

# **District 6 Recovery Plan**

## **Appendix: Recovery Assessment**

**District Planner: Goody Clancy**

# Recovery Assessment

*This assessment was undertaken in October 2006 as part of the UNOP District 6 process by the Goody Clancy District Planning Team. It represents a snapshot of the district at that time and was intended to provide a basis the district planning process. This document has been used to inform planning recommendations for the district incorporated in the UNOP District 6 Recovery Plan but has not been comprehensively updated to reflect changes within the District or information that has emerged since October 2006. As change is occurring rapidly in the city, some of the information contained in this document may have been superceded by subsequent events. Where information has changed, this is reflected in the District 6 Recovery Plan that includes information updated to January 2007. This document does not integrate the many useful maps and additional graphics prepared by the UNOP citywide team that provide one source for information included in this document. These very useful maps are available separately. Several of them are incorporated in the District 6 Recovery Plan document.*

## I. Introduction to the District

District 6 is bounded by Lake Pontchartrain to the north; I-610 to the south; Bayou St. John to the west; and the Industrial Canal to the east. Although sometimes referred to as “Gentilly,” district residents identify themselves most strongly with their individual sub-neighborhood, such as Lake Terrace or Pontilly. It is important to acknowledge these distinctions while recognizing the many common interest among all residents of District 6.

Much of the District consists of single-family houses, many built during the post-World War II boom as the City expanded north. The District is home to four institutions of higher education as well as a research and technology center affiliated with the University of New Orleans.

## II. Recovery Assessment

### a. Description of Recovery Assessment Methodologies

The team engaged the District 6 community in multiple formats including interviews with individuals and small groups representing neighborhoods, businesses and institutions; informal contact with residents in one-on-one conversations on the streets and in local meeting places; and more formal “sounding board” meetings with residents. The first sounding board meeting was attended by 25 people at the home of Vera Triplett, CSO Representative for District 6; the second, with approximately 40 in attendance, was held on the campus of the University of New Orleans. A District wide public meeting was also held on October 14<sup>th</sup> on the UNO campus and was attended by approximately 100 people. At the public meeting, participants engaged in small group discussions and ranked, in order of importance, some of the key recommended initiatives that have emerged from prior planning efforts. These discussions focused on which initiatives would have the greatest impact on keeping current residents, increasing the number of returning residents, and attracting new residents. The results of that exercise are to be found in the District 6 Recovery Plan. Each of the meeting formats outlined above enabled the Team to gain an understanding of key issues, concerns, and priorities as seen by the District 6 community.

The Team also undertook numerous field surveys to review conditions throughout the District and reviewed data on the District provided by the citywide team. (Some of the data gathered within the district is included in an Appendix to this document.)

The District Planning Team wishes to thank the following for their input into the Team’s understanding of the District, its residents, its businesses, and its institutions.

- Charlene Zimmer, Zimmer’s Restaurant
- Jeanne-Marie Jean, Gentilly Terrace
- Brady Skinner, Indian Village
- Peggy Braud, Virgil Boulevard

- John Whitney, Lake Terrace
- Alden MacDonald, Liberty Bank
- Mary Garton, Executive Director, Teach for America
- John Myers, Army Corps of Engineers
- Cecil McClennon, Army Corps of Engineers
- Bull Curto, Department of Homeland Security
- Cynthia Hedge-Morrell, City Council
- Dave Ippolito, Lake Terrace
- Jeanne Marie Jean, Gentilly Terrace
- Brady Skinner, Indian Village
- King Wells, Pontilly Neighborhood Improvement Association
- Peggy Braud, Virgil Boulevard
- Scott Darrah, Gentilly Civic Improvement Association
- Karen Parsons, Regional Planning Commission
- Marty Rowland, Gentilly Civic Improvement Association
- Vera Triplett, District 6 CSO Representative and Chair
- Deanna Causey, Gentilly Civic Improvement Association
- Nikki Najiola, Gentilly Civic Improvement Association
- Cecelia McNab, Lake Terrace
- Matt Strickler, Boston Consulting Group
- Phyllis Landrieu, Orleans Parish School Board
- Carrie Stewart, Alvarez & Marsal
- Kirsten Melberg, Alvarez & Marsal
- Karen Fernandez, Lambert Plan
- Tim Ryan, Chancellor, University of New Orleans
- Norma Grace, Vice Chancellor, University of New Orleans
- Marvalene Hughes, President, Dillard University
- Walter Strong, Executive Vice President, Dillard University
- Nick Harris, Assistant Vice President, Community Development Corporation,  
Dillard University
- Pat Gibbs, President and CEO, UNO Foundations

- Carol Reese, Tulane University
- Norm Whitley, University of New Orleans and Gentilly resident
- Jane Brooks, University of New Orleans
- Patty Gay, Preservation Resource Center
- Carey Shea, Rockefeller Foundation
- Tom O'Malley, AFL-CIO Investment Trust

## b. Sector by Sector Presentation of Findings

This section provides an overview of the Team's findings, based on windshield surveys, walks through the District, house-by-house assessments in sample areas throughout the District, conversations with residents, workers, and others encountered in both formal and informal settings.

