampart Street, as well as Iberville residents, from consideration by the DDD in its planning and expenditure of funds.

Subsequently, however, the downtown commercial interests represented by the DDD found that excluding Iberville from the District was not effective in keeping the problems of public housing from encroaching on them. In 1987, in an updated growth management plan (GMP Update:169), the following was noted

"The District has two neighbors on its downtown side across Iberville Street: the Iberville housing project and the Vieux Carre. The Iberville housing project, while once a model, has experienced serious problems in recent years as have many housing projects across the nation. The project seems to be a tremendous missed opportunity for the benefit of its residents and the CBD."

The 1987 GMP Update designated four areas of growth, one of which was the upper Canal Street area, and included five additional goals for inclusion in the DDD's scope of work. One of these goals was to protect and reinforce the traditional retail functions of Canal Street (GMP Update, 1987). Toward that end the Update Report recommended

"that a joint effort be undertaken by the District, the City and the Housing Authority (HANO) to examine ways to improve the lives of the residents. Issues which should be examined include the physical configuration of the site, management and potential owner-occupancy, and the long term future of the project (GMP Update, 1987:169)."

The GMP Update further implored that the study include improvement in the "accessibility and visual environment" of Iberville Street. Noticeably missing from the 1987 Update was any suggestion of designating the Iberville area as part of the DDD.

The Mayor and City Council embraced the 1975 Growth Management Plan and the 1987 Update. Other observers of New Orleans' "managed growth" have been

more critical. Downtown development has been characterized as "uneven" (Smith and Keller, 1983; Whelan, 1989). Smith and Keller (1983:139-140) write that the "managed growth" of New Orleans is ... merely symbolic, masking the speculative, uneven nature of CBD development. The Downtown Development District has used the GMP to develop in already high-intensity use areas and specify large-scale commercial uses of space in the CBD".

An "extreme reliance" on federal funding in the 1970s has been, at least in part, responsible for the unevenness of the redevelopment⁴. Because adherence to federal guidelines shapes the context of redevelopment, other needs, particularly in the area of supportive services, go unattended for lack of funds. "[T]he major emphasis of economic development activities [in New Orleans] has been downtown revitalization ... [but] relatively few redevelopment efforts have centered on the city's neighborhoods (Whelan, 1989:233). "Downtown property owners, real-estate developers, and firms serving these interests have gained the most from downtown revitalization" (Smith and Keller, 1983:141). Rarely do the redevelopment policies address the need for employment, housing, and education of the many poor citizens of the city's neighborhoods.

The City Planning Commission (CPC) plays a strong role in facilitating the DDD's objectives in the downtown area. It appears that the CPC is unable, or unwilling, to advocate for development efforts in which benefits might accrue to a general public good. Any "vision for the city" will have little input from the public sector, including City Hall (Whelan and Young, 1989:20).

"All forms of private development are welcomed as a boon to the city and its taxpayers. Alternative uses of space that might be of general public benefit are automatically discounted as no more than a drain on the city's revenue base" (Smith and Keller, 1983:140).

Neither the pattern of public expenditures nor the downtown revitalization show a

commitment to investment in human and social capital. The fiscal crisis of the 1980s continues unabated as New Orleans moves into the 1990s, intensified by the slack oil economy, perpetuated by a reliance on tourism, and exacerbated by a steady decline in federal programs and funds on which the city had come to rely. Poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy are the inevitable outcome of the structure of this political economy in which key elites and powerful business interests accept and promote economic growth as the best response to the social crisis of inequality (Smith and Keller, 1983:163).

Despite these criticisms, Sidney Barthelemy, the Mayor of New Orleans since 1986, has said he "feels it is important for the private sector to take the lead in creating the economic development initiatives for the city" (Whelan and Young, 1989:20). It is no wonder, then, that when the DDD requested the Mayor appoint a Task Force to study the Iberville public housing development, the request did not go unheeded. Neither is it surprising that the Mayor's choice to co-chair the Iberville Task Force and the Steering Committee was Donald Mintz, chair of the DDD board of directors and of the 1987 Growth Management Plan Update Committee. The other co-chair was a "politically correct" social worker who had campaigned for the Mayor. As a black woman it could be expected that she would be viewed by the community as an appropriate choice as well.

IBERVILLE, AN ISLAND IN THE CBD

Iberville is located in the shadow of Canal Street, the major commercial corridor for New Orleans (Figure 1). The public housing development itself, in spite of needing an estimated \$11.5 million in renovation, is handsome. The architectural style of the

buildings is similar to that of 19th century row houses, with gabled ends, galleries and ironwork. Streets are laid out to minimize traffic through the development and to allow for green space for courtyards and recreational areas. It is a testimony to the quality of the original plan that some people have suggested that Iberville be redeveloped for "upscale" condominiums, similar to those not far away in the "warehouse district". The development, built for "whites" when segregated housing was mandated by federal policy, was begun in 1940 and completed in May 1941. The site was chosen because of the high percentage of substandard housing in the area. The 1940 census indicated that 41 percent of the houses in the area had no running water and about one fourth were overcrowded. It also reported that 93 percent of the population in the area was black. Nevertheless, only whites who lived in the area before demolition were given priority for the rental units in Iberville housing development, upon completion of the "project". There are 75, two- and three-story walk-up, apartment buildings containing a total of 858 units. Today the development houses 2,232 people.

Over its five decades, the Iberville housing development, once considered a fine place to live and model housing for the poor, has been systematically isolated from other residential neighborhoods in the area. It is tightly bounded on all sides by nonresidential uses, including major city arteries, an elevated expressway, a cemetery, dilapidated warehouses, infrequently used railroad tracks, and a Municipal Auditorium. The only potential area for "unlocking" Iberville is to its immediate east.

It has been proposed that buying the railroad right-of-way, to the east, and razing the warehouses there, would allow for the development of green space, recreational areas, small cooperative commercial opportunities for residents and/or low density, low cost housing. A counter proposal, however, has suggested that this area to the east be used for another interstate highway ramp for "high occupancy vehicles". This latter

proposal, which is gaining momentum at the state level and has City Planning Commission acceptance, is seen by many as the final nail in the coffin, completing the isolation of Iberville.

Another suggested redevelopment effort to the east of the Iberville housing development, across Rampart St. in Louis Armstrong Park, is being watched closely by the community. A theme park, Tivoli Gardens, modeled after the gardens in Denmark, was first proposed by the Barthelemy administration in 1988, although redevelopment plans for the area date back even farther⁵. Talk about redeveloping Armstrong Park makes surrounding neighbors bristle. Many homes in the Treme neighborhood, adjacent to Iberville, were razed in the 1960s for the 31-acre park, entertainment center, and a cultural center which never materialized. Ironically one area of the park, called Congo Square for the slaves that were sold on the site, is a fortress surrounded by a large fence "which seems designed to keep locals [the intended beneficiaries] at bay" (Gill, 1990; Philbin, 1990).

A counter proposal to Tivoli Gardens was recently reported that is also designed to transform the unused Armstrong Park. A local musician, record producer and entrepreneur is suggesting that the site be used for the recording industry, "a mecca for the movie and music industries, with studios, labs, a museum, an education center and satellite links to bring New Orleans music, Mardi Gras and other events to [an] international audience ..." (Gill, 1990:B-9). New Orleans long known for its contribution to jazz, it is suggested, could experience "a permanent resurgence of the highly lucrative entertainment industry in its natural home" (Gill, 1990). Predictably, the proposal received a cold response from the Mayor (Bagert, 1990:B-6).

