

## Overview of the UNOP process

The Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP) was created to include all neighborhoods in planning the recovery of the city. The objective of this multi-level planning process is to integrate successfully community input and professional planning expertise into a citywide recovery and rebuilding plan.

This planning is led by one Citywide Planning Team, four District Planning Teams and several Neighborhood Planning Teams across New Orleans's 13 planning districts. The UNOP process builds on all completed professional and community planning work in New Orleans so that no unnecessary, duplicative work is done. Key post-Hurricane Katrina planning work has already been completed by the Bring New Orleans Back Commission (BNOB), Urban Land Institute (ULI), FEMA, Lambert Advisory and Shedo LLC, and numerous neighborhood groups. UNOP incorporates all of these efforts into a single, unified plan.

The planning process has been completed under the auspices of the New Orleans Community Support Foundation (NOCSF), a board made up of six current and past trustees of the Greater New Orleans

Foundation. The Unified New Orleans Plan process was established by an initial grant from the Rockefeller Foundation and subsequent donations from the Greater New Orleans Foundation and the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund.

## CHAPTER 2

# *The UNOP planning process*

Once completed, this recovery plan will be submitted to the City Planning Commission and then the City Council for formal approval, the Mayor's Office for review, and finally the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) and other state and federal agencies and private funding sources.

A recovery and rebuilding plan is required to capitalize on federal and state funds for residents and the city to rebuild. The plan will allow city and state officials to coordinate post-disaster recovery more efficiently and effectively and will help New Orleans comply with necessary federal mandates. The plan will also identify critical needs of investment, so that private and public entities may make more informed, coordinated investment decisions in New Orleans.

The final phase of the New Orleans Planning process will result in 13 complete planning district plans and one citywide plan. The final plan will be submitted to the City Planning Commission for review in late January 2007 and will follow the City’s ratification process shortly afterwards.

### How the community participated

The District 6 planning process provided numerous occasions for community involvement in a variety of formal and informal settings. Four District Meetings offered the primary opportunities for public dialogue at each stage of the planning process. Between District Meetings, an informal Steering Committee, representing the various neighborhoods within the district, engaged with the Goody Clancy consulting team in discussions of analysis and recommendations. Another key element of the planning process consisted of a three-day charrette led by the neighborhood planning consultant (DPZ), building on the results of prior efforts including the April 2006 Gentilly Charrette. The planning team also met with representatives of various community organizations, institutions, and individuals. Many individuals generously contributed their time and energy to assist the planning team in gaining a better understanding of the district and key issues.

#### DISTRICT MEETINGS

##### District Meeting #1, October 14, 2006

This meeting served as the starting point for the UNOP process in District 6. Nearly 100 participants engaged in a review of prior planning



efforts and identified high priority actions they believed were most critical to advance recovery of the district as a whole. Participants identified actions that they believed would have the greatest impact on retaining current residents, increasing the number of returning residents, and attracting new residents. Participants discussed key initiatives that had emerged from earlier planning efforts in a small group format and added additional items for consideration that they believed could be equally significant in advancing recovery efforts within the district.

Following these discussions, participants voted their preference for the five items that they believed were most important to advancing recovery. In general, each of the groups had similar

views, and a fairly clear pattern emerged regarding the highest priority items, suggesting broad agreement on these issues. It also reflected the ability of residents to look beyond the boundaries of their own neighborhoods to identify those issues of critical importance to the recovery of the entire district. Several important initiatives such as the restoration of local small parks that had been identified in other planning efforts received no votes not because they were considered unimportant but because they were not seen as catalysts for a wider recovery. The voting is summarized in the chart on this page.