### Housing

#### **What was Katrina's impact on housing stock?**

District 6 housing stock was severely damaged by Katrina (see chart below). FEMA damage inspections indicate that more than 7,500 parcels or 40.9% of properties<sup>1</sup> within the area were 50% or more damaged. Individual neighborhoods experienced substantially higher levels of damage. In Ponchartrain Park, 81% of properties experienced more than 50% damage.<sup>2</sup>

Each of the areas whose damaged properties constitute 50% or more of the total are situated in the zone where the greatest flooding took place – that is, where the waters reached depths of 8' or more.<sup>3</sup>

<b>District 6 Neighborhood</b>	<b>Number of Parcels</b>	<b>Properties with 50% or more damage</b>	<b>% of area properties with 50% or more damage</b>
Gentilly Woods	1322	889	67.2%
Gentilly Terrace	5642	1296	23.0%

<sup>1</sup> Numbers refer to residential properties

<sup>2</sup> District Six Planning Team analysis

<sup>3</sup> Katrina Flood Depth Map, City of New Orleans

Dillard	2076	852	41.0%
Ponchartrain Park	1097	889	81.0%
Milneburg	2161	1570	72.7%
St. Anthony	2157	1191	55.2%
Fillmore	3147	1660	52.7%
Lake Terrace/Lake Oaks	749	43	5.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18351</b>	<b>7501</b>	<b>40.9%</b>

Source: FEMA Assessment

**To what extent has the population returned?**

Repopulation has occurred mostly in the least damaged areas of the neighborhood, primarily on higher ground along Gentilly Boulevard and close to Lake Ponchartrain. Residents estimate overall repopulation at approximately 25% of the pre-storm population of 40,000. Repopulation is beginning to occur on more low-lying ground but overall numbers continue to be quite low. Occupied homes are widely dispersed through low-lying areas. Many returning residents in the low-lying areas appear to be individuals who had adequate flood insurance coverage to fund reconstruction.

The Team evaluated a sampling of blocks throughout the district including 326 houses that experienced varying degrees of flooding. Overall, the occupancy level within the seven sub-areas totaled 68 units, or 21%. However, many of the occupied units were concentrated in Gentilly Terrace, which had experienced less extensive flooding. Excluding the Gentilly Terrace sample, the District-wide occupancy rate drops to 12%, a fair reflection of what the Team observed during its assessment.

**What is the level of building permit activity?**

As illustrated by the UNOP map showing “Residential Demolition, Renovation, and New Construction Permits, Through July 2006,” demolition permits are concentrated in the band between Filmore and Leon C. Simon, and in the eastern reaches of Gentilly Woods close by the Industrial Canal.

Renovation permits are most heavily concentrated in the following areas:

- Gentilly Terrace, south of Gentilly Boulevard
- Gentilly Woods south of Dreux

- Vascoville south of Mirabeau

It appears that only two new construction permits were issued, one for a parcel in St. Anthony and one for a parcel to the west of Pontchartrain Park.

Areas within District 6 that show little or no permit activity are the least flooded areas including Lake Terrace-Lake Oaks; Gentilly Boulevard from Washington to Peoples, and the area between Providence and Seminary Drive.

### **What is the observed level of renovation activity?**

In its observations of sample block clusters within District 6, the Team discovered that, while many houses had been gutted, there was frequently little indication that any further action was contemplated by the owner. Additional assessment would be needed to understand the realities, or “stories,” behind each gutted house. However it appears that many property owners are taking a wait and see approach to rebuilding where their decisions will be influenced by their sense of the rate and likely success of recovery efforts.

The overall level of observed renovation averaged around 18%, ranging from 12% in Filmore to 30% in Dillard. At the same time, streets such as Verbena, from Franklin Ave. to Iris St., showed evidence of a significantly higher percentage of renovation, with over 50% -- or 50 out of 95 houses – in the process of renovation. This is certainly explained in part by Verbena’s proximity to the Gentilly ridge, which experienced somewhere between 2’ and 4’ of flooding.<sup>4</sup>

### **Are there intent to return data from previously conducted surveys?**

Several surveys have been initiated but to date the results have been limited and generally inconclusive. These include the following efforts:

- Earlier this year, a survey was undertaken by the Gentilly Civic Improvement Association in partnership with the University of New Orleans Office of Information

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<sup>4</sup> However obvious to some, it’s important to note that the waterlines still visible on many homes only indicate where the water eventually settled: a house with a waterline at 8’ could easily have experienced 12’ or more of flooding.

