Claiborne Reborn

The City, through The Network for Economic Opportunity (The Network), plans to install container-like structures under the I-10 elevated expressway between Orleans and Esplanade Avenues. The City intends for the installation to serve as a community marketplace. Neither the City nor The Network has thoroughly considered the impacts of locating vendors in a toxic environment or placing them in structures based on failed city projects.

Claiborne Reborn, a coalition of residents and business owners in Tremé and the 7th Ward, hereby opposes the City's plan to install a community marketplace, shipping container park, or festival venue anywhere under the elevated I-10 along the Claiborne Corridor, given the current environmental conditions.

We believe that placing entrepreneurs on a toxic site, in a socially challenging environment, is not only unfair, it's detrimental to the overall health of the entire Claiborne Corridor.

Therefore, we are asking the City of New Orleans to **halt the Cultural Innovation District (CID) project**!

Instead, we are calling for a transparent and interdisciplinary effort led by stakeholders who live and work within the corridor. We want to straightforwardly address the threats and environmental injustice imposed by the presence of I-10. We want meaningful community engagement that properly addresses the systemic issues that pose chronic threats to the Claiborne Corridor's businesses and residents, specifically, crime, poverty, filth, blight, lack of safety, and stormwater runoff from the elevated highway.

We are also asking for an audit. We want the funding earmarked for this project to be redirected into redevelopment programs that reflect best practices; offer support to existing businesses and encourage thoughtful development that's respectful of the historic character of the corridor and its surrounding neighborhoods.

We want the restoration of one of the City's greatest mixed use corridors and public spaces that thoughtfully considers architecture, open space, green infrastructure and helps to reverse the negative health outcomes plaguing residents of the corridor.

Major Issues:

A. The site is toxic.

According to the Lambert Plan for the 7th Ward, "One of the most significant liabilities from I-10 in the Claiborne Corridor is the issue of health and welfare. Various forms of pollution and debris are distributed down from the Interstate to Claiborne Avenue and adjoining streets. Acoustical pollution affects nearby residents, and vibrations have caused cracks in nearby buildings." Clearly, the health of those who live and work within the corridor is at risk. Why establish a marketplace in the toxic environment under I-10?

To make matters worse, the legacy of lead in the soil combined with at least 1,000 chemicals from diesel soot and other vehicular emissions constitute a public health hazard that unduly affects the CID area (Appendix, Exhibit A). Most alarming is that there's no regulation of these ultrafine particles.

Increased health risks for residents living near major roads or freeways include

- asthma,
- autism,
- miscarriage,
- stroke,
- cardiovascular disease,
- cancer,
- lung disease,
- heart attack,
- memory and cognitive decline leading to dementia and Alzheimer's disease,
- lifelong lung impairment,
- stress, and
- hypertension.

Reducing exposure; removing existing toxic chemicals from the CID area; and preventing the releases of further toxic chemicals is paramount to the safety and well-being of the extant community and future generations. This makes a case for removing vehicular traffic from the elevated roadway and transforming the concrete deck into a park. This strategy will help to mitigate years of contamination in the corridor and surrounding communities, and it will help to rectify years of environmental injustice.

Research conducted by Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs supports the link between lead exposure and crime. Their findings show that the busier the road, the more lead could be found in the surrounding soil. As a result, everyone living near a busy roadway absorbs lead from the soil mostly by inhaling it. People exposed to lead as young children are more likely to exhibit poor thinking skills and impulse control. They have trouble paying attention, and tend to behave aggressively. These traits can lead to antisocial or criminal behavior as adults. Princeton's findings indicate it is *vitally* important to clean up the environmental hazards in Hunter's Field, a park and playground nestled under the interstate in the 7th Ward. More importantly, the conditions at Hunter's Field should serve as a warning. Considering the conditions at Hunter's Field, playgrounds serving the CID should not be built under the highway and should be removed from all plans (Appendix, Exhibit C).

"We need to start finding ways to reduce exposure of ultrafine particles, especially near homes, schools, parks, and playgrounds."

-Doug Hemme, Professor of Public Health, Tuft University School of Medicine

Princeton's research offers one reason for the pervasive crime that has plagued the corridor between Canal and Elysian Fields for decades. Studies seeking links between adult crime and early childhood lead exposure have suggested that lowering lead exposure leads to a downward trend in crime.

In 2011, John Renee's New Orleans Claiborne Avenue Redevelopment Study's survey of 800 participants found that 58% supported removal of the I-10 elevated expressway, 21% were unsure, 16% opposed removal and the remainder indifferent. However, 82% of all survey respondents said that removal of the elevated expressway would positively impact the area.

