

**University of New Orleans**

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**From the SelectedWorks of Michelle M. Thompson**

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Spring May, 2014

## WhoData Project Newsletter May 2014

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# WhoData Project Newsletter

May 2014

*“Partnering with leaders and stakeholders across public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Placing data in service to strengthen and benefit communities.”*



## A Message From the Director

**W**hoData is a community action research and service program. Since 2009 the team of volunteers has provided organizations in New Orleans - LA, Boston - MA and Ithaca - NY with resources that aid in the recovery, renewal and/or redevelopment of communities. Since 1987, I have worked in a variety of roles and had opportunities to examine and participate in ways that academic, public, private and non-profit organizations have engaged in the neighborhood planning process. Some have been successful but others have not. As a result, the social and economic benefits that arise from collaboration, neighborhood knowledge and public policy have been mutually exclusive and, at times, directly undermine the goals of people and systems that otherwise should be compatible. (Thompson & Owens, 2012)

In an effort to bring the ideas, talents and technologies together, a theory of "middle through" community engagement was named in 1996 as public participation geographic information systems (PPGIS) (J. Ferreira, 1998; R. Sieber 2006). The goal was simple – identify the shared vision and resources that would allow residents, their municipal leaders and the academic community to work collaboratively and synchronously. By incorporating local/neighborhood knowledge with public information then merge them into shared data systems, there would be a significant increase in residents communicating their desires, improve civic engagement, and further inform municipal leaders with a better understanding of community needs. By using PPGIS, residents would be empowered by increasing ready access to information and increase their ability to fully participate in a modern 'ladder of citizen participation' (Arnstein, 1969) by using contemporary technology, such as GIS, to meet these goals.

In New Orleans, WhoData.org was created to use PPGIS theory and apply this to a community-municipal-university partnership. Thus, in 2009 with the help of Mr. David Lessinger (now Director of Land Banking at the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority) from the Neighborhood Housing Services of New Orleans, Brian Baldwin a 2010 Masters in Urban Planning graduate of the University of New Orleans Department of Planning & Urban Studies, Lynn Dupont who is the Principal Planner and GIS Manager for the Regional Planning Commission along with a coalition of non-profit groups in Central City and myself completed the first WhoData Project. By Spring of 2010 with the volunteer mapping service programming assistance of GISCorps, 'WhoData.org' - a fully integrated web-enabled community data information system – was launched.

Our focus remains to provide training, resources, support and a shared environment to view, map, download and monitor change in New Orleans neighborhoods. As we move forward in the second half of 2014, we will continue to follow the growth of many neighborhoods in New Orleans. WhoData will partner with entrepreneurial leaders and stakeholders using applied PPGIS to achieve mutual understanding and increase geospatial information between the public, private and non-profit business sectors. Our goal is to place cutting edge data in service to promote strategies and outcomes using best practices to strengthen and benefit communities.

While we initially focused on blight and property condition mapping, as you will see from the newsletter vignettes, the WhoData PPGIS achieved so much more. Our work is not unique but it is a measured success of how we moved from a dream to an idea realized to keep data public for the citizens and City of New Orleans.

With sincere gratitude for the opportunity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle M. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The text is set against a light beige rectangular background.