- Technology. The objective was to reach into the sub-areas through “team captains,” who would oversee the collection of data. The results so far have been inconclusive.<sup>5</sup>
- Silas Lee & Associates also undertook a survey sometime around August 2006, but the results do not seem to be available. The Lambert Planning Process did not include such a survey in its work.
  - The University of New Orleans has a survey underway, directed by Prof. Marla Nelson: the first mailing went out in early September, and a second one is scheduled over the next several weeks. The returns so far have been minimal<sup>6</sup>

### **Prior to Katrina was the neighborhood experiencing reinvestment activity?**

Prior to the storm, the District was a broadly stable and attractive residential area with a very high level of homeownership and ongoing investment in residential property.

Residents have expressed dissatisfaction with the level of investment/quality of services available in the district’s commercial centers before the storm and are seeking more appealing and comprehensive shopping choices within the area. The Gentilly Boulevard/Elysian Fields shopping center, which over many years had declined from what had been a major retail destination for both residents and others living outside the District has a particular source of concern.

One significant redevelopment initiative underway is the \$45 million, 750-bed student apartment complex on the University of New Orleans campus, with the financing package put together by the UNO Foundation prior to Katrina, and with construction having begun in September 2006.<sup>7</sup>

## **Historic Preservation Issues**

### **What is the level of demolition within local and or/National Register Historic Districts?**

Gentilly Terrace, one of five districts within New Orleans on the National Register, did not show evidence of demolition. Another historically important area without an historic designation are the neighborhoods adjoining Ponchartrain Park. This area constitutes the first suburban

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<sup>5</sup> Source: Karen Fernandez

<sup>6</sup> Source: Karen Parsons and Marla Nelson

<sup>7</sup> Source: Pat Gibbs, UNO Foundations

development built for African-Americans and, according to October 2005 testimony by the Executive Director of the New Orleans Preservation Resource Center, should be considered for designation on the National Register.<sup>8</sup> Within this area, only one of 42 parcels spot-checked along Press Street near Ponchartrain Park showed evidence of demolition.

### **What were the pressures on districts prior to Katrina?**

The Team did not uncover evidence of development pressures on the historic areas prior to Katrina.

### **What was Katrina's impact on historic areas?**

Ponchartrain Park, its senior center, golf course, and other amenities, are seriously in need of reconstitution. Because of the area's significance especially to the New Orleans' African-American community (*see above*), members of the Pontilly Neighborhood Improvement Association as well as architectural historians and landscape architects at Tulane are eager to see that attention is paid to the Park's rehabilitation.<sup>9</sup>

Gentilly Terrace School, within the historic district, is considered a landmark within Gentilly as a whole, with community interest in the building's preservation. There are signs that the school will be preserved and will be reopening.

### **Has new or proposed development been sympathetic to the characteristics of historic areas?**

Limited new development has occurred in these areas to date beyond renovation of existing structures. Conversations regarding new development in and around Gentilly Terrace have acknowledged the area's historic significance and have shown a desire to honor that significance while new development takes place.

## **Economic Development/Business Activity**

### **What was Katrina's impact upon major employers and commercial nodes within the District?**

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<sup>8</sup> Source: Patricia Gay, testimony submitted to the House Committee on Government Reform, Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census

<sup>9</sup> Source: Carol Reese, Tulane University; King Wells, President, Pontilly Neighborhood Improvement Association

Generally, the impact was severe on both major employers such as the local universities and on the major commercial strips.

Major commercial nodes within the District have limited or no businesses that are operational empty of activity.. These centers include commercial clusters at Gentilly Boulevard and Elysian Fields; Robert E. Lee and Franklin; Fillmore and Franklin; Gentilly Boulevard between Press and Louisa; and Mirabeau and Paris. The single exception is the Sav-A-Center shopping area, which has started to see a return of several of its pre-Katrina commercial establishments, such as the coffee shop.

As indicators of the impact of Katrina on the local universities, the number of students at the University of New Orleans went from 17,000 to 12,000 as of the beginning of 2006; Dillard University from 2,200 to 1,000; and Southern University from 4,000 to 1,500.<sup>10</sup>

**What is the present condition of major employers in the District? Key commercial nodes?**

The University of New Orleans is operating fully from its main campus; many of the buildings at Dillard University are under reconstruction, with classes being held in trailers. A limited number of businesses are open in commercial nodes.

**Are commercial services (drug stores, grocery stores, etc.) readily available?**

Commercial services are available within or adjacent to the district. But as a result of so many business closings, these services are located less conveniently and are not as readily, or conveniently, accessible to local residents.

