

# LIVING WITH HISTORY IN NEW ORLEANS' NEIGHBORHOODS

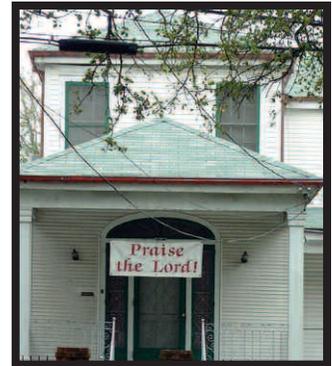
## Central City



**PRESERVATION RESOURCE CENTER OF NEW ORLEANS  
INVITES YOU TO EXPLORE THE LOCAL SIDE OF LIFE  
IN CENTRAL CITY, A NEIGHBORHOOD WORKING  
HARD TO TAKE CARE OF ITS CITIZENS.**



Orleansians from all across town converge on Uglesich's in Central City for a lunchtime po-boy sandwich and some people watching. Nearby Café Reconcile draws lawyers, artists, activists and teachers, attracted by good food, the ambience of the converted warehouse and the café's mission to train at-risk young people for jobs in the restaurant industry. Central City is earning its name as a geographical center for New Orleans, and in the last few years its main street, Oretha Castle Haley, has added a community garden, a cultural center, an art gallery and several nonprofit organizations. In another part of the neighborhood, the home of jazz great Kid Ory was restored by the Preservation Resource Center with the help of neighborhood teens apprenticing in the building trades. Neighborhood housing groups, churches, businesses, social aid and pleasure clubs and a new group of renovators are working to bring Central City, one of New Orleans' most historic neighborhoods, into the 21st century.

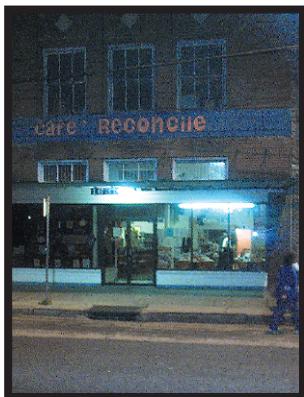


Part of the Central City Historic District was originally included in the fashionable 1806 development now known as the Lower Garden District. The swampy lands further from the river, however, were first occupied by laborers who came to build the nearby New Basin Canal in the 1830s. Irish and German immigrants were joined by Italians, African Americans and Eastern European Jews as the century progressed. By the time jazz great Buddy Bolden lived here at the turn of the century, the neighborhood was a polyglot mix of shopkeepers, draymen, porters and laborers, almost all of whom lived in shotgun cottages built expressly as rental housing and often surrounding



the original large palatial homes and townhouses. Oretha Castle Haley, then known as Dryades Street, was a thriving shopping area with more than 200 businesses at its peak. The area faltered as local businesses and industries moved out in the 1950s and 1960s, though African American-owned insurance and financial institutions retained a strong presence.

Today, Central City harbors landmarks for nearly every ethnic group that made up 19th century New Orleans. St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, designed for an Irish congregation by German architect Albert Diettel in 1869, stands down the street from a shopping district that was the site of a key civil rights protest by blacks in 1960. Carondelet Street boasts several historic orthodox synagogues, some of which do service now as Christian churches. First African Baptist Church at 2216 Third St. (1903) houses the oldest African-American Baptist church in the state. New Zion Baptist Church at 2319 Third St. became legendary after Dr.



Martin Luther King spoke here in 1957. While many residents have moved to eastern New Orleans they continue to flock back to their old neighborhood churches.

The Felicity Street Redevelopment Project has established a revolving fund to buy vacant houses and attract homebuyers into a section of the district that the group successfully nominated as a national "Save America's Treasures" neighborhood. The Preservation Resource Center is bringing new attention to the homes of jazz legends like Buddy Bolden, Kid Ory and King Oliver, all of whom lived in this area.

