THE FRANZ BUILDING: A Strong Advocation for Adaptive Re-Use in Post-Katrina New Orleans

Derek James Hoeferlin[1]
assisted by Washington University in St. Louis architecture students,[2]
Karl Seidman, and MIT urban studies and planning students[3]

"The Franz Building is in an area targeted for revitalization in the Planning District 2 Unified New Orleans Plan. The building is historic and located on a major corridor in Central City. Its renovation will preserve a piece of history of the neighborhood as well as help bring commerce to Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard, a street that was once a major commercial area. In addition, Good Work Network's business incubation services provide another key component of Planning District 2 plans for area revitalization."

—Councilmember Stacy Head, New Orleans City Council, District B

INTRODUCTION

In 2007, the Good Work Network[1] (GWN), a 501(c)(3) micro-enterprise development organization, purchased the historic Franz Building (Fig. 1) at 2016 Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard (O.C. Haley) in New Orleans, Louisiana and will renovate it to house expanded business support and incubation services along with several retail incubator storefronts. Established in 2000, GWN provides training, technical assistance, and management support services to low income and disadvantaged entrepreneurs as well as non-profit organizations in the greater New Orleans area. Located along an historic commercial corridor in the Central City neighborhood of New Orleans, the restored Franz Building will further GWN's mission to empower local entrepreneurs, while also achieving critical goals and objectives outlined in the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP) for Planning District 2.[2] UNOP, the community-driven post-Katrina recovery plan adopted by the City and State, identifies economic recovery of the O.C. Haley corridor as a top priority project to spur redevelopment. The subsequent New Orleans Office of Recovery Management[3] plan specifies the O.C. Haley corridor as one of its seventeen Target Recovery Zones (Fig. 2). Therefore, this specific project both will impact and be impacted by such important recovery and rebuilding initiatives.

Under the direction of Louisiana licensed architect and Washington University in St. Louis adjunct lecturer Derek James Hoeferlin, 10 senior undergraduate architecture students from the College of Architecture at the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts have designed a thorough conceptual and subsequent constructible design strategy for the Franz Building. As part of the CITYbuild Consortium of Schools, a collaborative group of Universities collectively working in post-Katrina New Orleans, this project is only one of many in an ongoing series of design studios led by Hoeferlin that furthers Washington University's commitment to the post-Katrina, New Orleans recovery and rebuilding. The simple pedagogical approach for Hoeferlin is to engage architecture and urban design students, at multiple scales, directly in the community by working with community groups and professionals on real projects not

[1]Derek Hoeferlin is a licensed architect in Louisiana and Adjunct Lecturer at the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis, a member of the CITYbuild Consortium of Schools; hoeferlin@wustl.edu.
[2]Hoeferlin's Washington University in St. Louis Spring 2008 architecture students: Alla Agafonov, Nicholas Berube, Elizabeth Bochner, Claudia Bode, Eric Cesal (Teaching Assistant), Zhan Chen, Leigh Heller, Kathleen Johnson, John Kleinschmidt, Andrew Stern, Aaron Williams; www.nolarecipe.blogspot.com.
[3]Karl Seidman is a Senior Lecturer at DUSP (Department of Urban Studies and Planning) at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). Seidman's graduate students: Holly Jo Sparks, Lakshmi Sridaran.

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 23 3/17/09 11:33:12 AM

typically within the bubble of architectural education. Hoeferlin's studio projects range in scale from the micro of actualized design-build projects for a community garden, to the macro of large-scale integrated water management scenarios, to this Franz Building design that is at the typical architectural scale for architecture students. In addition, as part of Massachusetts Institute of Technology's ongoing and extensive work in New Orleans, two graduate students led by senior lecturer Karl Seidman in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning worked with GWN to develop an accompanying financial analysis to supplement and legitimize the following exhibited design strategy for the Franz Building. The joint multi-disciplinary proposal of Washington University and MIT was entered in the 2008 JP Morgan Chase Community Development Competition. The entry placed first (Fig. 3) and the $25,000 prize money has gone directly to GWN as seed money to help implement the project.[4]

Working in networked collaboration, the three-part challenge is to: 1) help revitalize an historic corridor via a sustainable adaptive re-use to an historic structure that will in turn 2) assist GWN in furthering its mission to develop entrepreneurs within the Central City neighborhood in addition to 3) serving local residents with products that are indigenous, culturally relevant, and meet their needs. The focus of the following piece primarily is the first point.

The forthright position of the following piece strongly advocates for adaptive re-uses and environmentally sensitive renovations of the plethora of existing stable historic and/or viable structures that currently exist in the post-Katrina context of New Orleans. Many of these structures stand in areas of low risk for flooding by being situated above sea level, and are anxiously awaiting sustainable redevelopment projects.

The Franz Building and the historic corridor O.C. Haley of which the building is a part serve as precedent for such a redevelopment strategy within an area of low risk (O.C. Haley did not flood as a result of Hurricane Katrina).

FIGURE 1. View of existing Franz Building on O.C. Haley Blvd.

THE CHALLENGE: FROM RECOVERY TO REBIRTH

To meet this challenge, this project envisions a process that moves O.C. Haley and the Franz Building from recovery after Hurricane Katrina to the rebirth of a new O.C. Haley and a new Franz Building that builds from its rich history, prioritizes adaptive reuse and sustainability, and promotes local entrepreneurship to strengthen economic empowerment within underserved communities.

Serving as the anchor tenant in the Franz Building, GWN will provide business support services to

FIGURE 2. 17 target zones of the New Orleans Office of Recovery Management (O.C. Haley in the dark circle).

over 500 businesses a year in addition to affordable retail business incubation spaces consistent with the UNOP vision for the corridor. The Franz Building is being developed in collaboration with neighborhood groups, community leaders, universities, and architects to revive economic activity along O.C. Haley. Every effort will be made to maintain the ar-

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 24 3/17/09 11:33:13 AM

The Times-Picayune

50 CENTS 172nd year No. 108 THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2008 NEW ORLEANS EDITION

Central City project wins student contest

Winning team from Washington and MIT

CONTEST, *from C-12*

FRANZ BUILDING
2016 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd.

DANNY BOURQUE / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

THE CONTEST
A community development competition sponsored by JP Morgan Chase Bank. Chase ran the competition for 13 years in New York, but decided to move it to New Orleans this year

THE WINNERS
A team of students from Washington University in St. Louis and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

THE PRIZE
$25,000 in seed money to get started on the $2.1 million renovation of the Franz Building in Central City to support the activities of a nonprofit business incubator

Prize is $25,000 to start renovation

By Rebecca Mowbray
Business writer

A team of students from Washington University in St. Louis and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have won the first community development competition in New Orleans with a plan to renovate a historic building in Central City to support the activities of a nonprofit business incubator.

