NOLA Shares
An Integrated and Equitable Sharing Economy for the Iberville Neighborhood

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2018 SHARING ECONOMY DESIGN COMPETITION ENTRY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Iberville neighborhood has experienced extreme change since 2005. Since then, the arrival of Hurricane Katrina, the demolition of most of the Iberville Projects, and the creation of the new, mixed-use Bienville Basin have displaced many long-time residents and introduced a new population to the area.

With this complex reality in mind and dramatic demographic change, our team focused on the equitable distribution of goods and services within the sharing economy and the Iberville neighborhood. Our proposal, NOLA Shares, attempts to address perceived gaps of service within the neighborhood by using sharing economy technologies and physical anchors throughout the Iberville neighborhood.

NOLA Shares is a web and app-based platform that has a simple goal – to facilitate the sharing of skills, resources, and knowledge between Iberville residents. Homecare, tutoring services, transportation sharing, food services, elder-care, job training, and more will be available through this program. Most importantly, NOLA Shares will support relationship-building between former Iberville residents and the new population of the Iberville neighborhood. By providing physical kiosks at strategic points within Iberville, we hope that even those without access to smartphones or the internet will be able to reap the benefits of NOLA Shares.

NOLA Shares anticipates the need to ask hard questions about regulation, seeking to consolidate various sharing economy companies and services into one integrated platform. The platform—accessible through web, mobile app, and physical kiosk—enables the City of New Orleans to monitor and regulate the sharing economy in the manner that is least burdensome to the various companies. The sharing economy looks to re-categorize its labor force as independent contractors and, with NOLA Shares, we attempt to work with that categorization. By bringing all of an independent contractor’s work under one umbrella, the City of New Orleans can implement policy that understands and regulates workers as independent contractors while better protecting their labor rights. Importantly, the City should be able to monitor the number of hours that independent contractors work each week, as well as how much they’re receiving for their services. The City can then identify sharing economy companies that appear to use exploitative labor practices.

The aim of NOLA Shares is not to burden sharing economy companies unnecessarily. Rather, the aim is to ensure that the spirit of existing regulatory protections persists and is adapted to the sharing economy in order to secure fairness for workers and neighborhoods and cities. NOLA Shares, hopefully, can serve for other cities as a model of governance and engagement.

It is our hope that through NOLA Shares, new and long-time residents of this area will be able to connect more easily with their neighbors and establish strong social and economic bonds with one another.
**THE SHARING ECONOMY**

The sharing economy is an economic system based on peer-to-peer transactions where users share human, physical and intellectual resources and assets. The system is driven by big data algorithms and facilitated by the internet and easy-to-use technology. Many now think of the sharing economy as the “invisible infrastructure” of cities, expanding existing service capacity. Advocates of the sharing economy—both business people and policy makers—argue that the sharing economy helps forge bonds between neighbors and members across communities. Strengthening ties between community members contributes to a stronger social network—improving daily quality of life and making a city more resilient in times of crisis.

At its core, the sharing economy has emerged because it addresses market inefficiencies—extra bedrooms in a home, sparingly used household items, spare worker time, and more—with tech-based platforms for peer-to-peer transactions. Especially in cases of unused space, cities should encourage engagement in the sharing economy. However, the sharing economy has also benefited from municipal, state, and federal regulation that fails to account for the new forms of transactions that technological advancement has enabled. For example, Uber’s phone app, along with its payment, location, and communication technologies, facilitates transactions that would have been impossible five years ago. The result has been that—in some instances—sharing economy companies and individuals have been able to outcompete more heavily regulated companies operating in traditional economic spaces simply due to this regulation disparity.

The sharing economy is built on the idea that anyone can hypothetically earn extra cash by leveraging their excess time, goods, space or other assets. Yet we’ve seen that the benefits of the sharing economy do not reach all groups equally. Its reliance on technology to make connections through smartphone apps, websites, and bank accounts privileges those able to afford them. Further, lower income groups may simply be lacking excess assets to lend out or resources may already be shared among multiple family members. Those who cannot afford this technology or do not have excess resources, such as lower income groups—or those who lack the knowledge to use them, such as older adults—lose out on becoming full participants in the sharing economy. This is one place where planners can participate in the regulation of the shared economy—as advocates for these disadvantaged groups.

**THE ROLE OF PLANNERS**

As companies in the sharing economy enter cities around the globe, planners are already facing a new set of regulation challenges. Should they create regulations protecting the unique character of their city, while being open to innovation and change? Yes. This balance will require transparent working relationships between business and governmental entities as well as a dedicated focus to protecting vulnerable populations from gentrification.

