



**National Trust for
Historic Preservation**
Save the past. Enrich the future.

May 5, 2014

Hon. James Austin Gray, II
Councilmember, District E
New Orleans City Council
City Hall, Room 2W60
1300 Perdido Street
New Orleans, LA 70112
jagray@nola.gov

Re: Development Proposal for Former Holy Cross School Site

To the Honorable James Austin Gray, II:

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is deeply concerned about Zoning Docket No. 18/14, a request by Holy Cross College, Inc. for a Zoning Change from RD-3 (Two Family Residential) to a C-1A General Commercial District and an MUPC Mixed-Use Planned Community District overlay on the former Holy Cross School campus.

As you know, the residents of the Holy Cross Historic District and the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association have fought long and hard to bring their neighborhood back from the devastation of Katrina. They have been assisted in this task by the National Trust and many other partners, such as the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans. Our collaboration in the HOME AGAIN! program was a catalyst that brought many residents of Holy Cross home to restored, rather than demolished, homes. The National Trust opened a New Orleans Field Office shortly after Katrina and we maintained a staff presence there for over six years. We and our preservation partners have provided grants, technical assistance and legal advocacy in support of historic preservation in Holy Cross.

The years of local effort to revitalize Holy Cross after Katrina would be severely undermined if this zoning change were approved. The proposal by Perez Architects to redevelop the Holy Cross School site is grossly out of scale with the historic character of the neighborhood and the former campus. Even as recently revised, the proposal would allow massive new apartment buildings up to 60 feet high, in a neighborhood currently subject to a 40-foot limit, and would bring incompatible density to a neighborhood of single-family and two-family homes. In addition, this proposal would set a dangerous precedent by ignoring the Master Plan, potentially setting the stage for inappropriately scaled development along the river and throughout the city.

We urge you and your fellow Council members to consider the blood, sweat and tears of residents and historic preservation groups who are still working to return the Holy Cross neighborhood to its historic pre-Katrina character, rather than turning it into a venue of high-density condos and apartments.

The proposed zoning changes completely ignore the desires of the neighborhood residents. A vote in favor of this proposal would represent a betrayal of everything this historic neighborhood has fought to preserve.

Please, "Just Say No!" to this plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth Merritt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth S. Merritt
Deputy General Counsel

cc: Stacy Head, shead@nola.gov
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