Some commercial facilities, such as the Winn-Dixie supermarket on Chef Menteur Highway and the Walgreens on Elysian Fields Avenue, are operating fully. Services available in small neighborhood-focused shopping areas scattered throughout the District have been lost. (*See “Concluding Comments” below.*)

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<sup>10</sup> Source: *USA Today*, January 9, 2006

**Based on outreach, has business recovered for district retailers and restaurants?**

Based on outreach to date, the Team has been unable to reliably determine the level of business recovery for reopened businesses. The one food service place in seeming good shape is Zimmers take-out, which remains, after 27 years, a destination for residents and others from outside the District.

**Has there been major development activity or development interest in the District?**

Portions of the area are attracting development interest for commercial, residential and institutional use. Holy Cross school has announced that it will relocate to the District, spurring new interest in development of adjacent areas. Residents have reported that the shopping center at the intersection of Gentilly Boulevard and Elysian Fields Avenue has attracted the interest of national and local developers. As noted above, development of a 750-bed student apartment complex is currently underway on the campus of the University of New Orleans.

## Transportation/Transit Conditions

**To what extent has transit service been restored to the District? Is it widely utilized?:**

According to the Gentilly Civic Improvement Association's June 2006 *Infrastructure and Environmental Quality Report*, RTA ridership went from a pre-storm count of 124,000 daily passengers to 22,000, and from a pre-storm weekly count of 855,000 to 135,000 post-Katrina.

Five routes presently travel through or near the District: Nos. 52, 55, 57, 60, and 94. Nos. 55 and 57 are major north-south connectors through the center of the District; Nos. 60 and 94 are major east-west connectors that extend into East New Orleans. Transit service is currently limited with fairly low levels of utilization.

**What is the condition of major thoroughfares? To the extent that this information can be readily collected, what is the condition of minor arterials and local streets?**

The condition of streets within the district is frequently cited by residents as a very significant concern. Conditions appear to vary widely throughout the district and a more comprehensive survey would be needed to assess the level of damage.

A pre-Katrina survey undertaken by the Gentilly Civic Improvement Association showed that 22% of the District's roads were found to be in either "poor" or "failed" condition, versus a citywide total of 17%. The same survey showed that 60% of the District's road were in "excellent" or "good" condition, compared to a citywide total of 65%.

With Katrina, District streets bore water depths of more than 10 feet in some cases, for approximately 2.5 weeks. As noted in the GCIA report, "the strain on pavement and drainage infrastructure caused many pavement and pipe ruptures that can be readily observed."<sup>11</sup>

**What is the condition of ancillary transportation infrastructure such as street signs, traffic signals, etc.?**

Based on field observations, it appears that approximately 40% of street signs are missing. Whether as a result of the storm or not, there is insufficient signage off the major arterials. With signal upgrades planned for twenty-two intersections, signals have been replaced at thirteen of these sites, three have been repaired, and five are not yet done.<sup>12</sup>

**What is the current status of the pedestrian realm?**

Pedestrian walks in the sample areas were generally in need of repair.

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<sup>11</sup> Source: GCIA "Urban Planning/Infrastructure and Environmental Quality Report," p. 17. A recent conversation with a District 6 resident reinforced the conclusions of the GCIA report; the resident noted that streets such as St. Anthony appear to be sinking, and told of a series of recent water pipe breaks. She also noted brown-outs in the area between St. Anthony and Elysian Fields.

<sup>12</sup> Source: Op. cit., p. 18.

**Are alternate (non-automobile) forms of transportation readily available and accommodated?**

See above regarding the current status of bus routes.

**Have all essential city services (trash, water, sewer, power, etc.) been restored to the District? If not, what is the timetable for their return?**

Land line phone service is spotty at best. Regular trash-pick-up citywide is not scheduled to begin until January 2007.

**What is the quality of City services in the District, such as water pressure and frequency of brown outs?**

Water pressure, according to several individuals with whom the Team spoke, was satisfactory. However, conditions are varied and some residents have also reported major problems with water pressure. Residents have not specifically communicated issues with brown-outs.

**Is there still visible debris in the District? How effective and reliable is garbage pickup?**

Although trash collection is occurring, there was a scattered amount of debris due to ongoing gutting. No one street was noticeably filled with such debris. According to the Army Corps of Engineers, approximately 8-12,000 cubic yards of debris are being picked up daily by the Corps throughout New Orleans, or one-tenth of the amount picked up during the months immediately following Katrina. Two contracts for regular citywide trash pick-up have been let, with work due to begin January 2007.

## Flood Protection

**How much flooding did the District experience from Katrina? Which areas or Neighborhoods were particularly hard hit?**

Flooding within the District was generally very severe. The worst flooding occurred along a band whose northern boundary is Robert E. Lee Boulevard and whose southern band is Mirabeau Avenue, as well as virtually all of the area around Pontchartrain Park and immediately adjacent to the breach at the London Avenue Canal.

**Based on information in the Citywide Baseline Recovery Assessment, what is the status of pump facilities serving the District?**

Efforts are underway to improve pump facilities serving District 6. In the interim period, the limited capacity of pumps serving the district has the potential to result in flooding under certain storm conditions.

