

Rebuilding Plan Implementation in New Orleans, LA: A Case Study of Freret Street Commercial  
Corridor and Bayou Road Cultural Corridor

by

Oreoluwa Alao

B.S., Economics  
Duke University  
Durham, North Carolina (2003)

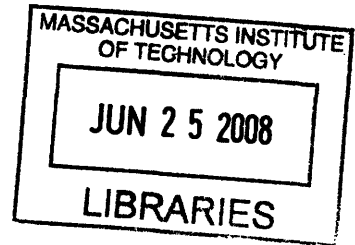
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Author \_\_\_\_\_  
Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
(May 21, 2008)

Certified by \_\_\_\_\_  
Professor Karl Seidman  
Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by \_\_\_\_\_  
Professor Langley Keyes  
Ford Professor of City and Regional Planning  
Chair, MCP Committee



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## **ABSTRACT**

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Three major rebuilding plans emerged from the planning process that followed the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Outlining the visions and goals of individual communities across New Orleans, the intent of these plans was to guide the city's long-term rebuilding process. The purpose of this thesis is to: 1) document how two communities endeavored to implement projects detailed in those plans in this initial phase of plan implementation, 2) identify the various challenges they faced in the process, and 3) provide practical strategies for ensuring implementation success into the future. This assessment of rebuilding plan implementation in New Orleans is particularly relevant, as it aims to capture the degree of progress that has occurred since the city formally announced its rebuilding plan strategy one year ago. My findings are based upon stakeholder interviews, media coverage and insightful analyses of plan implementation literature and disaster recovery planning.

I first briefly assess the political environment of the city at the time the storm hit, and explore the rationale for major events that unfolded in the aftermath of the storm. I then examine New Orleans' post-Katrina planning process, pinpointing key aspects of each plan that was developed. The nature of the planning process and provisions made in the plans were the context for my analysis of the two communities that serve as case studies in this research: The Freret Street Commercial Corridor and The Bayou Road Cultural Corridor. I document the experience of both communities, from initial recovery efforts, to work undertaken to restore and rebuild, and identify three major challenges encountered throughout the process – issues of communication, accessing resources, and building capacity. Faulty communication characterized this early phase of implementation from the onset, while community stakeholders faced the constant dilemma of trying to implement projects with limited access to needed resources. The need to strengthen community capacity became critical for both communities as stakeholders sought to assess what resources existed within their respective communities and determine who (or what) would strengthen and develop capacities they needed to acquire.

I conclude by first presenting three broad recommendations to address the cross-cutting issues that emerged from the challenges identified, recommending that city governments and rebuilding communities: 1) establish internal organization to allow for an adequate assessment of needs and timely delivery of resources; and, 2) build partnerships and networks across sectors to bolster implementation efforts at the neighborhood as well as the city government level. The third recommendation, specific to governments, is to develop mechanisms that allow for coordination across agencies. I then recommend a set of strategies that rebuilding communities and their local governments should prioritize to target issues specific to combating communication barriers, facilitating access to resources, and strengthening community capacity.

Thesis Advisor: Karl Seidman, Senior Lecturer in Economic Development

Thesis Reader: Xavier de Souza Briggs, Associate Professor of Sociology and Urban Planning