By all accounts the current park is largely unused, except by the "criminal element", at least in part because the city has found it "both costly to operate and

difficult to lease under city ownership" (Whelan, 1989:230). When the Mayor argues that the Tivoli Park and Gardens will revitalize the area, increase employment opportunities, and bring more "family" tourists to New Orleans, suspicions among neighboring residents are raised. To them, Tivoli Gardens means increased parking problems, more low paying, "dead-end" jobs, and potential "gentrification", increasing rents, property values, and displacement. Whatever the outcome of the debate, it is clear that the use of the Armstrong Park site will affect the Iberville development. It will either further restrict residents to "their side of the tracks" or offer a handful of meager paying jobs to residents, in a city where too many households already rely on paltry resources. Conversely, the Iberville development continues to affect the Armstrong Park site -- fear of crime and proximity to a low income public housing development, undoubtedly, have been part of its failure to date.

Plans for commercial developments seem never to include Iberville residents or address the needs they have for employment, child care, transportation, shopping and so on. Neither the controversial Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) project, "Canal Place" -- downtown mixed-used development, including retail, hotel, and commercial businesses -- nor the Rouse Company's Riverwalk on the 1984 World's Fair site were ever viewed from the Iberville resident's perspective, despite the fact that these developments affected Canal Street -- the most important economic and social resource to residents. Along with the aquarium and park on a 10 acre site along the riverfront, scheduled to open in Fall 1990, these developments are seen by developers and city officials as helping to provide jobs and taxes needed by the city to sustain itself (Whelan, 1989:230). However, no study has yet been done to show whether, and to what extent, the jobs or the taxes benefitted the majority of residents in New Orleans, its low and moderate income citizens.

As in other places around the nation, residents of public housing in New Orleans, and in the Iberville development specifically, are viewed as "a part of the urban problem, not as a means to a solution (Leigh and Mitchell, 1988). Upper Canal Street merchants, for example, charge that the crime committed by residents of Iberville is costing them a great deal and that the "fear of crime" threatens the tourist industry, on which the city so heavily relies. Residents counter that criminals use the development -- hallways and vacant units -- as a haven and that they too are under assault. They claim that the criminals are usually non-residents. This claim is confirmed by police records which indicate that 84 percent of the people arrested for crimes in the area were not Iberville residents.

Crime reported in the area around Iberville is high as indicated in Table 1⁶. In all, 1,050 crimes were reported in 1987 in the Upper Canal Street and Iberville development area. This represented, however, a decline of 13 percent in reported crime from 1986. In the Upper Canal Street and Iberville development area, the reported crimes were most likely to be auto burglary, auto theft, theft, and purse snatching. These activities represented 67 percent of the reported crime. Unfortunately, recent reports suggest that the nature of the criminal activity in the Iberville public housing development area is becoming more violent, is related to increased drug activity, and involves residents of public housing⁷.

It should be clear that the Iberville Housing Development, despite its central city location, is a virtual island in the downtown. Neither residents, management, nor the City Planning Commission have had any real input into the planning or development of the surrounding area. Instead, powerful downtown development interests have shaped the area.

IBERVILLE TASK FORCE AND STEERING COMMITTEE

Many local observers believed that the formation of the Iberville Housing Task Force signaled the beginning of the development's demise. Rumors seemed to indicate that the Task Force was potentially a "political hot potato". Although the Mayor attempted to calm the fears of Iberville residents, many still believed that the task force was created to find a viable way to "reduce the density" or to change the character of the development by housing only elderly and handicapped households, instead of families as is currently the case. The foundation of these concerns were the events that had immediately proceeded the formation of the Task Force and Steering Committee.

Just prior to the convening of the first Iberville housing development Task Force and Steering Committee meetings in January 1988, a report outlining a "Housing Plan for New Orleans" was released. This was no mere consultant's report, however. The author of the report was Mr. Reynard Rochon, Mayor Barthelemy's campaign manager in the 1986 election. Rochon's national reputation in the political arena was sealed when he managed the campaigns of Mayor Harold Washington of Chicago and William Goode in Philadelphia. The housing plan he prepared for the Mayor was commissioned at a cost to the city of New Orleans of \$100,000. It calls for two things -- the reorganization of the city's housing offices under a newly created Office of Housing and Urban Affairs and a reduction of density in public housing (Rochon, 1988). The reorganization, which was similar to a recommendation made more than a decade before by James Bobo (1978), was begun almost immediately after the report was issued.

Second, the report made the claim that there are an adequate number of vacant units in New Orleans to accommodate a "reduction of density" in public housing. This euphemism for razing one third to one half of all units was quickly understood by public housing residents. Needless to say, the report caused an outcry by the tenants and their advocates. While some residents might have agreed that eliminating some units in a development was appropriate, the fact that the Rochon report provided no relocation plan seemed to indicate little concern for them. The real origin of the reduction in density concept remains an enigma. Some local housing activists argue that the plan he devised was not his agenda, nor the Mayor's. Instead, the plan originated in the inner circles of the powerful developers in the community. There appears to be no written evidence, however, of such a plan.

The Rochon report deferred to the Mayor's Task Force and Steering Committee, where changes to Iberville development were concerned. In a presentation to the Task Force, however, he stated that he believed Iberville to be best suited to designation as "elderly and handicapped" housing. When the Iberville Task Force met for the first time they were met by a group of angry resident protestors since they believed the outcome to be inevitable. Understandably, residents objected to a Task Force meeting with the agenda, they believed, to remove them from Iberville. In addition, they objected to the fact that the Task Force included no residents from Iberville; in fact, one of the twenty-six members of the Task Force was the Tenant Council president, but the Steering Committee, at the start, included no tenant representation. Had these protestors known at this juncture that, although the Task Force was appointed by the Mayor, its staffing and the study were to be funded by the Downtown Development District they might have been even more rigorous in their opposition.

COMPOSITION OF THE IBERVILLE TASK FORCE AND STEERING COMMITTEE

The Iberville Housing Task Force and Steering Committee were appointed by the Mayor of New Orleans, Sidney Barthelemy, in January 1988. The process was initiated, however, by the Downtown Development District (DDD), when a list of names was forwarded to the Mayor, after publication of its 1987 Growth Management Plan Update. Reportedly, the Mayor changed the DDD's list very little, adding only the specific names from the City he would assign to the Task Force and Steering Committee⁸. The Task Force, was the more inclusive group, including members from the local business leadership, staff from the Mayor's Office, City Planning Commission, Housing Authority, Housing and Urban Development, and the Downtown Development District, and the City Council. Local social service providers from community centers, the NAACP, the Urban League, and non-profit housing agencies were also members of the Task Force. The Task Force had the broad goal of identifying strategies and recommendations to improve the quality of life for Iberville residents and enhancing the economic viability of the surrounding area.

The Steering Committee was a smaller group of eleven, and included only public-sector representation, except for the co-chair who represented the (quasi-public) Downtown Development District, and later the president of the tenants' council. The Steering Committee's role was to arrange the content of Task Force meetings, direct the study of Iberville and the surrounding community, ensure the progress of the study, and respond to community inquiries.

Membership on the Iberville Task Force and the Steering Committee was weighted toward the downtown business interests and representatives of public housing residents rather than residents themselves. Tenant Council representation on the

Steering Committee was only secured after meetings began, by a local advocate from a nearby community center who acted as "go between" the residents and the DDD. Over the course of the study, low-income activists and tenants complained that they did not receive mailings that announced meetings, or received them too late to make arrangements to attend. It is not clear whether the "oversight" was intentional, regardless the effect was to undermine resident and community goodwill.