# TOURS

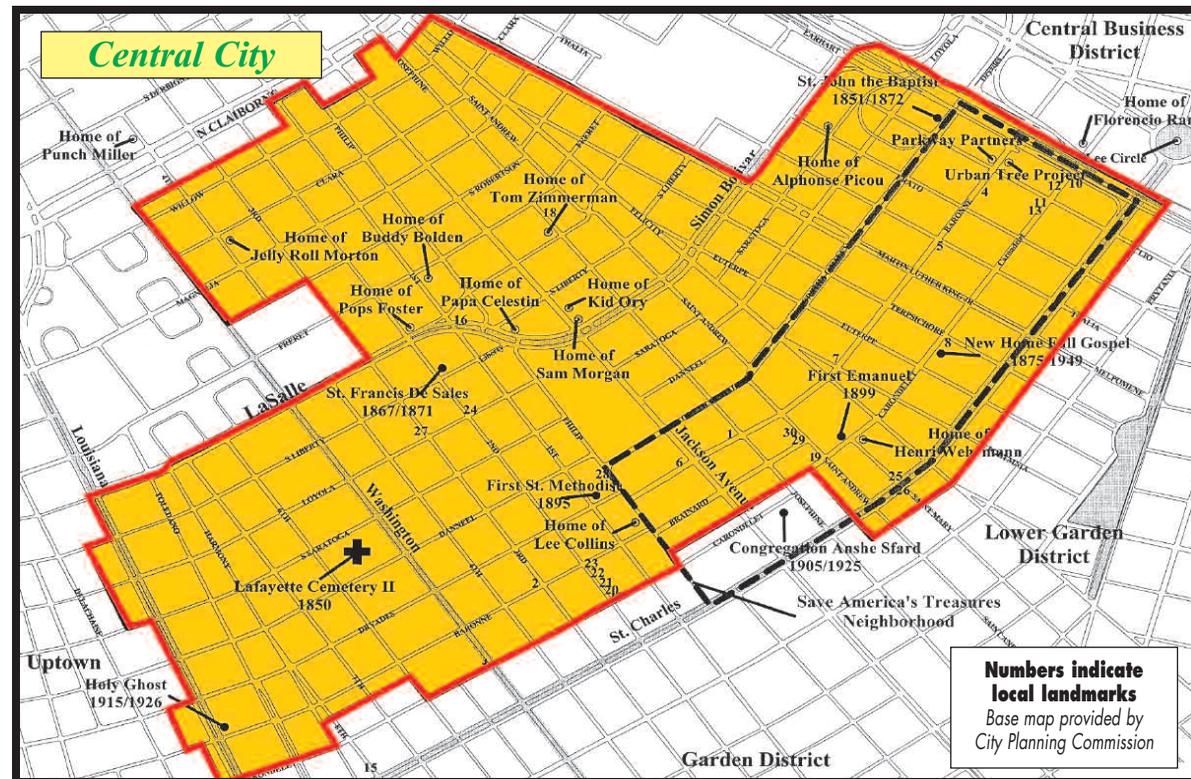
**We encourage you to use good judgment and common sense in taking these tours.**

## TOUR A

**Freret Street bus** The # 15 bus offers a tour through the heart of Central City for only \$1.25 each way. Catch it downtown at the corner of Canal and Baronne streets. You'll cruise through the center of the former shopping area of Central

City then jog right on cobblestone-paved Felicity St., once the upriver boundary of New Orleans. Many of the 19th-century frame houses here repeat one another because they were built in groups as affordable rental properties. By 1900 this neighborhood was home to a vibrant mix of African-Americans, Italians, Irish, Germans, and Eastern Europeans employed as laborers.

Most U.S. cities destroyed their older working class neighborhoods to make way for urban renewal and transportation projects in the last fifty years, but Central City is a rare survivor. The cottage at 2135 Jackson Ave was home to trombonist Edward "Kid" Ory, who went on to play with Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and to lead Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band from 1910-1916. The once-blighted cottage was renovated, with help from students at nearby Carver Senior High School, by the Preservation Resource Center. Across the street, in front of Gertrude Geddes Willis Funeral Home, the annual Zulu parade lines up every Mardi Gras morning. The Central City portion of the bus trip ends at Louisiana Ave., but continue on to Napoleon Ave. to catch the return bus. As the bus turns right on Louisiana then sharply left on Simon Bolivar, note the Flint-Goodrich home for the elderly, formerly Flint-Goodrich Hospital of Dillard University. Until at least the 1950s, African American doctors were allowed to practice only at Flint-Goodridge Hospital. New Orleans' first three African American mayors were born here. As the bus passes Second St., you can spy the double shotgun cottage at 2309-11 Second St. where jazz legend Buddy Bolden lived with his mother and sister during his most productive years, 1895-1905. Closer to downtown, on Carondelet St., you'll pass several former synagogues. New Orleanians who grew up in this part of Central City recall kosher butchers and bakers and streets that filled with neighbors and relatives walking to temple on Jewish high holy days.