**What is the condition of storm drains? Are they in need of repairs?**

Residents have reported problems with storm drains. The Team observed large areas with flooding of up to 1ft in depth in severe rain storm conditions.

**Based on information in the Citywide Baseline Recovery Assessment, is the District at risk for flooding due to the construction of flood gates at the mouths of drainage canals?**

As the process moves forward to establish, permanent flood gates at the mouth's of the London Avenue Canal and flood gated at the Industrial Canal, the district has certain vulnerabilities to flooding that will be lessened after completion of these projects.

**Has the area experienced subsidence through the years?**

The planning team has not gathered any specific information regarding subsidence within District 6.

**How well suited is the architectural stock to withstand flooding (e.g. slab or pier construction, height of standard building elevation)?**

Substantial sections of the district were developed with slab-on-grade construction developed during the post-World War II period, as the City experienced heightened demand for new housing and as developers sought to answer those demands with slab-on-grade homes. These homes are more difficult to retrofit to address flooding concerns than more traditional building stock where the overall structure can more easily be raised to required levels.

**Did the District experience flooding prior to Katrina, such as during the May 8, 1995 flood?**

Parts of the District have experienced modest to significant flooding in prior storm events.

## Public Safety

**Have key public safety facilities, such as police stations and fire stations been restored to the area? If not, what is the timetable for their return?**

There are two operating fire stations within the district: 5600 Franklin Avenue and 3940 Paris Avenue.

**Was the District plagued by crime before Katrina? Has crime—and violent crime in particular—returned since Katrina?**

Residents report that the most significant instances of crime pre-Katrina were associated with the St. Bernard housing facility and adjacent areas. More recently, some residents have expressed concern that the pawn shop within the Gentilly Boulevard/Elysian Fields shopping center is a source of guns that is making the area unsafe.<sup>13</sup> Concerns about crime continue to be a concern for District residents.

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<sup>13</sup> Although a post-Katrina Planning District Data report indicates 990 calls in July 2006 to the Police Department for service (citywide, the total amounted to nearly 19,500), there is no further breakdown as to the reason for the calls.

## Education and Health Care Services

### **Have schools and health care facilities re-opened since Katrina?**

Of the 11 public schools in use pre-Katrina within the District, Capdeau Elementary School has reopened as a charter school. The University of New Orleans is overseeing this and two other charters within the District: Ben Franklin (located on UNO's campus) and Early College High School. ECHS is currently housed in UNO's business school; the University is looking at the shuttered Jean Gordon school site at Robert E. Lee and Paris Avenue as a permanent location for the school.<sup>14</sup>

The Milne Trust Fund is looking to establish a new charter school, grades 5-12, on the site of the Milne Boys School that would focus on the arts. The Gentilly Terrace School appears to be on the verge of reopening in Spring 2007

The relocation and construction of the Holy Cross school to the site of Cabrini/Redeemer Seton Schools in the Oak Park section is scheduled to be completed by September 2008. The decision to relocate to District 6, as opposed to Jefferson Parish, should be considered as a signal of confidence in the ability of the District to recover and rebuild. The relocated school will also provide impetus for nearby redevelopment of areas surrounding this new institutional anchor.

The Gentilly Civic Improvement Association has held conversations with Dillard University, the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Teach America, and Dartmouth College in connection with opening schools within the District.

### **Based on the Citywide Recovery Assessment, are any other educational or health facilities scheduled to be re-opened in the future?**

To team has not identified additional facilities that are scheduled to reopen.

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<sup>14</sup> According to information provided by Alvarez & Marsal, the Gordon School suffered about 5% damage. V3. October 31, 2006; minor revisions January 22, 2007

The Pontilly Neighborhood Improvement Association is proposing senior housing at the Cargill School and a state-of-the-art magnet school at the Park View School site.<sup>15</sup>

**What is the present condition of these facilities? What was their condition prior to Katrina?**

Many residents have expressed deep-seated concern regarding the state of the shuttered schools as health and social hazards. While recognizing the Stafford Bill's requirements for complete inventories of a building's contents before demolition, residents believe that more urgent and timely action is needed to advance the process of district recovery .

**Are educational and health facilities conveniently located for those without access to an automobile?**

No. Given the currently paucity of neighborhood schools, it is clear that students are having to travel, by school bus or public transit, across districts to reach their schools.

## Other Community Facilities

**Have other community facilities, such as libraries and community centers, been re-opened since Katrina?**

The Norman Mayer Library is widely considered as one of the District's keystone institutions, and has not reopened. Estimates for a total renovation would require \$1.3 million; the Central Library has offered \$90,000 for renewal.<sup>16</sup> As a temporary alternative, a proposal has been outlined for a 27'-x-36' trailer, with ten parking spaces; the Gates Foundation has been approached to provide \$100,000 per year for three staffers and \$900 per month for rent and other operating costs.