One member of the Task Force initially was Ms. Jessie Smallwood, director of the Housing Authority of New Orleans. Her participation is noteworthy because she was the subject of much controversy during the early months following the convening of the Iberville Task Force. This controversy reveals a great deal about the bureaucratic and political context in which the Iberville study was undertaken. Antagonism between Mayor Barthelemy and HANO director Smallwood surfaced soon after her August 1986 appointment. Much of the problem seems to have stemmed from her stalwart pursuit of improving management and ridding public housing of its nonpaying and destructive tenants. City officials claimed Smallwood was "unable to work with federal officials, failed to communicate with the administration, lacked sensitivity toward tenants who fell behind in rent payments and publicly criticized HANO employees" (Donze, 1988). In addition Smallwood publicly admonished the "Housing Plan for New Orleans, the report done by the Mayor's former campaign manager, Rochon. This must have been considered a final effrontery.

Early in 1988, a tragic fire in Desire public housing development left six people dead. Smallwood was blamed when it was learned that a \$100,000 grant from the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to install the smoke detectors had just weeks before been returned to Washington, D.C. unused, while smoke detectors were in HANOs warehouses. Smallwood claimed that difficulties in letting the contract

to install the detectors had prevented the use of the funds. Although Smallwood was cleared of any wrongdoing (Treadway, 1988), this incident was followed by another that proved insurmountable.

In June 1988 -- just prior to New Orleans' hosting of the National Republican Convention -- Smallwood was accused of involvement with two housing activists in writing and distributing a letter to all the tenant councils in New Orleans. The letter warned residents to beware of the implicit message in Rochon's "Housing Plan for New Orleans." It also suggested that they organize to resist efforts to displace them from their homes. A mass mailing of 5,000 letters was "discovered" by three HANO commissioners. The authors of the letter argued that the letter was intended for black Republican leaders, to get public housing on the national agenda. Smallwood said the letter used little staff time, it was prepared by tenant volunteers, and that the materials used cost \$55.00. Nevertheless, it was perceived by the Mayor -- who lay in wait for the opportunity to rid himself of Smallwood -- and the HANO board as a conflict of interest, a breach of faith, and, at least, a misuse of limited HANO funds. Smallwood was dismissed in June 1988.

Over her two years tenure, Smallwood had received mixed reviews from the residents of public housing. Some claimed she favored the public housing developments where residents were "activists". The Iberville resident council, a less aggressive leadership, for example, seemed to shed few tears when she was dismissed. They claimed she showed no particular interest in them, as evidenced by grants written to benefit other developments and management training moneys did not include Iberville Tenant Council members. Other tenant council members protested bitterly when she was fired arguing that dismissing Smallwood was a "part of the city's effort to give the land occupied by the projects to developers" (Treadway, 1988).

While Smallwood served on the Iberville Task Force and Steering Committee she added considerable insight into the "political" constraints preventing improvement in public housing developments. Her dismissal, and particularly the letter that ultimately precipitated it, caused problems for the Iberville study team. Although it was claimed that the letter had been intercepted before mailing, actually, it had been read by most tenant council leadership, including those at Iberville. It arrived in Iberville when plans were being laid for the tenant council to interview 400 residents about their housing concerns, and threatened to derail the entire investigation.

IBERVILLE DEVELOPMENT AS RESIDENTS SEE IT

The Iberville Task Force membership requested that a survey of tenants be conducted to provide additional background information. The query of residents was to elicit a wide range of housing and neighborhood issues and concerns, as well as collect some household data not available from the Housing Authority. At the time of the survey approximately 850 households resided at Iberville. Of these, just under 30 percent (N=245) responded to the questionnaire⁹. The survey, like the Task Force itself, became suspect as a result of the letter written by local housing activists. Referred to earlier in this paper, the letter admonished tenant council leadership to "steer clear" of involvement that might support the city's plan to demolish public housing. The tenant council members who were to interview residents were apparently divided on whether to continue participation in the study. While a 400 household sample had been projected for the study, only 245 were returned. Some tenant council members refused to conduct the interview and simply discarded copies of the unanswered questionnaire.

PROFILE OF RESIDENTS AND THEIR CONCERNS

At the time of the study, the majority of the residents of Iberville were under 18 years old -- 1,195 of the 2,232. According to the survey results, the typical Iberville resident was an unemployed or underemployed black, female head of household, under 40 years of age, receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Only 6 percent of those surveyed were 65 years or over; and only 15.5 percent were male. Over one fourth of the respondents had less than a high school education, but half were high school graduates. The average household size was small, 2.6 members. About one third of the residents had lived in the development for under five years, but just over one third had lived there 20 years or more.

Most residents lived in abject poverty¹⁰. Ninety percent reported household incomes under \$5,500 per year, compared to a citywide average of \$21,283, or \$13,970 in predominantly black neighborhoods (State of Black New Orleans, 1989). According to the Housing Authority of New Orleans, in 1987 the average rent paid was \$82.00 for a one-bedroom, \$134.00 for a two-bedroom and \$149.00 for a three-bedroom apartment (HANO, 1988). HANO also reports that \$270.00 is needed to "break even" and that the operating subsidies from HUD are inadequate, not covering the difference between rent paid and money needed to provide a decent living environment.

Three fourths of respondents did not work outside the home. Most said they were not looking for work, but those who were had been looking for work for over one year.

Respondents reported many barriers to employment, principal among them were child care problems, lack of skills or training, and transportation.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED AT IBERVILLE

Few residents surveyed rated Iberville excellent or very good as a place to live. More than one third of them said the development was fair, one fourth that it was poor. They liked the centrality of the Iberville Development, particularly its proximity to hospitals, clinics, shopping and good public transportation. Over 70 percent of the residents surveyed selected just six items from a list of 36 features that were needed to make Iberville a better place to live: reduce crime in the surrounding area and in the development itself; provide more and better job opportunities and social services and programs for teenagers and young adults; develop recreation programs for children; and, reduce overcrowding within units by moving families to apartments based on family size¹¹.

From a checklist of 29 building and unit features, respondents were most anxious for a) improvement or replacement of the windows and screens; b) unit walls painted; c) hallway and courtyard lighting; and d) the addition of smoke detectors. They indicated that the greatest number of requests for repair over the last year had been made because of problems with plumbing, pipes, faucets, or bathroom fixtures. Corroborating information came from management, from whom it was learned that the average water bill per month for an unit was over \$59.00, considerably higher than that of the average residential unit. Over half of the respondents indicated they typically waited from less than one week to four weeks for repairs to be completed. However, just under one third said they typically wait for three months or more for repairs.

Other Concerns of Iberville Residents

Iberville residents surveyed were alarmed by the increase in crime. Respondents indicated that the lack of safety/security because of rising drug trafficking is their biggest problem. Fourteen percent of residents surveyed indicated that they or a family member had been the victim of a crime within the last year. One third said they were unwilling to call the police when they saw a crime being committed or when they had been the victim of a crime.

Many of the existing community resources available to residents are underutilized. From a list of 31 community services and agencies, only one, the Charity Hospital -- a state run, nonprofit institution -- is used by at least half of the respondents. One in five respondents said they used the Office of Employment's job placement and referral service, the Women and Infant Care (WIC) program, or two nearby community centers, St. Jude's or St. Mark's. When asked to identify additional social support services needed, most of the respondents did not answer. Of those who responded, however, child care was the most mentioned support service needed on-site, because current options were too few, too expensive and/or inconveniently located.

Iberville residents were asked to react to previous suggested improvements, that had been made in other studies, reports, or informal surveys conducted by the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO). The two suggestions that received the highest proportion of positive responses were "provide fenced in back yards, replace fences that had existed", and "repair or replace exterior lighting in courtyards and driveways". At least half of all residents surveyed agreed with the idea of creating more opportunities for residents to become homeowners, redesigning entrances so that each household has an individual entrance, and installing basketball courts, playground

equipment, park benches, and picnic tables and benches.