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- 1. INTRODUCTION..... 6**
  - Conceptualizing Implementation ..... 6
  - Research Questions ..... 7
  - Methodology ..... 7
  - Preview of Findings, Recommendations and Following Chapters ..... 9
- 2. RESEARCH CONTEXT ..... 11**
  - Introduction ..... 11
  - Concepts and Context ..... 11
  - The New Orleans Planning Process ..... 19
  - The Implementation Process and Designation of Target Areas..... 23
  - The Target Areas..... 28
  - Conclusion ..... 31
- 3. CASE STUDY: FRERET STREET (SEPTEMBER 2005 – JANUARY 2008) ..... 32**
- 4. CASE STUDY: BAYOU ROAD (SEPTEMBER 2005 – JANUARY 2008) ..... 43**
- 5. UN-PACKAGING CHALLENGES: OBSTACLES TO IMPLEMENTATION ..... 54**
  - Introduction..... 54
  - Communicating Expectations and the Roles of Government and Target Areas ..... 55
  - The Arduous Road/Path to Accessing Funding and Adequate Resources ..... 58
  - Seeking to Build Capacity, Collaborate and Rethink Neighborhood Competition ..... 62
  - Conclusion ..... 66
- 6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION ..... 67**
  - Introduction..... 67
  - Summary of Challenges Encountered and Lessons Learned..... 67
  - Recommendations ..... 69
    - Addressing Cross-Cutting Issues ..... 69
    - Combating Communication Barriers ..... 72
    - Facilitating Access to Resources ..... 74
    - Strengthening Community Capacity ..... 75
  - Concluding Remarks..... 78
- REFERENCES..... 80**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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In the over two and a half years since Hurricane Katrina made landfall in New Orleans on August 29, 2005, the city has progressed through a series of challenging phases. The first six months following the storm were defined by scenes of utter devastation throughout the city and marked by disaster recovery efforts that lasted well into July 2006. More than a year after the storm, by October 2006, the city's population had not quite reached half of its pre-hurricane level, and efforts to develop a comprehensive rebuilding plan were underway, but faltering. Four plans characterized the city's recovery planning process, two of which were largely ignored and rejected, and the other two also largely criticized but more readily adopted as the definitive components of what the city would eventually draft as its recovery plan. Today, despite continued criticisms, a citywide rebuilding plan exists, in addition to a plan for every neighborhood and district across New Orleans. As the planning process has concluded and is being evaluated, the question of how implementation of the plans is unfolding and will continue to progress, is very important, and thus the next order of business. The experiences of stakeholders in the Freret Street Commercial Corridor and Bayou Road Cultural Corridor target areas are the focus of my assessment.

### *Conceptualizing Implementation*

History has shown, as researchers and policy makers have repeatedly found in practice, that implementation processes are rife with challenges. Thus to try and achieve implementation success, what is warranted are those with the ability to approach the process with a keen understanding of what challenges are likely to arise and the necessary tools and knowledge to navigate and ultimately eliminate them. Implementation is often viewed as the process following policy or project design, but as highlighted following their case study of the challenges faced by the U.S. federal government program to establish Oakland's Economic Development Administration (EDA) in the late 1960s, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) underscored the need to conceptualize implementation as an integral part of policy design. "Implementation may be viewed as a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieving them"; thus the authors argue, implementation should not be divorced from policy. The real task policy makers face is thinking through the difficulties of implementation during the initial formulation of policy. "Implementation must not be conceived as a process that takes place after, and independent of, the design of policy." In formulating policy and visualizing its outcomes, they assert, "means and ends can be brought into somewhat closer correspondence only by making each partially dependent on the other." It is therefore imperative that policy makers aim to close the gap between design and implementation by gearing programs more directly to the demands of executing them by first acknowledging the length and unpredictability of necessary decision sequences in implementation and paying as much attention to the creation of organizational machinery for executing a program as for launching one. Thus, when projects require approval from multiple, independent organizations and city agencies, for example, it is unlikely such projects would move along as quickly as their advocates would deem ideal. Furthermore, designing an organization to manage, fund and negotiate the process is only one

aspect of adequate preparation for implementation. Ensuring that the organization can in fact carry out the initial commitment is as important. (qtd on p. 143)

Beyond anticipating implementation in policy design, the scope and scale of rebuilding in the aftermath of a disaster mandates a broader conception of implementation that integrates key components that can lead to success. Exploring urban governance theory, Burns and Thomas (2006) assert that given the limited resources governments have at their disposal, there is a need for governments to have established strategic partnerships across sectors. Such partnerships, especially with the business community, both help governments amass the resources needed to dedicate to rebuilding and strengthen their capacity to act decisively. In addition, Ferguson and Stoutland (1999) highlight the benefits of building multi-sector and multi-level networks that facilitate the exchange of resources between local community service providers, governments and private resource providers. Meanwhile, Rohe and Gates (1985) identify successful strategies for local governments to employ when developing and structuring neighborhood planning initiatives. Mattessich and Monsey (1997) emphasize the significance of community building, while Chaskin et al. (2001), underscore the importance of building neighborhood scale capacity in ensuring implementation success. The intersection of these concepts, further detailed in Chapter 2, provide a more comprehensive framework for assessing plan implementation.