It's important to note the Library's location in immediate proximity to the shopping center at Gentilly Boulevard and Elysian Fields Avenue, and the degree to which redevelopment of that site should include the Library as a combined community/information center and library.

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<sup>15</sup> Source: Meeting with the Pontilly Neighborhood Improvement Association

<sup>16</sup> Source: Marty Rowland, Gentilly Civic Improvement Association

**What is the status of the District’s “green infrastructure” such as park maintenance, street tree canopy?**

The street tree canopy along Gentilly Boulevard, is in reasonably good condition. Other major roadways (e.g., St. Anthony, Mirabeau, Filmore, Elysian Fields, etc.) experienced more severe damage. Parks throughout the district are in generally very poor condition.

**Were parks and community facilities conveniently located and relatively abundant prior to Katrina? What was their pre-Katrina condition?**

Pontchartrain Park was a major District-wide amenity, as was nearby City Park at the western edge. Smaller scale parks served individual neighborhoods.

**Based on information in the Citywide Baseline Recovery Assessment, what is the timetable for additional community facilities to be restored?**

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Data will be filled in pending availability of the Citywide Baseline Recovery Assessment.

### **c. Overall Conclusions Regarding Pacing of Recovery and Identification of Potential Needs**

The pace of recovery is uneven but generally slow, particularly in the most severely flooded areas. Many residents or former residents appear not to have made final decisions about returning or remaining within the District. People are following a “wait and see” approach, seeking to gain a sense of the likely pace of recovery before committing themselves to a particular course of action. Perceptions of the pace of recovery are shaping the pace of recovery itself.

Some key needs that have been identified include the following:

- Residents require further clarification and understanding of the progress being made on levee and pump repair and stormwater issues.

- One of the most important needs is clarification from the RSD regarding the final disposition of the school buildings located within the District: not only a schedule for reopening, but a clearly defined strategy and schedule for demolition of those buildings that will not be reused, either as schools or as other community-related facilities. There is huge concern regarding the physical and social health hazards posed by these buildings. Residents feel that a clearer understanding of the process, as well as visible action regarding demolition, would give impetus to residents now living outside the district to return.
- For the same reason, demolition is also a concern in connection with abandoned or otherwise unrecoverable housing and commercial properties. Here again, the need is for a clear-cut policy, and accompanying action, regarding such demolition.
- The return of easily accessible, neighborhood-focused shopping also remains a major objective. Without exception, every resident spoken to referred to a pre-Katrina situation in which he or she was able to walk to stores to take care of their everyday needs.

### III. Gaps Analysis

#### a. Detailed Assessment of Individual Planning Efforts

- Lambert Plan

Lead Planner: Hewitt-Washington Associates

Planning Period: 2006; released September 19, 2006

Planning Study Area Boundaries: Lake Ponchartrain to the north; Peoples Avenue/Simon Drive to the east; I-10, Florida Avenue, and I-610 to the south; City Park to the west

##### Overview

As of October 27, 2006, the plan's narrative has not been made available. There are, instead, a series of maps enumerating various development recommendations regarding parks and open space; schools and community facilities; pedestrian and bicycle projects; neutral grounds projects; and transit service projects. In addition, the maps indicate potential sites for in-depth

follow-on planning, such as the need for sub-area master plans focused on a number of potential revitalized shopping areas: Elysian Fields/Gentilly Boulevard, Mirabeau/Paris Avenue, Paris Avenue/Leon C.Simon; Leon C. Simon/Franklin Avenue.

While each of the maps focuses on one of the seven major sub-areas within District Six, certain common themes emerge from each of the areas. Beyond the Shopping Center site, residents asked for:

- restoration of the Neutral Grounds and a Neutral Grounds landscape master plan;
- improved wayfinding and sub-area “branding” via banners and signs;
- restoration of transit service and amenities;
- funding to support an EIS process in connection with streetcar/light rail service along Elysian Fields Avenue;
- implementation of an urban design overlay ordinance on Elysian Fields Avenue and Gentilly Boulevard.

In addition to these common themes, the text accompanying the maps presents a set of more specific neighborhood-focused initiatives including specific reuse proposals for school sites not reopening and recommendations for enhancements to neighborhood parks and open spaces. The available documents do not focus directly on housing conditions or on issues of historic preservation, public safety, or flood protection. At the same time, neither the maps themselves, nor the accompanying legend, indicate priorities. We expect that the narrative, when available, will provide additional insights and answers to these questions. [IMPORTANT NOTE 1/07: The Lambert Plans were published following the development of this document. They include a wide array of informative information, analyses, and specific project recommendations that have been incorporated in the District 6 Recovery Plan.]

