

Tale of New Cities

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New development in the historic Olde Towne of Slidell, La., soon will be following design guidelines developed by the Tulane Regional Urban Design Center. Half the city, including the homes, shops and antique stores of Olde Towne, flooded with tidal surge during Hurricane Katrina. In the two years since, the city has dedicated itself to rebirth and growth.



At the Tulane Regional Urban Design Center, Grover Mouton, left, center director, and student associate John Prather are drawing up design guidelines for Olde Towne in Slidell, La.. (Photo by Nick Jenisch)

Ben Morris, mayor of the city that lies 30 miles east of New Orleans, at the feet of Interstate 10 and Highway 11 where they cross Lake Pontchartrain, contracted the Tulane Regional Urban Design Center to establish guidelines for city development after the mayor attended a design conference for mayors from cities damaged by the hurricane.

Architect Grover Mouton, director of the Tulane Regional Urban Design Center in the

School of Architecture, is working on the guidelines along with project manager Nick Jenisch and John Prather, a master of architecture candidate.

Development guidelines require detailed attention to appearance, community input and legal concerns.

Mouton and colleagues developed a similar set of guidelines for Mandeville, La., nearly a decade ago, an initial assignment that took six months of writing to complete.

“We can do it now because we have done it before,” says Mouton, adjunct associate professor of architecture. The Tulane [Regional Urban Design Center](#) has developed designs for Shreveport, La., Birmingham, Ala., Fort Myers, Fla., Knoxville, Tenn., and [Zhenjiang, China](#).



Antique stores, shops and homes in Olde Towne were flooded during Hurricane Katrina, but new development in the historic area will follow design guidelines drawn up by a Tulane School of Architecture team. (Photo by Madeline Vann)

The guidelines address all aspects of future development in the city, including materials, rooflines, signage, lighting, entrances, setbacks, landscaping and parking lots ? all the minutiae that add up to a consistent aesthetic standard.

In addition to directing development in Olde Towne Slidell, the guidelines will apply

to development along the Fremeaux corridor, a major artery leading to the town's downtown district.

“Slidell is elegant. It's a very nice town and is coming back strong. It has a manageable downtown, but future development needs to be coordinated in context,” said Mouton, who explained that design guidelines also protect existing structures and investments by ensuring that neighboring structures add to the overall effect.

Aesthetic standards and affordable construction can coexist, said Mouton, as long as the materials are appropriate.

Next steps include writing up the guidelines and circulating them for the approval of city residents and city council members. After that, a committee will review the guidelines and proposals for new developments and renovations.

Mouton also is contemplating a new trailhead for Heritage Park in Slidell, where people can enjoy outdoor events along the bayou. It will be similar to the trailhead he designed for Mandeville's connection to the Tammany trace, a 26-mile walking and biking path that may one day connect downtown Slidell to Lacombe, Mandeville, Abita Springs and Covington, La.