As a prize, **JP Morgan Chase Bank NA** gave the incubator, the Good Work Network, $25,000 in seed money to get started on the $2.1 million renovation of the Franz Building at 2016 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd.

Phyllis Cassidy, executive director of the nonprofit, which last year helped more than 600 businesses, most of them startups, said she will use the students' plan to raise money for the project. "We got a very polished and sophisticated business plan," she said.

The winning team, made up of undergraduate architecture students from Washington University and graduate urban planning students at MIT, beat eight other teams in the Chase community development competition.

The students, many of whom have been volunteering in New Orleans over the past

See CONTEST, *C-12*

two and a half years, said they're excited to see the Good Work Network put their plans to use and help Central City flourish. "We're very excited to work with them so a whole new generation of entrepreneurs is able to get involved in the mainstream economy," said MIT student Holly Jo Sparks.

Chase ran the competition for 13 years in New York, but decided to move it to New Orleans this year at the suggestion of Ed Blakely, director of the city's Office of Recovery Development and Administration, who was familiar with the competition from his days as dean of the Milano New School for Management and Urban Policy in New York.

John Kallenborn, president of the New Orleans region for Chase Bank, said that about half of the projects in New York get built each year regardless of whether they won. He expects the same thing will happen with the New Orleans projects, which were slated for neighborhoods across the city on themes as diverse as an eco park, community center, warehouse, garden project and economic development for the arts.

A project by the Milano New School to build a mixed-income residential-commercial environmentally certified development in the Lower Garden District took second place, winning $15,000 for Volunteers of America of Greater New Orleans' **Renaissance Neighborhood Development Corp.**

Third place went to Tulane University business and architecture students for their plan to create elderly housing at the Bartholomew Golf Course in the Gentilly Woods-Pontchartrain Park area. The **Pontilly Disaster Collaborative** will receive a $10,000 prize to support the effort.

Chase plans to continue the competition in New Orleans in hopes that it will help revitalize the city and attract young professionals to the area.

* * * * * * *

FIGURE 3. The Times Picayune article documenting winning competition entry for the Franz Building.

chitectural integrity of the building while adding environmentally sustainable features that complement the existing building. This project not only will aid in the transformation of O.C. Haley into a vibrant arts, cultural, and retail district, it will also make adaptive reuse of an historic structure and business incubation a permanent asset in the neighborhood.

The potential impact of this project is far reaching beyond the bricks and mortar renovation of the structure itself, because the project holistically will impact a main street, a neighborhood, and a city that is struggling through its arduous task of recovery and rebuilding. Just as important, this project can serve as a proactive reminder to prove that by engaging multiple disciplines within a post-disaster context with many sets of eyes on achieving multiple layers of sustainability, an actualized project can add to the momentum of continued rebuilding.

HISTORIC AND PRESENT IMPORTANCE OF ORETHA CASTLE HALEY BOULEVARD AND THE FRANZ BUILDING

Prior to integration in the 1960s, the Central City neighborhood, particularly O.C. Haley, was a successful and independent Black cultural and commercial corridor. The nexus of establishments met the entertainment, household, and healthcare needs of Black residents who could not shop in other parts

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 25 3/17/09 11:33:13 AM

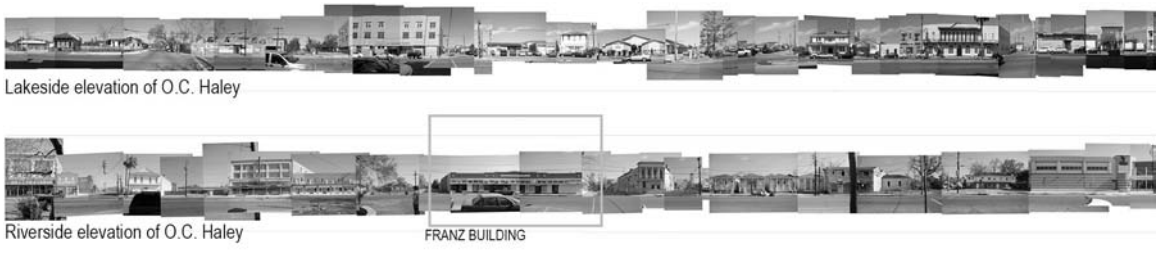
of New Orleans without risk of harassment. However, Black residents did not own the businesses nor work jobs above a menial level within these very same establishments. Oretha Castle Haley, hence the now naming of the street, was a native New Orleans leader within the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) who led the Consumer League boycotts along what was then named Dryades Street to show the importance of Black patronage in these shops. O.C. Haley, thus, was the center of the New Orleans Civil Rights movement. Therefore, the historic O.C. Haley main street is just as culturally important in the collective memory of New Orleans as it is architecturally and urbanistically important (Fig. 4).

O.C. Haley is lined with several well-built historic buildings that were erected in the early 20th century (Fig. 5). These structures characterize its strong and varied streetscape identity of shotgun homes, retail storefronts, and unique commercial buildings, such as the Franz Building. Without historic preservation of the Franz Building and other significant structures along O.C. Haley, the overall vision for O.C. Haley would be incomplete (Fig. 6).

O.C. Haley and the Franz Building are strategically located within Planning District 2 of New Orleans. Planning District 2 (otherwise known as Central City and the Garden District) is located within the "crescent" of the Mississippi River with close proximity to the French Quarter, the Central Business, Warehouse and Garden Districts, and Uptown New Orleans, in addition to major public transportation routes along St. Charles and Claiborne Avenues (Fig. 7). This unique geographic location, in addition to being situated a couple of feet above sea level, contributes to its appeal for both investment and patronage, and allows for the intersection of various communities to occupy the street and everything it has to offer. Nevertheless, as a result of historic disinvestment, further exacerbated by Hurricane Katrina, Central City residents do not have strong retail op-

FIGURE 4. Same view of O.C. Haley circa 1940s (left) and present (right).

FIGURE 5. Streetscape views of O.C. Haley historic main street with Franz Building outlined.



Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 26 3/17/09 11:33:14 AM

FIGURE 6. Significant historic structures of O.C. Haley.