## TOUR B

**Oretha Castle Haley Blvd.** The best place to feel the history of Central City is on Oretha Castle Haley Blvd. between Calliope and Felicity streets. St. John the Baptist Church at 1139 Dryades St. was a harbor for the largely Irish immigrant population when it was built between 1869 and 1972 (Albert Diettel, architect) and still draws churchgoers from all over the city. The German Baroque building with its landmark gold spire is justly noted for its brickwork. Turn your back on the Pontchartrain Expressway and head toward the former mercantile area between Euterpe and Terpsichore streets, passing Myrtle R. Banks Elementary School on your right at 1307 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd. Diagonally across the street at 1406 Oretha Castle Haley is the Parkway Partners-sponsored Kids Café Community Garden, named one of the eight best community gardens in the country by the national

John Deere Seeds of Hope program in 2001. Next door, the Ashe Cultural Arts Center and Barristers' Gallery have together turned the former Kaufman department store building (1904) into a center for new and emerging artists, film screenings, performances and community events. Ashe, run by the nonprofit Efforts of Grace, Inc., also sponsors an annual Holiday on the Boulevard festival as part of its focus on African-American culture. Across the boulevard, Café Reconcile is a popular lunch spot that doubles as a training center for young people preparing for careers in food service. The same building houses Kids Café, a mentoring program serving more than fifty elementary-school children at a time. The emphasis on the neighborhood's children and young people continues in the 1500 block, where Total Community Action operates a head start program, and the 1600 block, where the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana coordinates its efforts for humane treatment of juvenile offenders. Further up the block, Handelman's department store, Kaufman's biggest competitor in the heyday of the Dryades St. shopping area, waits for restoration.





- 1803 Louisiana Purchase
- 1806 Barthelemy Lafon lays out area now known as Lower Garden District, including Central City close to present St. Charles Ave.
- 1820-1860 Largest influx of immigrants into city, chiefly from Ireland and Germany
- 1832 New Basin Canal opens
- 1833 New Orleans and Carrollton Railroad (later the St. Charles Ave. Streetcar) chartered; begins operating in 1835
- 1836 New Orleans divided into three municipalities; present-day Central City divided between Second Municipality of New Orleans and City of Lafayette
- 1852 Municipalities combined into single city government of New Orleans
- 1890-1930 Approximately 2000 Eastern European Jews settle near Melpomene St.
- 1893 New Orleans drainage advisory board formed to tackle city's drainage problems
- 1899 Sewerage and Water Board established to implement drainage program that would make wet parts of city habitable
- 1913 Albert Baldwin Wood invents screw pump, facilitating drainage
- 1950s Pontchartrain Expressway constructed
- 1957 Dr. Martin Luther King speaks at New Zion Baptist Church
- 1960 Dryades St. boycott protests absence of African-American employees in Central City shops
- 1973 Path of St. Charles Ave. Streetcar added to National Register of Historic Places
- 1982 Central City becomes National Register Historic District
- 1989 Dryades St. renamed Oretha Castle Haley Blvd. after civil rights leader
- 1999 Lower St. Charles corridor designated a "Save America's Treasures" neighborhood

## Neighborhood Events

- February or March: Zulu Parade begins on Jackson Ave. Mardi Gras Day
- August: Night Out Against Crime
- December: Holiday on the Boulevard

## Neighborhood Associations

- Felicity Street Redevelopment Project
- Historic Faubourg Lafayette Association
- Holy Ghost Neighborhood Association



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*Since 1974 the Preservation Resource Center has promoted the preservation, restoration and revitalization of New Orleans' historic neighborhoods and architecture.*



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