Beginning tenant management at Iberville, a movement that is receiving much national attention (Monti, 1988), met with mixed emotions. Just under half of respondents supported the notion, but 19.4 percent neither agreed nor disagreed, and 32.7 percent were opposed to the proposition. Similarly, responses to the statements "house only elderly and handicapped households at Iberville" and "decrease the number of Iberville residents and relocate some households" indicated no clear cut policy direction.

Opening up Iberville to automobile traffic, the recommendation by local police who believe this change would reduce crime and improve surveillance opportunities, was the only recommendation that met with strong opposition, 74.8 percent of residents surveyed disagreed with the idea.

TASK FORCE REPORT TO THE MAYOR

The Iberville Task Force issued a final report in Summer 1989 that identified strategies and recommendations for changes to Iberville public housing development and the surrounding area. As with most reports of this type, it was to have been completed and made public six months after the Task Force began. A series of events made this impossible, and as time passed the political situation in New Orleans was changing in such a way that it was feared that the report might be shelved even before entering the public domain.

It was rumored that Mr. Donald Mintz, co-chair of the Iberville Housing Task Force and Steering Committee, was going to challenge the incumbent Barthelemy in the upcoming mayoral race. Barthelemy, who had appointed Mintz, then became very

wary of the Task Force's activities and as the time approached for the report's release, a press conference was scheduled only reluctantly. It had to have been clear to the Mayor that Mintz would use the event to gain public exposure. A measure of the Mayor's sensitivity can be gauged by his insistence that the cover of the Iberville report include not only the seal of the City of New Orleans, but his name. The first thousand copies of the report cover had to be returned to the printer for this addition; initially, the cover had only the seal and the Downtown Development District's logo.

The press conference was an obvious "tug-of-war" between Mintz and Barthelemy. No footage of this press conference made it to the evening news. Instead, the coverage was of the Mayor seated in his office, later in the day, describing the needs of the residents in public housing. Mintz formally announced he was challenging the Mayor in the Fall election the next day.

CONTENTS OF THE IBERVILLE TASK FORCE REPORT¹²

The final report of the Iberville Task Force was fashioned by the consultants in cooperation with a subcommittee of the Steering Committee, including Tenant Council representation. The goals, recommendations, and strategies were based on the year long study that preceded its release. Components of the plan were detailed in terms of the amount of time they would take to accomplish: short, intermediate, and long-term goals and strategies. The report delineated four areas of concern, in order of importance: 1) crime and safety; 2) site improvements; 3) social, educational, recreational, and employment opportunities; and, 4) land use integration. Figure reports goals and recommendations.

Crime and Safety

Reducing crime in the Iberville area and improving the security of residents were viewed as absolutely necessary, and a precursor to implementing other objectives. It was viewed as the first priority. The formation of an urban squad¹³, to be housed in an on-site substation, was viewed as essential in providing the police presence requested by tenants. It was also expected to reduce the response time to crime and establish rapport with residents, both important ingredients in reducing crime and improving safety in the development. It was recommended that Urban Squad officers be solicited, rather than assigned to the unit and that extra compensation be awarded, to establish participation as a "reward", not a "punishment", as public housing assignments had been viewed in the past. Over time the Urban Squad's role was to be expanded to include youth programs. Residents believed opportunities for youth are lacking in the Iberville development. Through recreation and other programs, it was hoped that police would become role models, providing direction and guidance in productive, non-drug-related activities.

Improvements to the physical structure were also recommended to deter crime, including: the addition of front and back solid rear doors with dead bolts, increased building and site lighting, repair and maintenance of existing lighting, securing of power boxes outside units, and building intercom security systems. Improving safety in the development also required tightening screening procedures, enforcing existing eviction policies, and pursuing methods to modify tenant mix, pushing rents to allowable guidelines. The management at Iberville supported seeking H.U.D money to allow site-specific tenant screening and eviction, first as a demonstration project. They felt that the greater control would provide a more stable resident population. At the time of the

study, HANO was considering securing funding to improve screening of incoming residents for prior drug and criminal activity. A problem, they said, was that tenants are often housed in a public housing development before a police check is complete, with the understanding that if it shows evidence of prior drug and criminal activity, eviction will follow. The average eviction, however, even under these circumstances, takes months. It was suggested, too, that residents' evictions were often barred by political rather than practical considerations. Tenants were disturbed by the number of cars parked on the Iberville site, many of which were abandoned. This recommendation included a suggestion that the tenant council undertake an effort to create a parking "validation" system, like the City's residential parking program. Identifying and towing abandoned cars was to be a part of this procedure.

Economic, Social, Educational, Recreational Opportunities

Iberville residents complained that job training programs frequently left the participants without marketable skills, or in "dead-end" positions, with little or no chance of advancement. As a result, the Task Force Report called for using existing Job Training Partnership Act (JPTA) monies to provide training specific to the needs of participating Iberville residents, that would lead to an adequate wage and the potential for career advancement. HANO was encouraged to pursue programs offered at Delgado College, a community college in New Orleans, again, tailored to the needs of the development residents.

Within six months to one year, linkages with the business community were to result in an on-site job placement bank to identify job openings for which Iberville residents would be appropriate, or for which they could be trained. Area merchants

and businesses, encouraged by the DDD, were expected to participate. Over time, additional community sponsorship was to be sought. New and existing area businesses would be asked to "adopt" Iberville, by "setting aside" jobs and providing training opportunities for area residents. The Development Corporation was instructed to pursue, in the long term, modification of existing welfare policy, which tends to penalize households receiving public assistance who take employment, by reducing benefits.

It was recommended that an immediate priority be the provision of on-site licensed, affordable child care. Nearby Iberville, child care was about to begin at St. Jude's Community Center. It promised a sliding fee scale and a number of new slots to accommodate the children of its neighbor, Iberville. In addition, the report called for the training of residents as licensed child care providers in the next two years. An on-site cooperative center with space donated by HANO and staffed primarily by volunteers was considered a solution.

It was recommended that a plan for an on-site administrative services center be devised in which the Development Corporation, job-bank, child care facilities, and an information exchange for off-site services be housed. The on-site center should also be home to new programs developed for residents, and/or initiated by residents.

The Task Force recommended immediate equipping of on-site playgrounds that are age-specific. That is, some play areas were to be designated for young adults, others for school-aged children, and still others for toddlers.

It was recommended that the Tenant Council work with residents to determine their wishes with regard to tenant management. The survey responses were mixed on this point. If the Tenant Council is eager to pursue management training, the Development Corporation should support them, seeking funds for the effort. Other management

opportunities, such as participation in the resident selection process, should also be supported and funds sought in cooperation with Tenant Council initiatives.

Site Conditions

It was recommended that the Development Corporation work with HANO officials to apply for Community Improvement Assistance Program monies to fund building renovations -- repair/update/replace systems and appliances, repair minor structural problems, and improve landscaping. Funding for more extensive landscaping, including sculpture and shrubbery was to be part of the "intermediate-range" planning activities of the Development Corporation. It was advised that the renovation efforts be shaped by the concerns of the residents and on-site management and that site-specific maintenance crews be employed. Both residents and on-site management felt that in the past renovation had occurred that did not include the items they deemed most needed.

The Task Force report showed that there was no incentive for reducing operating costs among Public Housing Authorities. The Federal Government sends monies to local authorities to subsidize the operation of housing developments. However, if costs are cut by local authorities, or go unused for some reason, they are recaptured, and, therefore, are unavailable for other needed uses. It was recommended that a plan be drafted that to modify HUD subsidy formula and identify a constituency that would lobby for the modification of the formula.

