

# THINKING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE BOX:

*A Plan for Houses and Jobs from Aidbeam*

## I. Housing: Rethinking the Vernacular

**THE TWO CONDITIONS FOR “REPLACING” NEW ORLEANS** housing stock are affordability and architectural uniqueness—we are talking about rebuilding lower middle and working class neighborhoods with the characteristic New Orleans’ shotguns, doubles and camelbacks.

These two conditions are of special concern to artists and musicians for whom gentrification would mean an eviction notice. In New York, the process of gentrification forced many artists to move—but just across the rivers to Hoboken and Brooklyn, both still within a short commute to the city center. There is no such megalopolis nor transportation infrastructure to support such an outcome here. Artists and musicians would most likely move to places like Austin, Memphis, Lafayette or farther. (Not to mention that the plans we’ve seen for development are visually/conceptually repugnant and would destroy the character of this city.)

The problem, as conventional wisdom would state it, is rebuilding traditional New Orleans “gingerbread” shotguns, doubles and camelbacks would be prohibitively expensive because of the amount of “workmanship” involved.

This is wrong—it is based on a misconception of the actual building and design processes used to originally construct these “vernacular” New Orleans structures.

These houses are essentially “decorated boxes” and were considered so when being built—a simple woodframe structure with decoration added that was ordered from a catalog of standardized mass-produced gingerbread from a millworks such as still exists in Sulphur Springs, Louisiana.



### Ironwork Spandrels

Each Spandrel is made to your measurements. To determine cost multiply the total number of inches you need by the price “per inch”.

FSP 1150		End Height 6 1/2" - Center Height 5"	\$20.88 per foot	\$1.74 per inch	\$50.00 min.
FSP 1151		End Height 6 1/2" - Center Height 5"	\$20.88 per foot	\$1.74 per inch	\$50.00 min.
FSP 1152		End Height 12" - Center Height 7 1/2"	\$27.36 per foot	\$2.28 per inch	\$60.00 min.
FSP 1153		End Height 12" - Center Height 7 1/2"	\$27.36 per foot	\$2.28 per inch	\$60.00 min.
FSP 1156		End Height 15 3/4" - Center Height 8"	\$31.68 per foot	\$2.64 per inch	\$70.00 min.

Vernacular New Orleans architecture [above] is basically a simple woodframe structure with added decoration ordered from a catalog of standardized mass-produced gingerbread from millworks such as still exist in Sulphur Springs, Louisiana [left and below.]

### No. 562 Victoria

	Dormer 562D 22" to 24"	\$99.99		Dormer Ext. 562DX 19"	\$89.99
	Gable 562G 32" to 36"	\$128.99		Gable Ext. 562GX 27"	\$118.99
	Bracket: 562B 13"x13"	\$24.99		Pendant: 562P 26"x8"	\$39.99

### GINGERBREAD WEBLINKS

<http://www.unclejohns.com/trim/default.htm>

<http://www.vintagewoodworks.com/index.asp>

## II. Housing: 1 from Column A, 1 from Column B

### I PROPOSE TO BRING THIS PROCESS INTO THE 21ST CENTURY.

To build “modular” pre-fabricated housing in the New Orleans vernacular.

It’s an easy concept:

A row of modules is a shotgun.

Two rows are a shotgun double.

A row of modules with one on top is a camelback.

With only a few modules, this “one-from-column-A, one-from-column B” approach to architectural design would insure a great deal of variety.

Construction firms, allied or partnered with architects, already design and sell earthquake and hurricane proof pre-fabricated modular housing for as low as \$45,000.

These companies produce a small number of units per year.

Imagine how **economics of scale** could change that cost— if we were producing 40,000 housing units a year, I believe it would be possible to produce a small single-family unit at a cost of \$25,000 or 40,000 houses for \$1 billion.

Economics of scale is not the only benefit of mass-production.

