

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.

This planning is led by one Citywide Planning Team, four District Planning Teams and several Neighborhood Planning Teams across New Orleans's thirteen 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.

CHAPTER 2

The UNOP planning process



Two of the districtwide meetings took place at Desire Street Ministries.

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 district wide 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 districtwide 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 sub-district sounding board met every two to three weeks.

For District 7, the consultant team established sounding boards for each of the three subdistricts, a reflection of the very significant distinctions among different parts of the district, the limited time available for community members to participate, and a strong desire expressed by community members to spend their time working with the consultant team in ways that would be most productive.

Participants at the November 10 sounding board meeting used colored dots to indicate their project priorities.



The Bywater-Marigny sounding board meetings each drew a diverse mix of between 15 and 30 participants, including both home and business owners and renters. The group met on November 10, November 30, December 15, and January 5. The December 15 meeting was a four-hour workshop to explore issues in a more detailed, individualized way. It was structured as an “open house,”

Sounding board meetings offered Marigny and Bywater residents opportunities to explore local issues—and potential solutions—in greater depth.

NOVEMBER 10: PRIORITIZING NEEDS & PROJECTS

Participants reviewed the list of proposed projects and identified priorities. Top priorities were:

- Develop St. Claude Avenue as a community retail corridor.
- Establish the St. Claude streetcar—named Desire.
- Establish a residential overlay district in Bywater.
- Redevelop the St. Roch Market.
- Develop a Press Street linear park.
- Strengthen historic preservation—height limits and character guidelines.
- Eliminate/manage the Norfolk Southern barrier—health and safety issue.
- Preserve housing diversity—rental, owner-occupied, mixed-income.
- Preserve riverfront access.
- Participants also made recommendations about zoning, economic development, historic preservation, and other issues of community concern:
 - > Limit high-rise development along the river.
 - > Create an “RDO” (residential district overlay) to allow local/neighborhood service stores.
 - > Limit the scale of development/presence of “big box” retail on Elysian Fields through square-footage restrictions.
 - > Preserve the area between Chartres and the flood-wall from Louisa Street to the Industrial Canal as 100% green space.
 - > Retain current wharves as part of parks system.

- > Promote cultural tourism, discourage novelty tourism.
- > Use blighted houses (many owned by NORA) for a housing program for teachers and first responders.
- > Promote “a mixture of rental and individual owned housing;” describe housing goals as establishing “mixed-income” rather than “affordable” housing.
- > Expand existing historic district to include the area between St. Claude and Claiborne; encourage galleries, a building-arts centers, and architectural history museums in the area.
- > Improve management of combustible materials.
- Cruise ship terminal access should be located off of Florida Ave. along the Industrial Canal.
- Reevaluate/rework Chartres; establish traffic-calming measures.
- Consider using a barge to provide delivery and service to the cruise ships.
- Restore the Douglass School and its theater.
- Share facilities where possible (e.g., schools used for technical training programs, school playgrounds used for community open space).
- Establish a technical school for training in the skilled trades.
- Establish a unified network of museums and community heritage centers highlighting the culture of the area.
- Encourage “green building.”
- Widen the servitude at the river wall.
- Promote the city’s “business development zone” and “Go Zone” for small businesses.

NOVEMBER 30: REVIEW OF DRAFT PLAN

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

- Possible business improvement district (BID) on St. Claude Avenue to help support neighborhood-serving businesses.
- Focusing on the arts and culture of the neighborhoods—St. Claude is the patron saint of sculptors.
- Developing an identity along both sides St. Claude Avenue to reinforce this corridor as a unifying element within District 7; encourage furniture shops, design/

restoration shops, and the arts. Participants also discussed strategies for preserving neighborhood character, culture, and community diversity, including:

- Expanding housing options to ensure a mix of incomes.
- Collaborating with NORA to promote an infill program.
- Supporting planning measures, business development, and housing initiatives that promote community diversity in terms of race, class and income.

Strategies for building neighborhood implementation capacity (e.g., a CDC) were also discussed.

DECEMBER 15: IMPLEMENTATION/DRAFT PLAN FEEDBACK WORKSHOP

- Participants reviewed draft maps and provided comments.
- Todd Poole, Director of Economic Planning with EDAP, offered advice on community-capacity building,
- Potential implementation strategies were discussed, including:
 - > Working with the St. Claude Avenue Main Streets Program.
 - > Establishing a community development corporation (CDC).>Establishing business alliances.

JANUARY 5: REVIEW OF DRAFT REPORTS

Residents reviewed the list of projects and made several additions and changes. Major project additions included:

- A technical assistance program and educational resources for individuals restoring historic properties.
- A truck route/weight limit within the neighborhood to address heavy truck traffic and their impact on structures as a result of vibration.
- A riverfront project liaison to serve as communication link to the community on related riverfront issues and proposals.
- Additional street trees in the neighborhood.
- A community policing effort—immediate action required by the citizens to address the increased crime in the neighborhood.

The December 15 sounding board workshop sparked active discussion about how to move neighborhood plans forward.



welcoming people to talk one-on-one with their neighbors and with planners. Key outcomes of all meetings appear in the boxes at left.

DISTRICT MEETINGS

As benchmarks in the UNOP process, District 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.

Like sounding board meetings, District Meetings were attended by a mix of Bywater-Marigny residents and activists, including both homeowners and renters along with residents from the other neighborhoods within the district.

District Meetings were held on October 28, November 11, December 16, and January 5. Feed-



Demolition debris in Bywater.



Neighborhood retail in Marigny.

back from these meetings appears in the blue boxes on the next page.