It was recommended that HANO management and the tenant council identify strategies to improve site conditions, including employing tenants to maintain property, providing training to tenants to fill existing maintenance positions, and enforcing existing

policies with regard to rent collections and evictions.

Land Use Integration

Improving integration of residential and commercial land uses were seen as needed to address the appearance and viability of the surrounding area Iberville housing development. Recommended strategies were to improve the area's image and marketability, expanding locally-owned and operated business, conducting market viability analyses for residentially oriented services, and developing a clean-up program for adjacent light industrial area. The most recent Comprehensive Land Use Plan for New Orleans was completed in 1980 and used 1975 data. Thus, a complete inventory of vacant, abandoned, and available property for use in upgrading the surrounding area and increasing its residential quality was recommended. It was recommended that the city's role in the Iberville area be one of "overseer". The City Planning Commission (CPC) was requested to require an "impact statement" for proposed developments in the area surrounding Iberville. The CPC was asked to pursue ways to improve area image and marketability by upgrading, renovating, and increasing utilization of city-owned facilities.

The supply of low-income housing in New Orleans is inadequate. A long range strategy was recommended which was to establish a state-financed Housing Trust Fund. This fund, with dedicated state revenues, was seen as a necessary vehicle for improving the long-term opportunities of Iberville residents.

ESTIMATED COSTS FOR THE RECOMMENDED CHANGES

The Task Force report showed how the costs of implementation would be spread among local, state, and federal agencies, as well as private and public enterprises, but not all costs or funding sources were identified. Readily identifiable one year costs, including renovations (\$11.5 million) were estimated at \$12.8 million.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO THE IBERVILLE TASK FORCE REPORT

Perhaps not surprisingly, the report was never endorsed by the Downtown Development District board of directors. In fact, because the report was released in the midst of the mayoral race, with some DDD members aligned with Barthelemy, others with Mintz, it was never presented for adoption. DDD members who served on the Task Force assumed there would be resistance that could not be overcome so they began working on the recommendations that were without seeking this approval.

The larger community was relatively quiet on the subject of the Iberville Task Force Report, due in part, again, to the upcoming mayoral election. The Times-Picayune carried only a short article on the report, quoting a few local activists and the City Wide Tenant Council President. They indicated a general appreciation for the report and called on Mayor Barthelemy to appoint similar Task Forces to fund studies in each of the City's ten public housing developments.

If there were members of the DDD who were reluctant to embrace the findings of the Iberville Task Force's Report, they must have been equally displeased with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) study commissioned by Barthelemy shortly after the Iberville Report was completed. The ULI study was to "develop strategies for the revitalization

of the Canal Street corridor between the Mississippi River and Claiborne Avenue." It too concluded that "the Iberville housing community needs to be recognized as an asset rather than a problem. The ULI recommendations mirrored those of the Iberville Task Force calling for a police substation, renewed initiatives to generate Tenant Council involvement and responsibility, job training, daycare, recreational opportunities, and major renovations. Reportedly, the commercial interests in the downtown were not pleased with the final report, and they considered the recommendations concerning Iberville particularly contentious. In fact, after the final ULI report was issued these powerful downtown representatives met with the panelists in a forum to persuade them to reconsider their recommendations. In the end, however, the report stood as issued.

THE IBERVILLE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The most important component of the final report of the Iberville Task Force was the recommendation to form a Development Corporation to implement the goals and strategies. The composition of the Development Corporation was to be similar to that of the Task Force, where an effort had been made to include varied community interests. The final report asserted that the Development Corporation was to:

- 1) independently coordinate resources of numerous public and private entities;
- 2) assume major responsibility for achieving Task Force goals;
- 3) act as an independent advocate for Iberville;
- 4) use its non-profit status to pursue grants and enter into contracts to accomplish objectives;
- 5) act as a catalyst for development of the entire area; and
- 6) bring business and residential forces together for the common good.

The formation of a development corporation initially was impeded by the Mayoral

election that occurred only months after the report was issued. The Downtown Development District, although no longer under Mintz's direction, continued to push for its establishment. A list of names was forwarded from the DDD. Although received early on by City administrators, the first meeting did not convene until after Mayor Barthelemy had been re-elected in Fall 1989. As the new year approached some 12 people assembled under the direction of the former co-chair of the Iberville Task Force and Steering Committee. She no longer shared the position with Mr. Mintz, who, needless to say, was not among those assembled to establish the bylaws and articles of incorporation for the Iberville Development Corporation. The composition of the Development Corporation is a smaller, but not very different group from that of the original Iberville Task Force. Consistent with previous membership, two tenants (president and former president of the Tenants' Council) were invited to attend. Community interests represented on the Development Corporation still include the Downtown Development District, local social service providers, a HANO appointee, and both private and not-for-profit commercial and residential development interests. Since the initial meeting of the board of directors of the Development Corporation, several new members were added, including representation from Christopher Homes, Inc. -- a nonprofit housing development arm of the Catholic Archdiocese.

The search for an executive director was one of the first undertakings of the initial group. Their selection, a black male with experience as an accountant for the Regional Transit Authority, officially began his new duties August 1, 1990. The selection committee -- composed of the two tenants, the committee's chair, and two DDD representatives -- has indicated that, although the new director has no housing experience, he was well respected among colleagues for his ability to negotiate among groups of people with different interests -- labor and management most recently, for

example. He also has "political connections", his wife is on the staff of a U.S. Senator. These connections, along with others held by directors on the board, should give the Development Corporation an audience with the Federal agencies, especially H.U.D., when they need it.

Prior to the executive director's selection, the Development Corporation board began to deal with two issues. First, the eviction of the "criminal" element -- tenants engaging in drug trafficking and other crimes -- through established grievance procedures. Second, the towing of abandoned cars from the Iberville development site. The latter may seem an odd place to begin, but tenants argue persuasively that these cars are storage for guns and harbor drug users and sellers. Even bringing to bear articulate spokespeople on the board who represent powerful interest, change has not come easily in either of these areas. It has taken nearly one year to move the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) to establish eviction procedures that encompass drug trafficking. Heretofore, only non-payment of rent was sufficient to activate eviction procedures. HANO appointed two "grievance officers" from the Citywide Tenant Council to hear the cases that had been put together earlier in the year using crime statistics, arrest reports, and a special "two week sweep" that gathered data on criminal activity in Iberville. The Development Corporation, through the DDD, brought forward 24 cases -- none were evicted. The grievance officers wanted more current data, since it had been nearly a year since some of the information had been assembled. However, it was HANO's inability to establish a process for bringing eviction cases forward that was responsible for the delay and outdated information. A "Catch 22" of the highest order.

In a recent meeting of the Development Corporation, the eviction issue was revisited. Corporation members confronted the HANO director, asking him whether

they could expect success if new data and cases were brought forward. They claim to have sufficient information on approximately 30 individuals to support review by the grievance officers. Of course, this review results in a recommendation by the grievance officers, not actual eviction. This is an important point. Once eviction is recommended the case goes to court where it is settled finally. To date, the court has been unwilling to evict an entire household when only one member is allegedly involved in drug activity. A particular case that went to court last year, for example, was a family of 11 and the drug activity was of one household member, but not the leaseholder (Development Corporation Meeting, August 1990). The judge ruled that only the leaseholder could be evicted. Apparently, he did not want to see himself on the evening news as the culprit "throwing a poor family onto the streets." Corporation members suggested that there is important "lobbying" that must proceed public housing eviction cases coming before the judge. The tenants themselves must indicate approval for the evictions, through their own use of the media and discussions with judges about the problems they experience when a family engaged in drug activity remains in the public housing development. This media attention and dialogue with judges would be arranged by the Development Corporation.