All of these findings support the case for removing vehicular traffic from the elevated roadway and transforming the concrete deck into public open space as a compromise between those opposed to I-10's removal and those who want it demolished.

B. The decision to build the marketplace was made without robust public input.

Public outreach for this project has been woeful and designed to discourage neighborhood participation. For instance, the final meeting regarding the project will be held Labor Day weekend, a holiday typically set aside for travel and family gatherings.

Ongoing discussions among residents and business owners in the corridor have revealed that a large number of stakeholders have not been informed of the City's plans. Most have never heard of the City's intent to build a container village as a host for the Cultural Innovation District. And the City is reluctant to show proof of widespread public engagement within the corridor and surrounding neighborhoods. Moreover, the City has not responded to questions regarding how it arrived at the decision to move forward with this scheme.

About the Proposed Project

The proposed scheme for the district is based on Scenario 2 in the final report for the *Livable Claiborne Communities* study. Under Scenario 2, the study calls for the addition of continuous bus service and streetcars along the avenue and the removal of interstate's ramps at Orleans, Esplanade and St. Bernard. To be clear, this scenario favors freight vehicles. Travel times for trucks moving goods between the Alabo Street Wharf and the Port of New Orleans is expected to improve by 5%.

According to the study, passenger cars and local vehicles that serve businesses in Treme, the 7th Ward and the French Quarter would be forced to use surface roads because the ramps into the neighborhood will have been removed. Under this plan, I-10 would become even more abhorrent as the super highway for freight vehicles.

There's no discussion of a build-out under the expressway in the *Livable Claiborne Communities* study. The Network's scheme is suggested in the rendering for Scenario 2 (Appendix, Exhibit B). In that rendering, the businesses face the street. In contrast, The Network is proposing an inward-facing plan, a potential death knell for the project (Appendix, Exhibits B

& C). In The Network's plan, the businesses' backs face the avenue. This means that the business will not be seen by the thousands of motorists who drive along Claiborne daily. The project will present itself either as a storage yard for containers or as a perpetual service zone facing both sides of Claiborne. Not only that, the inward-facing plan will shield criminals from view during the night. It's also reasonable to conclude that the stand alone public bathrooms proposed for the project will be troublesome, given the widespread crime, prostitution and homelessness ravaging the corridor.

This plan will be detrimental to the businesses that face the avenue and the new business The Network plans to locate under I-10.

C. Does this even make good business sense?

The placement of the containers is not the only question surrounding this plan. Will vendors be able to get business insurance given the toxic location? If they can, will they be able to afford all insurance costs - especially considering the health risks related to exposure to pollutants?

Outcomes - Based on review of comparable markets and local special event data, we expect the CID to reach the following targeted goals after 18 months of operation:

- Number of participating vendors: 60
- Number of staff trained and hired: 8
- Number of weekly visitors: 3,000 – 5,000
- Number of customers enrolled in loyalty program: 1,000
- Number of community youth reached: 1,000
- Revenue earned from booth fees: $80,000 - $115,000
- Revenue earned from parking fees: $45,000 - $65,000
- Revenue earned from marketplace merchandise: $50,000 - $80,000

The Network estimates $50,000 - $80,000 in revenue from marketplace merchandise. For the sake of mathematics, let's call it the total sales equally generated by all 60 vendors over an 18-month period.

At the lower end:

a.	Monthly sales for the marketplace would be	$50,000/18 = $2,778
b.	Monthly sales per vendor would be	$2778/60 = $46.30
c.	18 months revenue in sales per vendor would be	$46.3x18 = $833.40
d.	Revenue less 5% City sales tax	$792
e.	18 months booth rental per vendor	$1,333
f.	Vendors' loss after 18 months of operation	-$541

At the upper end:

a.	Monthly sales for the marketplace would be	$80,000/18 = $4,444
b.	Monthly sales per vendor would be	$4,444/60 = $74.00
c.	18 months revenue in sales per vendor would be	$74x18 = $1332
d.	Revenue less 5% City sales tax	$1265
e.	18 months booth rental per vendor	$1917
f.	Vendors' loss after 18 months of operation	-$652

