

Gentilly/Planning District 6 Neighborhood Mapping Pilot Project Summary

In order to have a functioning Citizen Participation Program in New Orleans, or even a Neighborhood Participation Plan, there must be an accurate neighborhood boundary map. Knowing the boundaries of our neighborhoods is essential for identifying the stakeholders within a neighborhood; allocating federal, state and local resources on an equitable basis; tracking any number of vital quality of life statistics; assisting developers and business people; and making sure that all citizens are given an opportunity to provide input to city government, among other vital objectives.

Accurate neighborhood boundary maps do not currently exist in New Orleans. The City's official neighborhood map last went through a major update in the 1970s, and that map was created by a top-down method that was based more on census tracts than the actual neighborhood boundaries as perceived by the residents and in keeping with the city's rich history. Given the urgent need for clear and accurate neighborhood boundaries, now is the time to update the City's official neighborhood map. Committee for a Better New Orleans (CBNO) has recognized this need and initiated this work. For a pilot project to test and refine its proposed methodology, CBNO worked with the Gentilly Civic Improvement Association (GCIA) and the neighborhoods in Planning District 6.

Baseline Maps

The first step for mapping neighborhood boundaries is to start off with a baseline neighborhood map. The City's present official neighborhood map for Planning District 6 only has eight neighborhoods (see Attachment 1). Having worked extensively in this section of the city, CBNO knew that resident perceptions were closer to 20 neighborhoods. Therefore, CBNO looked at other neighborhood maps to serve as the baseline; of these, the best and most current neighborhood map for Planning District 6 was found in the Charrette Report from the 2007 Unified New Orleans Plan (see Attachment 2).

Methodology

CBNO contacted all the neighborhood associations in Planning District 6 and asked them to confirm the boundaries of their neighborhoods as defined by the UNOP baseline map. CBNO received a response from all of the neighborhoods in Planning District 6. In most cases, these boundaries were confirmed. There were a few cases where the neighborhoods saw their boundaries as different from the UNOP map. This resulted in four areas where there were gaps between neighborhoods where residents were not included in a neighborhood. There was also one circumstance where neighborhood boundaries overlapped in an area that was claimed by two neighborhoods.

CBNO worked with the neighborhoods and residents to resolve these gaps and overlap. In addressing the gaps, CBNO began by contacting the adjacent neighborhoods to let them know that there were residents near their neighborhood that were not included in a neighborhood. We then asked if they would like to include these residents in their neighborhood. In the cases where only one neighborhood wanted to expand its boundary to include these additional residents, we then asked that neighborhood

if it wanted to make that expansion automatically, or if they wanted CBNO to survey the residents. If they did not think a survey was needed, CBNO made the map adjustment to include that area in the neighborhood (considering this to be the only viable option), and distributed flyers to notify the residents that they were part of a neighborhood and provide information about the neighborhood association. If the neighborhood requested a survey, or multiple neighborhoods wanted to include those residents in their neighborhood, then we surveyed the residents.

For the survey, CBNO distributed flyers with a map of the area in question, information about the neighborhood(s), and a question asking the residents if they wanted to be included in a neighborhood, and, if applicable, which one. We distributed the surveys with a stamped envelope so they could mail their responses to CBNO's office. Also included on the survey was information about a meeting that residents could attend to ask questions about this decision and about the neighborhood(s). Residents were given about two weeks to return the survey, and at which point CBNO tallied the results and determined which neighborhood would serve the area based on a majority of the responses. CBNO then distributed flyers to the residents to inform them of the results and to provide them with neighborhood meeting and contact information. The following sections describe how this methodology was applied in each of the specific gaps.

Mirabeau Gardens/Virgil Park Gap

The area without representation included about 80 houses located between Paris Avenue and the London Avenue Canal and Pratt Drive and Virgil Boulevard. Both the Mirabeau Gardens and Virgil Park neighborhoods wanted to represent this area. CBNO distributed 82 surveys to the residents, giving them the option to choose Mirabeau Gardens, Virgil Park, or neither. A group of residents organized a meeting to discuss this decision and invited CBNO and the neighborhood presidents. The meeting was well attended and informed residents about the neighborhoods. The results of survey were 13 for Mirabeau Gardens, 1 for Virgil Park, and zero for neither. Based on the results of this survey, this area was included in the Mirabeau Gardens neighborhood.