##### District Meeting #2, November 11, 2006

This meeting provided an overview of the status

#### District 6: Meeting #1—Community Priorities

| Votes | Item   |
|-------|--|
| 38    | Complete levee and pump repair   |
| 36    | Improve the process for dealing with abandoned homes   |
| 32    | Create plan to repair streets, sidewalks and infrastructure  |
| 28    | Create a mixed-use town center at Elysian Fields/Gentilly Boulevard  |
| 25    | Demolish public schools not reopening and use as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• green/ open space</li> <li>• community centers</li> <li>• senior housing</li> <li>• mixed income housing</li> </ul> |
| 24    | Create a Neighborhood Planning/ Information center (one-stop shop—not 50 places to go)   |
| 19    | Create strong partnerships with local institutions to rebuild (UNO, Dillard, NO Baptist Seminary, Southern University of NO)   |
| 16    | Extend streetcar line to Gentilly  |

of the city’s flood protection system including planned improvements and ongoing studies. Participants also engaged in a dialogue around three broad recovery scenarios developed by the Citywide Planning Team—Repair, Rehabilitate, and Re-envision—and discussed how residents’ objectives might be met by one or the other of

#### District 6: Meeting #1—Community Priorities

| Votes | Item   |
|-------|--|
| 16    | Reopen Norman Mayer Library—with district information/ community meeting center    |
| 15    | Create a new, unified land-development code to get better control over development |
| 13    | Include affordable housing in large new development projects                       |
| 12    | Provide better pedestrian and bicycle facilities across the district               |
| 10    | Renovate and reopen Mary Dora Coghill Elementary School                            |
| 8     | Restore Pontchartrain Park   |
| 6     | Restore traditional neighborhood character-walk to store, transit...               |
| 4     | Foster environmentally sensitive green design for buildings and open space         |
| 4     | Restore neutral grounds landscape  |
| 3     | Reopen Stuart Bradley K-8  |
| 2     | Improve access to the lake with more parks and open space                          |
| 2     | Establish all schools as community centers (nexus concept)                         |
| 1     | Restore small parks and open spaces  |
| 1     | Create landscape/ noise barrier along I-10   |
| 1     | Convert St. Raphael school and church to senior assisted-living facility           |
| 1     | Renovate and reopen Pontchartrain Park Senior Center                               |



these scenarios. Each represented possible futures for the district based on a combination of individual actions, local initiatives, and the availability of state and federal funding to advance recovery. These scenarios are further summarized in Chapter 5 of this document.

Residents also discussed the critical importance of the LRA's Road Home Program to the district's recovery. The lack of available information about the number and location of properties that have applied for Road Home funds within the district, and how precisely the program will be executed within the district were significant concerns for district residents. Meeting participants also differentiated between potential initiatives that could be advanced with and without allocation of significant state and federal funds.

### **District Meeting #3, December 16, 2006**

Participants engaged in a discussion regarding District 6's major project, program, and policy recommendations for the district. These are enumerated in Chapter 6.

### **District Meeting #4, January 6, 2007**

The last of the four district-wide meetings focused on a review of the draft recommendations incorporated in this plan. There was also discussion of next steps, including the schedule for



presentation of the plan to the Community Support Organization, the City Planning Commission, the City Council, and the Mayor.

Participants focused much of their attention on the proposed near- and mid-term initiatives, and on issues of

broad concern – ranging from infrastructure to schools to social services -- that will be among the subjects of the citywide plan. Participants also identified district-specific items within the draft plan that required further development: the results are included in this final report.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD CHARRETTE**

In April 2006, District 6 residents had the opportunity to participate in a planning charrette, led by Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) and volunteers from the Congress for the New Urbanism. The major proposals from this event were further developed in a follow-up charrette—also led by DPZ—as part of the UNOP district planning process. The results reinforced the major themes that emerged from the district meetings. Key proposals include development and implementation initiatives, as well as environmental initiatives, such as the implementation of a natural drainage system to infiltrate stormwater runoff. Other key recommendations include:

- **Establishing a community development corporation**

- **Creating a Neighborhood Planning Center**
- **Redeveloping the Gentilly Boulevard/Elysian Fields Avenue shopping center as a mixed-use town center**

The results of this work are extensively documented in a separate report prepared by DPZ that represents an update and elaboration of its work on the Gentilly charrette. This work is included as an appendix to this document.