### ***Research Questions***

The primary purpose of this research is to evaluate the implementation process of New Orleans target area projects in the one-year period immediately following the city's recovery planning process. The questions that are the focus of my research are:

- (1) What progress has occurred in implementing recovery plans?
- (2) What factors have (negatively or positively) most impacted implementation progress (for example funding, leadership, or capacity), and
- (3) What can be done to improve the conditions for successful implementation?

### ***Methodology***

My evaluation of the implementation process was through the lens of case studies of two target areas (designated by the City of New Orleans Office of Recovery Management) that are currently engaged in rebuilding their neighborhoods and thus, engaged in the implementation process. The period of evaluation covers September 2006 through January 2008 (which would mark about a year of active efforts at plan implementation once the planning process concluded and the New Orleans City Council approved the citywide recovery and rebuilding plans).

Beyond my primary research questions, the secondary objective of this research is to gain an understanding of the planning process that preceded implementation efforts, and to assess how it impacted the nature of the implementation process. An understanding of the planning process is crucial for evaluating the ongoing implementation process. The planning processes were each well documented and continue to be evaluated today. Critical questions that directed this second area of research are:

- What planning, if any, was done in the target areas prior to the formal planning processes?
- Who initiated and led these processes?

- Who was invited to participate and who was involved in the process?
- What neighborhoods were associated with the planning?
- Which plans are characterizing the current implementation process?

There are advantages and limitations of using case studies for this research, and perhaps even the two target areas that I selected. The fact that both areas had begun moving forward with implementation was an advantage. The primary disadvantage stemmed from the fact that since these two areas were moving forward and other areas were not experiencing the same level of progress, their ability to inform other processes across the city may be limited. My analysis of the implementation process thus sought to highlight the applicability of these two cases.

My research primarily consisted of interviews that were reinforced with relevant literature. Before conducting interviews to assess the implementation process to date, I sought to become knowledgeable of the planning efforts that took place in the city that produced the four formal plans and multiple neighborhood plans. I conducted this research by not only reading the plans themselves, but also articles in the local papers describing the process. The types of literature I reviewed were:

- Articles on planning and implementation during and after disaster recovery,
- All recovery and rebuilding plans related to my two target areas,
- Newspaper articles analyzing and critiquing the plans and planning process, and
- Literature on plan implementation and challenges to implementation.

My goal in reviewing literature on planning in the aftermath of a disaster was to develop a sense of what indicators tend to predict success in implementing plans, what were important factors impacting the ability to implement a plan, and what were lessons learned regarding what is important to focus on and challenges often encountered. I extensively reviewed literature on the tsunami that struck communities along the Indian Ocean in 2004, to develop a clear picture of implementation challenges they encountered and subsequent strategies developed for movement forward.

The purpose of my review of all related recovery and rebuilding plans was then to identify what elements of the plan actually aligned with those elements that were outlined in the literature on disaster recovery planning. The focus of this review was to determine what provisions were there, what was missing, and what would inform my analysis of the implementation process. I read news articles to also frame the response of the planning process and thoughts on the way forward regarding implementation. In addition, I also briefly explored various debates about both the planning and implementation process highlighted in the literature regarding disaster recovery and planning more broadly, and then used them as the framework for discussing what is essential to ensure long term implementation efforts are successful.

The balance of my research was conducted between January and April 2008 when I interviewed target area residents, business owners, neighborhood associations, and other organizations within the neighborhoods to get a full picture of the process from their perspectives. Through my interviews, I was able to gain an in depth understanding of my two target areas, and was able to over time assess their similarities and differences, and determine why the New Orleans Office of Recovery Management (ORM) designated both as renew target areas. In addition, I sought to gain an understanding of what plan or plan priorities were guiding the implementation process

and the different implementation efforts to date taking place in the target areas. For each of the target areas, I reviewed neighborhood scale plans and local news articles to capture the concerns of the community about the ongoing process.

