

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 multilevel planning process is to successfully integrate community input and professional planning expertise into a citywide recovery and rebuilding plan.

CHAPTER 2

The UNOP planning process



Two of the District Meetings took place at Desire Street Ministries.

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 to minimize redundancy and maximize efficiency. Key post-Hurricane Katrina planning work has already been completed by the Bring New Orleans Back Commission (BNOBC), 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 conducted 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.

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 and other state and federal agencies and institutional 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 federal mandates.

The final phase of the planning process will result in 13 complete 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

SOUNDING BOARDS

To supplement the four districtwide meetings and citywide community congresses that took place under the UNOP process, Goody Clancy and EDAW, as District 7 planners, established “sounding boards” in each of the subdistricts. These sounding boards helped the consultant team get to know the people and issues in each neighborhood, provided a regular review of findings and emerging recommendations, helped the consultants communicate findings and recommendations to the larger community, and expanded outreach to promote attendance at the four district-wide meetings. Goody Clancy and EDAW worked with community leaders to identify organizations to be represented on the sounding boards and issued a public invitation at each district meeting to any community member who wanted to participate. Each subdistrict sounding board met every two to three weeks.



St. Roch and St. Claude residents explored ideas and issues in more detail at sounding board meetings.

Sounding board meetings in St. Roch-St. Claude drew a diverse mix of 15–30 participants, including both home and business owners and renters. Residents actively recruited friends and neighbors to attend. The group met on November 10, November 30, December 15, and January 5. The December 15 meeting took the form of a four-hour workshop that explored issues on a more detailed, individualized basis. Structured as an “open house,” it focused on one-on-one conversations between residents and their neighbors and residents and planners. Key outcomes of all meetings appear in the adjacent boxes at right.

DISTRICT MEETINGS

As benchmarks in the UNOP process, districtwide meetings provided an important opportunity for residents of the district to come together, discuss challenges and emerging plans for the district, and share their ideas and concerns. Each meeting began with a planning process update on districtwide issues, and participants then broke into three smaller groups—one each for Bywater-Marigny, St. Roch-St. Claude, and Desire-Florida. Breakout groups allowed more detailed discussion of neighborhood- and community-level issues and opportunities, as well as review of the sounding boards’ recommendations.

NOVEMBER 10: PRIORITIZING NEEDS & PROJECTS

Participants discussed and assigned priorities to proposed projects. Top priorities were:

- Address abandoned homes and vacant lots.
- Achieve higher owner-occupancy.
- Develop St. Claude commercial and cultural district.
- Attract a mid-sized grocery store and other neighborhood commercial establishments.
- Restore St. Roch Market as a true farmers’ market.
- Return streetcar (along St. Claude and Desire).
- Restore regular bus service on Galvez and Desire.
- Develop artists’ housing at Urquhart and Music.
- Provide safe places for children to play.
- Restore Bunny Friend Park.
- Convert unused fire stations to community centers.
- Restore schools; also use them for job training.
- Reduce commercial traffic on Claiborne/N. Robertson.
- Establish “no truck” routes.



St. Roch and St. Claude residents used colored stickers to vote on project priorities at the November 10 sounding board meeting.

NOVEMBER 30: REVIEW OF DRAFT PLAN

Participants reviewed and commented on a draft of the project matrix (Chapter 6 of this report). Highlights of the discussion included:

- Endorsement of the Housing Resource Center idea, with potential locations identified at Claiborne Avenue, Desire Street Ministries, St. Roch Fire House, buildings near the railroad tracks on St. Claude, and the Capital One Bank building on St. Claude.
- Further discussion of St. Roch Market rehabilitation.
- Further discussion of the Desire/St. Claude streetcar. Some residents no longer believed that this should be a priority.
- Description of community residents’ efforts to renovate and reuse the St. Roch Fire Station as a community center.

DECEMBER 15: IMPLEMENTATION/DRAFT PLAN FEEDBACK WORKSHOP

- Participants reviewed draft maps and provided comments.
- Planning team gave a presentation on community development, including CDCs.
- Potential implementation measures were discussed.



Residents gave planners detailed feedback on draft plans at the sounding board workshop.

JANUARY 5: REVIEW OF DRAFT REPORTS

- Residents reviewed the list of projects and made several additions and changes.
- Major additions included discussion of a cultural center celebrating indigenous fine arts, adding or repairing sidewalks on all streets, and establishment of alcohol-free zones (stronger business nuisance ordinance).
- Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell participated and discussed City plans for rebuilding. She also provided advice about several of the projects listed.

District Meetings were held on October 28, November 11, December 16, and January 5. Feedback from these meetings appears in the boxes at right.

MEETING NOTIFICATION

Residents received notification of meetings through fliers, emails, and phone bank calls. Two rounds of emails went out for every meeting, and all prior participants received two reminder calls by telephone. Participants from St. Roch-St. Claude played a key role in encouraging neighbors to attend various meetings. A survey was conducted to determine the best locations for flier distribution, and students were sent to key retail outlets to distribute them. In advance of district-wide meetings, news alerts were sent to print and broadcast media, and spokespersons were scheduled on talk shows. Newsletters reporting the

results of meetings were distributed at several points during the process.