One major hurdle facing policy-makers—planners, in the urban context—is to determine where sharing economy companies are exploiting the regulation gap. Certainly, the lack of regulation is concerning when regulation would provide relevant labor protections or land use policy. And policy-makers must address sharing economies that succeed because they skirt important, effective regulation. At the same time, the emergence of the sharing economy offers an opportunity for planners to reassess the value of existing regulation with the aim of removing outdated models that inhibit the efficient operation of traditional industries. When a new sharing economy platform emerges, planners should ask questions such as:

- Does this platform escape regulation governing similar, competing traditional industries?
- Is that regulation useful and effective?
- How can we ensure (a) that the sharing economy is subject to this same (effective) regulation, or (b) that this (ineffective) regulation is removed to allow traditional industry fair competition?

The lingering question is, “Why should cities regulate the sharing economy?” The easiest answer is that other levels of government have been slow to respond to the sharing economy. Someone has to do something. This has manifested across the world recently. From London terminating Uber’s operating license to San Francisco requiring registration for Airbnb hosts, it is cities that are leading the way in regulating the sharing economy.

Cities leading the charge as the regulatory leader makes sense because cities directly control many assets upon which the sharing economy capitalizes—particularly, urban space and infrastructure. City planners occupy a privileged position that can link public and private interests—a position they can leverage when establishing equitable sharing economies in urban spaces. Planners must consider the effects of the sharing economy on the needs and identity of their particular city and have a duty to consider the most vulnerable populations when crafting new policies, programs and initiatives.

The economic and physical impacts of the sharing economy have caught many cities off-guard, and planners have struggled to respond to changing transportation, housing, and working patterns. The sharing economy demands a certain level of flexibility and adaptability that may be foreign to the planning profession. If planners are to successfully harness the benefits of the sharing economy for the public good, they must respond creatively to issues as they arise.
DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2010, before demolition of the existing project began, the neighborhood of Iberville was small (1,200) and racially-homogenous—94% of residents were black. With a median household income of $9,000 per resident, the majority of residents were below the poverty line. 35.6% of residents were employed and 76.9% of the population was receiving SNAP benefits. Of those employed, food service, sales, and personal home care were the top three occupation areas.

Working-age women between the ages of 35 and 64 made up the largest population group (40%) in the Iberville housing project. Children (individuals under the age of 18) made up the second largest population (35%). Of the 560 households, 31% were single moms and 50% were single females. The ratio of women to men was almost 2 to 1—almost 60% of the male population was under the age of 18.

The Choice Neighborhood Initiative requires that the new housing complex provide a one-for-one replacement of the original 821 units for everyone who wants to stay. Critics, such as Roberta Brandes Gratz, highlight hidden problems in this redevelopment model: “to make room for all the market-rate and workforce-housing units in the revamped project, a good number of the affordable units will be located offsite, spread out within the larger 300-block Treme neighborhood.” Further, a strict selection criteria for admission may keep many of the original tenants out. Most troubling is the legal authority to evict tenants with family members who have been arrested for criminal activity.

The new population of the Iberville neighborhood is still in flux, but it is likely that the neighborhood will host a wider variety of incomes, demographic groups, employment types, and age ranges than pre-demolition. This new population, in concert with the original Iberville residents, will form the new social fabric of this area.

DEVELOPMENTS

As part of HUD's Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, the Iberville neighborhood has been the site of significant public investment. Fifty buildings of the original housing development have been demolished and replaced. Twenty-four buildings were preserved and renovated. The street grid was restored to connect the site with the surrounding neighborhoods. The new development contains a total of 821 public housing units, with an additional 1,625 new units planned—1,305 of which will be market-rate rental units. A major goal of the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative was to create a sustainable, mixed-income neighborhood. Links to surrounding public services, transportation, schools, jobs and public assets are numerous. The site neighbors the French Quarter and Canal Street—both which offer cultural, commercial and entertainment amenities.
The location of the former Iberville Projects, now the Bienville Basin, at the center of the site is zoned as medium-intensity mixed-use district (MU-1). This is the dominant zoning for the site. MU-1 zoning supports walkable neighborhoods that contain both residential and commercial development.

The Saint Louis Cemetery #1, a Catholic cemetery with above-ground vaults at the corner of St. Louis Street and Basin Street is zoned as a neighborhood open space district (OS-N). Saint Louis Cemetery #2 along North Claiborne Avenue is also zoned as OS-N. Both cemeteries are popular tourist destinations.

The northeastern portion of the site between St. Louis Street and Basin Street is zoned MU-2, a high intensity mixed use district. MU-2 zones support mixes of commercial and residential development that encourage transit use. These areas act as neighborhood cores or major corridors.

