

September 2, 2014

Dear Mr. Rivers:

The undersigned organizations express our sincere appreciation for you and your office for your work. We are writing to offer our comments on the draft CZO, specifically the Frenchmen Arts & Cultural Overlay. We believe it presents a great opportunity for Frenchmen Street, the neighborhood and the city, but needs to be further reviewed and vetted.

We formally request the CPC and the city extend the public comment and written review period to allow for additional public meetings on the draft CZO throughout the city, not just at city hall. We also request a meeting with your office and Cmr. Ramsey's office to discuss the overlay changes in greater depth.

In the review of the current and draft overlays by our respective organizations, several of the draft CZO's changes were of shared concern. The larger items of shared concern are:

1). Applicability

The uniqueness and current situation on Frenchmen street necessitates zoning separate from other included overlays on St. Bernard Avenue and Broad St.

2) Bars

There is question as to the process by which currently zoned bars, nightclubs and restaurants may become zoned as bars, accounting for their seniority, history and their willingness to operate in the spirit of overlay. Currently, many businesses on Frenchmen Street, while zoned as restaurants, operate more in the spirit of bars with accessory live entertainment. As well, rezoning existing businesses in a manner consistent with their current operation would exceed the two bar per block face rule in the current draft overlay.

3) Enforcement & Other Items

There are numerous other concerns and questions as to other portions of the overlay regarding live music in restaurants, the conditions surrounding special event permits and actual enforcement of all applicable zoning regulations.

One recurrent theme is that the absolute lack of city enforcement of current zoning laws. This creates hesitancy regarding any actual changes and their realistic effect. We look forward to your response and working toward a substantive and realistic discussion regarding the Frenchmen Street Arts & Cultural Overlay.

Sincerely,
Miles W. Swanson
President, FMIA

Jan Ramsey
President, Faubourg Marigny Triangle Business Association

Ethan Ellestad
Musician and Cultural Coalition of New Orleans
c.c. Paul Cramer, Nadine Ramsey, Scott Hutchinson