DISTRICT MEETING #1, OCTOBER 28

- Presentation focused on assessment of existing conditions and core opportunities and challenges across the district.
- Breakout group discussion focused on top priorities for rebuilding the neighborhoods. The items that received the most discussion and attention were:
 - > Rebuilding housing
 - > Rebuilding the St. Claude Avenue commercial and cultural area
 - > Making sure that infill construction is compatible with the historic character of the neighborhood
 - > Reducing truck traffic on Claiborne and Robertson
 - > Addressing the long delays getting into and out of the neighborhood from the east caused by trains stopping on the CSX tracks
 - > Introducing new elements/amenities into the neighborhood (e.g., recreation venues, new retail, job centers, monuments, open spaces, alternative transportation infrastructure)

DISTRICT MEETING #2, NOVEMBER 11

- Presentation focused on draft scenarios for the future of the district's neighborhoods.
- Breakout group discussion focused on reviewing draft scenario elements, assigning priority to needs and projects, and evaluating potential implementation strategies:
 - > The most popular proposed elements/amenities:
 - Technology Job Center
 - Farmers' market at St. Roch Market
 - Honoring the heroes of the neighborhood
 - > Participants felt the most important strategy for bringing residents back to the neighborhood was development of a Housing Resource Center
 - > Participants identified business incubators, tax incentives, and marketing efforts as potential economic development strategies
 - > Development of a community development corporation was deemed very important to implementing plan recommendations



Residents shared their opinions on needed projects at the districtwide meeting on November 11.

DISTRICT MEETING #3, DECEMBER 16

- Presentation focused on implementation of proposed plans and projects.
- Breakout group discussion focused on identifying implementation mechanisms for St. Roch-St. Claude plans and projects. Participants favored these key strategies:
 - > A community development corporation (CDC)
 - > A neighborhood planning organization to review and provide input on development proposals within St. Roch-St. Claude
 - > Stronger zoning controls to ensure that development is consistent with neighborhood goals
 - > Lots next door and other property transaction policies
 - > A one-stop resource center for assistance with housing and job training
 - > Economic development and job development support
 - > Financial assistance to citizens affected by the storm

DISTRICT MEETING #4, JANUARY 5

All six district neighborhoods convened at the Holy Angels Convent for the final district meeting. City council members and their representatives, including Councilmembers Hedge-Morrell and James Carter, were in attendance and expressed their support of the neighborhoods, the importance of the planning effort and the need for each resident to remain involved as their plans move toward implementation.

- Presentation included:
 - > An overview of each neighborhood plan
 - > Major implementation strategies, including formation of a community development corporation (CDC), formation of a District Planning Council, development of neighborhood information centers, fostering a stronger planning culture, and advocating for funding and other support
 - > Information on how a community development corporation (CDC) organizes for implementation, as well as examples of successful CDCs in other cities

Additional community input was provided through a survey of residents and businesses conducted by planning students from the University of Illinois. The survey results appear as an appendix to this report.

Community perspectives

Community input from sounding board and district meetings played a critical role in shaping the plans for St. Roch-St. Claude. The key ideas emerging from neighborhood feedback are summarized below.

HOUSING

- Provide support for the rebuilding damaged/destroyed housing to bring people back to the neighborhood.
- Address vacant and blighted properties.
- Achieve higher levels of owner occupancy.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- Provide assistance for those wishing to preserve historic homes.
- Rehab city-owned, blighted historic buildings.
- Ensure that new development is compatible with the neighborhoods.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS ACTIVITY

- Develop St. Claude Avenue as a commercial and cultural corridor; develop Franklin and Desire as secondary corridors.
- Attract a mid-sized grocery store and other neighborhood commercial establishments.
- Restore St. Roch Market back to a true farmers' market.
- Create live-work space for artists.

TRANSPORTATION

- Repair roads—including drainage, signage, signals, lighting, trees, gutters, and curbs.
- Provide enhanced transit service, especially along Galvez and Desire.
- Establish/restore streetcar service on St. Claude and Desire.
- Reduce truck traffic—and traffic generally—in the neighborhoods.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC WORKS

- Address drainage issues across the community.
- Address rail-crossing delays, which can interfere with emergency services.

FLOOD PROTECTION

- Raise houses where needed.
- Repair levees.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- Improve public safety throughout the community.
- Create alcohol-free zones.

EDUCATION AND HEALTH SERVICES

- Rehabilitate and reopen local schools as state-of-the-art facilities.
- Re-establish healthcare services.

COMMUNITY/CULTURAL FACILITIES AND PARKS

- Provide safe places for children to play.
- Rehabilitate civic and recreation facilities; convert unused public buildings to community centers.
- Restore parks and open spaces, especially Bunny Friend Park.

“People want to return but they don’t know how—we need to get them information about funding and how to rebuild.”



“St. Claude Avenue can become the Main Street of the Upper Ninth Ward.”

“We need to attract people back to the neighborhood—schools and a safe environment are key.”

“The St. Roch Market should be a true farmers’ market, where we can buy Louisiana produce, meat and seafood.”