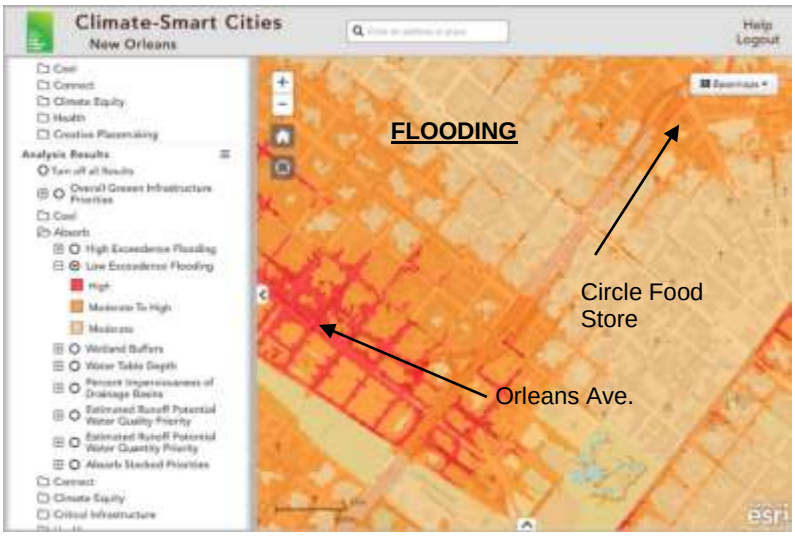
Neither scenario is favorable for establishing a business in the CID.

D. The proposed Cultural Innovation District is based on failed types.

The abandoned recreation center and amphitheater at Hunter's Field, coupled with the abandoned LaSalle Street marketplace are glaring signs of the City's epic failure with similar built projects. And the current plan for the CID borrows heavily from both. The dismal financial projections for the CID and the disadvantageous siting of the businesses portend failure. Consequently, we contend that a development of this type will be detrimental to the corridor and its surrounding historic neighborhoods. Therefore, we are asking the City of New Orleans to **halt this project**!

Creating incentives for property owners to develop vacant lots would encourage a better build-out of the corridor.

E. The CID, as proposed, does not consider green infrastructure, the mitigation of contaminants or the restoration of the parkway.



Flooding along Claiborne

The recent flooding along Claiborne has confirmed data developed by the City and the Trust for Public Land. According to their maps, I-10 is a primary contributor of large amounts of stormwater run-off in the corridor. The land below the highway is paved, making the area highly impervious. Additionally, subsidence has caused depressions and low points that worsen

problems. As a result, the threat of flooding in the corridor and its neighborhoods increased and, unfortunately, was realized under recent heavy rains.

What makes matters worse is The Network's attempt to develop green infrastructure solutions through a public process did not yield results. No strategies developed to replace or mitigate the loss of the tree canopy; and there was only a cursory discussion of green infrastructure. As fate would have it, The Network adjourned its green infrastructure meeting at the height of the July 22 flash flood. The proposed marketplace site flooded and was besieged by more intense flooding two weeks later.

F. Parking.

According to a handout from The Network's August 12, 2017 meeting, the agency plans to charge for parking under I-10. According to their budget for implementation, published in a February 23,2016 submission for HUD's Round III Promise Zone Finalists, committed funding from The Rockefeller Foundation's RE.invest Initiative will be used to integrate iPark into the CID. iPark is a branded parking garage operator in New York City. The RE.invest Initiative provides dedicated funding to build stormwater resilience. The City was selected to receive the $350,000 grant for funding resilience projects in 2013.

Cross-Sector Partnerships –The City of New Orleans, with offices and departments convened by The Network for Economic Opportunity, will work with Foundation for Louisiana, Re.Invest Initiative, New Corp, Inc. CDFI, N. O. Jazz & Heritage Festival, N. O. Multicultural Tourism Network, Clark High School, Tambourine & Fan, Tremé/ 7th Ward Cultural District, Housing Authority of New Orleans, Basin Street Station, and National Park Service, amongst others, with an ultimate goal of creating a professional, profitable, educational, sustainable and celebratory community-based project.

Outcomes - Based on review of comparable markets and local special event data, we expect the CID to reach the following targeted goals after 18 months of operation:

- Number of participating vendors: 60
- Number of staff trained and hired: 8
- Number of weekly visitors: 3,000 – 5,000
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- Revenue earned from booth fees: $80,000 - $115,000
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This strategy suggests the City is squandering an opportunity to properly address stormwater management by reallocating the resilience grant to establish a parking operation in the district. This action will create hardship for many of the businesses on Claiborne. The new businesses in the CID won't be able to afford the parking fees. Some of the existing businesses will lose their required parking, forcing them into nonconformity with the zoning code. Other businesses that use the existing parking for overflow will either be forced to rent the spaces to accommodate their patrons or ask their patrons to pay for parking.