Michelle M. Thompson, PhD

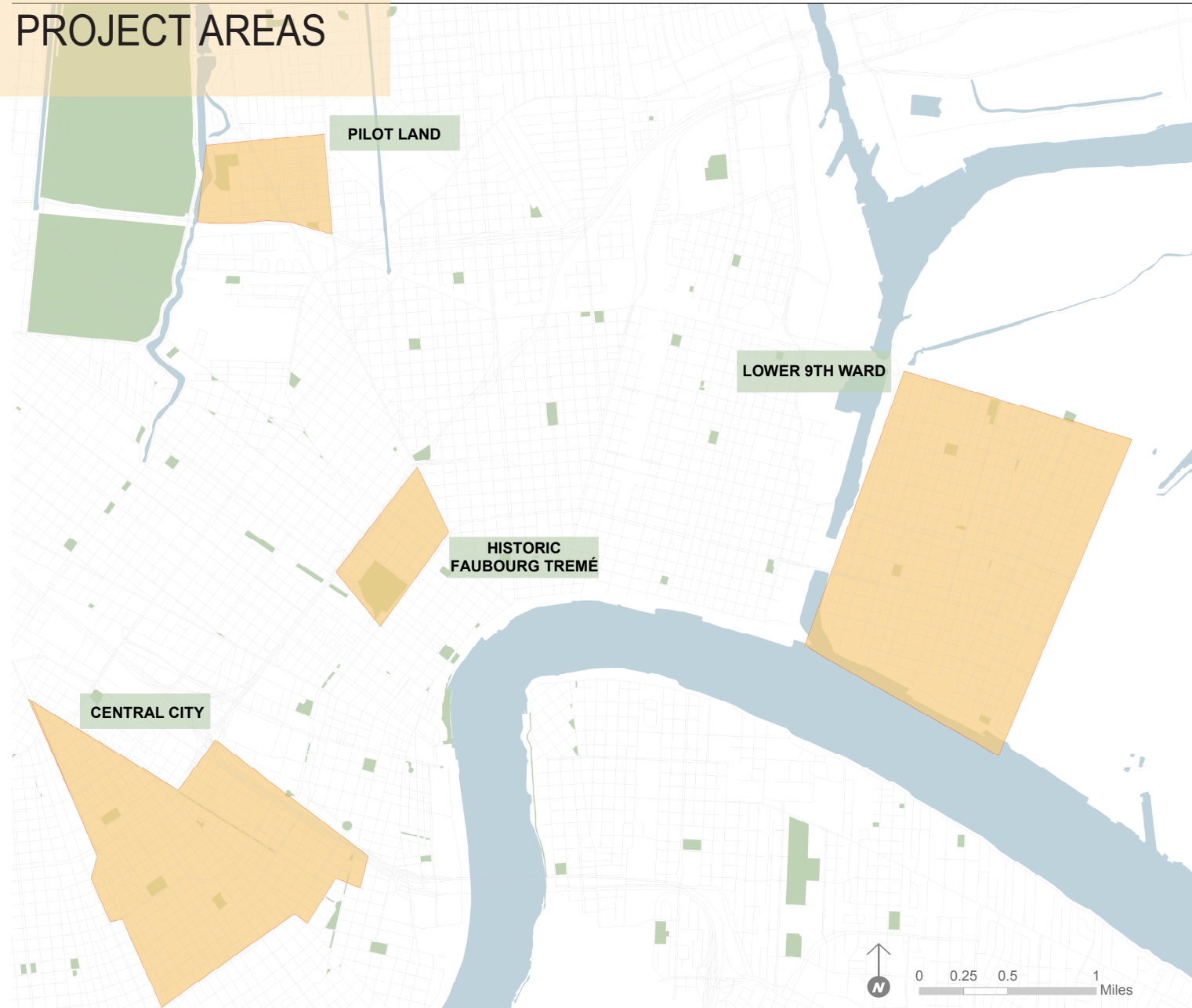


## Project and Report Overview

**W**hoData.org, a community-focused public participation geographic information project, aims to share data that academic, public, private and non-profit organizations can use to assess, monitor and manage quality of life issues. WhoData empowers resident-led, non-profit or community-focused groups, primarily in New Orleans, with training and resources to map and analyze data they collect on neighborhood conditions and trends. The community data information system, [www.whodata.org](http://www.whodata.org), houses the results of property condition surveys. Residents are able to highlight priority properties that reflect indicators of blight, create customized maps and export property lists to share with the public and municipal leaders.

Neighborhood profile reports, compiled maps and select data analysis are summarized on the project website: [www.whodata.net](http://www.whodata.net). The WhoData team is primarily supported by dedicated volunteers from the University of New Orleans Department of Planning & Urban Studies, City of New Orleans with support from the GISCorps and the Regional Planning Commission. Operations Management is provided by the Project Director with key support from the Associate Director and WhoData Interns. Operations Management includes project monitoring, training on data collection methods and techniques, direct supervision of special projects, overall organization, security and control of WhoData resources.