- **Community Planning Charrette for District Six: Framework for Neighborhood Recovery Plan**

Lead Planner: Duany Plater-Zyberk/Congress for the New Urbanism

Coordinator: Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell and the Gentilly Civic Improvement Association

Planning Period: April 18 to April 26, 2006

Planning Study Area Boundaries: Primarily District 6 , with the exception of Pontilly (Lake Ponchartrain to the north; Peoples Avenue/Simon Drive to the east; I-10, Florida Avenue, and I-610 to the south; City Park to the west)

### Overview

The plan provides a detailed, comprehensive overview of the key issues affecting District 6's recovery, and provide a solid framework for more a more detailed analysis and the establishment of effective implementation strategies.

### Housing conditions

- Focuses on the need for temporary and low-cost housing, as well as affordable replacement housing and “starter” housing for returning families
- Recognizes need to identify rebuilding options and deal with structures that may not be re-occupied
- Outlined issues surrounding building repair, including review of FEMA regulations
- Outlines funding strategies
- Sets the stage for determining where within the District such strategies would best be deployed

### Historic Preservation Issues

- Acknowledges particular character of District, as reflected in its housing stock and in its strong urban structure
- Acknowledges Gentilly Terrace's historic 19<sup>th</sup> century homes
- Urges that, wherever possible, historic buildings and other structures should be preserved
- Sensitivity to these issues provides the platform for deeper consideration of residential area surrounding historic Pontchartrain Park, located in Pontilly sub-area

### Economic Development Business Activity

- Emphasizes importance of neighborhood mixed-use centers, all within five-minute walk for most residents, or located on local bus lines
- Urges implementation of Town Center concept, particularly on site of most underutilized Gentilly/Elysian Fields shopping center
- Will lead to economic/market analysis of proposed program for Town Center

#### Transportation/Transit Conditions

- Careful review of existing bus system, as well as potential for expansion of streetcar and regional light rail system, and relationship to overall pedestrian catchments area
- Reviewed opportunities for traffic-calming along major boulevards/roadways
- Need to analyze feasibility/desirability of streetcar extension along Elysian Fields, and implications for neighborhood

#### Infrastructure/Public Works and Debris Removal Conditions

- Sees need for street repairs as opening opportunities for increased walkability within a strongly pedestrian-focused series of residential and commercial areas
- According to the Corps of Engineers, currently 5,000-to-10,000 cubic tons of debris are being removed daily, or approximately one-tenth of what had been removed on a daily basis during the months immediately following Katrina
- Specific redevelopment scenarios will include recommendations for street and roadway improvement, including coordination between such improvement and continuing debris removal as more homes are reconstructed, demolished, or gutted.

#### Status of Flood Protection

- The plan incorporated a report on the FEMA floodplain requirements, while establishing, at its first priority, the need to ensure a safe levee system, a functional infrastructure, and a workable disaster preparedness plan.
- Current and planned conversations with the Army Corps of Engineers are providing more up-to-date information on what is and will be in place regarding flood protection.

#### Public Safety

- The plan's focus on livable, walkable, activated neighborhoods is a key contributor to peoples' sense of overall public safety.
- More detailed planning will reinforce that with such concepts as "eyes on the park," enhanced streetscapes and lightings, etc.

#### Education and Health Care Facilities

- Plan pays particular attention to the re-development and neighborhood-building opportunities afforded by Dillard University and the University of New Orleans.
- There is opportunity to include Southern University and the Baptist Seminary in on-going planning, particularly given the Seminary's interest in acquiring property across from its main campus along Gentilly Boulevard in the Indian Village sub-area.
- Need to understand RSD's strategy for K-12 school re-openings and opportunities for supportable adaptive re-use of those facilities that will not re-open as schools.

#### Other Community Services

- Plan recognizes and strongly supports need for Neighborhood Planning Center
  - Need continues to be underscored by District residents
  - Pursue possibility of implementing model developed by Liberty Bank
- **Gentilly Civic Improvement Association Urban Planning/Infrastructure and Environmental Quality Report (July 2006); Land Use and Zoning Committee Final Report (October 2006)**

Lead Authors: Karen Parsons, Martin Rowland, Laura Joh Rowland, Jennifer Ruley, and GCIA Land Use and Zoning Committee

Study Period: Late June 2006 to mid-July 2006

Planning Study Area Boundaries: Lake Ponchartrain to the north; Peoples Avenue/Simon Drive to the east; I-10, Florida Avenue, and I-610 to the south; City Park to the west

#### Overview

These detailed reports contain a set of carefully thought-through concerns and recommendations that reflect the work of the April 2006 Community Planning Charrette. Developed by residents representing many of the sub-areas within the District, they represent a depth of local knowledge that is essential to the successful implementation of any change management plan for the District. The reports' recommendations are both site-specific and philosophical regarding the overall nature of a revitalized District.