I also conducted a series of interviews with local stakeholders to assess their contributions to the process and current outcomes. Among this categories of stakeholders were major institutional players that were not insiders to the target areas, but, nevertheless, had a role in the ongoing work being done in the communities. Among these were city officials (primarily the ORM) and non-profit organizations providing funding for various projects. I also read documents produced by state organizations, foundations and others who were involved in recovery and rebuilding efforts.

The findings from my research are used in my analysis of the implementation process to address challenges the two target areas encountered, their applicability to other communities across the city, specifically, and more general cases. It is important to note that I acquired some knowledge of the areas while working in New Orleans between January and May, 2007 on Bayou Road and between July and August, 2007 in Freret. I had one-on-one interactions with individuals in both target areas and was involved in project work that led me to initially consider pursuing this research.

### ***Preview of Findings, Recommendations and Following Chapters***

I found that effective communication must be the foundation of all successful implementation endeavors in both target areas. As it became clear what the vision for each respective area was, and subsequently how to effectively engage with city government officials managing the macro process, these communities were better able to work through implementation. Accessing resources proved to be an extremely challenging barrier to overcome, as stakeholders had to learn to navigate the confusing and often frustrating process of figuring out how they would effectively get things accomplished with seemingly limited resources. Freret Street initially focused on garnering public resources, but is shifting more to seek out private resources, while Bayou Road has generally had more private funding flowing to the area, but has not always proactively advocated for them as they are currently. Lastly, building the capacity to organize internally, manage projects and priorities and ultimately ensure that progress is on track is a challenge both areas are seeking to master. They each have been acutely aware of this need throughout this initial phase of implementation and are strategically developing ways to tackle this issue into the future.

My recommendations for future implementation, thus build upon the strategies these target areas have already envisioned as they look towards long-term future implementation. My purpose in this approach is to focus on fully extracting lessons learned while offering useful and practical methodologies to employ to ensure successful implementation of rebuilding plans. As this is only the start of what will be an ongoing process across New Orleans, incorporating lessons from these early stages of implementation will serve to propel and strengthen future efforts. Since it is generally the case that neighborhoods will not possess all the resources needed to implement projects in their communities completely independent of city government supports and oversight, I incorporate strategies for city governments that enable officials to better serve the communities.

I present three broad recommendations that address the cross-cutting issues that arise from the challenges that emerged, and recommend that city governments and communities: establish

internal organization to allow for an adequate assessment of needs and timely delivery of resources; and, build partnerships and networks across sectors to bolster implementation efforts at the neighborhood as well as the city government level. Specific to governments is the recommendation to develop mechanisms that allow for coordination across agencies. In addition, I recommend that rebuilding communities prioritize: articulating a clear vision, establishing systems for building consensus and engaging in proactive advocacy to combat communication barriers; identifying needs and projects that require resources to facilitate access to resources; and, adopting strategic community building initiatives, ongoing community engagement, establishing and developing community organizations and pursuing smaller-scale projects to build momentum to strengthen community capacity. In addition, I recommend that city governments prioritize: establishing clear lines of communication, communicating clear goals and procedures of their programs, and developing systems of accountability to combat communication barriers; exploring and exhausting all possible sources of funding and other resources, and developing mechanisms that ensure effective and timely delivery of resources to facilitate access to resources; and, actively supporting neighborhood scale capacity building initiatives to strengthen community capacity.

In Chapter 2, I present the context for events that occurred in the aftermath of the storms, and background for this research, detailing the planning processes that occurred across New Orleans; I also present a snapshot of the outcomes of Sri Lanka's planning process and the country's approach to tackling challenges in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami; I then identify key challenges I assumed would impact the case study target area communities in the early stages of implementation. In Chapters 3 and 4, I present the case studies of the Freret Street Commercial Corridor and the Bayou Road Cultural Corridor, respectively, giving a brief description of their organizing histories, then detailing their experiences immediately following the storm, engaging in the planning process, and ultimately stakeholders' efforts to move forward and successfully implement projects and priorities they had for their communities. In Chapter 5, I identify and analyze the primary challenges both target areas encountered during the initial phase of implementation. Finally, in Chapter 6, I first present recommendations that largely build on the target area communities' agendas moving forward, and then offer my concluding remarks.

