

Walking tours provide students with deeper perspective on city's architecture, history

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Richard Campanella, associate dean for research and professor at the School of Architecture, leads School of Architecture students on free walking tours throughout certain areas of the city, giving an in-depth and up-close look at the city's urban geography, architecture, history and culture along the way. In February, Campanella led students on a tour that covered parts of the French Quarter, the Tremé and the Central Business District. (Photo by Sally Asher)

In a time when many students find themselves frequently sitting behind a computer screen for classes, events or assignments, there is one way Tulane University School of Architecture students can get an in-person, yet COVID-19-safe, learning experience in the city of New Orleans.

[Richard Campanella](#), associate dean for research and professor at the School of Architecture, leads students on free walking tours throughout certain areas of the city, giving an in-depth and up-close look at the city's urban geography, architecture, history and culture along the way. The tours are outside and socially distanced, with all attendees required to wear a mask. The tours are limited to 12 students at a time.

Campanella has already led one tour in February that covered parts of the French Quarter, the Tremé and the Central Business District. This month's walking tour will cover the Marigny and Bywater, and next month's will cover the old Bayou Road portage from the Mississippi River to Bayou St. John.

"Attendees get an intimate, ground-level interpretation of the historical geography, urbanism, and culture of specific neighborhoods, down to arcane but revealing features such as off-plumb lot lines, palimpsests and relict features," Campanella said.

He has previously conducted walking tours and bus tours for students enrolled in his courses and sometimes leads them for other professors' courses, but these walking tours are the first to be offered to any School of Architecture student, thanks to a gift from an anonymous donor to the school.

"The tours are designed to be independent of specific class curriculums, although they are pertinent to just about any class taught in the school, most of all my own," Campanella said.

Each of the tours is three hours long and covers between 3 to 5 miles, which Campanella says is sufficient to provide a thorough experience.

"Conducting a walking tour is an art and science, and one of the basic rules is not to wear people out."

The tours meet and start at the same location, which was a strategic decision for making it easier to cover the specified areas.

"I've given tours of everywhere from West End to Westwego, and Gretna to Gentilly, but in this case I wanted all three to start from the same location for the sake of simplicity, and so I designed them to radiate outwardly from that point," Campanella said.

Campanella says he is happy to continue the tours in the future if the donor so wishes but will always provide walking tours for students enrolled in his courses.

The next tours will be held Saturday, March 27, and Saturday, April 24, both starting at 10 a.m.

Students interested in attending one of the upcoming tours must email Richard Campanella at rcampane@tulane.edu to register and to receive the starting location. The tours will be conducted rain or shine.