The Network should apply the RE.invest grant to develop stormwater management solutions for the corridor and reconsider its plan for generating revenue from parking fees.

Visions and Testimonies

I want to see

- Blight removed from Claiborne Avenue from Cleveland to Elysian Fields;
- Buildings repaired with either low interest loans or grants;
- Graffiti removed, trees planted, and benches installed;
- Under the overpass cleaned, and columns painted and preserved.
- Some blocks can be used for parking, and some just for walking paths and bike lanes.
- Locals who hang under I-10 can be hired to patrol the area and keep it clean.

Once site conditions are addressed, the corridor could have a weekly pop-up market with wares, vegetable, food, and more. Since the Circle Food Store is the main grocery store in the food desert, let's really support it so they can be competitive with the bigger stores.

Let's organize door to door, a few blocks at a time, holding meetings right on the block. City leaders need to find out what residents want and provide it to help the neighborhoods move forward. **But until we deal with the ills of Claiborne Avenue, we are calling to have this project halted!**

- Margaret Thomas

I would like to see

- An engaged community of residents and businesses who care about all elements of Claiborne Avenue; `.
- A bottoms-up approach to community development that addresses the needs of the stakeholders, people who live, work and visit the area regularly;
- Funding, resources and tools directed to current initiatives that impact this particular focus area;
- Police address drugs, crimes and other undesirable activities that occur daily in this area and eliminate the activities that create the conditions;
- Traffic slowed down so that people who have to walk to meet their needs can do so safely;
- The streets surrounding the Claiborne Corridor repaired;
- Blight addressed;
- Additional commerce and opportunities for community producers to set up sustainable business models; and
- Funding directed to programs that will support entrepreneurs and the capacity building programs that are needed to accomplish this.

- Tamah Yisreal

I want to see

- A holistic approach to restoring the public space;
- Support for businesses on Claiborne and residents who live within 1,000 feet of the elevated expressway;
- Green infrastructure;
- Pollution mitigation;
- Solar panels incorporated into the parkway's design and installed on the overpass with power generation calculated as a discount to energy bills for low and fixed income residents in the CID;
- Neighborhood residents who need good jobs being trained with community partners in solar and water management so that they qualify for green collar jobs generated in the CID;
- Landscaping to address flooding, vertical "buffer or screen" plantings to block the view of the expressway and ramps;
- Reduced noise pollution;
- Filters for toxic air;
- Economic development and support for small business;
- Tax credits or tax reductions, grants, discounts for CID residents, community "shop small" days to support retailers in the corridors
- Historic restoration, and cultural preservation:
- General arts programming with area schools and community partners,
- Oral history/documentary of the Claiborne Corridor public space, which was almost like a museum;
- Training program for traditional building skills like plastering and stucco, carpentry, and more; and
- Neighborhood organization for the CID.

- Emily Gaddis

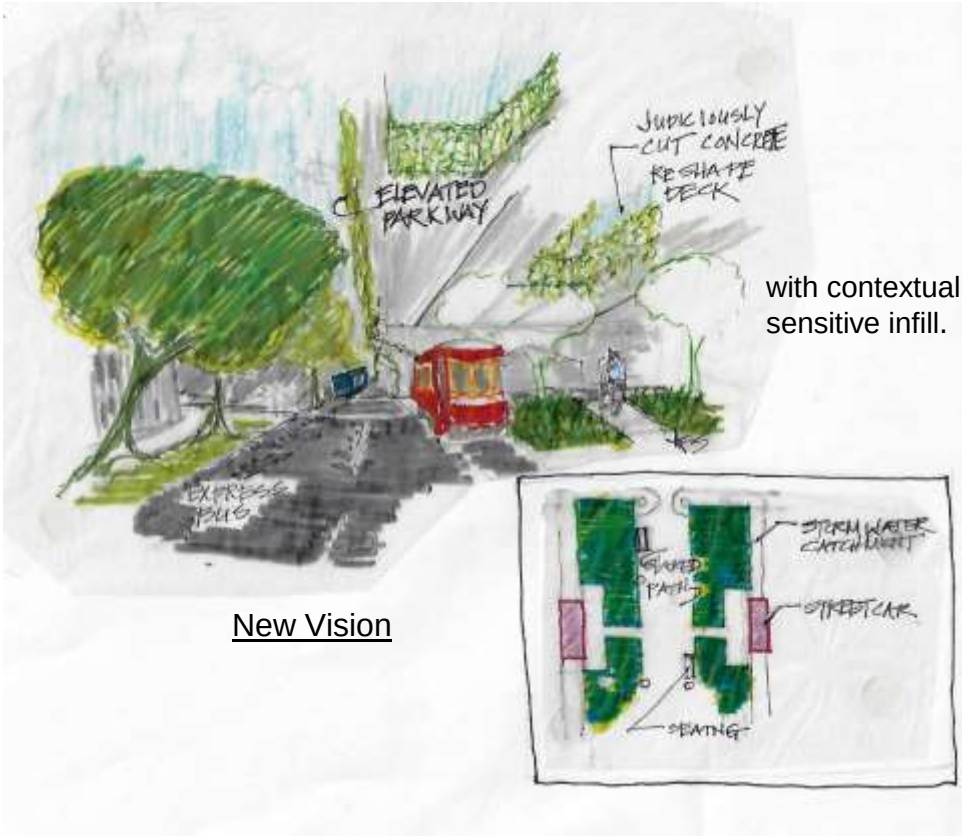
Take down the elevated expressway as reparations to the Treme and 7th Ward neighborhoods for the historic and constant injustices heaped upon its citizens. The present use and the city's proposed new use of the Claiborne Corridor does nothing to address current conditions at the site, or ameliorate conditions in the surrounding neighborhoods. Water raining from the elevated deck threatens existing businesses. Soot coats nearby homes. And crime occurs regularly. Is it really a desirable space to incubate businesses and host festivals without addressing bad site conditions?