## PROJECT AREAS



## COMMUNITY ROLES

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION  
GEOGRAPHIC  
INFORMATION SYSTEMS

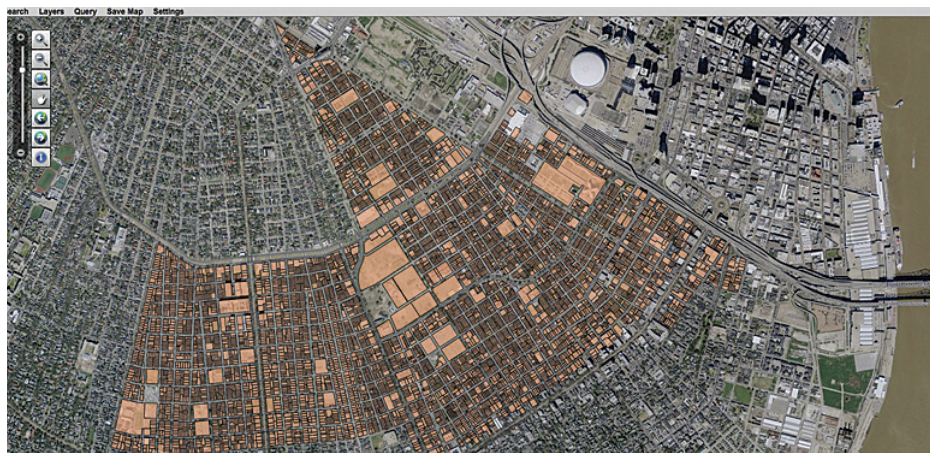
RESEARCH AND  
CARTOGRAPHIC SUPPORT

COMMUNITY LAND  
TRUST COLLABORATION

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Whodata utilizes a PPGIS platform to encourage students to work closely with community-based organizations and municipal leaders to integrate neighborhood and regional data for mutual understanding and access. Since 2011 WhoData has collaborated with various organization to collect, process, and share real property conditions for over 9,000 parcels throughout Orleans parish.

The WhoData team has trained trainers and volunteers on how to survey land uses, read a parcel map, determine characteristics of blight, identify housing and commercial occupancy and recognize other built environment information that a community requires when making decisions for future needs and growth. Whodat.org is a unique resource with a wide range of applications. The PPGIS model that WhoData provides not only has been used to collect property conditions, but has also been used to address issues such as food desserts, poor street conditions, and broken street lights.



Using Whodata's survey instruments and GIS databases, staff members at Lower Ninth Ward Food Access Coalition were able to identify areas in the Lower Ninth Ward to conduct canvassing projects. The Lower Ninth Ward Food Access Coalition collected valuable information from Lower Ninth Ward residents that helped shape business plans for the projects outlined in the Food Action Plan, as well as helped to attract quality food businesses to the Lower Ninth Ward.

