

Resurgence in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward

20 Years Later: Sankofa Creates a 'Trail' for Sustaining & Developing New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward Community



New Orleans, Louisiana Apr 20, 2025 ([IssueWire.com](http://www.IssueWire.com)) - As the world prepares to recognize Earth Day on April 22, stakeholders in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward are reflecting on community development progress geared to making the area more environmentally and economically sustainable.

In the days ahead, August 29, 2025, will mark two decades since Hurricane Katrina devastated and altered the course of New Orleans' history. *Yet one question lingers: **How have coastal communities strategically addressed compounding factors like flooding and environmental concerns, community preservation, economic development, and sustainability?***

In the Lower Ninth Ward, neighbors and stakeholders galvanized around [Sankofa Community Development Corporation](#) to prioritize the community above catastrophe. Sankofa CDC's resilience is an undercurrent in a resurgence in the community, which is home to about 7,500 residents compared to the 14,000 who resided there before Hurricane Katrina.

Rashida Ferdinand, founder and executive director of Sankofa CDC, said: "Sankofa Community Development Corporation's mission is to build healthier communities for generations to come. Since 2008, we have focused our efforts on bringing flood protection, food access, and economic opportunities to the Lower Ninth Ward. We accomplish this by valuing community voices and partnering with stakeholders and experts to repurpose blighted land into community-centered establishments."

Sankofa CDC's work is trailblazing in the community, where:

- homeowners account for 48% of the population;
- less than 25 businesses are in operation on its major thoroughfares (mostly convenience stores);
- the median household income is \$40,960; and
- Black people account for 84% of the population*

Recreation & Relief at the Wetland Park & Nature Trail

The Sankofa Wetland Park & Nature Trail project is a development of 40 acres of a deteriorated natural area on Florida Ave. adjacent to the Bayou Bienvenue Wetland Triangle that is transforming the land into a model of a restored ecosystem and natural wildlife habitat for recreation, environmental education, and flood protection. In 2017, Sankofa gained rights to transform the site through a

Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the City of New Orleans. To date, 20 acres have been developed and are open to the public for recreational use, aiding in the return of native wildlife, flora, and fauna. [Learn more.](#)

Food Access in the Ninth Ward

The Sankofa Fresh Start Market is the Lower Ninth Ward's only green grocery store, providing 1,600 sq. ft. of access to a variety of healthy, whole foods to meet the community's nutritional needs.

A "Main Street" Corridor

Sankofa CDC is currently working to revitalize the St. Claude Avenue commercial corridor in the Lower Ninth Ward to support health-centered revitalization and address long-term disinvestment in the area. As a result, the organization has obtained a Main Street America designation, which is bestowed upon organizations dedicated to "strengthening older and historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts nationwide."

The Future for Sankofa CDC & the Lower Ninth Ward

Over the next 5-10 years, Sankofa CDC will collaborate with the City of New Orleans, planners, and partners to develop the remaining 20 acres at the Wetland Park & Nature Trail with an outdoor amphitheater, stormwater management infrastructure, water quality systems, and plans for enhanced programming. Sankofa CDC is projected to have all 40 acres of the Wetland Park completed by 2026.

In addition, plans are underway to construct a Lower Ninth Ward Main Street headquarters and space for community use and retail along the St. Claude corridor.

To learn more, volunteer, or donate, visit www.sankofanola.org and follow @sankofanola504 on Facebook and Instagram.

**5-year American Community Survey 2019-2023 for Census data; Sankofa CDC and Google research for business data*

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Source : Sankofa Community Development Corporation

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