

Examining and Addressing the Theme of “Hunger” in New Orleans’ Urban Core

Joseph S. Clark Preparatory High School, FirstLine Schools
9th Grade English Language Arts



ISSUE

Joseph S. Clark High School integrated Y-PLAN into its 9th grade literature class, beginning with a reading on Richard Wright’s *Black Boy*, where students connected the book’s hunger themes to their own themes of hunger within New Orleans. Students spent the school year under the guidance of Clark teachers and cross-sector community partners developing proposals to satisfy what they are hungry to see more of within the school’s neighborhood, specifically focusing on a real-time opportunity for informing community-oriented programming beneath and around the “Claiborne Bridge.” The high school and “the Bridge” sit within the federally funded Choice Neighborhoods footprint and that of the recently concluded Livable Claiborne Communities Study. The City of New Orleans is currently leveraging these federal investments to implement community-driven economic and neighborhood revitalization throughout the area.

“One important thing I learned doing the Y-PLAN presentation is how much we were being listened to even though we are young.... We have a responsibility now – it’s not like we’re obligated to do it, but we’re interested in it. I want my city to become one of the best cities in the state and country...” – Y-PLAN Student, New Orleans

Students took a cross-disciplinary approach to developing programming recommendations, bringing in guest speakers, researching the community’s history, conducting neighborhood asset mapping, working in teams drafting multiple proposals, building a power point presentation, and ultimately making a final set of formal recommendations to officials at the City of New Orleans in April of this year and, in May, presented before a national audience at the Coalition for Community Schools National Forum, in Cincinnati.

QUESTION

What are your recommendations for programming beneath the Claiborne Avenue Bridge?

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: Y-PLAN TEAM

Y-PLAN Instructors: Sophie Teitelbaum, Dawn Goodwin

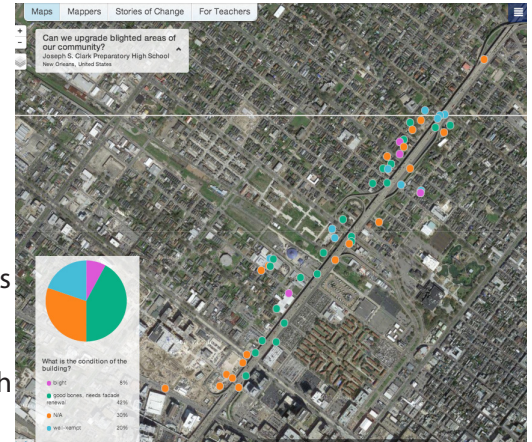
Students: 9th grade English Language Arts

Clients: Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, Urban Strategies, Livable Claiborne Communities Initiative, and The City of New Orleans

Community Partners: Bobbie Hill, Concordia, LLC; Lisa Green-Derry, Urban Strategies; Angela Taylor and Ashleigh Gardere, Livable Claiborne Communities Initiative; Eric Jensen, Partnership for Youth Development

YOUTH DRIVEN DATA AND INSIGHTS

- Students mapped a total of 75 lots along the Claiborne Corridor to assess lot type, building type, and building condition
- Building Type: 8% Abandoned; 34% Business; 24% Empty; 9% Government Building; 16% Housing
- Building Condition: 8% “blighted”; 42% “good bones, need renewal”; 20% well-kept
- Many residents identify the freeway and the underpasses as critical to their sense of place and community
- Once a symbol of destruction and relocation, community members have claimed the space beneath the freeway, which is used for various cultural festivals including Mardi Gras



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Keep the I-10 overpass/Claiborne bridge up. It is an important site for cultural and community events, like Mardi Gras, and an important source of transit for commuters and in case of hurricane evacuation.
- Instead of complete demolition of the freeway, eliminate strategic on/off ramps to open up opportunity for programming beneath the bridge and along N. Claiborne Avenue.
- Beneath the Claiborne Bridge:
 - o Develop services and programming to serve corridor residents workers, and visitors while preserving paths for traditional celebrations
 - o Encourage food trucks and open air markets
 - o Put emphasis of public art, use of color, and gardens in vacant lots
 - o Install a Jumbotron for Saints tailgating, family movie nights, etc.
- Along North Claiborne Avenue:
 - o Develop programs and services that benefit corridor residents, workers, and visitors such as the development of restaurants, music halls, and neighborhood small business services
 - o Look for unique opportunities in addressing homelessness in the area
 - o Place priority on youth-oriented development along N. Claiborne

“Y-PLAN has changed perceptions of the young people at our school. Not only do the adults in the community and school see them differently, but students also see themselves differently - as being part of something bigger. They are already trying to figure out how to continue in the process of community change.” – Dawn Goodwin, Y-PLAN Instructor

NEXT STEPS

Students continue to work with community partners to identify opportunities to implement their recommendations. These partners will be developing curriculum throughout the summer to strengthen the 9th Grade Y-PLAN program and aim to identify additional opportunities to scale the work so that interested students may continue Y-PLAN work throughout their high school experience.

For more information on Y-PLAN, contact Jessie Stewart, Y-PLAN National Coordinator: jessie.stewart@berkeley.edu