

CHAPTER 5

Scenarios

Citywide scenario summary

In advance of the second district meeting in November 2006, district and citywide planners convened to discuss potential recovery scenarios as New Orleans rebuilds. Scenario planning is distinct from community visioning exercises in that scenarios are grounded in the real constraints that communities face. Whereas visioning typically produces an idealized “wish list” of projects and programs, scenarios balance community desires with physical, economic, and environmental constraints.

Post-Katrina New Orleans faces many real constraints. Its infrastructure needs are overwhelming; its population has been cut in half; its economy is in a state of flux; and the precariousness of its physical setting has been reinforced by Katrina’s flood waters. The UNOP planning team reviewed these issues in the context of rebuilding strategies and incorporated them into a number of scenarios based on the circumstances the team felt would be likeliest to prevail in the five- to ten-year timeframe of this recovery plan:

- A *population* that has reached 60–65% of pre-Katrina levels by 2009 and that in 10 years has reached 75% to 90% of the pre-Katrina population.
- The Army Corps of Engineers’ long-term *hurricane protection* plan has not been implemented yet. The best-case scenario is that more ambitious hurricane protection plans have been approved with some work underway.
- Additional *federal funding* has been made available but is not limitless.

Based on these circumstances, the planning team outlined three scenarios:

- **REbuild**— This scenario assumes a status-quo resettlement pattern (that is, scattered and haphazard) as a result of individual rebuilding and settlement choices independent of coordinated planning.
- **REvision**—This scenario reduces the risk from Katrina-like events to a minimal level. It envisions an ambitious public funding and implementation strategy that renders New Orleans largely immune to even the most devastating effects of future hurricanes. This scenario would require basing key decisions about where, when, and how to rebuild primarily on public-safety considerations with limits on the ability of individuals to make these decisions independently.
- **REhabilitate**—This scenario represents a compromise between the REbuild and REvision scenarios

in which New Orleans does more than rely on external flood protection methods to reduce its risk, but more individual decision making would be preserved than in the REvision scenario.

In devising these scenarios and in introducing them to district residents, UNOP planners intended to engage the public in a realistic, meaningful dialogue about the pros and cons of the various approaches to reducing flood risk and about the interrelationship among population, flood risk, economic development, and quality of life. District planners sought the community's acceptance of and desire for each of the three conceptual rebuilding scenarios in their districts.

District 6 discussion of scenarios

The district planning team discussed the scenarios at the second district meeting. In broad terms, residents were most supportive of a REhabilitate scenario that combined improvements in external flood protection and efforts within the district to mitigate the impact of future flooding by raising homes or allocating some parcels of land in low-lying areas for open space. Residents strongly supported the right of individuals to make their own independent decisions on whether to rebuild their properties based on the best available information. Many residents generally supported the idea of clustering future development within the district, provided appropriate voluntary mechanisms could be established that would advance such a goal. But these views were largely seen as part

of an overall phasing strategy for rebuilding with the ultimate goals of restoring the entire district to approximately its pre-Katrina population.



Discussion at the second district meeting concentrated on robust recovery scenarios.