I'm really tired of seeing epic pictures of the Circle Food Store, flooded, yet again.

Take down this monument to bad urban planning! It would be an act of restorative justice

- Philip Stelly

We need a new vision



with contextually sensitive infill.

New Vision

Restore the traffic circle at Claiborne and St. Bernard.

I would like to see the public realm returned to its former glory.

-Amy Stelly

Appendix
Exhibit A

EJSCREEN Report (Version 2016)

1 mile Ring around the Corridor, LOUISIANA, EPA Region 6

Approximate Population: 32,171

Input Area (sq. miles): 4.48

(The study area contains 1 blockgroup(s) with zero population.)

August 12, 2017

Digitized Line

EJSCREEN Report (Version 2016)

1 mile Ring around the Corridor, LOUISIANA, EPA Region 6

Approximate Population: 32,171

Input Area (sq. miles): 4.48

(The study area contains 1 blockgroup(s) with zero population.)

Selected Variables	Value	State Avg.	%ile in State	EPA Region Avg.	%ile in EPA Region	USA Avg.	%ile in USA
Environmental Indicators							
Particulate Matter (PM 2.5 in µg/m³)	9.04	9.26	45	9.45	31	9.32	39
Ozone (ppb)	41.7	42.1	36	47	25	47.4	19
NATA* Diesel PM (µg/m³)	2.03	0.887	93	0.72	95-100th	0.937	90-95th
NATA* Cancer Risk (lifetime risk per million)	51	49	71	42	80-90th	40	80-90th
NATA* Respiratory Hazard Index	2.2	1.9	79	1.8	70-80th	1.8	70-80th
Traffic Proximity and Volume (daily traffic count/distance to road)	1400	250	96	320	94	590	90
Lead Paint Indicator (% Pre-1960 Housing)	0.81	0.22	97	0.18	98	0.3	92
Superfund Proximity (site count/km distance)	0.29	0.08	95	0.072	96	0.13	91
RMP Proximity (facility count/km distance)	0.7	0.58	74	0.55	76	0.43	82
Hazardous Waste Proximity+ (facility count/km distance)	0.063	0.088	52	0.11	46	0.11	46
Water Discharger Proximity (facility count/km distance)	0.58	0.45	74	0.41	80	0.31	86
Demographic Indicators							
Demographic Index	65%	40%	80	45%	76	36%	85
Minority Population	70%	40%	78	50%	69	37%	79
Low Income Population	59%	40%	80	39%	78	35%	85
Linguistically Isolated Population	2%	2%	76	6%	49	5%	59
Population With Less Than High School Education	18%	17%	58	17%	60	14%	72
Population Under 5 years of age	5%	7%	31	7%	28	6%	36
Population over 64 years of age	13%	13%	55	12%	61	14%	52

* The National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) is EPA's ongoing, comprehensive evaluation of air toxics in the United States. EPA developed the NATA to prioritize air toxics, emission sources, and locations of interest for further study. It is important to remember that NATA provides broad estimates of health risks over geographic areas of the country, not definitive risks to specific individuals or locations. More information on the NATA analysis can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/national-air-toxics-assessment.

