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**keepNOLAreal**

(working title)

Concept Statement

**2020 Post Katrina New Orleans**

Fifteen years after Katrina, the City of New Orleans continues to have a large number of vacant lots and abandoned buildings beyond the point of repair (many owned by the City), predominantly within neighborhoods that were more severely flooded. With post-Katrina re-development and the related real estate boom and property tax increases, affordable housing has become a scarcity.

I believe there is a way to develop more affordable housing in the City, maintain and grow the cultural and architectural fabric of many of its neighborhoods by combining contemporary and traditional building methods.

**Design and Building Concept**

As anyone who’s lived or visited knows, New Orleans is a densely built city. In many of the older neighborhoods, the average lot is about 30-feet wide. This is largely why the traditional “shotgun” home became so prevalent here. Not surprisingly, this building type is one of the most space-efficient residential designs there is. Since roughly the early 19th century (\*1), people have found increasingly creative ways to make these linear houses more functional and comfortable. They remain an iconic form that around the world has become symbolic of New Orleans.

Contemporary panelized (\*2) and modular (\*3) construction systems are well suited to the traditional shotgun house form and planning. These systems can produce high quality wood or metal construction, built in a controlled environment, brought to the building site and anchored to a foundation. Depending on the project, these elements can be completely or partially finished. Then in combination with traditional field-build construction methods, roofs; porches; finish materials and other functional and decorative elements can be attached to the structure. The result is as strong and elegant as a traditionally built home but can be completed faster, with a higher level of quality control and at considerably less cost than traditional “stick-built” construction. The completed home will be fully compliant with all building codes, zoning ordinances and Historic Commission regulations. And the more of these houses being built at once, the greater the economy of scale.

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**Big Picture**

The problem of vacant land and affordable housing is big enough that if this concept were organized on a large scale, there would also be an opportunity to create educational and business opportunities here in New Orleans for designing, building and managing much if not all of what’s described above. A collaboration between City agencies, local organizations and professionals could launch this idea and ultimately make a positive contribution to the City.

**Notes**

\*1: [The Shotgun House: An African Architectural Legacy. Part I](https://www.jstor.org/stable/20831831?Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=The%20Shotgun%20House%20An%20African%20Architectural%20Legacy%20PART%20I%20AND%20jid%3A(j50001011%20OR%20j50001012)&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3DThe%2BShotgun%2BHouse%253A%2BAn%2BAfrican%2BArchitectural%2BLegacy%253A%2BPART%2BI%26filter%3Djid%253A10.2307%252Fj50001011&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_SYC-5187_SYC-5188%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A05b0247cf80adc870a5f0a6ca5c3d28d)

[John Michael Vlach](https://www.jstor.org/action/doBasicSearch?si=1&Query=au:%22John+Michael+Vlach%22)

*Pioneer America*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (January 1976), pp. 47-56

\*2: https://blog.bardenbp.com/the-pros-and-cons-of-panel-built-homes

\*3: https://www.modular.org/HtmlPage.aspx?name=why\_modular