David Drive and the Neighborhoods of Lafreniere Park

- Visualizing proposed zoning changes and residential architectural improvements -
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In Fall 2020, the Jefferson Parish Planning Department engaged Tulane’s Albert & Tina Small Center for Collaborative Design to work with Council District 4 and Councilman Dominick Impastato’s office on an effort to assess current and proposed zoning along David Drive and residential housing design in neighborhoods immediately adjacent to Lafreniere Park.

Working alongside N-Y Associates, Inc., Small Center participated in a process of community engagement throughout Fall 2020 and early 2021, helping to visualize proposed changes to zoning, signage regulations, roadway improvements, and speculative residential development improvements.
A series of both in-person and zoom meetings were held throughout Fall 2020 with a Taskforce made up of residents, business owners, and other stakeholders. A final meeting open to the wider public was held in January 2021, allowing for input on proposed zoning changes and residential improvements.

Using real-time surveys, public meetings confirmed significant majority support for the proposed changes.
Zoning changes along David Drive were recommended to create a kind of linear “town center” catering to the pedestrian experience by reducing setbacks, moving parking to the side and rear for new developments, reducing signage clutter, and encouraging landscaping to reduce the overwhelmingly pervasive condition of “overpavement.”

**OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Before**

**After**

- Setbacks reduced to provide greater street presence
- Landscaping used to delineate sidewalks to increase pedestrian safety
- Side allies and driveways facilitate parking at the side and rear of commercial properties
Zoning changes within the neighborhoods adjacent to David Drive and Lafreniere Park were recommended to allow for density while also providing for conversion to single-family residential where appropriate. Additional design research was used to envision and encourage design improvements to existing housing stock, and to explore possible solutions to perennial problems including overpaving, parking, permeability, and incentivizing renovations.

Before

After
Recommendations for Renovations and Additions: David Drive
DAVID DRIVE: CHALLENGES

Sign clutter along street; lack of landscaping; rollover curbs and parking in front prioritizes vehicles over pedestrians

Extensive setbacks prevent a relationship between the building and the street; overpaving
Rollover curbs reduce pedestrian safety; parking in front of buildings prevents a quality pedestrian experience
The proposed zoning change to Town Center Mixed Use District (TCMU) results in the following changes for new developments proposed along David Drive. Changes would also be required for major renovations along the corridor, while signage requirements would be required even for existing developments, to be conducted within a reasonable amortization period.
Handicapped parking can be maintained in front of businesses.

Pole signs are replaced by monument signs.
Below are examples of how even light renovations can improve the visual character of David Drive, drawing more customers to businesses and providing a pleasant experience for pedestrians and drivers alike.

Before

After

Landscaping provides separation between adjacent businesses and helps delineate pedestrian sidewalk for increased safety.

Temporary signage removed

Trees and shrubs can provide visual relief from over-paving

No parking removed
Lafreniere Neighborhood Revitalization Strategic Plan

Before

After

- Trees and shrubs can provide visual relief from over-paving
- Excess signage on building removed
- Windows added to provide more “open” feel to commercial businesses
- No parking removed
- Pole sign removed and replaced with monument sign
- Landscaping provides separation between adjacent businesses
Below are examples of how renovated buildings can meet the requirements of the zoning change to Town Center Mixed Use District (TCMU).

**DAVID DRIVE: RENOVATION**

- Trees and shrubs can provide visual relief from over-paving and help provide visual site boundaries.
- Pole sign removed and replaced with monument sign.
- Landscaping provides separation between adjacent businesses.
- Windows added to provide more “open” feel to commercial businesses.
- Landscaping and potential for outdoor dining in front add to the visual character of the corridor.
- Where possible, shared lanes can be used to access parking in the rear.
The diagram below demonstrates the differences between existing and proposed commercial properties along David Drive. These changes will occur slowly as new developments and major renovations occur along the corridor over time.

**EXISTING**

- Pole signs add to visual clutter
- Rollover curbs in front mean that the look of the corridor and buildings are dominated by parked vehicles, in addition to reduced pedestrian safety
- Large setbacks in prior zoning made parking in front the most obvious solution
- Space on the side of the building can accommodate handicapped parking, with additional parking at the rear

**PROPOSED**

- Landscaping and potential for outdoor dining in front add to the visual character of the corridor
- New construction closer to the street provides more space for parking behind the building and creates a more pedestrian-oriented condition at the front
Recommendations for Renovations and Additions: Residential Neighborhoods
LAFRENIERE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

While quality residential properties exist throughout the neighborhoods adjacent to David Drive and Lafreniere Park, other properties face a number of challenges.

Flat facade, multi-unit buildings lead to parking in front yard, little to no landscaping

Dated architecture, lack of detail
LAFRENIERE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

More cars than can be accommodated, lack of landscaping

Lack of maintenance, no tree coverage
Housing in the Lafreniere neighborhoods is approaching 40-50 years in age, a timeframe in which both surface and full renovations are often needed. Ranch renovations are very common as suburban housing nationwide reaches the half-century mark; design changes referencing the Mid-Century Modern style are particularly popular, and well suited to some of the simple ranch style housing found in Lafreniere.
LAFRENIERE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Ranch facade improvements with Mid-Century Modern and other styles.

Home Exterior Makeover

FOR LESS THAN $3500

Examples of renovated ranch style homes
Both light and medium facade renovations are incentivized through available Parish tax abatement programs.

Before

After

- Windows added for light and detail
- Planters help define visual site boundaries and prevent parking on front lawns
- Landscaping provides visual relief for flat facade
- Screen provides privacy and visual upgrade for carport
LAFRENIERE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS: SETBACKS

Zoning changes include a recommended reduction in required front yard setback from 20 feet to 10 feet. This provides homeowners with additional flexibility when undertaking major renovations, with the additional benefit of adding value to the home without having to build a second story (most homes in the neighborhood remain single-story).

Purchasers of ‘70s homes often desire more open floor plans and larger family rooms connected to adjacent kitchens, neither of which is common in these older homes. Relaxing the setback helps to accommodate such renovations. The diagram below shows the prevalence of 2 and 3-unit buildings in the neighborhood, and the hatched area demonstrates the added square footage now available for expansion.
Conversions from 3 to 2 units or 2 units to single-family are allowed in the proposed zoning code; adoption by property owners would reduce parking issues and could raise property values.

Before

After

- Driveway conversion from two to one
- Permeable parking along the street
- Driveway to landscape conversion
- Addition of windows for a more dynamic facade
- Front door renovation for privacy, added planters for additional privacy and depth of facade
Conversion of two unit to single unit homes reduces parking needs and increases the availability of street parking.

Conversion of two unit to single unit home; project also takes advantage of relaxed front yard setback with an addition in the front yard.
LAFRENIERE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS: INFRASTRUCTURE

Longer term solutions to identified parking challenges could include the widening of residential roadways to utilize the entire municipal right-of-way. The amount of driveway curb cuts prevent the use of parallel parking on the street and encourage either parking on front lawns or paving the entire front yard.

EXISTING: parking on front lawn, too many driveways, parking on sidewalk and landscaping
Instead, with the removal of some driveways, additional parallel parking along the street becomes possible. Widening the street to include permeable parking strips instead of grass on the municipal side of the sidewalk allows for parking on both sides of the street while allowing two-way traffic to safely pass each other.

When these methods are employed along the length of an entire street (Wytchwood Drive pictured below), the amount of legal parking spaces equals or can even increase the amount previously available, and creates a more visually pleasing and safe pedestrian environment.

PROPOSED: Permeable parking strip installed, less visual clutter, reduced pedestrian danger