HUNG DAO COMMUNITY GARDENS
ALGIERS, NEW ORLEANS, LA

A Project Of
HUNG DAO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
TULANE CITY CENTER
LSU URBAN LANDSCAPE LAB

Made Possible By
NEW ORLEANS CITY COUNCIL
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LOUISIANA LAND TRUST
HUNG DAO COMMUNITY GARDENS

In 2010, when the former Southwood Homes development in New Orleans’ Lower Algiers neighborhood became vacant, community leaders began searching for a remedy to the blight the buildings represented. With the leadership of then-Councilwoman Kristin Palmer, the City worked closely with the Louisiana Land Trust to facilitate a partnership that would demolish the decaying development, clear the property, and transfer the newly open land to the community for use as a park and gardens.

The community and councilwoman reached out to the Tulane City Center in the Fall of 2013 in an effort to understand the design challenges that would face the neighborhood (Hung Dao CDC) as new owners of the property. Landscape Architect Elizabeth Mossop and the LSU Urban Landscape Lab provided expertise in landscape design for the large open site. The team began by identifying and mapping the site’s significant trees to ensure their preservation during demolition. Lead Architect Tiffany Lin and the Tulane City Center worked closely with the Hung Dao CDC to adapt community-provided initial designs into a full proposal laid out on the following pages.

Finally, in early 2014, demolition on the property began. After nine months that included demolition, drainage work, sidewalk repair, and soil replacement, the site was prepared for transfer to the Hung Dao CDC. The design team worked concurrently to create a dynamic design for the community center, sports and festival structure, park, playground, pathways, and gardens. Hung Dao CDC has recently begun a fundraising campaign to secure construction and operational funding for what will become the largest community-run park in New Orleans.
Blighted Algiers property to become community park

BY CHAD CALDER  ecalder@theadvocate.com

When the bucket of a bulking Hyundai backhoe tore into unit 10-A of Southwood Patio Homes in lower Algiers on Tuesday morning, it marked a new beginning for the dozen Vietnamese residents gathered from the adjacent neighborhood and an ending of sorts for City Councilwoman Kristin Gisleson Palmer.

After the demolition of Southwood’s 132 blighted units is completed in March, work will begin on converting the six-acre site into a park with a playground, walking trails and a community garden to serve New Orleans’ oldest Vietnamese community, nestled at the base of the Woodland Highway bridge over the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

For Palmer, who hosted Tuesday’s outdoor news conference in mid-20s weather amid patches of ice in the Sullen Avenue development, it was a chance to watch the demolition of a property that’s been vexing her since she took office in 2010.

“It was horrible,” she said of the years she spent driving by the development, which had been only partially inhabited since Hurricane Katrina and was completely vacant since 2010.

But with the efforts of the Algiers Blight Committee, Mayor Mitch Landrieu’s administration, the Louisiana Land Trust and the Vietnamese community, the legally complicated, halting process of getting the building torn down passed its biggest milestone Tuesday.

Nearby resident Van Pham said his mother-in-law once lived in the Southwood complex, before it became the eyesore that has frustrated neighbors.

Children now play basketball on a single hoop with a broken backboard in a nearby cul-de-sac, and Pham said he is hoping the park will soon be home to the community’s annual cultural festival.

The community created the Hung Dao Community Development Corp. and will use a $54,000 bank loan to buy the property from the Louisiana Land Trust, which is paying for the $900,000 demolition project using Community Development Block Grant money.

Palmer, who will leave office in May, said the demolition and transfer of the land to the community “speak to the reason I got into government.”

She said there were several times when the effort to tear the building down almost fell apart, and she praised the community for coming forward and raising the money to complete the transformation of Southwood.

Algers has been hit hard by blight in recent years, as the post-Katrina reconstruction of the East Bank has drawn many residents who had moved to the less damaged West Bank right after the storm.

Palmer said that while a lot of work remains to be done, changes in the law and the efforts of entities involved in the Southwood demolition have taken about 500 units offline in Algiers.

“If we can keep this going, it stabilizes the marketplace and allows for new development to come in that is good for everybody,” she said.

Landrieu told the roughly 50 people gathered at the event that, pending final verification of the numbers, he will announce on Thursday that his administration has hit its goal of eliminating 10,000 of the parish’s 40,000 blighted properties, with 2,000 of that number being units forced into code compliance.

He stressed that Southwood was a problem created by a private company, not the government, explaining later that he always takes the opportunity to point out that blight usually is a problem created by private interests who walk away from their responsibilities and leave it to taxpayers to foot the bill.

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PHOTOS OF SITE CONDITION BEFORE DEMOLITION
Established in the 1970s by refugees from the Vietnam War, New Orleans’ Vietnamese communities represent some of the strongest ethnic cultures in the region, maintaining their heritage through community farming, traditional food, festivals, and chosen trades, most notably fishing. The Hung Dao community in Lower Algiers is New Orleans’ oldest Vietnamese neighborhood, and tells its foundational story this way:

After the fall of Saigon, Vietnam on April 30, 1975, many of the Vietnamese fled as ‘boat people’ to search for freedom. American ships rescued them from the sea and brought them to various refugee camps throughout the United States.