Along Canal Street, the southwestern edge of the site, a “biodistrict” (CBD-7) supports the densest level of development within the Iberville neighborhood and is designed to encourage large science or bio-related campuses. This area will also support pedestrian mobility, mixed-use developments, and educational buildings.

Massive neighborhood change is unsettling, not only for those forced to relocate during construction, but also for newcomers and returning residents. To create a cohesive neighborhood identity, neighbors must know and feel connected to one another. The sharing economy can help ease this process by creating a platform where community members can share their skills and resources with one another.

The goal of NOLA Shares is to support peer to peer exchanges, while strengthening a sense of neighborhood identity and personal relationships.
NOLA Shares is a streamlined sharing economy platform that users will be able to access in multiple ways: (1) through a webpage (2) using an app and (3) through physical kiosks. We hope that the physical kiosks will help all users access and fully utilize the platform—especially those without access to technology. Through NOLA Shares, users can swap items, services, and skills across multiple program areas which are fully highlighted in the subsequent pages. These programs were developed specifically with the Iberville neighborhood in mind but could be rolled out throughout the City of New Orleans. Each program is anchored in the built environment by kiosks, specific locations and other physical assets.

By introducing NOLA Shares under the purview of the City of New Orleans, the city legitimizes exchanges between strangers—making users more comfortable to lend out their bikes, welcome strangers into their homes and entrust their children to the care of their neighbors. This is why companies like Uber and Lyft are so successful. They offer both consumers and vendors protection and oversight. By placing all services under one platform, the city is better able to track, regulate and work with operators towards fair labor practices.

While users will be able to access traditional sharing economy companies, such as Uber, Lyft and AirBNB through NOLA Shares, the platform will also offer targeted programs for all types of users. Our new programs complement rather than duplicate existing services. These companies are integrated into the platform to provide a fully functional sharing economy. Users will be able to access NOLA Shares for all sharing economy services—not just NOLA-branded services. Non-branded companies will have to pay to be listed on the website. By integrating private companies with NOLA Shares, we hope to provide leverage when new private companies enter the market for the city to enact pro-city regulations.

In addition to informing users about programs through NOLA Shares, each kiosk will be fully equipped to load money and credit onto a “sharecard.” Users without access to traditional financial institutions, such as credit cards, loans, or bank accounts, will be able to use cash to load credit onto their sharecard. Any city-subsidized funding can also be easily credited to a user’s sharecard through the system.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems of the Traditional Sharing Economy</th>
<th>NOLA Shares</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology Dependent</td>
<td>Physical Access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sharing economy is only accessible to those with easy access to technology, smart phones, wifi etc.</td>
<td>Physical Kiosks provide those without access to smartphones, the internet, and wifi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privileges Credit Cards &amp; Traditional Banking Institutions</td>
<td>Cash-based Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sharing economy privileges those with stable finances and access to bank accounts, credit cards and traditional loans.</td>
<td>Kiosks offer the ability to load credit onto a fare card using cash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Built for a Universal User</td>
<td>Diverse Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sharing economy is built by and for those within a particular socioeconomic class—typically white, upper middle class.</td>
<td>Incorporates programs specifically designed to include all population interests across all age and income levels.</td>
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### SPACE-SHARING

Space is a prized commodity. The sharing economy has already capitalized on this reality through AirBNB and other home-sharing sites; WeWork and other coworking sites; and LiquidSpace and other non-traditional office-rental sites. New Orleans residents renting out their homes on AirBNB must already officially register with the city. These users would be able to link to their AirBNB pages through the space-sharing section of NOLA Shares, thereby accessing additional customers.

NOLA Shares also supports other space-sharing activities. Rather than lugging heavy laundry bags across town, users can find a place to do laundry close to their home. Additionally, users could also find a coworking space or rent out unconventional spaces for small events.

### THE MARKET

In addition to these NOLA-branded programs, “the Market” on NOLA Shares would allow users to swap, sell and exchange items similar to Craigslist, e-Bay and other bartering websites.

### NOLA MOVES

Although existing ride-sharing companies like Uber and Lyft have cornered one aspect of the transportation market, NOLA Moves would be a platform for alternative transit sharing. Blue Bikes, the bike share program recently launched by the City of New Orleans in December 2017, would be integrated into NOLA Moves. While there are two Blue Bikes locations already on the site—one on Canal and one on Basin Street, we suggest adding an additional Blue Bike location next to Lafitte Greenway. Tourists, commuters and recreational weekend bike riders all use the Lafitte Greenway to quickly access the French Quarter, Central Business District and City Park.