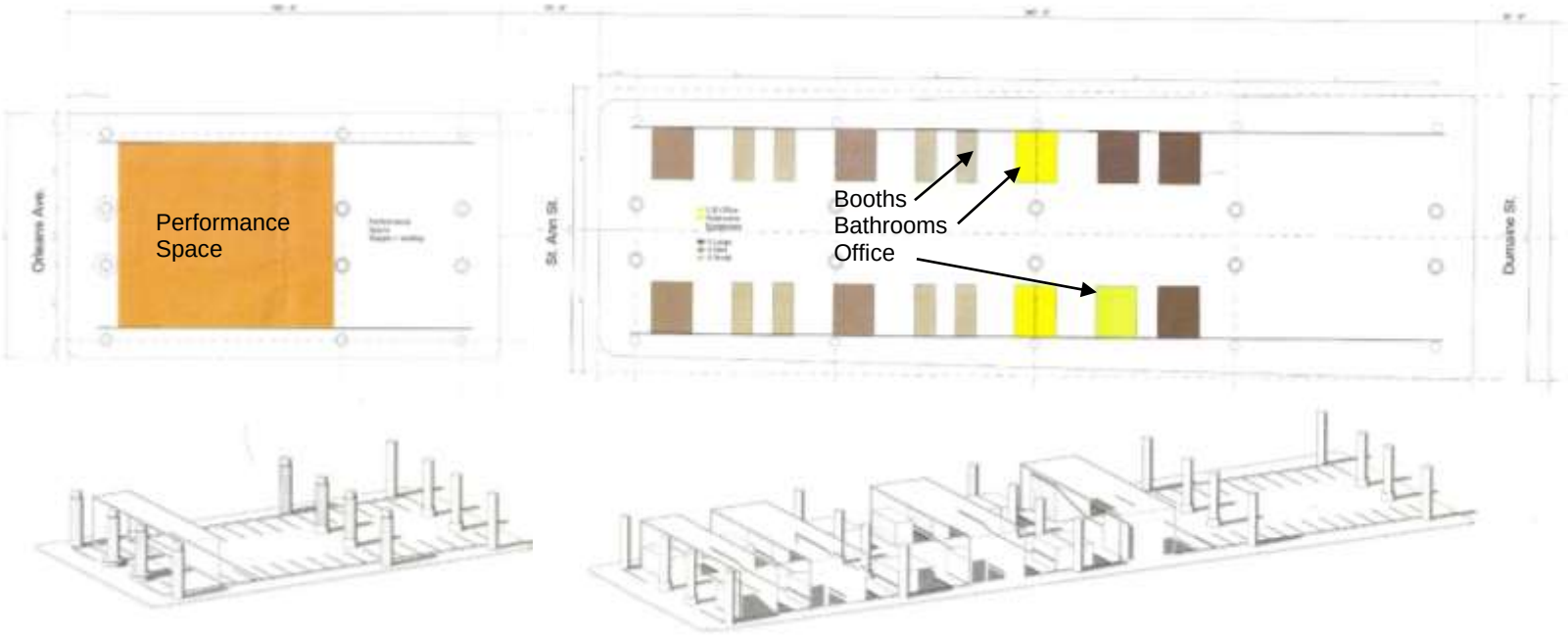
+ The hazardous waste environmental indicator and the corresponding EJ index will appear as N/A if there are no hazardous waste facilities within 50 km of a selected location.