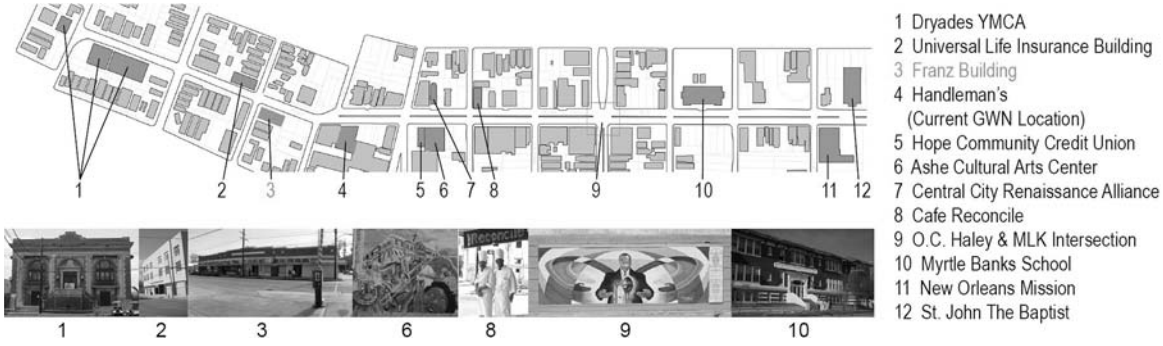
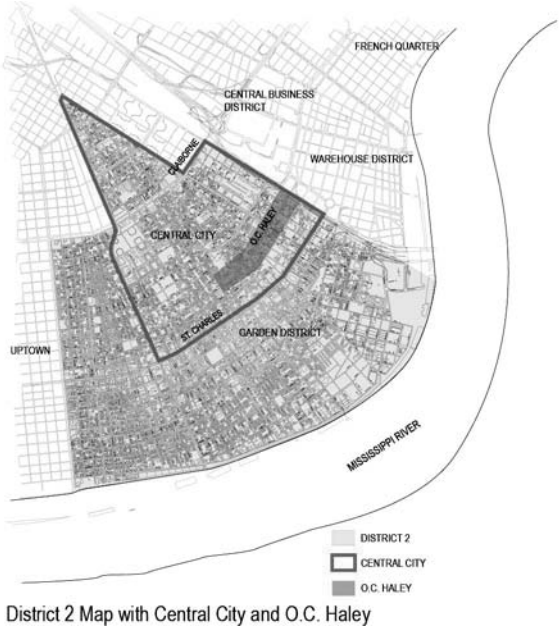


FIGURE 7. O.C. Haley and Franz Building and their strategic location in New Orleans, above sea level.



District 2 Map with Central City and O.C. Haley

tions in their neighborhood. This lack of retail options, coupled with a large deficiency in purchasing power, forces residents to spend their income outside of the community to meet even basic needs.

In order to meet the challenges outlined, the proposed development plan for GWN incorporates programmatic, design, and financing elements consistent with the vision for the rebirth of O.C. Haley. The renovated building will house GWN offices from which business support and services will be provided along with affordable incubation space for four promising retail operations.

GWN's mission of providing technical assistance and development resources for low-income and disadvantaged entrepreneurs addresses a critical gap in small business development that has grown explosively since Katrina; while the need to simultaneously provide services and products to Central City residents has also increased. The Franz Building, located just down the boulevard from GWN's current location, will provide crucially needed space to meet this growing gap. GWN will accomplish this by expanding its services to produce robust local entrepreneurship to realize the shared vision for O.C. Haley. The Franz building will host four incubator clients in addition to a new, larger, central office for GWN (Fig. 8). GWN has requested between thirteen and sixteen offices to be used for client consultations, support spaces (a kitchen, computer lab, and bathrooms), and a large "flexible" space to be used for board meetings or larger community gatherings. Probable tenants include a bakery, beauty salon, consignment shop, and crafts cooperative featuring products made by local artists.

CURRENT STATE OF THE FRANZ BUILDING

The Franz Building is a 6828 square foot, single-story retail building situated along the street-front of O.C. Haley between St. Andrew and Josephine Streets (Fig. 9). It currently has only two (of a possible

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 27 3/17/09 11:33:14 AM

FIGURE 8. Sketches of potential built-out tenant spaces in Franz Building.

FIGURE 9. Existing (2008) Franz Building O.C. Haley (northwest) elevation.

seven) tenants occupying the building. Constructed in 1915, it evokes memories of the once thriving retail and commercial district on O.C. Haley. The building is in a National Historic District, within a Main Streets Initiative, and also a nominated structure for the National Register of Historic Places. The Franz Building is a fine example of early 20th century commercial main street American architecture. It is solidly constructed of masonry and accompanied by austere, yet sophisticated, detailing. The Franz family originally owned the building, hence its namesake and correlating named placard located below the stepped parapet, centered on the street elevation (Fig. 10). Mr. Franz operated a neighborhood grocery, "B.P. Franz Grocery" (Fig. 11) store within the building, and many elderly residents currently in Central City have fond memories of not just neighborhood access to services and the fine building, but also Mr. Franz himself.

Though the building is structurally sound, years of economic disinvestment have left it needing comprehensive renovation. It is divided into four structural bays constructed of load-bearing tile (typical method of this time), and still covered with the original plaster in some places (Fig. 12). Three of these four structural bays are further subdivided into two, resulting in seven leasable spaces (Fig. 13 and 14). Three gorgeous and large cypress wood box-trusses transversally span each structural bay, with perpendicular ceiling and roof joists spanning between them (Fig. 15). Both the trusses and joists appear to be sound albeit with stabilized and minimal termite damage, a significant concern in New Orleans' subtropical climate (Fig. 16). Currently, the roof system has no insulation between the new metal pan system (installed post-Katrina to temporarily alleviate leaking) and the pre-existing cypress decking (Fig. 17). This uninsulated condition will need to be addressed in renovation, especially if the structure and roof decking is intended to be exposed. The front façade includes a gracious large awning, in poor condition needing complete replacement. The entrances to the bays are inset in the building, producing the typical dedicated display areas in these building types (Fig. 18). These entrances are not ADA-accessible and may need to be removed or reworked. This of course will depend on historic review. There are existing plumbing lines along the back wall, and every

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 28 3/17/09 11:33:15 AM

FIGURE 10. Existing Franz Building with named placard.

FIGURE 11. October 25, 1954 photograph of Franz Building with "B.P. Franz Grocery" occupying corner of building.

FIGURE 12. Existing load bearing wall with original plaster (note exposed structural tile in lower middle portion of photograph at floor).

FIGURE 13. Existing floor plan of Franz Building with current seven leasable units.

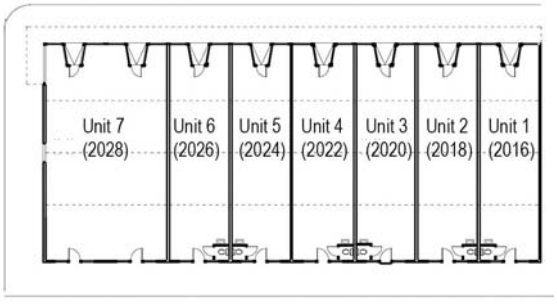


FIGURE 14. Current example of one of the Franz Building subdivided leasable bays.

leasable bay has a back door (Fig. 19). The existing concrete floor can be exposed and refinished or used as a solid base for finished flooring. Although the space behind the building is divided and partially obstructed by a metal shed, it easily could be cleared and utilized as a back patio garden for outdoor work and leisure.

