

## Freret Street's culinary comeback

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Tulane alumni Michael Casey, Joe Seremet and Alisha Lacour Seremet established Liberty Cheesesteaks on recovering Freret Street in 2012. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Like ships guided by a lighthouse, New Orleanians always drift toward good food. The “if you feed them, they will come” philosophy drew investors to uptown's Freret Street. A beacon of optimism in the post-Katrina foodscape, Freret's culinary

comeback has led to a renaissance with restaurants now lining every block.

In September 2009, [Freret Street Po-Boy & Donut Shop](#) (4701 Freret St.) was first to open after the storm, says Greg Ensslen, developer of Go Mango Neighborhood Restoration, which rehabilitated multiple buildings housing Freret's post-Katrina eateries.

As [Sarita's Grill](#) (4520 Freret St.) reopened and [Beaucoup Juice](#) (4713 Freret St.) also launched a brick-and-mortar location that year, a transformative domino effect surged through the eight blocks comprising the Freret Arts and Entertainment District.

The commercial corridor has since expanded to include approximately 18 restaurants and 62 businesses, Ensslen says.

[Liberty Cheesesteaks](#) (5031 Freret St.) opened its doors in 2012.

Housed within the original Dat Dog location, the compact shop was established by Tulane University alumni Michael Casey, Joe Seremet and Alisha Lacour Seremet, who sought to start a different sandwich legacy in the city with a penchant for po'boys.

"Because I'm from Philadelphia, I knew that the best cheesesteak shops were always part of a neighborhood. That's what I want to be a part of," Casey says.

"This is kind of an experiment where New Orleans is our lab. We thought we were going to get college kids, but we have just as many women coming with their daughters from Newman [School] as we have Sig Eps from Tulane. You go in with preconceived notions and the market tells you the truth."

The truth is that students and families have kept the thoroughfare humming 10 years after the storm. As cyclists pass a muraled music venue and families grab coffee on Sunday strolls, Freret Street's future is evident.

"They're talking about going commercial all the way down to Louisiana Avenue. There seems to be a lot of momentum," Casey says.

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