In May 1975, Most Reverend Philip M. Hannan, the Archbishop of New Orleans, through US Catholic Charities was able to sponsor settlement of some refugee Vietnamese families in New Orleans. These refugees lived in our small neighborhood of Woodlawn in Algiers known as Cong Doan Hung Dao under the guidance of Rev. Joseph Pham Van Tue, their chaplain at that time. Both nuns and lay people of different religions volunteered their time to help these newcomers learn English and adapt to the new culture. Adjusting was incredibly tough, but through the help of both religious and government agencies, the new refugees soon learned to succeed.

Over time, the Vietnamese Community of Cong Doan Hung Dao continued to grow. Today there are approximately 350 families who belong to the community.
The design for the Hung Dao Community Gardens is the product of a collaboration between the LSU Urban Landscape Lab and Tulane City Center. Working together they conceived an overall site strategy, which was then developed by the specialized teams. Major landscape features and garden design were completed by Elizabeth Mossop, assisted by Michael Averitt. The festival pavilion and expanded community center were developed by lead architect Tiffany Lin, assisted by Stuart Hurt. The project was overseen by Nick Jenisch, Project Manager at Tulane City Center.
TOP SOIL PLACED IN FUTURE GARDEN AREAS

EXISTING TREES TAGGED AND SAVED DURING DEMOLITION

PARTNERSHIP: 4-18
EXISTING CONDITION: 4-7
HUNG DAO CDC: 8-11

COLLABORATION: 12-18

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INITIAL PLANS FROM COMMUNITY
Preliminary Site Studies
The masterplan for the site was developed with the specific needs of Hung Dao Community Development Corporation in mind. Upon transfer from the Louisiana Land Trust, the site is to be secured by fencing to prevent dumping and the gardens can be planted immediately. In later phases, as funding allows, the site elements that will provide the most immediate benefit to the community will be installed. In the final phase, the final elements will be installed and ongoing maintenance of the gardens will continue. Phasing the project in this way ensures that it can serve the needs and meet the goals set by Hung Dao CDC at the outset even as project fundraising continues.
The Algiers Vietnamese community is planning to develop a neighborhood park. New Orleans City Councilwoman Kristin Gisleson-Palmer, left, and Van Pham, right, of the Hung Dao Community Development Corp look over a draft plan of a park for the Lower Algiers community as Tulane University's Tiffany Lin looks on.

Effort to develop 7-acre park in Hung Dao underway

BY CHAD CALDER
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When neighborhood children gather to play basketball after school or on weekends in the Vietnamese community of Hung Dao in Lower Algiers, they do it on a concrete island in the cul-de-sac of Kathy Court, under the shadow of St. Joseph Mission Church.

The space also functions as a football field and volleyball court, when it’s not being used by the children’s parents as a parking lot.

COMMUNITY DESIGN MEETING: MAY 16, 2014
Hung Dao receives property title from Louisiana Land Trust

Tulane City Center and LSU Landscape Lab produces VISIONING DOCUMENT for masterplan of Hung Dao Community Gardens

Secure major grant for Community Center and Large Pavilion Construction

Secure grants for site improvements

Project Phasing:

PHASE 1
- **Drainage**
  Fix existing pump to alleviate ponding on central parking lot
- **Property Fence**
  Construct temporary fence along Sullen Place to prevent vandalism
- **Existing Community Building**
  Repair existing building enclosure
  Hook up water and power to building

PHASE 2
- **Community Gardens**
  Start planting community gardens
- **Storage Shed**
  Build shed for gardening equipment
- **Bathrooms**
  Add outdoor bathrooms, possibly (composting toilets)

PHASE 3
- **Heritage Garden**
  Plant heritage garden to showcase regional vegetation of Vietnam
- **Small Pavilions**
  Build small pavilions to provide gateways and shade through park

PHASE 4
- **Basketball Court / Large Shade Pavilion**
  Build large shade structure over basketball court
  Design event space for temporary stage
- **Expand Community Center**
  Redesign and expand existing community center building to include classrooms, teaching kitchen and additional community programs TBD
- **Paths and Trees**
  Complete site vision with trees and paths
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The space also functions as a football field and volleyball court, when it’s not being used by the children’s parents as a parking lot.

“It is all-purpose cement,” joked James Nguyen, whose four boys — ages 16, 15, 12 and 9 — play regularly on the spot, which is in the heart of the Hung Dao neighborhood of about 80 homes just north of the western end of the Woodland Highway bridge over the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

Soon, though, the children could have a better place to play. A movement is underway to turn the nearby site of a blighted apartment complex torn down by the city in January into a 7-acre park that would allow children to play sports, the elderly to tend a community garden and residents of all ages to reflect on the culture that spawned the Vietnamese cultural festival.

The Hung Dao Community Development Corp. expects to take over the mostly empty site of the former Southwood Apartments from the Louisiana Land Trust next month.