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 29 3/17/09 11:33:15 AM

FIGURE 15. Rendering of existing structural bay with existing storefront beyond and cypress box-trusses and ceiling joists above.

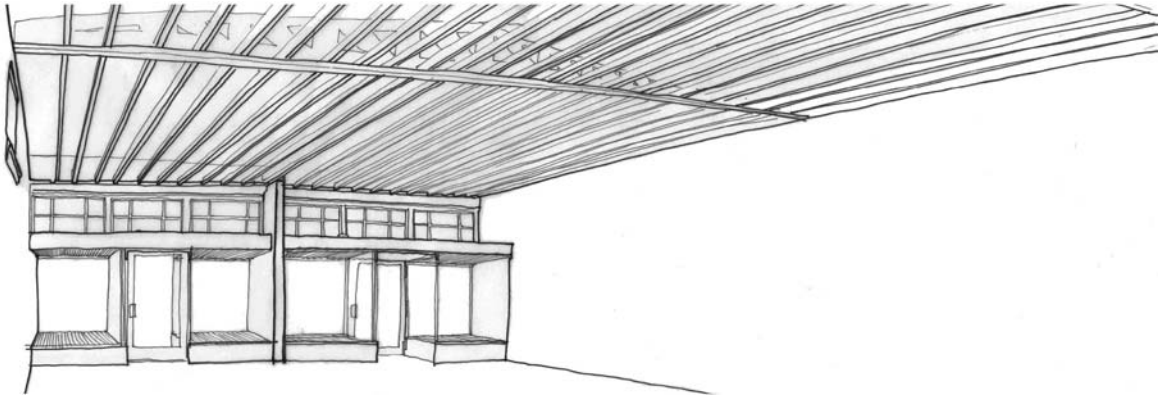


FIGURE 16. Detail of existing cypress box truss, ceiling joists, roof joists, and roof decking.

FIGURE 17. View of exposed roof decking.

DESIGN STRATEGY

Because space for GWN programming is constrained by physical factors (the bearing walls divide the building) and economic factors (limited leasable space to generate sufficient revenue), an important aspect of the design is laying out the necessary spaces efficiently in the allotted area. After conducting a space planning analysis, the preliminary work concludes that it is possible to fit the GWN requirements into two structural bays, or half the building, leaving the rest as leasable space. The remaining half containing four leasable bays dedicated for incubator businesses will be outfitted with the necessary utilities, HVAC, and plumbing,

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 30 3/17/09 11:33:16 AM

FIGURE 18. Existing awning and inset entrances at sidewalk.

FIGURE 19. Existing rear access of typical bay.

though specific finishes will be left to each tenant's discretion. The (to be later described) sectional design strategy of floor and ceiling differentiation proposed for the GWN portion of the Franz Building also will be deployed in the leasable spaces to both save cost and add design continuity to the entirety of the Franz Building.

In addition to structural and programmatic integrity, the design strategy for the renovation of the Franz Building must be conducive to the vision for transforming O.C. Haley. By creating a space that is efficient, sustainable, and respectfully integrated with the existing community, the design will further GWN's mission and the vision for O.C. Haley.

Outlined are four general design guidelines below that will allow for the physical manifestation of historic preservation, adaptive reuse, sustainability, and economic empowerment. Derived directly from GWN's programmatic and design needs, the following design concepts further its mission. These four concepts serve as the foundation for the design strategy.

1. *Public Presence*—GWN's ability to encourage local entrepreneurship and revitalization is largely dependent on its ability to draw in clients and integrate with other community anchor institutions as an independent, stand-alone physical structure. Incorporating historic preservation and a strong architectural connection to the urban streetscape will help achieve this objective.
2. *Efficiency*—The Franz Building poses many flexible design options because of its simple layout with rectilinear bays conducive to retail space, including limited space further divided by bearing walls. However, due to tight programmatic and leasable space requirements, the design is spatially efficient, but does not compromise GWN's programmatic objectives.
3. *Adaptive Reuse*—Renovation of the Franz Building is more sustainable and cost-effective than ground-up construction. Adaptive reuse is one of UNOP's primary goals in the Planning District 2 recommendations for Central City.
4. *Sustainability*—To ensure the longevity of the building and reduce its resource outputs, the design integrates environmental sustainability concepts into its design.

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 31 3/17/09 11:33:17 AM

PUBLIC PRESENCE

It is crucial that GWN's office building has a transparent public face to and from O.C. Haley, especially for the success of business incubator clients (Fig. 20). The storefronts of each bay will be prominent in order to increase the visibility of incubator tenants. The flexible shared space, drawn into the interior design, is intended to host meetings, classes, presentations, and large events (Fig. 21). The shared space faces O.C. Haley so the public can view inside activity, feel connected to it, and feel welcome to learn more (Fig. 22). Other spaces facing the street include the reception desk, waiting area, director's office, and staff lounge. A transitional shared zone mediates between the urban scale of the public front to the more intimate scale of the private offices (Fig. 23). Offices are in the private zone in the rear of the building, relating to the street via the transitional shared space and have direct access to a private back patio that relates to the adjacent residential context behind the Franz Building (Fig. 24).

Wherever people gather within the GWN office, there will be a view of O.C. Haley—serving as a physical connection between GWN's mission and the Central City community.

FIGURE 20. Rendering of restored storefront of Franz Building.

FIGURE 21. Rendering of proposed view at entry to GWN portion of Franz Building from O.C. Haley.

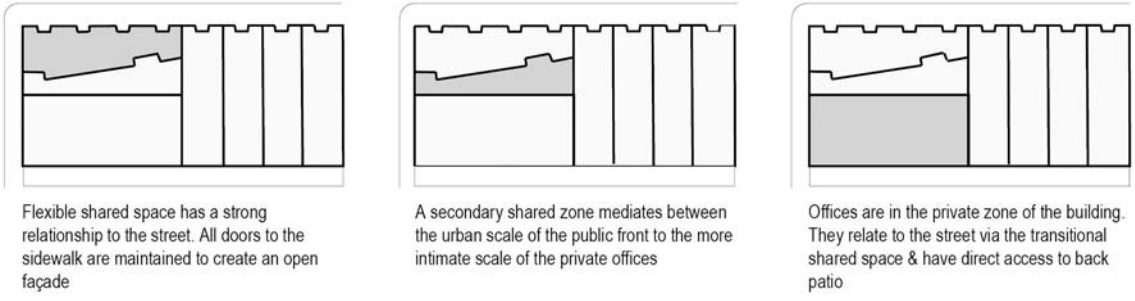
FIGURE 22. Rendering of proposed view of flexible shared space of GWN towards O.C. Haley.