## 2. RESEARCH CONTEXT

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### *Introduction*

In this chapter, I provide the background and context of the ensuing findings. I first briefly discuss the dynamics of city government in New Orleans, and then explore the concept of neighborhood planning processes and the community rationale for engaging in efforts to build community, strengthen community capacity, and establish community organizations. I then detail the planning processes that occurred across New Orleans in the immediate aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and present a snapshot of the outcomes of Sri Lanka's planning process and the country's approach to tackling challenges in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, to draw attention to potential issues that my case study communities would face. I identify the key challenges I envisioned would present major obstacles to implementation, given the history of planning and the political environment of the city, and finally present a brief history of the Freret Street and Bayou Road target areas and the impact the storms had on each.

### *Concepts and Context*

The series of events that occurred following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have laid a foundation for how implementation is unfolding across the city of New Orleans. The impact of these events is better understood by exploring their purpose and context. A brief analysis of the city's political landscape provides relevant context. Certain dynamics at play prior to the storm dictated why various events occurred in the manner they did in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. The planning process in New Orleans began two months after the storms hit, while disaster relief efforts were still underway. As one means of giving communities a voice in what occurs in their neighborhoods, it is important to explore how traditional neighborhood planning has evolved to more adequately address the needs raised during a planning process. Even with the most elaborate planning processes, however, there are common challenges that governments encounter managing implementation; research provides key lessons learned for more effectively transitioning from planning to action and implementation. Recognizing the challenges governments face, communities also have an important role in spurring implementation. The establishment and development of neighborhood organizations, a commitment to community building and strengthening community capacity are often heralded as components for ensuring implementation success. As neighborhoods seek mechanisms for successfully navigating the implementation process, these are important concepts and practices to highlight.

*New Orleans City Government: A Political Structure Struggling to Establish Firm Footing*  
Coordinating rebuilding efforts remains a particularly daunting task for city government officials in New Orleans almost three years after the storm. According to Burns and Thomas (2006), the lack of a governmental regime explains the many failures that characterize the city's governmental reaction to the disaster. Drawing on urban governance theory, the authors stress the reality that due to the scarcity of resources in American cities, public officials, namely mayors, cannot make and execute decisions on their own. (Elkin 1987; Mossberger and Stoker 2001; Stone 1989, 1993, 2005 in Burns and Thomas, 2006) Faced with this dilemma, public sector and private resource providers, usually the business community, create governance

arrangements that are mutually beneficial (Stone and Sanders 1987, in Burns and Thomas, 2006). Such long standing patterns of communication would allow members of this type of governing coalition to understand each other, calculate the resources each commands, and learn from experience how their partners will react to policy problems. The glaring absence of established structures of this nature in New Orleans is what Burns and Thomas (2006) argue marred the response needed in the face of the disaster that hit the city. They point out that New Orleans diverges from regime cities in three major ways:

- Critical actors in the city lack agreement on a common, community agenda to direct action
- Issue-based coalitions, not a governing coalition address policy problems
- The lack of consensus on an agenda and the absence of cooperation among critical actors limit capacity to appropriately target resources.

Consequently, Burns and Thomas (2006) note, the lack of regime arrangements hinders governmental capacity to carry out plans effectively. Hurricanes and other crises produce problems that would challenge any government's capability, but regime arrangements possess more governing capacity than non-regime constellations. "The absence of stable and long-lasting partnerships prevented the development of rapid collaboration." (Burns and Thomas, 2006)

Temporary governing arrangements had emerged in the city in the past, however, because they were not long-term, they failed to provide the adequate coordination needed among federal, state, and local actors; without a regime, chaos marked the government's initial response to the hurricane. The city government could not provide mechanisms to effectively evacuate residents, for example, and attempted multiple uncoordinated planning efforts in the immediate aftermath of the storm. Because of the time needed to establish a functional regime, issues of the regime-less structure still plague New Orleans, most notably as the city seeks to coordinate agencies, secure funds for rebuilding, and communicate with residents in the city.

