

## **Felicity Redevelopment, Inc. Internship Report**

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I spent eight weeks of the summer interning with Felicity Redevelopment, Inc., a nonprofit, historic preservation organization in New Orleans, Louisiana. Since its founding in 1998, Felicity has worked to improve the lower St. Charles neighborhood. The organization operates with a revolving fund that it uses to purchase, renovate, and ultimately resell blighted buildings in the neighborhood. Throughout its history, Felicity has restored over 50 properties (both residential and commercial) making it possible for current residents to stay in the neighborhood while continually bringing new home/business owners into the historic area. Felicity is devoted to the revitalization of historic buildings, but most importantly to the improvement of the neighborhood and its community.

While at Felicity, one of my main projects involved composing a virtual book of Felicity's completed projects. This included researching the properties, finding "before" pictures of the blighted buildings from files, and taking current pictures of the renovated structures in the neighborhood. I learned how to use the program InDesign to create the book, which included property information and photographs, information about Felicity's mission, and a history of the once thriving, historical Central City neighborhood.

My second major project involved conducting the preliminary research for a proposed Martin Luther King, Jr./Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

monument to be erected in the neighborhood. Felicity owns a lot of land on Lasalle Street across the street from Mount Zion Baptist Church where in 1957 one of the SCLC's formative meetings took place. Felicity has been working alongside the Tulane architecture program to design a monument to commemorate this historic event in the neighborhood. Because little was known about the meeting or King's time in New Orleans, I consulted local and national newspapers of the time, Tulane's archives at the Amistad Center, and the New Orleans Public Library archives among other sources to uncover information for this continuing project. I also attended and helped at a community meeting Felicity organized regarding the proposed monument. The meeting's attendees included people from the city, Felicity's board, Tulane's architecture program, and most importantly neighborhood residents. The meeting presented residents with four proposed monuments for the site designed by Tulane architecture students. Before proceeding with fundraising and construction, Felicity wanted to get a sense of what residents would like to see in their neighborhood. To me, this exemplified Felicity fulfilling their goal of promoting community while aiming to improve the structures and aesthetics of the area.

Aside from these two major projects, I gained experience learning the workings of a small nonprofit. Among other tasks, I answered the phone, scheduled appointments with contractors and maintenance providers, and updated and organized files and photographs. While organizing boxes of old photographs, I learned more about the history of Felicity as well as the neighborhood. I gained research experience by utilizing

New Orleans City Hall's records and conducting a full property title research on one of Felicity's newly attained blighted houses. I also gained an understanding of property status – how a property is deemed blighted, how it can be claimed, and how it goes to tax sale – all important steps of Felicity's operation. During my time at Felicity, the office, a historic building, was being renovated. I saw firsthand the codes, regulations, and precautions of the Historic District Landmarks Commission that must be followed when renovating a historic site.

Through this internship, I learned that I am able to work well independently. Felicity is a small organization with only one employee; therefore, most of my tasks were independent or involved one other person. I also gained a real understanding of the certain types of conditions people live in. With the office located in Central City in the organization's target area, I was exposed to people living in blighted houses that seemed unlivable, even unimaginable. I was thankful to be able to be part of Felicity and gain an understanding of this problem while working for an organization that fights to improve this growing issue in the neighborhood. This opportunity at Felicity also allowed me to gain experience learning to navigate a new city and settle into an unfamiliar place alone. As a recent graduate, this experience was invaluable as I removed myself from Sewanee and into the broader world.

I have enjoyed working in the nonprofit sector and feeling that the daily work I do truly contributes to a greater cause. I am interested in continuing pursuing a career in the nonprofit sector, and this experience has provided me with a strong understanding

of what makes up a small nonprofit. I believe this understanding will be beneficial in all aspects of the field. Regardless of small, large, or even dealing with historic preservation, Felicity Redevelopment, Inc. has provided me with invaluable experience and functioned as a great stepping stone towards other opportunities in the nonprofit sector.