For trips further afield, riders could coordinate carpools through NOLA Moves between Basin residents to set locations across the city. 35% of former Iberville residents commuted by car—60% of those traveling by carpool. It took ¼ of workers less than 30 minutes to reach their place of employment—an ideal trip length for carpooling.

This program would also offer commuters in Iberville a independent low-cost alternative to riding the bus or trolley. In addition to the economic benefits of the program, Nola Moves encourages city residents to adopt a smaller carbon footprint when considering transportation options. NOLA Moves will be anchored in the community with fixed hand-off locations—such as Blue Bike racks—and designated pick-up and drop-off locations for carpools.

### NOLA LEARNS

NOLA Learns can provide Iberville neighborhood residents with the opportunity to further their education by sharing their academic skills and experiences with one another. This could be anything from learning a new language, to studying for the GED, to learning a technical trade or shadowing a neighbor at work.

A major aspect of NOLA Learns is a job training program supported by the city which would allow entry level workers to participate more fully in the sharing economy. This program would require partnerships with surrounding business owners and retailers, such as Urban Strategies, Inc, Total Community Action, Youth Development Project and local Workforce Investment—organizations which are already working in the neighborhood to support literacy, continuing education, and other youth development initiatives. NOLA Learns will be anchored in the community through partnerships with local business and a skill-swap and tutoring center where individuals can meet and exchange knowledge. Initial job training within a certain industry could occur in a training facility.

The job training aspect of NOLA Learns allows workers—particularly those in minimum income positions—to supplement their incomes and begin to pick up hours outside of their normal work day with businesses looking to contract out. This portion of the program will be accessible through the NOLA Shares app, which will allow employees to schedule shifts based on the needs of the business and the availability of the job trainee.
Program: NOLA Moves
Location: Proposed Blue Bike Stop

Program: NOLA Eats
Location: Grocery Store Kitchen Incubator

Program: NOLA Learns
Location: Community Center

Program: WeWork, Airbnb
Location: Homes, Offices

Program: Market
Location: Drop-Off Area in Parking Lot

Program: NOLA Cares
Location: Senior Housing

NOLA Shares Physical Anchors
NOLA EATS

People come to New Orleans for the food—their crawfish, gumbo and beignets. Food is at the center of NOLA Eats. Through NOLA Eats, tourists can connect to locals for authentic meals—adding a singular experiential evening to their trip. The proximity of the Iberville/Treme neighborhood to the downtown French Quarter—where many tourists stay when they visit the city—positions the residents of Iberville as the most likely beneficiaries from this NOLA Eats program.

Locals can also connect to other NOLA residents by sharing their garden plots or meals. Landowners could connect with amateur gardeners and farmers—perhaps for money or sharing a portion of the produce. Partnerships between existing New Orleans’ food-access organizations such as New Orleans Food and Farm Network, Propeller and Liberty’s Kitchen will help to strengthen and broaden the reach of the programs in NOLA Eats.

The NOLA Eats program could be anchored in Iberville through a shared kitchen space in the community center. The kitchen space could also be rented out by new chefs for pop-up meals and temporary restaurants—transforming the space into a resident-based kitchen incubator.

NOLA CARES

Through NOLA Cares, the oldest and youngest populations can be looked after by one’s neighbors and local residents. Entrusting one’s child or elderly parent to a neighbor is one of the quickest ways to forge ties between residents.

31% of households in the original population of Iberville were single mothers—and 50% of households were single females. Using NOLA Cares, single mothers in Iberville could connect with childcare professionals, daycare groups, babysitters or organize after school activities for their kids. Without this platform, parents would likely leave their kids with family, close friends or in the care of their older siblings. NOLA Cares gives parents the comfort to leave their kids with neighbors and offers robust after-school activities that are close to their homes.

There are two large medical facilities less than a half a mile from the site—University Medical Center New Orleans and Tulane Medical Center. Together, the two serve over 80% of the people in Iberville. Tulane Medical Center’s 2016 Community Health Needs Assessment identified access to health care, chronic conditions and behavioral health as the three key community needs. The 2016 Community Health Needs Assessment found that over 53% of survey respondents did not receive a check-up in the past year—30% citing cost of care as a major deterrent.

16% of the former Iberville residents worked in home health services. Residents’ experience in health care service coupled with the Neighborhood’s proximity to these major medical facilities, a natural partnership between Iberville residents and medical providers.

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REPRESENTATIVES

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Anna is a second-year masters student in City and Regional Planning at Cornell University. Her studies focus on the intersection of economic development and historic preservation—in particular, how historic structures can be leveraged to encourage and promote economic development agendas. She completed her Bachelor’s of Arts in Asian Studies at Carleton College in Northfield, MN.

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REFERENCES


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