The towing of abandoned cars was similarly fraught with "red tape." It first had to be decided who had jurisdiction over the streets in the Iberville development, the city or HANO. After much discussion over more than six months, it was determined that HANO could deputize a member of its staff to ticket cars on the site, and that HANO would contract with a towing service to impound the ticketed cars. This new effort was to begin July, 1990. The wheels of progress move slowly.

It is safe to say that if it were not for the Downtown Development District, who staffed the Development Corporation even before the Executive Director was hired,

even these small accomplishments would not have occurred. In addition, the DDD funded three of the six officers for the new unit now on foot patrol in Iberville Development, at a cost of \$200,000. The new police unit reports each month to the board of directors and gives them crime statistics. Undoubtedly, now that the executive director has been hired, he will be in even closer contact with these officers, to learn more about the individuals involved and the locations of the crime/drug trafficking. For the moment, until they are established, the police unit is only working in Iberville in the daytime. They have done some surveillance from atop Canal Street commercial buildings at night to identify the locations and people engaged in criminal activity. The unit will have to begin night-time patrol soon, however, since there are already indications that some of the day activity is shifting to the night.

Tenants and the HANO director have also alerted the Development Corporation to residents' concerns that the police unit is simply benefitting the Downtown Development District, or Krauss, the largest department store on Upper Canal Street and closest neighbor to the substation. The location of the police substation is a point of debate. At the suggestion of the police, its site was located, almost one year ago, across from the Iberville development, on Rampart Street, in Krauss buildings. Although no objection was raised about the location initially, tenants, and some Corporation members, are now asking should the substation be located in the interior of the development or on the fringe, close to Canal Street. Canal Street, as the focus of some criminal activity such as robbery, purse snatching, and shoplifting, may not be the primary location for drug trafficking which is what most worries Iberville residents.

This concern about the location of the police substation highlights the delicate balance between the Development Corporations two objectives "the improvement of the quality of life for Iberville residents and the enhancement of the economic viability of

the Canal Street corridor." The Iberville police officers report each month to the Development Corporation. The reports indicate that significant numbers of arrests occur in the Iberville development, and/or are development residents. In fact, unfortunately, it appears that there is an increase in the criminal activity, especially drug related, by residents, where previously crime statistics indicated Iberville was a hideout for, but not home to, criminals. Possibly, however, this increase in arrests is simply a result of six more officers patrolling the Iberville development.

To date, arrests infrequently have resulted in conviction and jail sentences. This raises other concerns among Development Corporation members. The "system" itself is faulty. Jails are overcrowded in New Orleans. Consequently, the Iberville police officers content that the people they arrest are often "back on the streets" before they return to the patrol the development. In addition, many of the arrests have been juveniles who are even less likely to be detained after arrested. These problems plague many cities, particularly low income neighborhoods. Again, a delicate balance exists between the rights of the arrested and those of the community. Iberville residents who report crimes become reluctant to do so again when the individuals are back in the development, "laughing", at the end of the day. These residents feel victimized and believe that there is no collective will to improve the Iberville development, but rather there is a kind of conspiracy to contain the criminal element within Iberville and prevent its "spilling" out to "white" neighborhoods.

For the moment, however, these efforts -- implementing eviction procedures, towing abandoned cars, and funding an "urban squad" -- are apparently seen by Tenant Council representatives as worthwhile. The DDD, who has donated staff toward these efforts, too, must feel that there are benefits in doing so. At some point it is possible that evictions and towing will touch more than a small number of

residents and spark a re-examination of the recommendations being so vigorously undertaken. Residents might begin to ask about other priorities identified by them and in the Iberville Task Force report -- a job bank, employment opportunities generated by their Canal Street neighbors, child care, recreation programs, and/ or building renovations, none of which, to date, have been pursued.

On the other hand, if the New Orleans economy improves, the "economic development" community may exert pressure on or through the Development Corporation to adopt an agenda predicated on "highest and best use" real estate principles. These powerful downtown interests could easily renege on, or ignore, recommendations they never really "endorsed." Worse yet, perhaps they could use newly established eviction procedures to change the "character" of the Iberville housing development or argue that it is in the tenants' interest to "privatize" management and gain control of the Iberville site through almost "legitimate" means.

At this time, most of what the Development Corporation has accomplished falls under recommendations categorized under the "crime and safety" issue. It is on this issue where consensus is most likely -- no quality of life improvements or enhancement of the Canal Street corridor can occur in an environment stymied by fear. Even so, special policing units may come under attack, as they have before, because scarce city funds are being spent on public safety rather than education or social services (Smith, 1983:162).

"... the ddd has spen[t] the lion's share of its annual operating budget subsidizing [police] ... The long-term implications ... may be a slowing of the downtown boom and ... a further politicization of social-control issues."

Nevertheless, powerful downtown interests, the Development Corporation, the Tenant Council, and residents of Iberville seem to agree that additional police are a good community investment.

How long before the goals of these diverse groups no longer converge? is the unanswered question. And an equally important answer is unknown as well, will those representing the Iberville residents' interests recognize the point at which downtown and tenant interests diverge? or will they be unwilling co-opted by the community's powerful development interests, legitimized by a "development corporation" of their own making?

CONCLUSIONS

Improving the "quality of life" in public housing developments has frustrated planners and city administrators. In neighborhoods undergoing economic redevelopment and revitalization, public housing is generally viewed as part of the problem rather than as a means to a solution (Leigh and Mitchell, 1988). Many previous attempts to transform public housing have failed to provide needed changes. In fact, some observers argue very persuasively that the Federal government has never intended success for direct subsidy housing programs (See Marcuse, 1986; Bratt, 1986).

It is clear that public housing has not solved the economic and social problems of its residents and that appropriate programmatic responses remain unclear and fragmented. Although many public housing authorities share common problems, it appears workable solutions need to be tailored to individual sites, in concert with their surrounding communities. Plans for improving public housing, whether initiated by Federal or local governments, too infrequently acknowledge the influence of the structure of the local economy and its "politics" on expected outcomes. Too often the role of business in policy making -- including agenda setting and the implementation of

policy -- are underestimated (Whelan, 1987). In the political arena where strategies are actually implemented, a mechanism is needed to equalize the balance of power between downtown interests and disenfranchised public housing residents. This mechanism must evaluate economic development schemes and revitalization efforts asking the question "who benefits and who loses by the initiative?" Compromises must be identified that do not, in fact, "compromise" the poor.

The Iberville Development Corporation has the potential to be such a mechanism. As an outgrowth of the Iberville Housing Development Task Force and Steering Committee, for the moment its agenda is essentially outlined -- implementation of the recommendation using the strategies identified. Its objective is clearly stated, to "improve the quality of life" for residents and to enhance the economic development opportunities in the area. Members of the Development Corporation can rally important resources for the Iberville community and as persistent, articulate spokespeople can bring change to bureaucratic systems that stymie improvement. They can be the voice for the powerless and disenfranchised.

That an Iberville study was conducted and Development Corporation formed speaks to the pressure being brought to bear on New Orleans' Mayor by the business community to "do something" about the Iberville project. That "political realities" shaped these efforts from the first moment of their inception should be clear. The Task Force agenda was set and financed by the Downtown Development District, the Development Corporation includes two Iberville tenants and thirteen influential "others", only some of whom can be said to serve the interests of low income people. Some observers say there may be a missing element, a powerful, politically connected, white male who speaks for the Development Corporation, as did former member Donald Mintz. Although the Development Corporation has important white men that are

"movers and shakers" they represent development and real estate interests, so are somewhat suspect, and they simply do not have the same established place in the community as did Mintz.