Even as the relevant actors seek to develop a regime that can effectively manage rebuilding moving forward, the current lack of a regime is evident in the assessment of communities' experiences detailed in the chapters that follow. The next section describes the concept of neighborhood planning and why it became important to engage communities in the recovery effort as the process transpired.

*The Neighborhood Planning Process: A means for identifying objectives and goals*

The planning process in New Orleans spanned well over a year. Viewed in context, the practice of neighborhood planning emerged from what is known as the traditional, comprehensive approach to planning, which is often critiqued for ignoring or misrepresenting the needs of local neighborhoods. As described by Rohe and Gates (1985), traditional planning is characterized by the exclusion of citizens from meaningful participation, and thus tends to overemphasize physical development at the expense of service delivery and social and political development, and furthermore, rarely achieves tangible results. Rohe and Gates (1985) further assert that neighborhood planning, viewed as a more decentralized, participatory, action-oriented planning process, has been presented as an alternative means of addressing the limitations of comprehensive planning. Despite its limitations, what critics of traditional comprehensive



planning advocate is not replacing the approach, but rather incorporating neighborhood planning to bolster benefits and outcomes of the process. The first two planning processes that occurred in New Orleans were primarily rooted in the traditional comprehensive approach to planning. Mounting criticism regarding the lack of community involvement, and backlash against recommended actions of these earlier planning processes eventually led neighborhood planning, both unofficially (self-initiated neighborhood plans, for example) and officially sanctioned (government initiated), to become important in later planning processes; in particular, neighborhood planning was prominent in the final citywide plan.

Rohe and Gates (1985) note that municipally sponsored neighborhood planning programs seek to involve neighborhood groups throughout the city in activities that either 1) involve reviewing plans or proposals developed by municipal agencies which may have an influence on neighborhood life, 2) give neighborhood organizations the responsibility for producing their own plans for the development of their neighborhoods, or 3) encourage neighborhood groups to become involved in self-help activities. Neighborhood planning programs thus purport to be more responsive to local problems, increase citizen participation, improve local physical conditions and public services, increase local interaction and sense of community, foster social integration, increase trust in local government, and bring about a more equitable distribution of public goods. (Rohe and Gates, 1985)

Rohe and Gates (1985) identified a series of characteristics that are associated with the effectiveness of neighborhood planning programs and the ability to carry out projects. Among them are financial support of neighborhood organizations, government provision of information and the adoption of an early-notification system to inform neighborhood groups of proposals that affected their areas, the structure of the administering agency, citizen group involvement in the development and review of plans, inter-organizational relations (coordination across city agencies), and neighborhood group involvement in comprehensive planning. The range of problems associated with planning programs is vast, with inadequate implementation, low rates of participation, lack of citizen competence, lack of support for programs, insufficient staffing, inadequate representation, poor communication and unclear goals and responsibilities, and inter-neighborhood conflict often cited as presenting huge obstacles to realizing program successes. Of these, Rohe and Gates (1985) identified lack of funding for operation and lack of participation as two of the most pressing problems generally encountered by neighborhood planning programs.

The chapters that follow illustrate how these theories and findings were a reality in the case study target areas. The chapters detailing the community experience depict how the planning process allowed communities to have a voice and determine priorities for their neighborhoods. The chapters also draw attention to some problems associated with planning programs, thus while neighborhood planning programs have great potential, it is important to acknowledge that they can fall short; adopting mechanisms that have proven successful to address those gaps would sustain long-term implementation efforts and will be explored in the concluding chapter.

The next three sections discuss three key parallel efforts necessary for communities to engage in fruitful plan implementation: community building, strengthening capacity and establishing community organizations and networks.