Milneburg Gap

The unrepresented area included about 20 homes in a four block long and two-thirds of a block wide area between Elysian Fields and St. Roch avenues and Mexico Street and behind the houses on the riverside of New York Street. This area is between the Lake Oaks and Milneburg neighborhoods. Lake Oaks' neighborhood boundary was established by the Levee Board as part of state legislation and could not be expanded to include this area. Milneburg was willing to include this area as part of their neighborhood, but only if the residents wanted to join the Milneburg Security District. At Milneburg's request, CBNO surveyed the residents to see if they wanted to join the Neighborhood Association. We distributed 22 flyers with a survey and invited residents to the Milneburg monthly meeting to answer questions. Three residents favored joining Milneburg and two did not. Since Milneburg was the only viable option for this area and the majority of the responding residents were in favor, this area was included in the Milneburg neighborhood.

Pilotland Gap

There was a one block unrepresented area of about 25 homes located between Bayou St. John and St. Bernard Avenue and Harrison Avenue and Park Island Drive. This area is located between the Bancroft Park and Pilotland neighborhoods. CBNO contacted both neighborhoods to see if they wanted to include this area in their neighborhood. Pilotland was willing to include this area, but Bancroft Park did not respond to multiple requests so CBNO assumed that Bancroft Park did not want to include this area. The Pilotland neighborhood did not think that it was necessary to survey these residents, so CBNO distributed flyers to these residents with information about the Pilotland neighborhood and its meetings. This area was included in the Pilotland neighborhood.

Gentilly Heights Vascoville Gap

There was an unrepresented area of about 30 homes located between Pelopidas Street and Gentilly Boulevard and Warrington Drive and Norman Mayer Avenue. This area is located south of the Gentilly Heights Vascoville and southwest of the Gentilly Heights East neighborhoods. Gentilly Heights Vascoville wanted to represent this area, and Gentilly Heights East did not respond to requests about representing this area. The Gentilly Heights Vascoville neighborhood wanted to survey these residents, so 29 surveys were distributed to these residents. The survey results were four for Gentilly Heights Vascoville and zero for no representation. This area was included in the Gentilly Heights Vascoville neighborhood.

Edgewood Park/Fairmont Park Overlap

Both the Edgewood Park and the Fairmont Park neighborhoods claimed a large area of about 600 properties between I-10/I-610 and Gentilly Boulevard and Franklin Avenue and Clematis Street. The UNOP map used as a base for this project showed the area as being part of Edgewood Park. However, CBNO contacted both neighborhoods and asked for any information they had substantiating their claim on this area. Edgewood Park provided their membership roster, showing that they had 62 members (46% of their total membership) living in this area. They also informed CBNO that they were in the Edgewood Park Assessment Area as defined by the City Assessor, which CBNO confirmed from the Assessor's website. CBNO then prepared a survey to deliver to the residents in this area, asking them which neighborhood they considered themselves to be residing in. Prior to launching this survey, Fairmont Park informed CBNO that their historian had reviewed the maps and that they were conceding the area in question to Edgewood Park. The matter was thus resolved, and the area is placed within the Edgewood Park neighborhood in the final map.

Completed Map

After all of the neighborhoods confirmed their boundaries and the gaps and overlaps were resolved, CBNO created the final neighborhood boundary map for the Planning District (see Attachment 3). 21 neighborhoods are completely or partially within Planning District 6. This is a stark difference from the eight neighborhoods identified in the City's official neighborhood map. CBNO feels that this map is more representative of the actual neighborhoods in the Planning District, as defined both by the people who live there and by historical documents.