### Housing Conditions

- Distinguishes between totaled homes and blighted homes, creating a strategic framework for relocating residents within the District and repopulating where it makes the most sense.
- Asks for the creation of an easy-to-understand home revitalization “decision tree” to provide people with information and proposals to decide among options for their houses.
- Proposes senior-focused facilities in each sub-area, including assisted living facilities as apartment buildings, with possible retail at ground level.
- Higher density multifamily housing should be configured to fit into existing communities.
- Need expressed for temporary and low-cost housing
- There is a need, as the report indicates, for a District-wide inventory of areas that will lend themselves to the kind of relocation strategies proposed.

### Historic Preservation Issues

- Noted the desire by residents to maintain a sense of place and the desirable architectural features of their neighborhoods, while permitting some flexibility in design to allow for individual taste and diversity.
- These overarching principles will figure into the design guidelines for new development.

### Transportation/Transit Issues

- Calls for a streetcar line along Elysian Fields Avenue
- Proposes extended light rail system, with a station at the Indian Village/Baptist Seminary site.
- Looks at bike and pedestrian systems throughout the District
- Asks that roadways be placed on a “road diet” with reduced lane widths, wider sidewalks, activities on Neutral Grounds, and roundabouts
- Particularly need to undertake EIS of potential streetcar line, as well as overall neighborhood impact.

### Infrastructure/Public Works and Debris Removal Conditions

- Need to remediate contaminated soils
- Suggests identifying those avenues/streets that are most heavily used and/or critical as focal points for renewal by FEMA

- Study of latter, in conjunction with parallel studies in other districts, could shape one of the initial citywide initiatives

#### Status of Flood Protection

- Identifies site-specific short- and long-term recommendations for increase protection against storm surges
- Includes need for increased public awareness as part of successful implementation of new flood protection initiatives
- Especially because flood protection and related issues are at the heart of any District (or Citywide) revitalization effort, these recommendations need to be vetted objectively and integrated with other such recommendations emerging from other District studies.

#### Public Safety

- The study's focus on livability, environmental efficiency, and sense of place, along with the rebuilding or restoration of schools, speaks to a resulting increase in public safety.
- There is otherwise no specific reference to issues of crime and public safety

#### Education and Health Care Facilities

- Study reviews a number of the endemic issues surrounding public education, including slow reopening of schools, shortage of qualified teachers, status of badly damaged (and still shuttered) building, and, ultimately, problems with the school system that date back to pre-Katrina.
- There remains the need for a transparent exchange among neighborhood stakeholders (a fair representation of all groups) and the RSD to ensure that there is understanding of how decisions are made, and the ingredients that need to go into those decisions.

#### Other Community Services

- Calls for Neighborhood Information Center
- Need to identify opportunities for implementation as one of the first programmatic elements in a revitalization scenario

## **b. Sustainability/Risk Assessment Gap Analysis**

Recognition of relationship among physical settlement patterns, land development practices, infrastructure, building practices, and hazard mitigation.

- The plan frames its recommendations within an overall system incorporating these elements, and includes a green building and conservation strategy.
- More recent information regarding the state of flood protection will strengthen the final plan emerging from the UNOP process.

Recognition of unique geographical setting of New Orleans, and nuances within the District

- Plan paid particular attention to the specifics of each of the 20 separate residential and mixed-use areas; 15 pairs of designers analyzed these individual sub-areas.
- In broad terms, plan acknowledged New Orleans' unique physical characteristics.
- While honoring the individuality of each sub-area, for purposes of the overall plan these sub-areas will – at key levels – be integrated in order to increase capacity and take district-wide advantage of all assets.

Recognition of timetable for implementation of additional hurricane protection

- Plan includes report on FEMA Floodplain Requirements

Recognition of New Orleans' geomorphological changes and possibility of more frequent hurricanes

- Again, the plan includes the FEMA Floodplain report.
- Additional information to come from Corps of Engineers on overall status of proposed flood protection.

## **c. Community Participation Gap Analysis**

Sign-in sheets provided at charrette sessions

- 400 to 500 people attended each of seven formal meetings, each three hours long, that constituted the charrette

Methods of public notification and involvement by neighborhood organizations

- All local aspects of the charrette were organized and coordinated by the Gentilly Civic Improvement Association
- Attendance at meetings have ranged from 25 to 40 to 100. The diversity of the District requires specific outreach to ensure that all sub-areas are represented at meetings.
- Team is engaging in smaller meetings with separate neighborhood associations as well as in District-wide meetings, and is continuing its “tours” of the various sub-areas with local residents. Objective is to ensure that all (or as many as possible) voices are heard and to ensure familiarity with the specific, highly localized characteristics, issues, and concerns of each sub-area..
- Team is also using newsletter(s) to get the word out regarding outcomes, forthcoming meetings, etc.
- Clearly, outreach is as necessary as it is complex in this District