*Community Building: A Pre-Requisite for Long-term Implementation Success*

Findings detailed in the following chapters indicate that community-building efforts have been on the rise in neighborhoods across New Orleans since the storm. In their manual *Community Building: What Makes It Work*, Mattessich and Monsey (1997) state, “the outcomes of community building efforts are an improved capacity to accomplish tasks and goals and a heightened sense of community – a strengthening of social and psychological ties to the place and to other residents, not to the actual accomplishments of goals.” The authors go on to write that, “community social capacity constitutes one of a variety of resources that offer communities the potential to get things accomplished. Defining community building as “any identifiable set of activities pursued by a community in order to increase social capacity,” Mattessich and Monsey provide the rationale for why communities are actively engaging in community building activities. Though viewed only as a precondition for ensuring successful outcomes of projects, community building is a foundation upon which communities can more effectively cultivate their community development efforts. Emphasizing the link between community building, social capital and community development, The Committee for Economic Development (in Mattessich and Monsey) wrote in 1995:

Social capital is the attitudinal, behavioral, and communal glue that holds society together through relationships among individuals, families, and organizations. Without social capital...efforts to address specific problems of individuals, families, and neighborhoods will make little progress. (qtd on p. 9)

Mattessich and Monsey note that much of the work done under the rubric of “community development” involves projects intended to improve community well-being through some tangible accomplishment (for example, building a dam to improve the energy supply or enhance land use; developing improved street lighting to improve safety). The authors assert that the more often projects include a community building component, the greater the likelihood of success with an overall community building initiative. Kincaid and Knop (in Mattessich and Monsey, 1997) exhort those interested in community building to understand this as a “basic, practical lesson”:

In addition to tangible project goals and citizen learning experiences, general project goals should include attention to building a sense of community, opening up local participation, and encouraging a realistically optimistic view of the community’s future among a broad range of citizens. (qtd on p. 10)

Briggs (2007) in “Networks, Power, and a Dual Agenda: New Lessons and Strategies for Old Community Building Dilemmas” meanwhile, draws attention to what has emerged as the dual agenda of community building. The first part of the agenda emphasizes building influence or power to move plans forward and win resources, and it typically includes a blend of cooperation and conflict strategies. Thus as is the emphasis of traditional community building (as described in Mattessich and Monsey, 1997), groups focus on developing a coherent agenda among diverse neighborhood interests and advocating and negotiating outside the neighborhood, too. But the second part of the dual agenda looks for workable action plans to get better tangible outcomes through collective action, close to “the ground.” This second component often demands the clout

to win outside resources and get outside institutions to be responsive partners. Briggs explains, “it is much more than an influence game—a question of who has the power or who’s in control. Some of the most savvy and innovative efforts to change tangible social and economic outcomes engage those who would merely be clients, in a service delivery approach, as agents or co-producers of change.” Given that the roles, rhetoric, and forms of accountability are somewhat different for these two agendas, a failure to recognize and address these differences can lead to unproductive conflict and disappointing results: Nuts-and-bolts implementation problems get distorted and misinterpreted as power-and-control issues, or conversely, a failure to appropriately empower others in the decision making process is dismissed as merely a problem of mismanagement or missing “capacity.” (Briggs, 2007)

Further driving home the need to build community in order to realize success in community development or for the purposes of this thesis, implementation, Mattessich and Monsey (1997) write that successful efforts (at community building) tend to occur in situations where specific projects to improve the community also include activities to accomplish community building. The leaders continue over time to devote attention to community organizing, bringing new residents into the process, and training residents to organize the community. Thus striking a balance between achieving ultimate goals and paying attention to the process is a critical skill and capacity for ensuring implementation success in communities.

Acknowledging that there are the challenges imbedded in building community, Briggs (2007) asserts that it is a very elastic idea, invariably complicating efforts to mobilize support and foster durable cooperation, largely because it can be difficult to arrive at shared priorities and then stick with them. Furthermore, Briggs (2007) found that political competition, scarce resources, residential turnover, cultural diversity, and other factors often act as serious challenges at the neighborhood level and beyond. Given these complexities, Briggs argues that locally-based institutions and their partners face a real challenge in determining what specific community building aims to pursue, which strategies to apply in their local context, how to track progress, and how to guard against the pitfalls. (Briggs, 2007)