FIGURE 23. Rendering of proposed view of transitional shared space in GWN portion of Franz Building (public flexible shared space on left, private office space on right).

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 32 3/17/09 11:33:17 AM

FIGURE 24. Layout diagrams of GWN portion of Franz Building: (left) flexible shared space has strong relationship to the street; all doors to the sidewalk are maintained to create an open façade; (middle) a secondary shared zone mediates between the urban scale of the public front to the more intimate scale of the private offices; (right) offices are in the private zone of the building, relating to the street via the transitional shared space and have direct access to back patio.



EFFICIENCY

The GWN's activities demand an efficient office configuration as well as flexible space that can accommodate a variety of needs. Due to the straightforward layout of the existing bays, a flexible intervention can be implemented with ease. The installation of sliding wall partitions and polycarbonate doors allow the flexible shared space to take on several configurations to be used for GWN's varying programmatic needs. With all partitions closed, there will be a large conference room, a classroom, a smaller conference room, and a computer lab. With all partitions open, the flexible space can accommodate large events such as public meetings or graduations from GWN business training classes. The reception area, entry, conference room, computer lab, and main corridor are secondary spaces that blend with the flexible shared space. In other words, the inherent simplicity of the existing Franz Building layout can accommodate quite a flexible intervention to efficiently serve multiple purposes with minimal moves (Fig. 25).

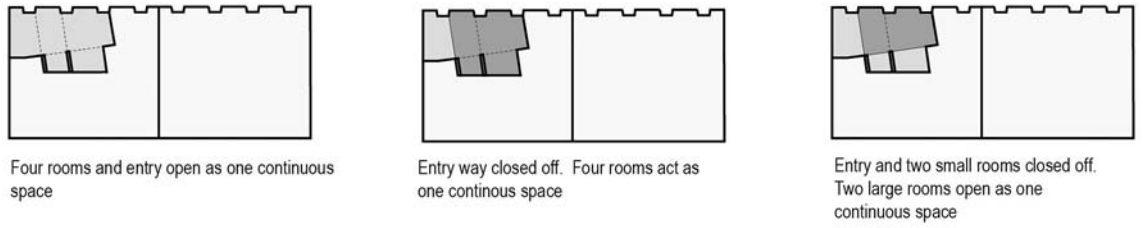
ADAPTIVE RE-USE

The adaptive reuse of the Franz Building allows GWN to utilize an historic structure to meet its new programmatic needs. Capitalizing on the healthy stock of sturdy existing structures on O.C. Haley is an important component of efficient revitalization and transformation. As a result of the various flexible design options previously mentioned, there remain significant physical components of the Franz Building that are favorable to GWN's needs. Typical with any intervention between new and existing conditions, one or two potentially major moves are made, with the intention of not compromising the whole. The main intervention in this adaptive reuse proposal is the removal of half of one of the structural bearing walls. As can be seen in the proposed floor plan (Fig. 26), this move allows GWN to have complete frontage to O.C. Haley for the GWN half of the renovated Franz Building. The resulting opening in the bearing wall will be supported by a large steel beam and exposed steel column at the strorefront. Another dialogue between the old and the new in the proposed design is that of differentiated floor and ceiling planes. The front portion of GWN will expose and refinish the existing structurally sound concrete floor. The rear part of the GWN space (specifically the transitional and private office zones) will use a raised bamboo flooring system that will allow for the running of wiring to the computer stations within the offices. At the ceiling plane in the front public portion a drop hard-surfaced ceiling of finished plywood will slightly slope to help draw the public street and daylight into the middle of the building. In the rear part, the existing cypress box-trusses will be exposed and energy efficient fluorescent fixtures and acoustical clouds will suspend from the existing tongue and groove cypress roof decking (Fig. 27 and 28).

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 33 3/17/09 11:33:18 AM

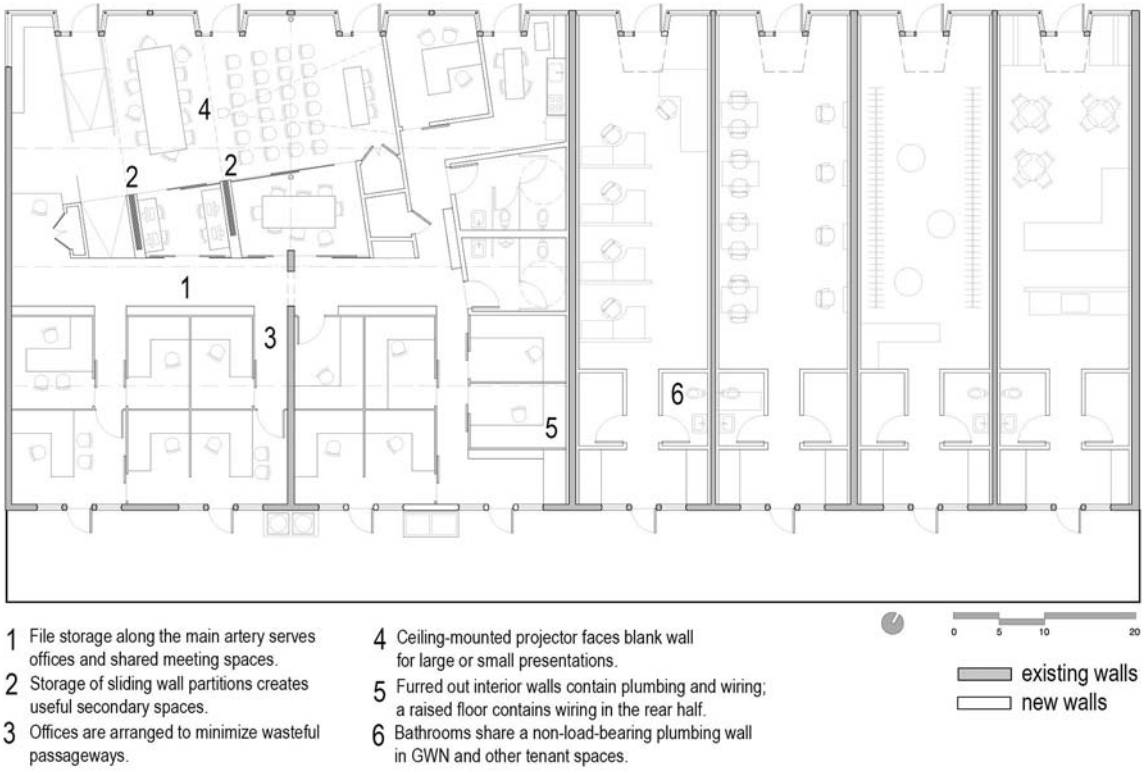
FIGURE 25. Diagrams noting the flexible, efficient layout of GWN portion of Franz Building (above) and proposed floor plan of renovated Franz Building (below).