Photo credit CfreedomPHOTOGRAPHY

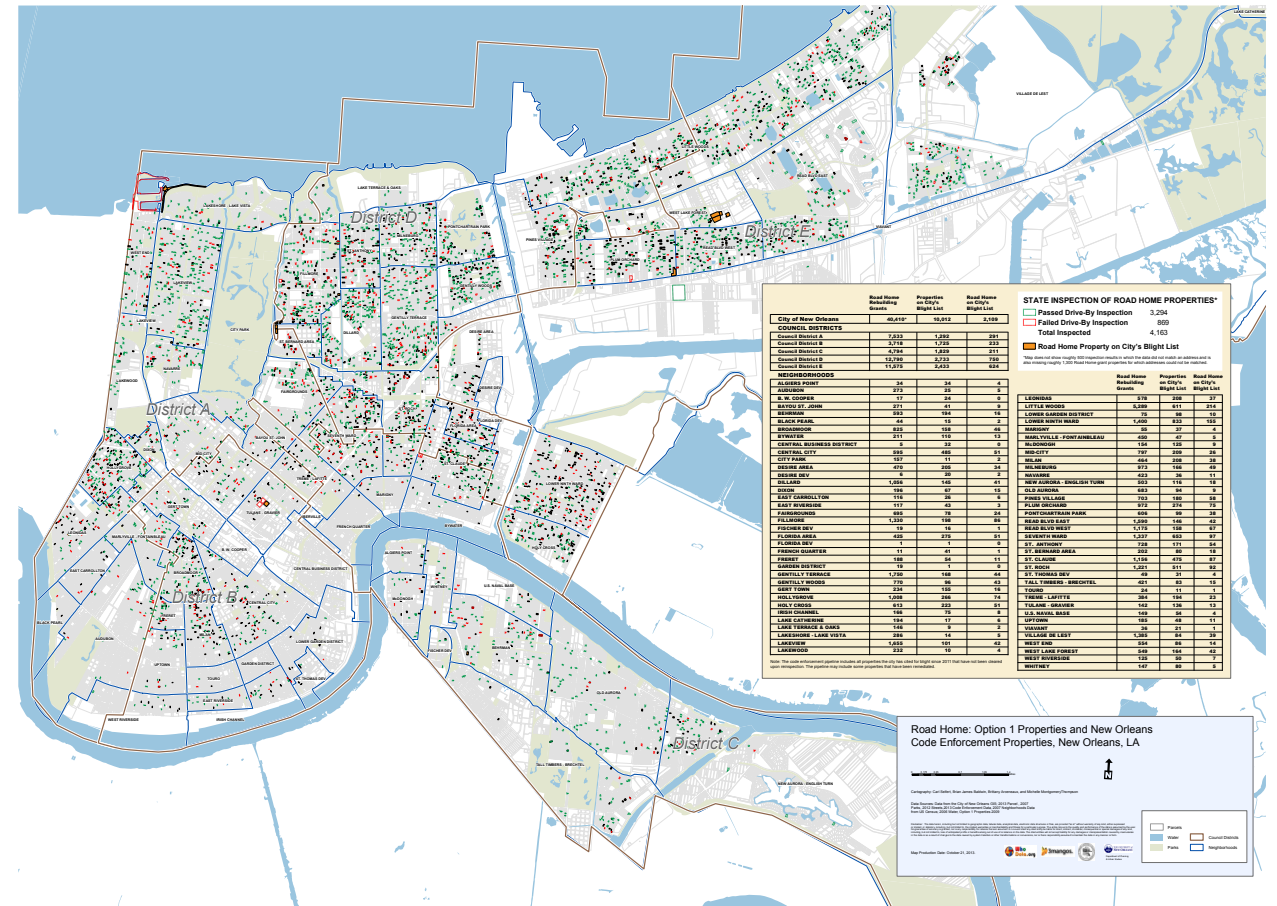
"The WhoData.org web interface displays and shares collected neighborhood survey Information developed by agencies and organizations who wish to collaborate. The data display alone should help eliminate some of the redundant data-gathering efforts that have happened in the past, while it promotes a simple categorization methodology that can be used throughout the city as we track our rebuilding efforts and analyze change. "

Lynn Dupont, Regional Planning Commission



# RESEARCH AND CARTOGRAPHIC SUPPORT

Along with providing community resources throughout the New Orleans metropolitan region, Whodata also develops sustaining partnerships with community organizations. Throughout the WhoData property condition survey process WhoData trains participating community-based organizations on how to collect property conditions survey data that will be displayed on the mapping website. Whodata not only provides free professional services to the community the organization also creates a segway between the students and the community. Through university course projects and internships, WhoData has been able to partner with organizations such as the Associated Neighborhood Development, The Uptown Tirangle Neighborhood Association, and the Historic Faubourg Tremé Association. We have also completed research projects with the Advocate, WWLTV and provided business profiles for the Livable Claiborne Communities Initiative. These partnerships provide an opportunity for student and professional volunteers to provide technical training, in-depth research, and ongoing cartographic support. Whodata aims to provide the community with a free resource, but to also ensure



In 2013 Whodata partnered with WWLTV and The Advocate to do an in-depth study regarding the relationship between blighted and property owners who received Road home grants. WhoData provided GIS support and database development. "Across New Orleans, according to a joint investigation by The New Orleans Advocate, WWL-TV and whodata.org, nearly one in five properties the city deems blighted also got Road Home grants. Recent estimates have put the city's portfolio of blight at about 30,000 properties. According to the news organizations' analysis, about 6,000 of those likely got Road Home grants, about one in five ." <sup>1</sup>