Given the Development Corporation, its membership weighted toward development interests and its dual charge, understandably cynicism continues to exist in some parts of the community. Some critics believe the Task Force and the Development Corporation are a sham, that they were formed to implement the Rochon agenda. That is, the Development Corporation is merely a smokescreen to diffuse criticism of the "Housing Plan for New Orleans" while in actuality it will be responsible for the plan's implementation. For the moment, however, it does not appear that the Development Corporation is attempting to change the character of Iberville from family to "elderly/handicapped" housing.

It is too soon to evaluate the track record of the Development Corporation. The "moment of truth", however, may not be far off for the Iberville Development Corporation and its members. Some Corporation members are interested in pursuing "privatization" of the management of Iberville. They believe this would allow them to make improvements, escaping the enormous bureaucratic machine of the Housing Authority of New Orleans. While this privatization may simply mean the eviction of the criminal element and removal of drug traffickers is assured, it could also be the beginning of important changes. Political pressure could mount so that only housing moderate-income households, in contrast to very low income households, those earning less than 50 percent of the area median income, would be welcomed (and profitable) in the Iberville development.

Already the members of the Development Corporation are debating their purpose and facing the "reality" that as an entity the Corporation has no resources of its own.

This dilemma is highlighted by the debate in locating the substation to house the six police officers, assigned to Iberville development, paid for by the City and the Downtown Development District. The question remains unanswered, are Iberville tenants better served by a police substation in the development's interior or on its periphery? At least one Development Corporation member arguing for the site on the periphery indicated that since the DDD paid for the police officers, they (the downtown interests) are entitled to some protection from them. Upper Canal Street merchants must thrive if employment and services are to be available to tenants. Residents must be safe in their homes and community to consider job training options, child care needs, and employment opportunities. Development Corporation members will be challenged to find the "win-win" solution that serves Iberville and area residents and the central city business community. Similar situations will arise in the near future as the Development Corporation identifies sources of state, local, and federal monies. Guidelines will be attached to the use of these monies that could shape the outcome, in unintended ways. This means Corporation members must assess the objectives of the funding source in terms of potential improvements for Iberville area residents and enhancement of economic development opportunities. Needless to say, the method(s) to insure these improvements and enhancements rest(s), to some degree, in the "eye of the beholder."

In other places, more prosperous than New Orleans "widespread poverty and subemployment still persist ... illustrating that growth and the distribution of the benefits of growth are separate processes (Smith, 1983). Most downtown revitalization efforts have benefitted downtown property owners, real estate developers, and firms serving these interests, perhaps never serving public housing residents. Alliances like that formed between Iberville residents and the Development Corporation may be "inherently

unstable" (Harvey, 1989:150).

Divisions become immediately apparent when it comes to mapping the future. Different interests pull in different directions, each claiming that the public interest lies wherever it itself is headed. Factional divisions within the ... financial, commercial, producer, real estate, and landed property interests ... and the neighborhood interests ... and factional divisions within classe[es], make it hard to talk of any coherent ... alliance formation (Harvey, 1989:150)."

While the Iberville Development Corporation could become a model in New Orleans, demonstrating how factions with diverse interests can work to identify and achieve mutual goals, the final verdict is still out. Even given a Corporation membership that is sincere in its pursuit of change, it is difficult to be hopeful that history will somehow fail to be repeated.

ENDNOTES

This research was conducted under the auspices of the Louisiana Urban Technical Assistance Center (LUTAC), a unit housed in and administered by the College of Urban and Public Affairs at the University of New Orleans. Mr. Timothy Joder, LUTAC director, and Ms. Louise Williams, LUTAC associate, along with the author shared responsibility for the completed report described herein.

(1) Estimates vary because there is believed to be a substantial number of hidden residents, especially males, who live in public housing units but go unreported.

(2) That problems abound in public housing, particularly in the large developments in major metropolitan areas, is well documented. A 1979 HUD study found only 7 percent of the total inventory of public housing was "troubled" financially, but 28 percent of large, older, family developments were so classified (The President's Commission on Housing, 1982). Maintenance costs and operating subsidies have continued to increase, rising 217 percent between 1969 and 1980. In addition, the median income of public housing residents declined from over 60 percent of median in 1950 to below 30 percent in 1980. Segregation of low-income black families (Miller and DePallo, 1986; Leigh and Mitchell, 1988), fear of crime, particularly among the elderly (Normoyle and Foley, 1988; Lawton and Yaffe, 1980), and a lack of appropriate social programs and economic opportunities for public housing residents are frequently cited as inherent obstacles.

(3) Although it is largely local politics that are examined, as they shape the outcome of land use and economic development initiatives in the New Orleans central business district, the impact of federal housing policy cannot be ignored. During the 1980s radical changes occurred in the treatment of subsidized housing, especially public housing. The Reagan years were characterized by sweeping changes in the attitude toward federally administered housing programs. Besides enormous reductions in the budget of the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a significant philosophical shift took place. To be funded residents of public housing must show a willingness to "pull themselves up by the bootstraps", a task that is virtually impossible when the political economies of most communities are structured to divert benefits, both social and economic, from low income residents.

Some researchers argue very persuasively that the Federal Government has never intended "success" for direct subsidy housing programs (See Marcuse, 1986; Bratt, 1986). In a report to the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on the Budget, Ms. Jessie M. Smallwood, the former director of the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), writes about the crisis in public housing, perpetuated by federal housing policy (Smallwood, 1987:2):

HANO spends more on maintenance than it receives in subsidies and this is a major source of its deficit. Other HUD policies have affected HANO as well: a) an inadequate operating subsidy to cover deficits based on income to rent ratio and a recapture policy that further reduces subsidies; b) an automatic five percent inflation factor for projecting rental income that disregards local conditions, such as tenant population, authority size and changing neighborhood conditions; c) no allowance for escalating insurance costs; d) limited, or no, operating budgets for materials, supplies,

and equipment; e) restrictions on maximum income of residents, thus reducing housing for working low-income families, and limiting social and economic integration; f) insufficient modernization funds, especially given inadequate operating subsidies for maintenance; and g) an 87 percent drop in the production of low-income housing by the federal government between 1980 and 1986.

(4) In the 1970s, 65.3 percent of New Orleans' revenues came from the federal government, compared to just 33.4 percent in Atlanta, for example (Smith and Keller, 1983). The state and local funds come largely from sales tax; property tax revenues are limited by a \$75,000 homestead exemption on the assessed value of primary residences. This exemption is Louisiana's "sacred cow". Governor Roemer's attempts to lower the exemption in 1989 were met with extreme resistance. Residents of the state can be characterized as fiscally conservative, their aversion to taxes extreme.

(5) Preliminary plans for the Armstrong Park/Tivoli Gardens plan included amusement rides, retail outlets, restaurants and a museum, charging \$4.00 or \$5.00 for admission (Hodge, 1988; Gill, 1990). The plan has been stymied by the amount of money needed, estimated to be \$55 million, and a general lack of enthusiasm for it. Nearby households are very low- to moderate-income and they assert that the an admission fee will prevent them from entering. Succumbing to community pressure, Mayor Barthelemy said he would "consider" exempting portions of the Park from admission fees. This still fails to address another major criticism, however, that of "insensitivity". It is ludicrous some say to propose that Europeans manage and redesign a New Orleans park dedicated to a jazz musician (Hodge, 1988).