Four rooms and entry open as one continuous space

Entry way closed off. Four rooms act as one continous space

Entry and two small rooms closed off. Two large rooms open as one continuous space



1 File storage along the main artery serves offices and shared meeting spaces.
2 Storage of sliding wall partitions creates useful secondary spaces.
3 Offices are arranged to minimize wasteful passageways.
4 Ceiling-mounted projector faces blank wall for large or small presentations.
5 Furred out interior walls contain plumbing and wiring; a raised floor contains wiring in the rear half.
6 Bathrooms share a non-load-bearing plumbing wall in GWN and other tenant spaces.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

The design investigations into the Franz Building revealed several fundamental strategies for sustaining natural resources *via passive systems already latent in the pre-existing structure* (Fig. 29). Research was made into several active systems, such as solar power and green roofs. However, rather than deploying a "kitchen sink" approach to sustainable features that often ends in cost overages, the design opts for practicality and nuanced understanding of the existing sustainable merits of the Franz Building itself.

First, utilizing natural daylight already made plentiful from the existing northwest-facing storefront and the southeast-facing windows will in turn reduce the workload of electric lights. The fifty-five foot depth of the Franz Building is shallow enough to allow adequate amounts of daylight to penetrate the mid portion of the structure. Therefore, what would be a cost-prohibitive use of skylights in the center of the building is therefore unnecessary. As many have returned to believe, the use of natural light provides a healthier working environment. The U.S. Depart-

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 34 3/17/09 11:33:19 AM

FIGURE 26. Proposed detailed floor plan of GWN portion of renovated Franz Building.

ment of Energy and the Rocky Mountain Institute documents eight case studies, in which "efficient lighting, heating, and cooling measurably increased worker productivity, decreased absenteeism, and/or improved the quality of work performed."[5]

Second, natural cross-ventilation through operable doors and windows will reduce energy loads and encourage a pleasant work environment throughout the year, taking advantage of New Orleans's natural climate. New operable transom windows above a new awning at the streetfront will allow generous cross ventilation.

Third, water management via rainwater-collecting cisterns and rainwater retention gardens will mitigate runoff and localized flooding (Fig. 30). Water will flow off the rear of the building, as the

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 35 3/17/09 11:33:19 AM

FIGURE 27. Proposed detailed building section through GWN portion of renovated Franz Building.

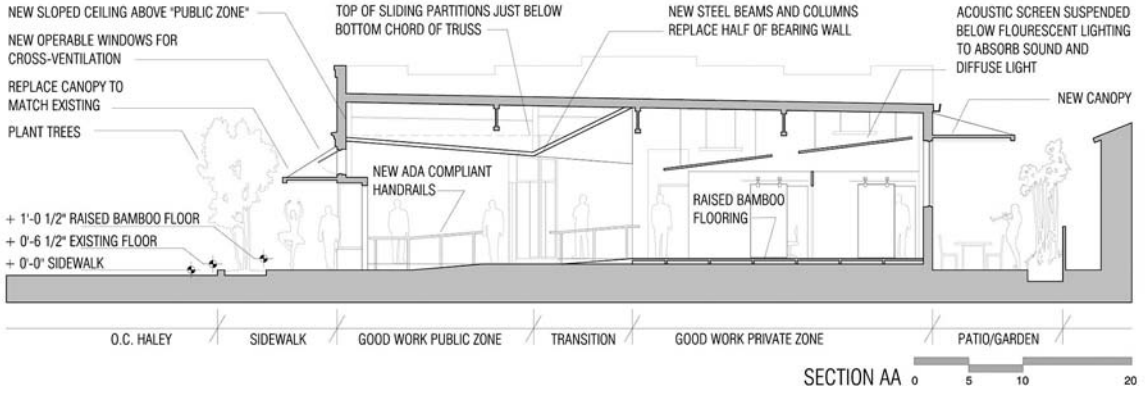
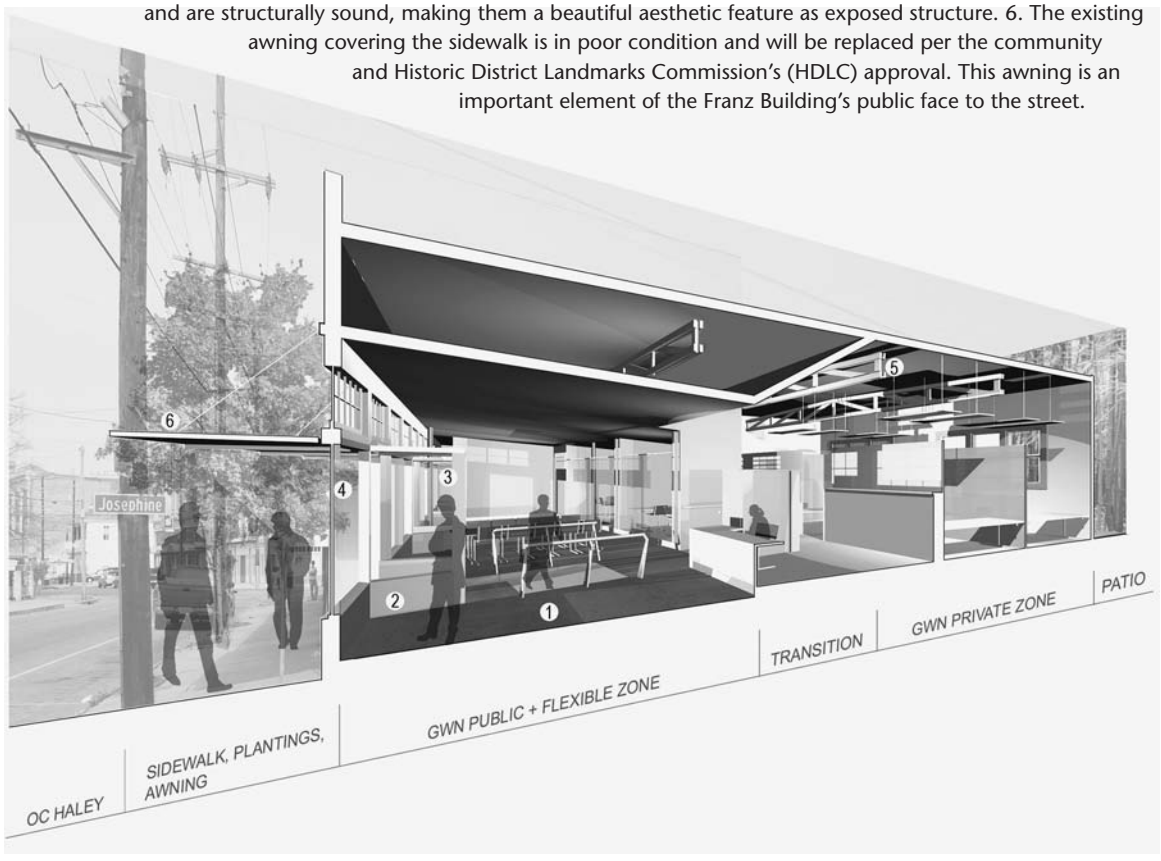