It is working with the Tulane City Center program at the Tulane University School of Architecture on designs for what neighborhood leaders hope will become the home not just for casual recreation but also for the community’s annual festival.

“For years that property was just like an eyesore,” Pham said. “It was blighted for years, and after Katrina, it was even worse. It just needed to go away.”

The group has begun to work with Tulane City Center, which organizes collaborative efforts between the university’s students and faculty and community groups looking to create and improve public amenities.

On Tuesday, four representatives of the Tulane group met with roughly two dozen members of the community to go over a plan of the park featuring green space, a walking path, a picnic and play area, a garden, the community center and a covered pavilion that would function as a basketball court and a home for the annual Vietnamese cultural festival.

Money, however, will be the next hurdle. The final plan, which will be completed later this year, will include a list of potential funding sources. Dividing the project into several phases is expected to improve its chances of attracting grants and other funding.

The total cost is still unclear and will depend largely on how ambitious the plan is, though Pham and Tiffany Lin, a Tulane assistant professor of architecture, noted elements in the proposed first phase of work, including the community garden, are relatively inexpensive.

Pham said the group may work with the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority in the meantime to fence in the property. The former apartment complex’s office building has already been stripped by vandals.

Lin said Tulane has programs that use landscape architecture students to help build projects, noting the popular Grow Dat educational community garden in City Park was built by students working on a project that reused large building containers.

The Hung Dao CDC also will hold fundraisers, beginning with a pair of Sunday pho sales on April 27 and May 4 that will bring in some money by selling the popular Vietnamese noodle soup.

“We mainly want to have the community aware of the property and what’s going on,” Pham said. “We want to get everyone’s support.”

He said some of the neighborhood’s elderly residents are still a little skeptical that anything will happen because Southwood was allowed to remain in deplorable condition for so long.

The children, however, are understandably excited.

“They were playing on concrete. Now they will get to play on real grass,” Pham said.
COMMUNITY CENTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT
DESIGN CONCEPT
RAINWATER HARVEST FOR GARDEN USE

The design of the community center responds sensitively to the needs and program of the site. The major concept behind the design is an inverted roof to capture rainwater and channel it into a central pool. This inversion reduces the linear length of gutter required to catch and channel the heavy, intense rains of southeastern Louisiana. The captured rainwater can then be filtered and stored in a closed, hermetic system until it is delivered to the gardens on site, thereby reducing demand on the city's water system and reducing utility cost for the Hung Dao CDC.

In addition to the inverted roof, the building's massing is organized to ensure uninterrupted visual access between the community garden plots and the heritage teaching garden. The large roof also shelters an expansive porch on the side nearest the community garden, creating a pleasant condition between indoors and outdoors to foster greater interactions between those in the garden and those using the community center.
COMMUNITY CENTER STUDY MODELS
VIEW OF COMMUNITY CENTER FROM COURTYARD
INTERIOR VIEW OF COMMUNITY CENTER MEETING ROOM
RAINWATER COLLECTION ROOF
COMMUNITY GARDENING BEDS
OUTDOOR DECK
REFLECTION POND
CLASSROOM
BEYOND HERITAGE GARDEN
SMALL GROUP MEETING ROOM
RAINWATER COLLECTION ROOF
COMMUNITY GARDENING BEDS
OUTDOOR DECK
RAINWATER IRRIGATION FROM POND TO GARDEN BEDS
COMMUNITY GARDENING BEDS
OUTDOOR DECK
PAVILION PRECEDENTS FOR COVERED BASKETBALL COURT
BASKETBALL COURT DESIGN PROCESS

SHADE STRUCTURE OVER OUTDOOR BASKETBALL COURT (Blackwell, Duseen, Riccui, Thompson)

MOCK-UP GRAPHICS BASKETBALL COURT FLOOR (Map of Vietnam could be integral to the rubber floor of the basketball court rather than as a figurative garden as suggested at last meeting)

Sample graphic surfaces of basketball courts

HUNG DAO COMMUNITY GARDENS

PRECEDENT IMAGE REFERENCES

16 MAY 2014

TIFFANY UN, AIA
ELIZABETH MOSSOP

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ARTICULATED ROOF STUDIES FOR BASKETBALL PAVILION
Modularity and use of simple, off-the-rack materials in the lamella scheme allow fast, efficient construction while minimizing material and labor cost.

Folded skin for shading and rain collection.

Simple bolted connection.

Modular elements create a structural lamella.
Hung Dao CDC stressed the importance of passing down its cultural traditions to the next generation and beyond. The design team collaborated with the CDC to develop the idea of a heritage garden that would tell the story of the community through plantings native to all regions of Vietnam.

As neighborhood residents, other locals, and visitors walk through the park, they will be able to learn about the Vietnamese heritage of the Hung Dao community by learning about the flora specific to different regions of the country and how these plants relate to regional differences in food and culture.

Hung Dao CDC has identified cultural translation as the greatest opportunity they have been given with ownership of this large, open space. The Heritage Gardens will benefit both everyday users and visitors to the site, and will enhance the cultural events to be held here, including the Lunar New Year (Tet Festival).
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