

*"The UNOP process will include ALL of the neighborhoods in New Orleans. The plan will build on work already completed in some neighborhoods and begin new in others...  
...the goal is to weave all of the plans together into thirteen district wide plans and one unified recovery and rebuilding plan that will incorporate the whole city of New Orleans."*

*-- UNOP Website FAQs*



**2.1 UNIFIED NEW ORLEANS PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW**

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 successfully integrate community input and professional planning expertise into a city-wide recovery and rebuilding Plan.

This planning is led by the Citywide Planning Team and four District Planning Teams assisted by several Neighborhood Planners 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 was 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.

Once completed, this recovery plan will be submitted to the City Planning Commission and then the City Council and to the Mayor's office for formal approval and, finally, to the Louisiana Recovery Authority 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 investment needs so that private and public entities may make more



informed, coordinated investment decisions in New Orleans.

**2.2 DISTRICT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION APPROACH**

Public involvement is one of the most critical components of the Unified New Orleans Plan. Achieving an open and transparent public involvement process was viewed as a priority within our overall work plan and within each of the Districts that we were assigned. Our Team recognized that each planning District had its own set of unique challenges and opportunities. We also recognized that we would need to identify impediments and understand the unique circumstances associated with each of the Districts in order to be effective. Developing a relationship of trust with residents was an important first step in the process of identifying and prioritizing recovery, rebuilding, and community enhancement projects.

One of our initial strategies was to expand the public involvement process beyond District-wide meetings. We felt that it would be important to meet with key political and community leadership within several of the respective Districts on a one-on-one basis. At a minimum, a small core group of residents would help to start the process by providing current, local information, serving as a sounding board for preliminary project ideas before presentation at the District-wide level, and aiding in the dissemination of fact-based UNOP data to District residents. While individual meetings with stakeholders are often time consuming, we recognized that community leaders are generally more open to discussing sensitive issues in a more private setting.

The project team used various communication tools to effectively inform, educate and encourage public participation. At the core of the public participation strategies was the UNOP website. Our Team recognized that in order to gain additional insight into each district, we needed to develop personal relationships with a core group of stakeholders. We also understood that each District had its own unique experience as a result of Hurricane Katrina. These experiences impacted the selection and composition of the Steering Committees and influenced the way in which the public participation process was managed.



**A. Unique Challenges**

Residents within this District had formed an impressive community-based organizational structure that met on a weekly basis. The “Recovery Group Steering Committee” was led by Martin Landrieu and included numerous subcommittees (who represented hundreds of residents from the District’s overall recovery group) focusing on key District-wide recovery issues such as housing, communication, roads, parks, etc. A significant portion of the stakeholders within this District felt that because they had one of the city’s highest median incomes, they may not receive a proportional amount of funding for their priority projects. While the organizational structure of the Recovery Group greatly facilitated assessing important baseline post-Katrina recovery indicators, the perception of being “looked over” because of their affluence challenged our Team to find ways to add value to their important volunteer work. Because residents in this District had recently completed an extensive planning process through the Lambert Group, they felt that they already had an adopted Plan. Our task in District 5 was to ensure residents that the EDSA Team would respect the work they had put into the previous planning process, and provide them with the implementation framework needed to move them closer to recovery and rebuilding projects.

**B. Public Participation Process**

The existing organizational structure of the District 5 Recovery Group also served as our Steering Committee. Since the Recovery Group and the Steering Committee members were the same, meeting dates and times for the Steering Committee were scheduled around the Recovery Group meeting times and locations. Early meetings with the Steering Committee focused on identifying what elements of the rebuilding process the members felt would be most beneficial to their District’s rebuilding priorities. Each subsequent Steering Committee meeting and District-wide meeting provided an opportunity to build on the work of the earlier planning process and demonstrated to District 5 stakeholders how their vision for recovery, rebuilding, and enhancing their District could be incorporated into UNOP.

**C. Important Outcomes**

The process surfaced key outcomes including:

- The importance of an advocacy role for how surplus property within District 5 could be managed
- The need to analyze market-driven economic development opportunities along major retail corridors as a priority focus for identifying recovery and rebuilding projects
- The community accepted the UNOP Plan as an important step in the process of achieving their recovery priority projects and initiatives

- community development
- Awareness that the Plan can be leveraged as a tool for accessing funding resources outside the Louisiana Recovery Authority

**2.3 CONCLUSION**

The basic principle of the public involvement process used by the EDSA Team is that more citizens will participate in the process if they understand the issues that influence decision-making. This principle served as the basis for our approach to public participation and the reason the EDSA Team chose to expand the community outreach process. The expanded public participation process included four simultaneous tracks of activity (individual interviews, neighborhood meetings, Steering Committee meetings, and district-wide meetings) that were designed to maximize public involvement and build consensus around important recovery and rebuilding projects. Feedback from each of the Districts suggests outcomes that seem to be consistently referenced by residents:

- A heightened awareness of flood protection as an important component in community building
- Community organization and empowerment as a tool to help influence how and where recovery and rebuilding should occur
- An acknowledgement that community organizational infrastructures and consensus on issues that emerged through UNOP will be an important element of the project implementation phase
- Recognition that the Plan not only has value as a short-range recovery tool but also for long-range