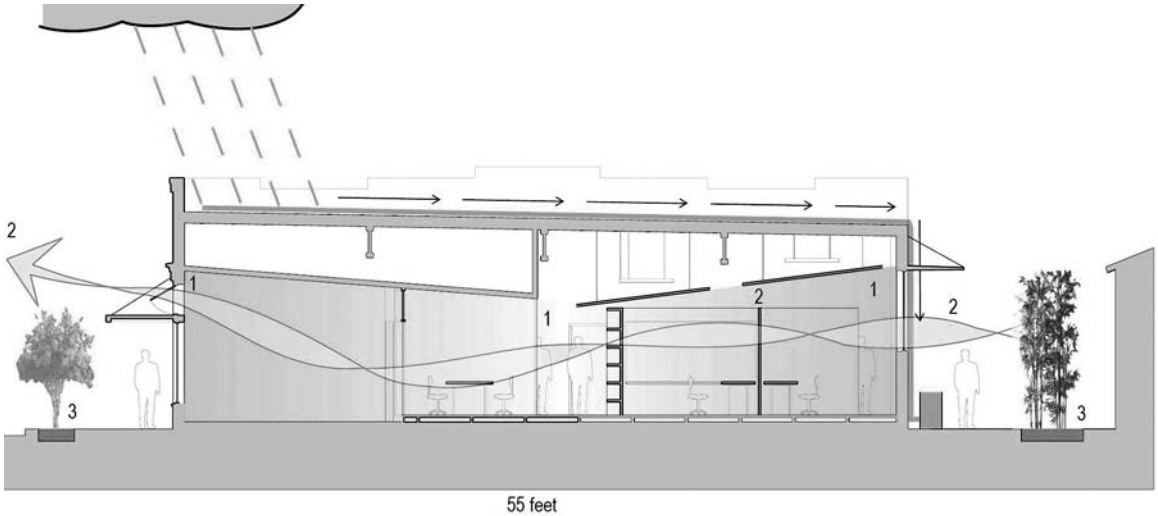
FIGURE 28. Sectional perspective rendering through GWN portion of renovated Franz Building.
1. The existing concrete floor can be refurbished to serve the front half of the building. 2. The unique geometry of the storefront entry alcoves informs the organization of the flexible space. 3. Embracing the transparent storefront character of the building creates a transparent face toward O.C. Haley. 4. The exterior is restored to its original appearance. New doors and windows are fitted to the existing openings. 5. The existing box string trusses display only minor damage and are structurally sound, making them a beautiful aesthetic feature as exposed structure. 6. The existing awning covering the sidewalk is in poor condition and will be replaced per the community and Historic District Landmarks Commission's (HDLC) approval. This awning is an important element of the Franz Building's public face to the street.



Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 36 3/17/09 11:33:20 AM

FIGURE 29. Sectional strategy of utilizing passive systems of sustainability in the Franz Building. 1. The 55-foot depth of the Franz Building is optimal to capture daylight through the existing doors and windows. Reflective and lightly-colored surfaces bring daylight deep into the building, thereby reducing the need for inefficient artificial lights and the resulting heat generated by them. 2. Low interior partitions along with operable doors and windows across the entire façade maximize natural ventilation. Based on local climate data, it has been determined that the building can be naturally ventilated all year with the exception of July, August, and September and minor cold snaps during the winter. 3. UNOP recommends an incentive-based rain garden program. Rainwater will be collected from the roof of the Franz building via a cistern and potentially diverted to flora along O.C. Haley's street-front, permanent gardens behind the building, and possible temporary gardens in the adjacent empty lot. This effort of tying architecture to ground via water collection can serve as precedent for New Orleans's challenges of mitigating flooding.



parapet wall is on three sides. In addition, the strategic use of sustainable materials and low-flow plumbing fixtures will reduce the environmental impact of the renovation. The use of rapidly renewable materials, recycled-content products, and materials that do not emit harmful chemicals will reduce the Franz Building's ecological footprint. Potentially higher initial costs for these materials may be offset by UNOP's recommendation for an incentive-based sustainable materials program.

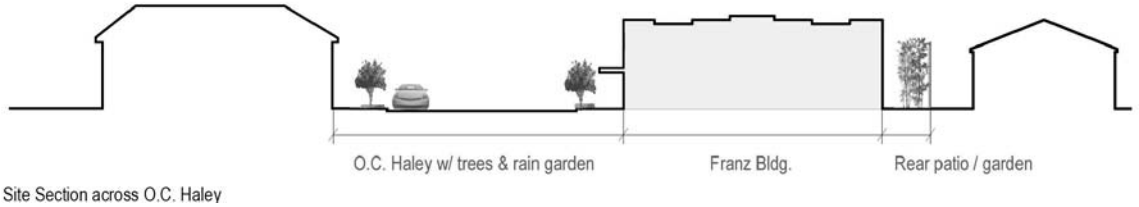
Finally, the District 2 UNOP recommendation for energy efficiency includes LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification as a significant objective for new building projects and major renovations in post-Katrina New Orleans. LEED is a third-party certification program and the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings. Certification is determined by a system of points awarded for specific sustainable practices, and depending on the point total, a building may achieve a certification of Silver, Gold, or Platinum. According to the credits that pertain, the sustainable solutions of this design represent a significant step toward LEED certification at the Gold level, anticipated to achieve 40 credits (Fig. 31), within the necessary 39–51 range. LEED certification for the Franz Building will serve as an example of successful green renovation within the community, inspiring other green projects in Central City and New Orleans. The potential of a LEED Gold rating was derived by reviewing each credit and totaling those that are feasible for the design of the Franz Building. For example, the use of rainwater cisterns to irrigate the green spaces meets each Water Efficient Landscaping credit. One credit is awarded for reducing the amount of potable water use by 50%, and the second is awarded by eliminating the use of potable water for irrigation completely. Some credits cannot be realized until the construction phase. These

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 37 3/17/09 11:33:21 AM

FIGURE 30. Rendering of a restored Franz Building utilizing rainwater collection systems for raingardens on site and surrounding O.C. Haley streetscape.