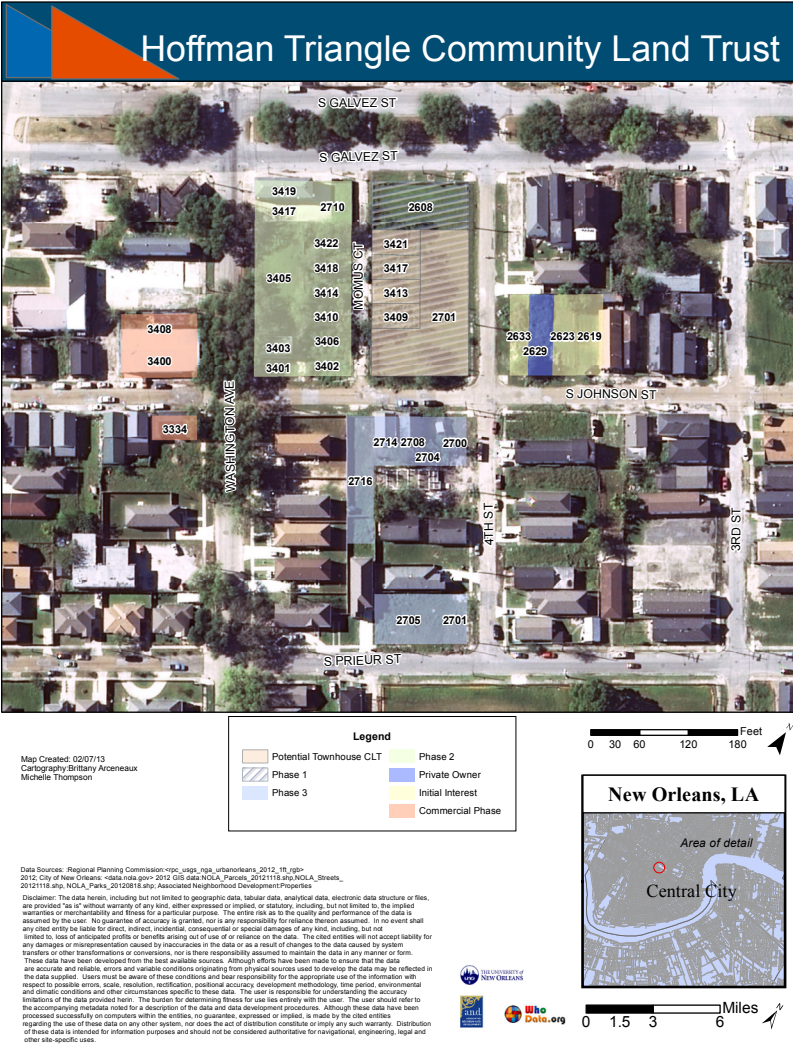
# COMMUNITY LAND TRUST COLLABORATION

As part of WhoData's continuing commitment to our partner organizations, interns aided The Hoffman Triangle Neighborhood Association with strategies to implement a Community Land Trust. Whodata interns assisted in the research, GIS database development, and acquisition strategies. The Land Trust model aims to create: permanently affordable owner-occupied and rental homes; affordable commercial space; and community green, open and common spaces under the community land trust (shared-equity) model.

This model helps extend the benefits of homeownership beyond the short-term affordability periods typically provided through programs utilizing federal funds. The intent of this partnership is threefold:

1. maximize the use of public and philanthropic funds to serve more low- and moderate-income families over time;
2. Leverage the capacity of both organizations to meet shared housing and community development goals; and
3. Promote long-lasting positive economic impact in Hoffman Triangle.

Whodata developed several acquisition strategies in collaboration with the Crescent city Land Trust and Hoffman Triangle Neighborhood Association based on neighborhood conditions and ownership.