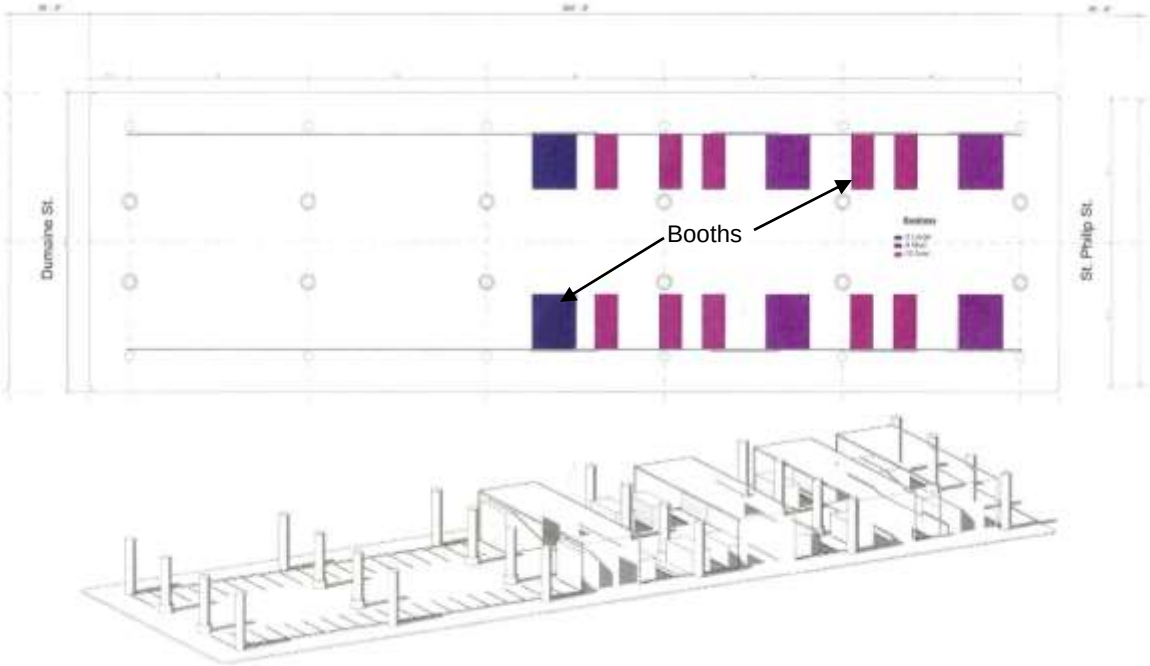
Exhibit B

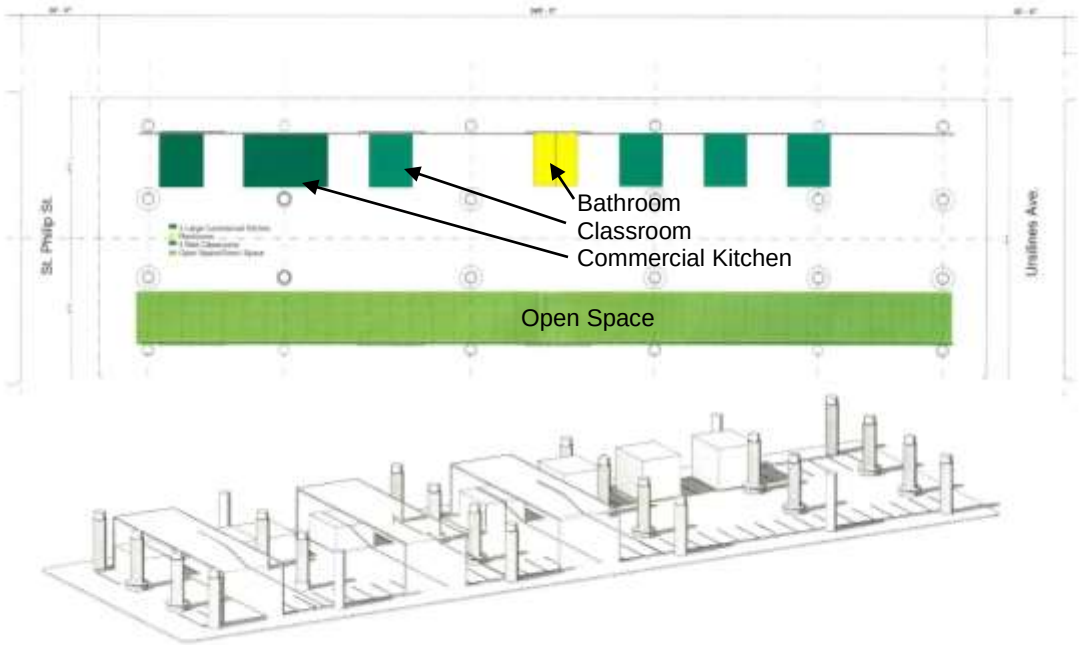
Livable Claiborne Communities

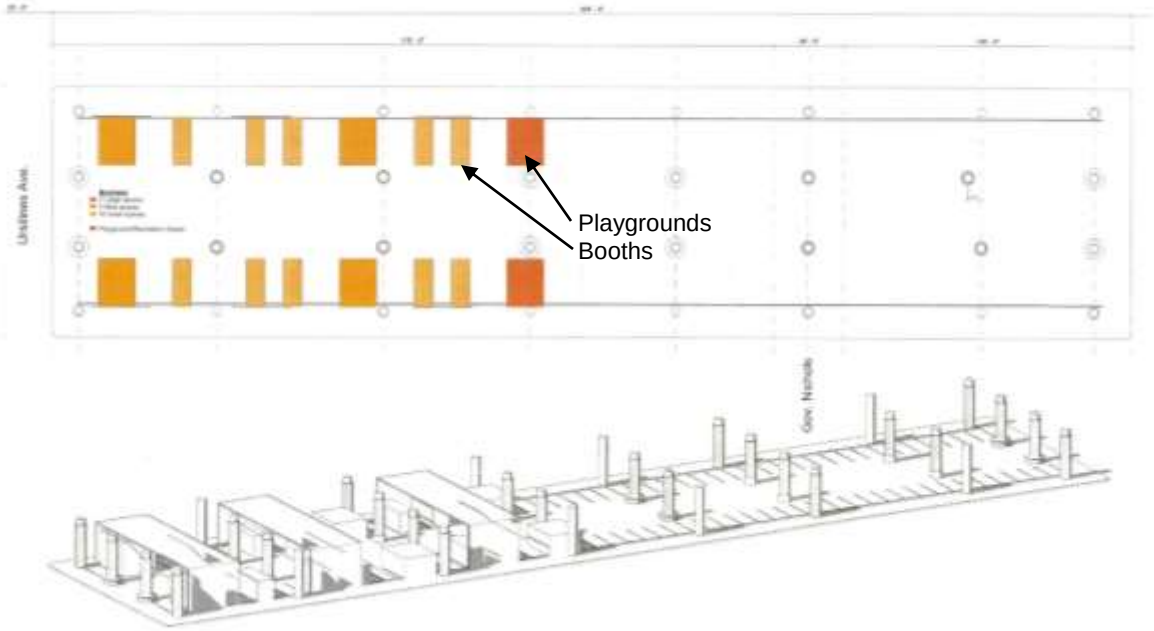
The Network for Economic Opportunity