View of renovated Franz Building looking down O.C. Haley:
The slow release of rainwater into the ground provides beautiful pockets of green space, known as "rain gardens." These reduce localized flooding, runoff, and the load on the city's stormwater system. This effort is a continuation of Groundwork's rain garden program along O.C. Haley and Martin Luther King Blvd. in Central City.



Site Section across O.C. Haley

can be achieved by requiring that 50% to 75% of construction materials be sorted and diverted from disposal to recycling or salvage—a standard practice for construction companies, and a practice critically useful in post-Katrina New Orleans.

RE-USING EXISTING BUILDINGS WITHIN A MULTI-SCALED AND LONG-TERM REBUILDING CONTEXT IN POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

Post-Katrina New Orleans is difficult. There is no denying how difficult *it still continues to be, will be for a long time, and that all should be reminded of such.* Adding the current national and global economic crisis does not help matters. However, a new New Orleans is achievable—one that is smarter, yet builds on its unique past, and that in turn can serve as precedent for a sustainable American city of the 21st century.

What is required in the post-Katrina rebuilding process is a multi-scaled and multi-disciplined holistic approach that accommodates many different time frames, (short, long, and simultaneous). In other words, the "New New Orleans" is a long-term initiative (and potentially fascinating initiative). Despite many setbacks since August 29, 2005, and clearly many setbacks were already pre-existing pre-Katrina, there is momentum in the crippled crescent city. The Franz Building is proof of such an assertion. Although it is a "6828 square foot building," it operates at multiple scales and disciplines. The renovated Franz Building will be a critical structure within the

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 38 3/17/09 11:33:21 AM

LEED for New Construction & Major Renovation Overview - **GOLD CERTIFICATION**		
Sustainable Sites (Construction Activity Pollution Prevention, Alternative Transportation, Site Development, Heat Island Effect)	8 Points	(14 Possible)
Water Efficiency (Water Efficient Landscaping, Water Use Reduction)	3 Points	(5 Possible)
Energy & Atmosphere (Commissioning of Energy Systems & Performance, Refrigerant Management, Optimize Energy Performance, Renewable Energy)	5 Points	(17 Possible)
Materials & Resources (Storage & Collection of Recyclables, Materials Reuse, Construction Waste Management, Recycled Materials)	10 Points	(13 Possible)
Indoor Environmental Quality (Min. IEQ Performance and Environment Tobacco Smoke Control, Low-Emitting Materials, Construction IEQ Plan, Daylight & Views)	13 Points	(15 Possible)
Innovation & Design Process (Innovation in Design, LEED Accredited Professional)	1 Point	(5 Possible)
Total	40 Points	(69 Possible)

FIGURE 31. Projected LEED Gold certification for renovated Franz Building.

larger revitalization of the O.C. Haley mixed-use corridor. The O.C. Haley corridor will be a critical revitalized corridor within the larger network of a rebuilt New Orleans. Working back in scale, the adaptive reuse of the Franz Building will serve as a "green" and sustainable precedent advocating for renovating the plethora of preexisting structures anxiously awaiting careful attention. This brings up a crucial point about post-Katrina New Orleans and taps into much larger scales of rebuilding and redevelopment: *Rather than opting for the quick fix of demolishing old structures why not adaptively re-use them!* For example, this has met national attention with the demolition of solid and historically designated public housing sites of New Orleans in 2008,[6] in addition to the current threat of demolishing the historic Charity Hospital in downtown New Orleans along with portions of the surrounding historic Mid City neighborhood to make way for new hospitals.[7] This point is all the more critical because of the preexisting condition of New Orleans at-large. Already there exists large areas of blight and emptiness, and demolishing structurally sound buildings of historical significance only will add salt to these wounds. In addition, it is pretty safe to say the population return has leveled off and the long-term rise of population is unknown, unless a serious economic jolt is pumped into the system. In other words, the lay of the land may, and honestly will, need to take a different condition than it currently is and had been pre-Katrina. It is only responsible to believe so. This taps into such issues of integrated water management strategies as both security and amenity, in addition to resettlement and aggregation strategies—big sticky issues, but ones that must be addressed. Amazing structures such as the Franz Building, set within the historic O.C. Haley corridor, both of which are low risk on "high ground" just above sea level, can serve as near-term "bricks and mortar" catalysts that are understandable as tangible projects to all. Set within the difficult and necessary decisions of longer-term sustainable strategies that seem intangible and confusing to many, such as the above-mentioned water management strategies and settlement patterns, projects such as the Franz Building can be active players representing specificity, history, and immediate potentiality within such complicated decisions. Again, no easy task. The long term requires leadership, at all levels, coupled with the continued participation of the community, side by side with professionals and academics. However, this makes the immediacy of the potential reality of the Franz Building all the more achievable. It advocates for the incremental, set within a long-term understanding and vision of rebuilding the new New Orleans.

REFERENCES

1. Phyllis Cassidy, Executive Director of the Good Work Network, has been instrumental in the continued collaborative success of the Franz Building project; www.goodworknetwork.org.
2. "A Framework for Sustainable Urban Resilience in Planning District 2, Unified New Orleans Plan" by H3 Studio, Inc., John Hoal (Project Director) and Derek Hoeferlin (Project Manager), 2007.

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 39 3/17/09 11:33:22 AM

3. See http://neworleans.iprojweb.com/.
4. See "Central City Project Wins Student Contest" in The Times Picayune by Rebecca Mowbray, 05-08-2008. http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/index.ssf?/base/money-1/1210225158270110.xml&coll=1.
5. Romm, Joseph J. and William D. Browning. "Greening the Building and the Bottom Line: Increasing Productivity Through Energy-Efficient Design." Snowmass, Colorado: Rocky Mountain Institute, December 1994. GreenBiz.com. 26 February 2004.
6. See "High Noon in New Orleans: The Bulldozers are Ready" in The New York Times by Niccolai Ourousaff, 12-27-2007. http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/19/arts/design/19hous.html.
7. See "Plan for New Orleans Hospitals Draw Outcrys" in The New York Times, by Adam Nossiter, 11-25-2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/26/us/26hospital.html?_r=1.

Downloaded from https://prime-pdf-watermark.prime-prod.pubfactory.com/ at 2025-08-30 via free access

JGB_V4N1_a03_franz.indd 40 3/17/09 11:33:22 AM