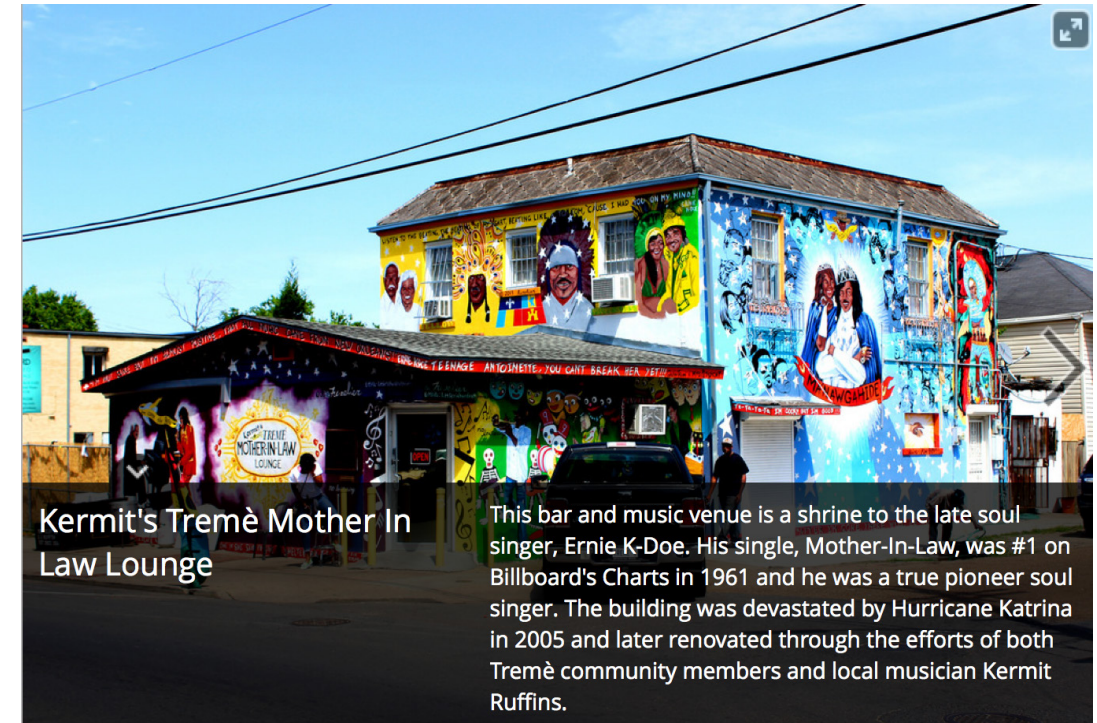


# PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## Self-Guided Walking Tour of the Tremé Neighborhood

As part of an ongoing partnership with the Historic Faubourg Tremé Association (HFTA), WhoData used GIS and smartphone applications to develop a survey of historic conditions in Tremé. This project was initiated in the spring of 2013 by Brittany Arceneaux in coordination with Project Homecoming to conduct the property condition survey for the Land Policy Committee of the HFTA. Additional data was collected on blighted and tax delinquent properties which the UNO MURP 4081/5081 class evaluated in spring 2014. During the summer of 2014 the integration of property and blight data will be evaluated by a WhoData Intern for the HFTA.

To expand economic and community development opportunities, WhoData Intern Alex Dolmseth created a demonstration website application ("web app") for the 'Innovate UNO' research competition. The project presentation won 1st place and is featured in the May 2014 UNO Magazine (<http://issuu.com/universityofneworleans/docs/uno-magazine-spring2014>). This research will present the examination of existing historic buildings and landmarks for prospective economic and commercial renovation by creating a smartphone application and accompanying website for the purpose of a self-guided walking tour. It will look into the past historical context of the Tremé, while outlining key historic landmarks that are relevant to the development of modern day Tremé. Through creating a self-guided tour, visitors and existing residents of the Tremé will be provided with a platform of technology developed information without the price of paying for a guided tour. The app will also include other businesses within the Tremé, acting as an economic growth tool for existing commercial establishments by creating a mapping network for application users to physically access these establishments.



Use this QR code to visit a preview page for the Self- Guided Tour

# PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## HOFFMAN TRIANGLE 365 PROPERTY RESEARCH

Throughout the fall of 2013 WhoData worked with the Associated Neighborhood Development and the Neighborhood Development Foundation to conduct real estate research in the central city community. WhoData team members analyzed every property adjacent to assets owned by local non-profits to develop and acquisition strategy.

Each property was photographed, catalogued, and entered into a customized database to identify whether the property posed quality of life threats or currently had taxed or liens against it. Like many neighborhoods in New Orleans the Hoffman triangle faces challenges of blight and abandonment. The Hoffman triangle contains many blocks composed entirely of empty lots. Some of these lots are maintained by local organizations such as the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, but many are abandoned and pose serious health issues to surrounding homeowners. The 365-property research project aims to acquire these types of properties to ensure affordable housing and accountability within this community.



Many blocks in the Hoffman Triangle have this checkboard condition. It is not uncommon to see perfectly maintained lots bounded by two blighted properties. Photo Credit: Brittany Arceneaux, 2011)

# PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## UTNA: BLACK PEARL NEIGHBORHOOD MAPPING

WhoData Intern Graham Hayes is a resident and Board member of the Uptown Triangle Neighborhood Association (UTNA). In response to the UTNA resident concern for safety and City Councillor Susan Guidry query on data related to related quality of life issues, Graham developed a project to conduct a comprehensive community analysis project similar to the Hoffman Triangle Project Profiles (2011, 2012). Data collection will include an evaluation of street lights, crime incidents, blight, tax status and sales status. The property condition survey will be conducted by volunteers attending the 2014 Urban and Regional Information Systems Association ([www.urisa.org](http://www.urisa.org)) conference in New Orleans.





