



April 7, 2010

To: All Oak Street business and concerned citizens

After debating the issue during the past two board meetings, the decision was made to move the 2010 Po-boy Festival off of Oak Street to nearby Palmer Park.

One of the primary goals of the Po-boy Fest is to raise money to sustain the Oak Street - Main Street program on Oak Street. The four Oak Street committees (Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Restructuring) have many plans for outreach, street and property enhancements, and promotional events, which could never be funded without increased revenue from a two-day festival. Streetcar signs, Gambit ads, Oak Bucks and Passport cards, holiday decorations, street events and façade grants (to name a few) will benefit *all* merchants all year long – not just during a six hour event.

The cost of the festival each year is rising due to the ever-increasing crowds and logistical issues of a public event on a city street. These rising costs leave an ever-diminishing amount of funds to distribute to the committees to promote the Oak Street commercial corridor during the year. In addition to the rising cost of the festival, there are increased liabilities that need to be insured against.

At the Feb. 3 board meeting Cecilia Holzenthal, past-President of the OSA, gave a comprehensive presentation on the history of the Po-boy Festival as well as discussion of how it needs to evolve for Oak Street to have maximum benefit in the future. This presentation was videotaped and can be viewed at <http://www.facebook.com/OakStreetNOLA> until it is available on our website [onlyonoak.com](http://onlyonoak.com). Also at the Feb. 3 board meeting the Po-boy Festival committee chairman announced that they were looking at steps to take, including moving the festival off of Oak Street due to high costs for police, street closing, tents, permits and insurance. The possibility of extending the festival to two days, to allow for a rain day, was also discussed. At the end of the meeting the Po-boy Committee was charged with evaluating alternative sites with respect to costs, logistics and potential net proceeds and comparing same with Oak Street as the site.

At the most recent board meeting (April 7) Jim Elliott, Chair of the PBF made his committee's report. They evaluated Oak Street, City Park and Palmer Park as possible sites. City Park was eliminated due to costs and distance from Oak Street. The basic recommendation was that Palmer Park offers the best potential as the site for the 2010 Poboy Fest for the following reasons:

- It is in the neighborhood (unlike City Park).
- It will cost \$3,000 to rent it for three days (including one set-up day) compared with \$15,000 for City Park.
- It can be fenced off, allowing for ticket sales to the event (with the modest price of \$5 being considered). Oak Street cannot be effectively fenced off.
- It actually provides more area for booths, stages and circulation than does the Oak Street site.
- Private security can be used in conjunction with NOPD to offset security costs.

- Lower total costs and higher income from ticket sales, and other sources, will result in higher net proceeds.
- Higher net proceeds would be distributed to the four Oak Main Street Committees (Promotion, Organization, Design and Economic Restructuring) to fulfill the plans, projects and programs on their yearly work plan.

Every board member in attendance (a quorum of eight were present) was given a chance to voice his or her opinion. Most felt that indeed the Fest has outgrown the capacity of the street to contain it. While it has certainly put Oak Street on the map, locally and nationally, the festival itself benefits less than 30% of the local businesses directly, either on the day of the Fest or later. (It is quite the opposite for the food vendors, who enjoy high sales at the Fest and gain market exposure that translates into later sales at their normal place of business.)

Objections were raised, including the following:

Objection	Response
Some Oak Street merchants do get a direct economic benefit at the Fest and afterwards.	There were loud complaints about how much the Fest disrupted business last year. And the number that do benefit is very small.
Oak Street would lose its strong association with the Festival.	There will be an "Oak Street Village" at the Palmer Park site where Oak businesses can have a presence. Promotional and PR activities will stress the connection.
Parking is challenging for the Art Market that is held at the park every month.	It is challenging now for the Oak Street site. We will continue to encourage the use of public transportation. There is bus service to the park, via Claiborne, as well as streetcars. We can work with RTA to promote public transportation.
The park doesn't drain well after rain.	Oak Street has the same problem, although the water doesn't stay around as long as it does at the park.
It is sad to see it move off of Oak Street.	All agreed, but most felt it necessary under the circumstances. Several other street events will bring people to the street.

In the end the vote was seven in favor of holding a two-day Poboy Festival at Palmer Park and one opposed.

It was also noted that the Fest could still move back to Oak Street in the future if this seems advisable.

For more information, the videotaped presentation from the Feb. 3 board meeting can be viewed at <http://www.facebook.com/OakStreetNOLA> or <http://www.youtube.com/user/OakStreetMainStreet?feature=mhw5> until it is available on our website [onlyonoak.com](http://onlyonoak.com).