MEETING NOTIFICATION

Residents were notified of meetings through fliers, emails, and the use of phone banks. Two rounds of emails were issued for every meeting, and all prior participants were called twice.

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 establishing top priorities for rebuilding the neighborhoods:
 - 1) Establish a streetcar line on St. Claude Avenue—provides transportation and economic benefit.
 - 2) Identify abandoned properties and develop a program to rehabilitate.
 - 3) LRT on Press St. connecting to Slidell and Baton Rouge (however, Slidell does not want LRT).
 - 4) Control crime.
 - 5) Establish stronger zoning/historic preservation regulations.
 - 6) Establish Douglass High School as a center to promote Creole culture.
 - 7) Create more green space.
 - 8) Enhance access to the riverfront.

DISTRICT MEETING #2, NOVEMBER 11

- Presentation focused on draft scenarios for the future of the district’s neighborhoods.
- Discussion in breakout groups focused on review of draft scenario elements, prioritizing needs and projects, and potential implementation strategies.
- Participants largely affirmed the November 10 sounding board priorities, but added use of public schools (e.g., Douglass High School and Colton Elementary) as shared facilities, activity centers, and cultural nodes
- Participants agreed that the major themes of the plan should include:
 - > Incorporation of mass transit—including the streetcar.
 - > Emphasis on historic preservation.
 - > Supportive zoning for mixed-uses.
 - > The complete neighborhood concept—live, shop, play and work.

A survey was conducted to determine the best locations for flier distribution and students were located at key retail outlets to distribute them. In advance of District Meetings, news alerts were sent to print and broadcast media, and spokes-

DISTRICT MEETING #3, DECEMBER 16

- Presentation focused on implementation of proposed plans and projects.
- Breakout group discussion focused on identifying implementation strategies, including:
 - > Community development corporations with capacity to advance the following goals:
 - Maintain community diversity through mixed-income residential.
 - To address blighted and vacant properties.
 - To support neighborhood-serving retail.
 - > Partnering with the existing Main Street Program.
 - > Building on the informal planning infrastructure created through the UNOP process by:
 - Recognizing the new culture of planning in the neighborhood and continue to meet.
 - Investigating other neighborhood councils.
 - Maintaining neighborhood and district-level planning.
 - Working with the Main Street Program to seek funding support from Baton Rouge and other sources.

DISTRICT MEETING #4, JANUARY 5

All six district neighborhoods convened at the Holy Angels Convent for the final districtwide meeting. City council members and their representatives, including Councilmembers Hedge-Morrell and 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.

persons were scheduled on talk shows. Newsletters reporting the results of meetings were distributed at several points during the process.

Additional community input was provided through a survey of neighborhood 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 Bywater-Marigny. A summary of the key ideas that emerged from neighborhood feedback follows.

Housing

- Leverage vacant/blighted properties as opportunities to preserve Bywater-Marigny’s diverse, mixed-income character.
- Preserve housing diversity—rental, owner-occupied, mixed-income.

Historic Preservation

- Strengthen historic preservation protections/enforcement, including height limits and character guidelines.

Economic Development and Business Activity

- Create a residential district overlay (RDO) to allow local/neighborhood-serving stores.



Many businesses in Bywater and Marigny have reopened, but further revitalization is essential.



Preserving the historic character of Marigny and Bywater is important to residents.

- Support the redevelopment of St. Claude Avenue as a vibrant commercial and cultural corridor.
- Promote economic development that supports neighborhood character.

Transportation

- Provide streetcar service along St. Claude Avenue.
- Address traffic issues related to the cruise ship terminal.

Infrastructure and public works

- Address drainage issues.
- Eliminate/manage the barrier posed by the railroad tracks.

Flood protection

- Repair levees and floodwalls.



Newsletters communicated meeting results.

Public safety

- Improve public safety.

Education and health services

- Rehabilitate schools; use as community/cultural centers as well as for K–12.
- Establish a skilled crafts training center.

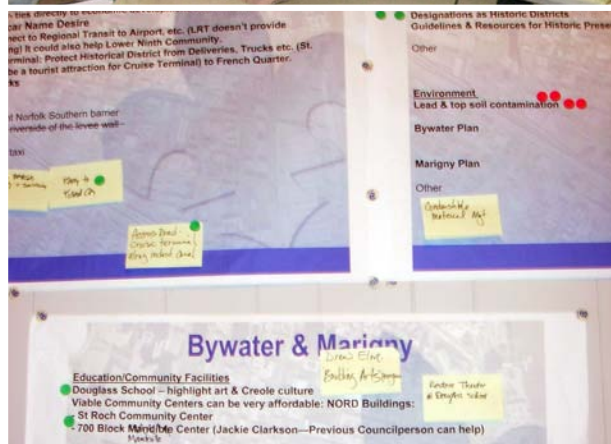
Community/cultural facilities and parks

- Expand, enhance and preserve open spaces, including linear parks.
- Enhance access to the riverfront.
- Develop facilities that celebrate local culture and heritage.
- Use community facilities for multiple purposes.



Residents would like to see certain schools double as activity and cultural centers.

“...for St. Claude Avenue, we need to see available funding used to aggressively return property to commerce and put aside matching funds for streetcar and other improvements. Revitalizing St. Claude brings four neighborhoods back at once...”



“...let’s see city property that is not being kept up...such as old fire stations, the St. Roch market...sold to those who will restore, use and preserve their structures...”

“...river access and views must be preserved for residents. Charming, quality river-front development is welcome...”

“...we need better zoning protection and enforcement of violations. This is a historic district-do not allow development to destroy it...”