

Saving Circle Food

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Students in the Tulane School of Architecture and the A. B. Freeman School of Business have rallied behind the hurricane-damaged Circle Food Store, intent on helping the store owner reopen one of the city's great landmarks. Initially opened in 1938, the market was the first African American owned-and-operated grocery store in New Orleans.



Opened in 1938, the Circle Food Store has been an important community market for residents in the 7th Ward and Treme neighborhoods of New Orleans. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celantano)

"The building is historic and has a special place in the city's cultural history, but it's in need of rehabilitation," says Emilie Taylor, senior program coordinator at the [Tulane City Center](#), a program of the architecture school that houses the school's urban research and outreach efforts.

According to Taylor, students are nearing the completion of a report containing both a business plan and recommendations for the building's renovation. The report will be used to help store owner Dwayne Boudreaux obtain funding to rebuild.

Within the 40-plus pages of the report are schematic plans, a project timeline and a cost analysis for the renovations. A summary of the full business plan, which features a 10-year projection of the store's operating budget, also is included.

"This document will be instrumental in helping funders, politicians and grant providers see how important the store is to the community," Taylor says.

Taylor notes that although damaged, the store contains architectural gems such as the original skylights that had been covered at some point over the years.

"One of the suggestions made by the student designers is to save those original skylights, a sustainable and historically sensitive design move," says Taylor.

The draft document was presented to the New Orleans City Council a few weeks ago and gained unanimous support from the council members.

Taylor and Ralph Maurer, visiting assistant professor in the business school, are serving as advisers to the team of students.