Next Steps

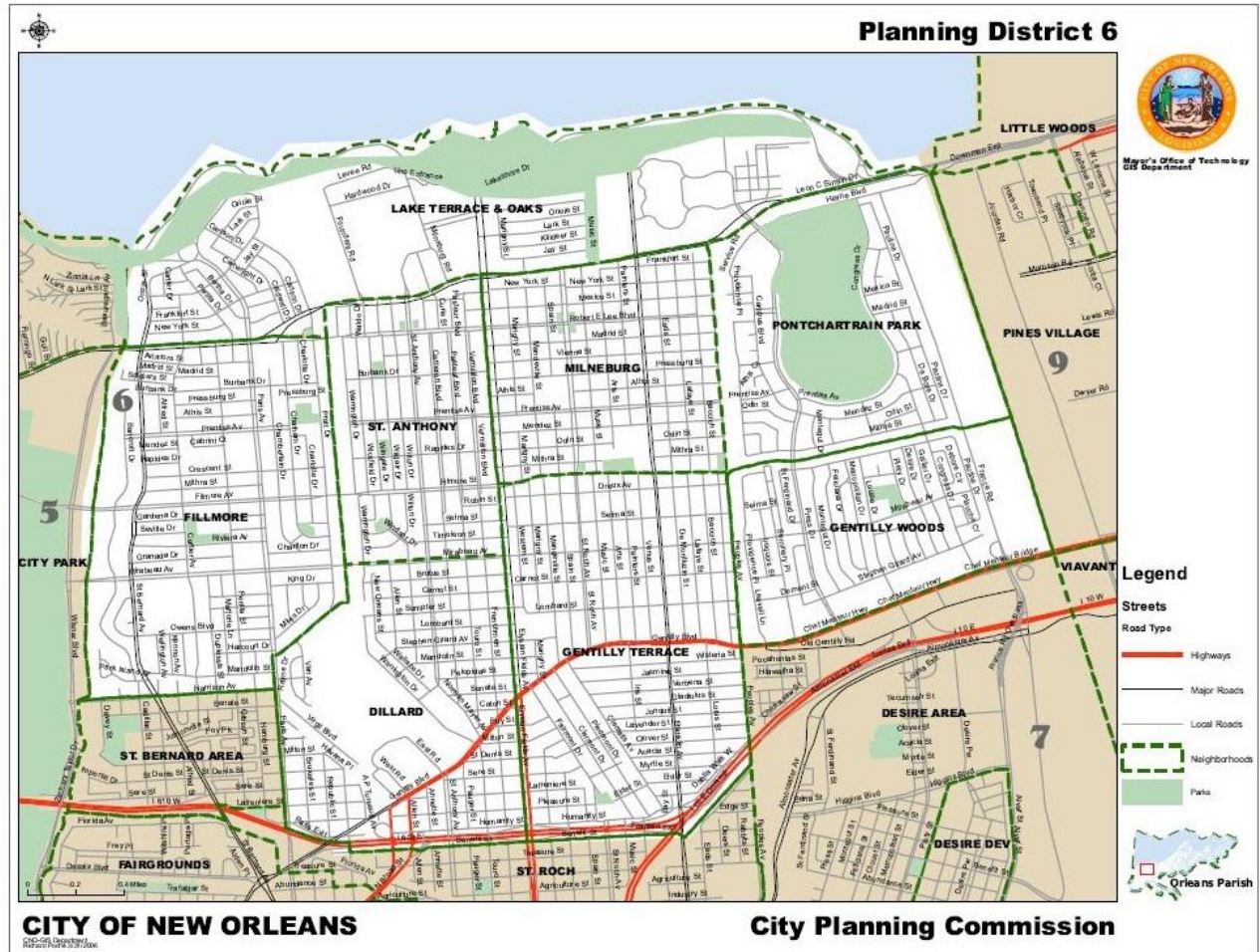
Now that CBNO has completed a neighborhood boundary map for one Planning District, and demonstrated the effectiveness of the methodology, we would like to expand this mapping to the rest of the City. A necessary precursor to this is to develop and sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the City to complete this work.

Two potential next areas for CBNO to map would be New Orleans East and Treme. ENONAC in New Orleans East has expressed interest in mapping neighborhood boundaries in its geographic area, and CBNO has initiated discussions with the organization on how to advance this effort. Additionally, CBNO is collaborating with NEWCITY, and exploring opportunities to participate in the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative project, both of which work in the Iberville/Treme area, so it would seem natural to map the neighborhoods in this area. CBNO is open to suggestions and input from the City on where to map next.

Attachments on the next three pages are the current official city neighborhood boundary map for Planning District 6; the UNOP map for Planning District 6; and the final CBNO map for Planning District 6, with the areas that required resolution as described above circled in red.