# SUMMER & FALL 2014 FUTURE PROJETS

UTNA: BLACK PEARL NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

ASSOCIATED NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT: PROPERTY MAN-  
AGEMENT & SPATIAL INFORMATION DATABASE SYSTEM

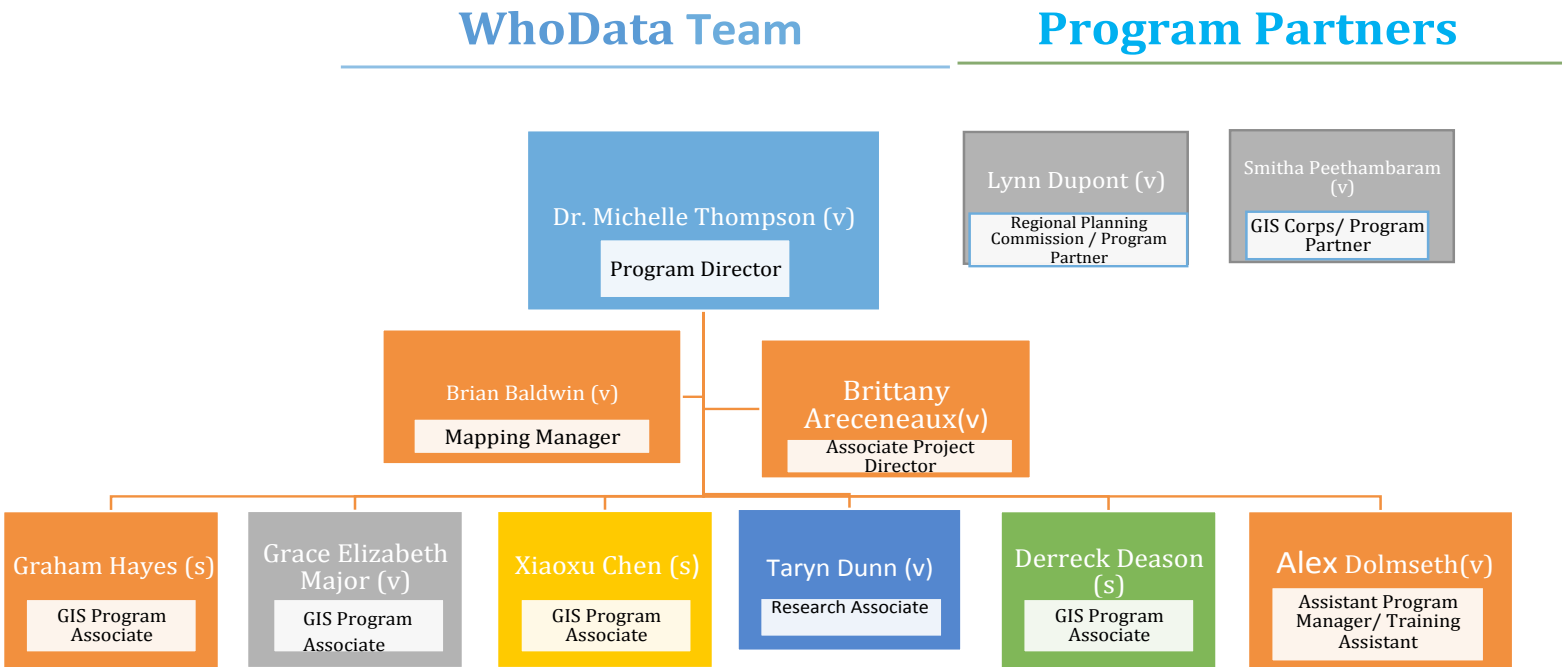
OLD ALGIERS: MAIN STREET PROJECT PROFILE

NEW CITY: PROPERTY CONDITION MAPPING & TREND ANALYSIS

# WHODATA TEAM

## ORG CHART 2013-2014

### Organizational Structure



Legend  
(v) = volunteer  
(s) = student receiving credit or work-study