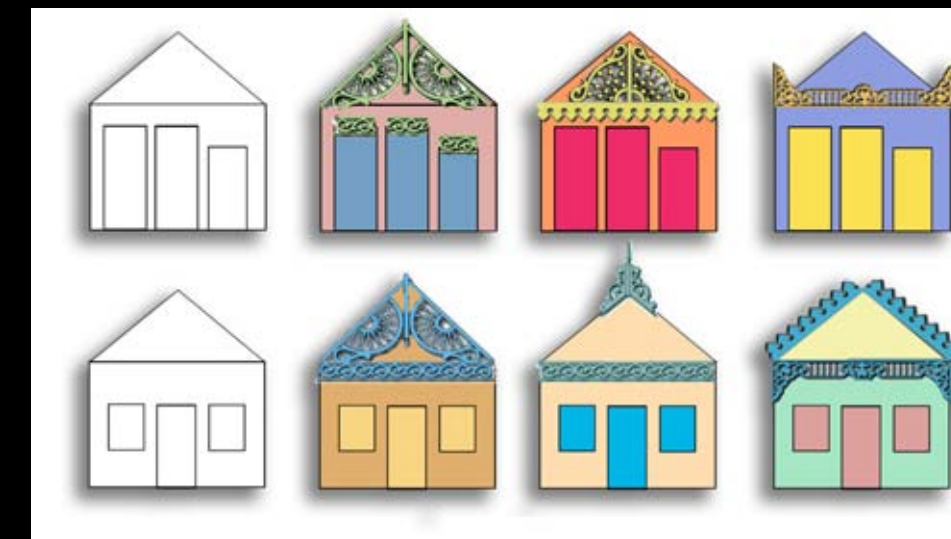
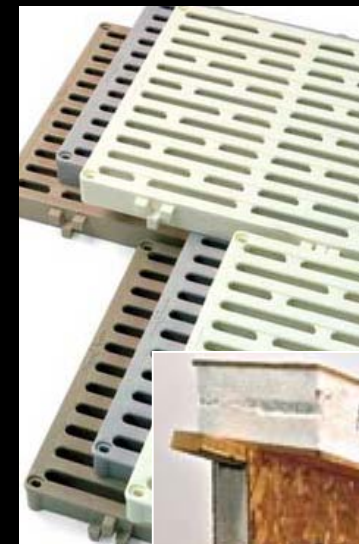
**Current Technology** would allow for standard-sized wall, ceiling and roof panels (SIPs or Structural Insulated Panels up to 14’ by 30’) pressure and/or heat molded out of a mixture of recycled and new materials including interiors and exteriors of paintable protective laminate, crown molding, ceiling medallions, gingerbread decoration (licensed from pre-existing designs?) and channels for electrical and plumbing.

ALCHEMY architects  
56 Raymond Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55114  
(651) 647-6650



Standardized modules such as built by Weehouse [above and right] can be arranged in a row to create a shotgun, two rows for a shotgun double, a row and one on top for a camelback.

Two basic front facade modules and gingerbread modules can be arranged to create almost limitless diversity [below]



[Left] Cutaway of SIPs assembly and molded structural panels

### PREFAB/MODULAR WEBLINKS

<http://www.livemodern.com/resources/resources/directories/prefabhouses/>

<http://www.warnerasmus.com/projects/weehouse.htm>

### III. Jobs: Kickstarting a New Industry

#### WHY SHOULD BILLIONS GO ELSEWHERE?

We could build these houses in New Orleans and kill 4 birds with one stone.

1. The houses are cheaper (shipping being a major cost.)
2. The money stays in New Orleans
3. We create a new industry.
4. Use of recycled plastic, paper, oyster shells (and bagasse?) would reduce disposal costs to the city.

Let's create a new industrial organization to design and produce these houses in or near New Orleans.

Local architectural and engineering firms would be brought into the process. The experience of large industrial facilities such as Avondale and Michoud will be invaluable.

The project could be a public/private consortium funded by an IPO and issuance of municipal/state bonds. The city could use the bond revenue to purchase a majority share of the stock.

In return the company would contract to deliver a fixed number of units at an agreed upon profit of say 1% (1% of \$1 billion remember is \$10 million.)

Upon fulfilling its contract with the City the company could be free to pursue other marketing and sales directions, subject to approval by a board of directors which would include local appointees approved by a blue-ribbon panel.

The city would share in the company's subsequent revenues.

If the warnings of scientists as well as the experience of the past year tells us anything it is that with population growth and climate change there will be a long-term world-wide need for inexpensive new and replacement housing.

We could sell houses worldwide, build plants in strategic locations and/or license the technology—MAX SINGER



Louisiana/New Orleans expertise with large-scale complexes such as Michoud [above] and Avondale [above right] will be invaluable. Local Architectural firms such as those who worked on the World's Fair [below] have the New Orleans spirit down pat.

