

## Visit report 13/10/16: Holy Cross Project

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Situated in the Lower Ninth Ward, on 409 Andry Street in New Orleans, lays the Holy Cross Project. Actually, a demo house of the project and main office of Michelle Pine from Global Green USA. This organization is a non-profit organization which stimulates sustainable building of healthy affordable housing in New Orleans and other cities in the USA. This visit report is divided in two parts: a presentation from Michelle and Jeff Supak and a visit to the Bayou Bienvenue Wetland Triangle with John Trevor.

### Presentation Michelle Pine and Jeff Supak

The Holy Cross Neighborhood is named after the Holy Cross Catholic Church which was formerly located in the area. When hurricane Katrina hit, great parts of the Lower Ninth Ward were flooded, especially the parts closer to lake Pontchartrain. These parts are lower than the parts near the Mississippi river, contrary to everyone's logical thinking. Due to the flooding, a lot of houses were damaged or completely destroyed.

After Katrina, the rebuilding began and Global Green USA stepped in with the Holy Cross Project as one of the many. Where many projects failed, the Holy Cross Project (partially) succeeded. It wanted to rebuild the houses in the Lower Ninth Ward in a sustainable way and inform the people about the effects of climate change and how to address them on a local level.

The rebuilding of 18 houses was completed in 2010. The demo house, where the presentation took place, was finished in 2008 and is used as a presentation tool for all kinds of people; from school kids to governmental agencies. The construction of the houses had a lot of problems, mostly due to funding. For example, after more than 3 years of construction on hold the project had to construct property of 2.2\$ million in 6 months due to sudden funding. Former mayor of New Orleans, C. Ray Nagin, had allocated money to the project, but the new mayor (2010), Mitch Landrieu, checked these allocations and stopped the funding. There was also a change in contractors which caused a major increase in costs. All of these problems resulted in the fact that 56% of the project is completed till now. They are now searching for new opportunities for funding the project.

The community center, Climate Action Center, is also a big part of the project. In this center, the project wants to inform the community about the effects of climate change and how they can address them. In this center the academia can meet up with the local people to exchange knowledge.

Jeff Supak informed us about the urban water management part of the project, Water Wise. Urban water management started after Katrina and visits to the Netherlands which resulted in the Urban Water Plan of New Orleans. The project focusses on the local level, to have local residents help them implement the measures and pay for them. However, these measures do not have any incentives so it is hard to advertise them to the local community. One of these measures could be to install rain barrels to collect runoff. They also made the book Joy of Water to inform the local community. Another part of the project is to collect data of flooding around the neighborhood and to beautify the neighborhood to reduce crimes.

### Visit to Bayou Bienvenue Wetland Triangle

After the presentation of both Michelle and Jeff, we got to see the Bayou Bienvenue Wetland Triangle with John Trevor alongside Michelle. This 69-year-old man, born, raised and still living in the Lower Ninth Ward, knows a thing or two about the neighborhood and the bayou. Many, many cypress trees

and waterlilies grew in the fresh water. However, due the construction levees and canals the water became brackish and the trees, lilies and other vegetation died. This caused the water to be cleared, which resulted in turn in open water ideal for hurricanes. This was also one of the causes why surge during Katrina got so far inland which resulted in the failure of dykes. In the wake of Katrina, a surge barrier and rock dam were constructed which reduced the saltwater intrusion. Now they are planning to restore the lilies, trees and other vegetation to get the former 'horizontal levee' protection back. This will take some time but the community is confident it will work out.