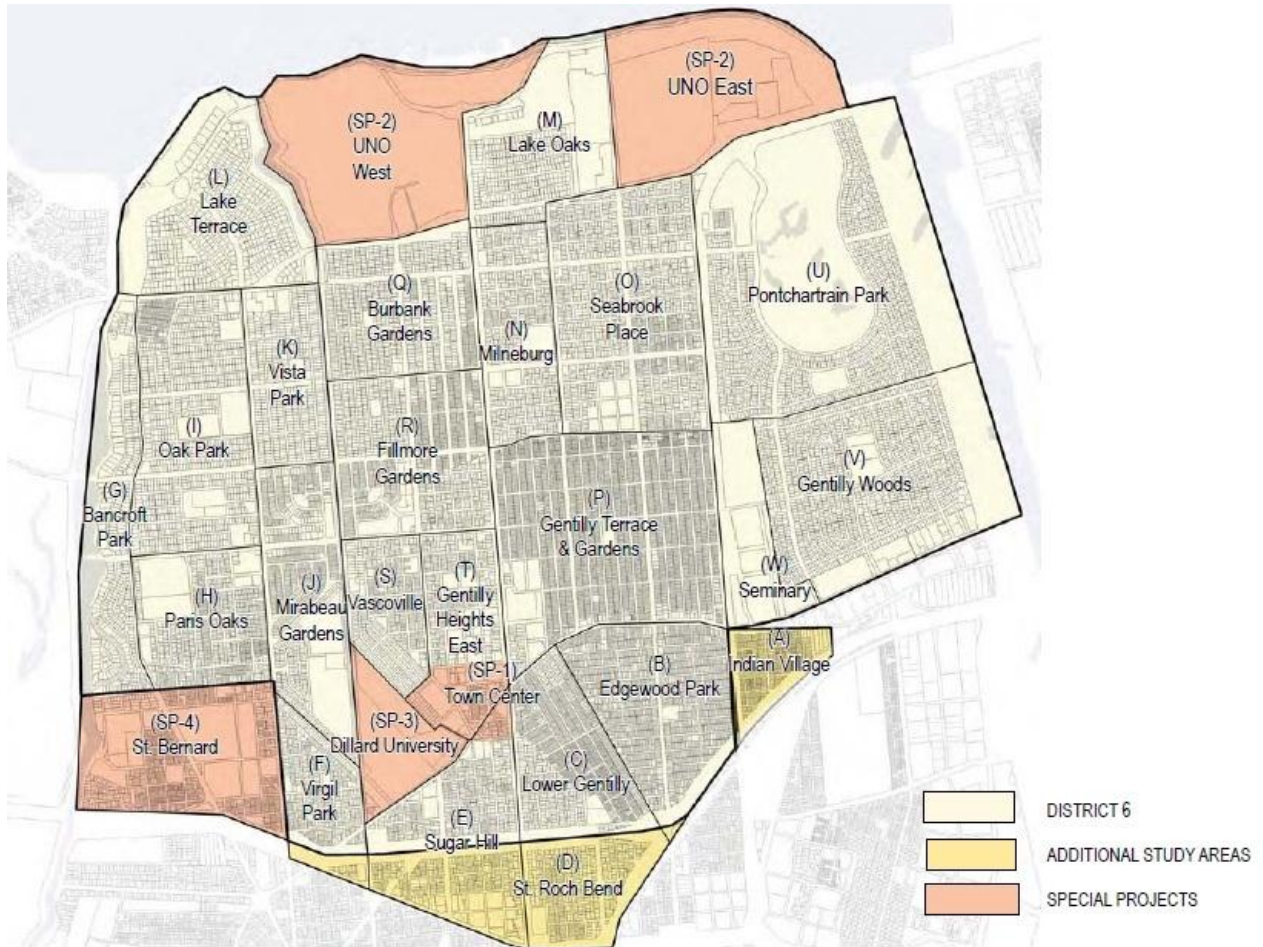
Attachment 1

City's Official Neighborhood Map for Planning District 6



Attachment 2

UNOP Charette Report Neighborhood Map for Planning District 6



Boundary plan for District 6 with neighborhood delineations and additional study areas.

Attachment 3

CBNO's Neighborhood Boundary Map for Planning District 6