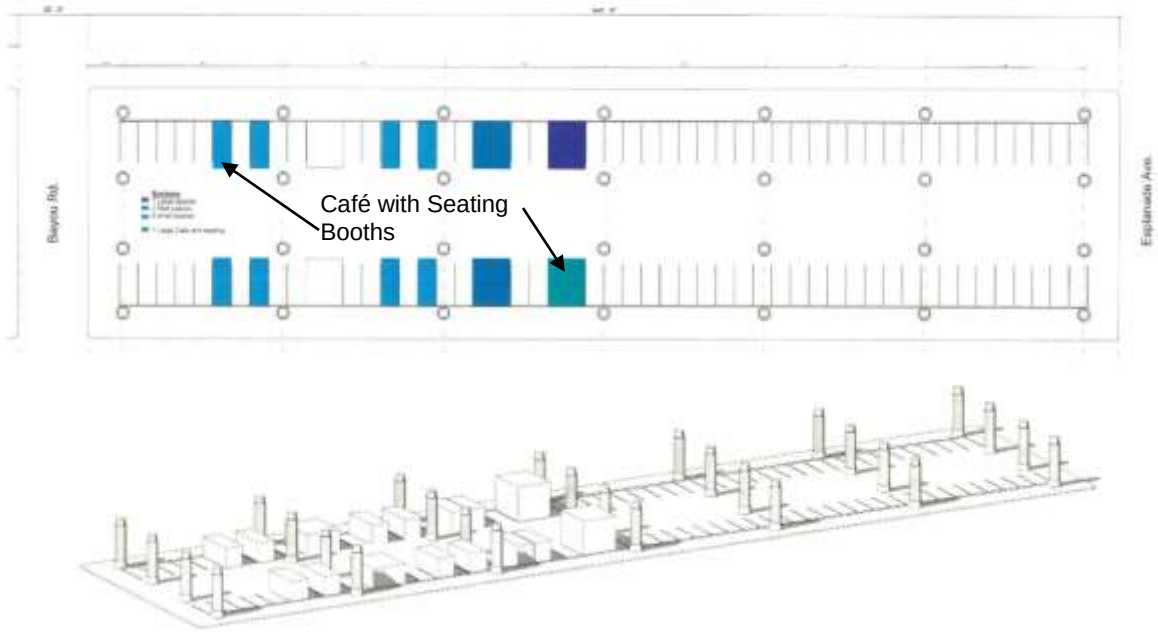
Exhibit C




Dumaine St.
St. Philip St.
Booths


St. Philip St.
Ursulines Ave.
Bathroom
Classroom
Commercial Kitchen
Open Space


Playgrounds
Booths


Café with Seating
Booths