### **SMALL-GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS**

The planning team was intent on meeting and talking with as many district residents, business



people, community and institutional leaders, and other key stakeholders as possible. Serendipitous encounters and informal conversations, with individual residents allowed the team to gain an enhanced understanding of the district's physical and social conditions. Invitations to visit residents in their homes—whether they had returned to those homes or were living in nearby trailers—provided an unequalled sense of immediacy to the planning challenges.

An ever-growing network of contacts produced quite personal—and, at times, painful—insights into issues ranging from the schools to health care to the continued difficulties inherent in simple tasks such as food shopping.

Invitations were extended—and accepted—to speak with neighborhood groups or key representatives. These in turn were supported by “drive-arounds” or “walk-about” —requests to residents to accompany members of the planning team through the district and point out what they considered to be most important to the district's history and to its recovery.

Other groups have emerged that reflect what one senior official at a local university referred to as the need for people to “reinvent themselves” in the face of what happened. For example, the team was made aware of, and met with, individuals within the district who have taken it upon themselves to lobby the LRA in connection with the Road Home program, advocating for greater efficiency in its implementation and, in fact, issuing a “report card” on the program.

Separate conversations with senior administrators at the district's institutions of higher education led to an exploration of the academic and community benefits that might be gained through closer collaboration among those institutions. These conversations also enabled the planning team to link a major university-based initiative—Dillard's community development corporation and the projects under discussion within the con-

text of the CDC—to parallel efforts beginning to be discussed within the district as a whole.

A team from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, visited New Orleans at the request of the university’s vice chancellor, with an eye toward contributing to the city’s recovery and with special emphasis on District 6. The UNC team participated in several district meetings, and is now exploring opportunities for partnering on specific projects within their district. Currently underway is a mapping effort involving students from Dillard and Dartmouth College that identifies levels of recovery progress throughout the district.

The signal importance of the state of the public schools—district-wide as well as, of course, citywide—led to a series of discussions with members of the Orleans Parish School Board, with consultants to the Recovery School District, and—ultimately—to a joint meeting between those consultants and district leaders particularly focused on school recovery.

Similarly, the state of the district’s—not to mention the city’s—health care system led to conversations with senior staff at the Louisiana Public Health Institute regarding the efforts—now underway at both the state and national levels—to lobby for funding to create a network of decentralized health care clinics throughout the areas

most affected by Katrina and Rita. These conversations provided the opportunity to conceive of a new health clinic (the district, pre-Katrina, had none) as one element within a new town center or community nexus.

If there was an overall objective to these efforts beyond that of sheer knowledge acquisition, it was to identify the “dots” that, if connected, could make a significant difference in the district’s recovery, in addition to individual “bricks and mortar” projects. The team’s approach was to seek ways to increase the district’s social, as



well as physical, capital, creating the opportunity for new partnerships and an opening for new stakeholders.

## Community perspectives

Residents were eager to focus from the very outset on implementation, moving beyond recommendations to a determination of the actions—and the actors—required to spur recovery. This was largely possible as prior planning work had established a strong and shared vision for the district. The community’s collective perspective included these essential elements:

- that repair/upgrades of levees and pumps are advanced quickly to provide enhanced flood protection;



- that health and other social services and local infrastructure are restored and enhanced;
- that public schools are brought to educational and physical excellence;

- that Road Home program’s disposition of properties consider the impact on the district’s character and overall quality of life, and that land purchased by the LRA will not be left to blight and disrepair;
- that opportunities for partnership and vehicles such as community development corporations be thoroughly mined as ways to jump-start redevelopment;
- that the relocation of the Holy Cross School to the district is accomplished and other catalyst projects such as development of a town center are advanced; and
- that better information is provided to residents, including potential flooding risks, to assist them in rebuilding decisions.