



For Immediate Release

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**College Students Create Plan for First Grocery Store in Lower Ninth Ward,
Earn \$25,000 in Chase Competition**

Development plan aimed to remedy Fresh Food Desert

NEW ORLEANS, November 18, 2009 – College students from three universities who teamed up to devise a detailed plan to bring a grocery store to the Lower Ninth Ward have earned the top prize in the 2009 Chase Community Development Competition. Five teams made extensive presentations to judges Tuesday, November 17, at the Brownfields 2009 Conference in New Orleans and the winners were announced at an evening reception. The competition is sponsored by Chase and Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.

The winning team includes students from the University of New Orleans, Louisiana State University and DePaul University who partnered with the Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development to create a business plan and architectural renderings for a food store at 5523 St. Claude Avenue.

“We have a lot of people moving back into the neighborhood, and the number one question they ask is, ‘When are we going to get a grocery store?’” said Warrenetta Banks, a Ninth Ward resident and the office manager at the Lower Ninth Ward Center. “We’ve been waiting a long time for a grocery store of our own.”

College and graduate students partnered with local nonprofits to develop real estate plans that are sustainable and meet a prevalent community need in low- and moderate-income areas. Students from 12 universities across the nation participated in this year’s competition.

The second place prize of \$15,000 was awarded to Broad Community Connections for its design proposal with Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Washington University in St. Louis for a fresh food hub. The third place prize of \$10,000 was awarded to the Neighborhood Empowerment Network Association (NENA) for its resource center design project with the New School (New York). Other competing schools were Tulane University, UC Davis and the University of Oregon.

“Through their hard work and fresh ideas, these college students are making a great contribution to our city,” said Lizette Terral, president of Chase in New Orleans.

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“Chase is proud to award these grants that will assist their partnership with local agencies who are dedicated to making New Orleans a better place to live and work.”

All three winning designs included plans for a new grocery store as part of the development project. According to one student presentation, there is one grocery store for every 18,000 residents in New Orleans, while the national average is one store for every 8,000 residents. Access to fresh, healthy food is a critical consideration for low-income neighborhoods that too often are afflicted with high levels of diabetes, heart disease, obesity and other health concerns.

“Our partnership with Chase on this competition is an innovative way to bring additional resources to New Orleans to help local nonprofits rebuild communities and to expose students to professional opportunities in the community development industry,” said Michelle Whetten, vice president and Impact Market leader, Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.

After 14 years in New York City, Chase moved the community development competition to New Orleans in 2008 to generate business plans for hard-hit city neighborhoods. Last year’s winning team featured students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Washington University in St. Louis, who partnered with the Good Work Network of New Orleans on a strategy to restore the Franz Building at 2016 O.C. Haley Boulevard. The project is designed to provide support services for 500 local businesses each year, as well as provide store-front space for local entrepreneurs.

“The Chase Community Development Competition has been a very important boost for our project. It gave us a wonderful business plan, and it gave us greater credibility in the community, which has been very helpful in fund raising,” said Phyllis Cassidy, executive director of Good Work Network.

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