(6) An important caveat needs to be made explicit in interpreting New Orleans' crime statistics. The figures presented are the actual number of reported crimes in selected areas, without regard for the population of the area. Reported crime that is not evaluated relative to the "daily population" of each area is somewhat misleading. The daily population of an area consists of the total tourist and resident population of the designated area. Although the residential population of the designated may be lower than that of other districts, its daily population due to tourists may be quite high.

(7) At a recent meeting of the Development Corporation, the sergeant in charge of the special police force attached to Iberville gave this information. Recent Times-Picayune newspaper reports confirm the trend (Philbin, 1990).

(8) A complete list of Task Force and Steering Committee membership includes:

Task Force

- ** Downtown Development District
- ** Tulane Student Services and MedRep
- ** Housing Authority of New Orleans
- ** City Planning Commission
- ** New Orleans Office of Housing and Urban Affairs
- ** Iberville Tenant Council
- * Covenant Housing
- * Urban League of Greater New Orleans
- * Southern University of New Orleans,
- * Neighborhood Housing Services
- * NAACP
- * Neighborhood Development Corp.

- School of Social Work
- * Iberville Housing Development
- * New Orleans City Council
- * H.U.D. New Orleans

- * St. Jude Community Center
- * Dillard University
- * WYLD AM/FM Radio
- * D.H. Holmes Company

** Also, Steering Committee members

(9) The questionnaire was distributed by the Iberville Tenant Council, under the direction of its president. Tenant council members went door-to-door requesting cooperation in completing the survey. To facilitate completion of the questionnaire, tenant council members assisted some residents by reading the survey to them. In other instances, as deemed appropriate by tenant council members, the questionnaire was dropped off and picked up later, at a pre-arranged time.

This method of distribution may be considered by some as unorthodox and lacking the control that rigorous research standards would require. The method was overseen by the principal investigator and a local service agency administrator who had been involved in several similar efforts to collect data at Iberville. The sampling method may not have been random in the strictest sense, but it appears that those sampled are fairly representative of the resident population overall. The characteristics of residents sampled are similar to those of the entire resident population on characteristics such as age of householders, number of family members, employment status, and source and amount of income.

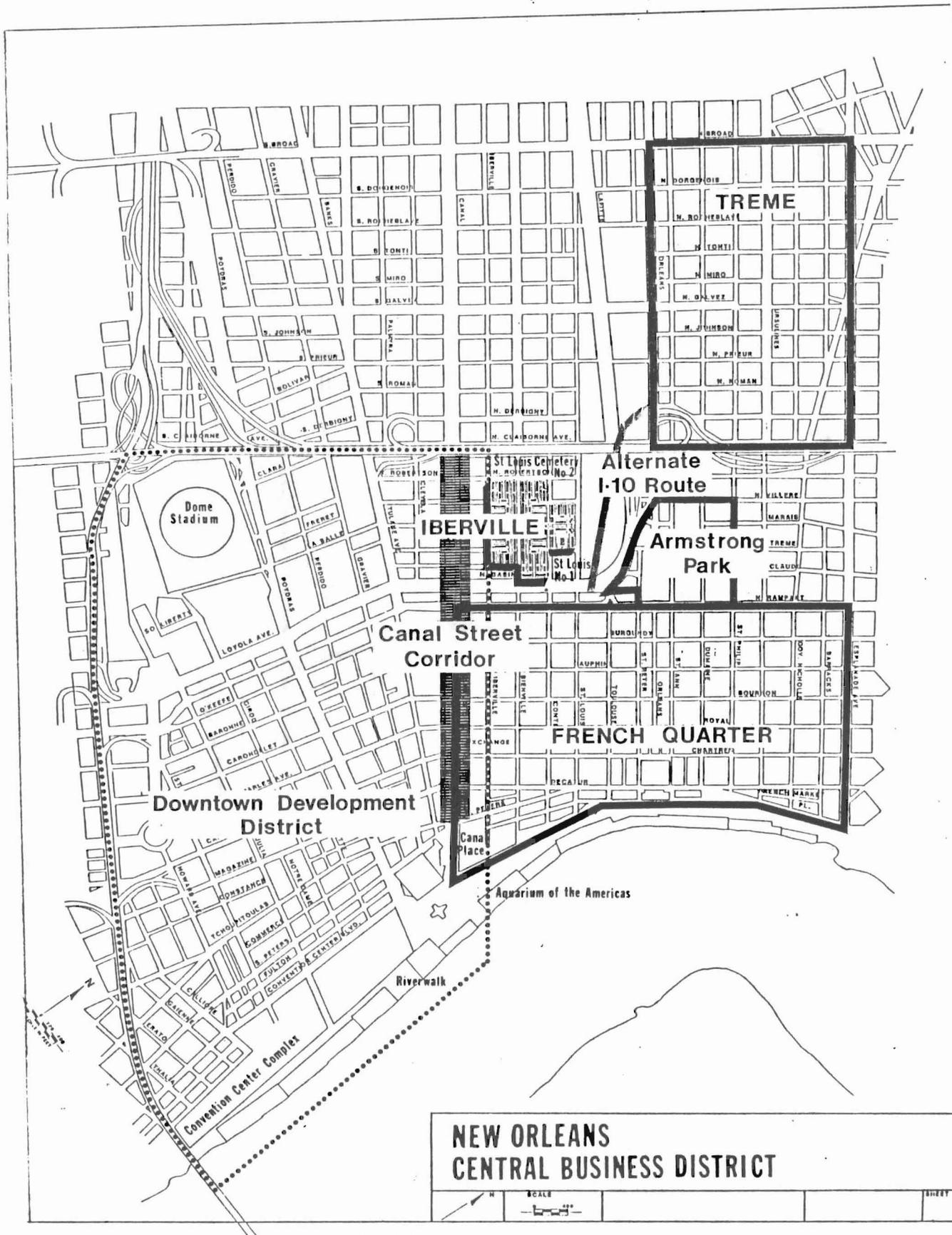
(10) Income data were not collected in the survey in order to limit residents' suspicions that the information was to be used against them, by the Housing Authority, to raise rents or identify "nonpaying" tenants. The income data reported in the study come from the 1988 "intake sheets" used by the Housing Authority to calculate and update rents for each household. The intake sheet data are not without flaws. It is believed that as much as half of all resident income may go unreported. It is probably safe to say, however, that even if the average income of residents was twice that reported (\$5,500), they are still poor.

(11) At the time of the survey, Jessie Smallwood, the HANO director, was engaging tenants in an all out effort to move families that were doubling up into separate units and to move residents living alone into one bedroom apartments. In the years previous to Ms. Smallwood's directorship, as family configurations had changed, management had not the will or resources to make necessary changes. Smallwood's influence on residents' opinions is evidenced in the responses to this question.

(12) The contents of the report described here is abbreviated, paraphrased from this original. The complete Iberville Task Force Report is available from the author.

(13) The Urban Squad concept was employed in New Orleans in the 1970s. It was formed as a specialized unit to concentrate on crime prevention in low income areas. Because officers chosen for the unit were volunteers, and often former residents of these areas, they were able to create a cooperative atmosphere among residents and themselves. Two officer teams usually patrolled on foot and were very visible members of the community. Budgetary limitations led to the abolishment of the unit in 1982, however, public housing residents still lament the loss of the Squad.

FIGURE 1





Designated Area	1987 Reported Crimes	1986 Reported Crimes	Percent Change
Upper Canal & Iberville	1,050	1,820	-13.3
Lower Canal Street	1,580	1,820	-13.1
Treme	278	442	-37.1
Vieux Carre	1,635	2,091	-21.8
Riverfront	256	216	+18.5

IBERVILLE STUDY AREA
Area Crime Statistics

SCALE

 SHEET

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