*Community Capacity: The measure of a community’s ability to coordinate and get things done*  
Community capacity at the neighborhood level is crucial for ensuring implementation success. In *Building Community Capacity* Chaskin et. al (2001) define community capacity as:

the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of that community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized efforts by individuals, organizations and social networks that exist among them and between them and the large systems of which the community is a part. (qtd p. 7)

This very comprehensive definition of capacity provides for a degree of flexibility in conceptualizing what capacity means and how it is manifest. Documenting their findings from the practice of community capacity building over a decade, (from 1990 to 2000), Chaskin et al. (2001) describe the differences in approach, process, and strategies for effectively building community capacity. They assert that, “community capacity is what makes communities work,”

noting that overall capacity at the community level will be a function of the following characteristics: 1) a sense of community; 2) commitment to the community among its members; 3) the ability to solve problems; and 4) access to resources. These components are broadly intertwined, and according to Chaskin et al. (2001), a community does not need to possess a certain threshold of every characteristic to be considered as having capacity. What is important is maintaining and expanding capacity over time.

The above characteristics of community capacity provide some insight into why strengthening capacity is critical and relevant to the implementation process. In a neighborhood, a sense of community reflects a degree of connectedness among members and recognition of mutuality of circumstance, including a threshold level of collectively held values, norms, and vision (McMillan and Chavis, 1986 in Chaskin et al, 2001). Commitment describes the responsibility that particular individuals, groups, or organizations take for what happens in the community. Commitment is evident either when community members identify themselves as stakeholders in the collective well-being of the neighborhood, or show a willingness to participate actively as stakeholders. Often those who define their commitment by actively participating in neighborhood efforts are generally a minority of residents, and tend to have somewhat higher socioeconomic status than most people in the neighborhood. They also are more likely to have more active connections with local organizations and are frequently responding to some immediate issue, conflict or crisis. (Berry, Portney, and Thompson, 1993; Crenson, 1983 in Chaskin et al 2001) Chaskin et al. (2001) found that the ability to solve problems, translating commitment into action, is an important component of virtually all definitions of community capacity; furthermore, they note that, what is most important is not “the particular locus of a problem-solving mechanism”, but rather that there are “enough such mechanisms that function relative to the demand for them.” Problem solving mechanisms “must be able to endure or adapt over time, responding to or compensating for the impact of community change.” Access to resources, (whether economic, human, physical, or political) within and beyond the neighborhood, represents the ability to make instrumental links with systems in the large context, (the city and region) and to access and leverage various types of resources both inside and outside the neighborhood.

Chaskin et al. (2001) propose that successfully building community capacity within a neighborhood can increase that neighborhood’s ability to produce certain public goods locally, connect residents and organizations to opportunity and resources, and enhance the influence of community actors on public policy, service delivery, and development activities driven by exogenous actors. While it is not a panacea, the authors suggest it can help communities provide what can be provided locally, by crafting mechanisms for responding to local problems and opportunities; it can also help consolidate locally based constituencies to influence policy and practice at higher levels of action.

The experience of the target area communities documented in the next two chapters is imbedded in the presence and absence of certain capacities in these communities, and stakeholders’ assessments of their existing capacities. One key aspect of community capacity is the presence and function of community organizations in a neighborhood. Their potential to strengthen community capacity and spur community development is discussed in the next section.

*Community Organizations and Networks: Strengthening Capacity and Driving Implementation*

Often serving as vehicles for resident mobilization, community organizations— from neighborhood associations, to local service agencies, to CDCs- organize resources for the local production of public goods and services and link residents with the broader systems of decision-making, production and provision. (Chaskin et al, 2001) To achieve sustainable momentum toward the ideals of community development, the field needs alliances of many types, including many that span several levels and sectors and some to do political battle against opposing interest (Ferguson et al. 1999) Ferguson and Stoutland in *Reconceiving the Community Development Field* (1999) provide a framework for distinguishing between these levels and sectors, categorizing the types of organizations that exist within and outside of a community, and how they can relate to achieve the maximum benefits for a community. Ferguson and Stoutland (1999) argue that every organization belongs to an institutional sector, whether it is the standard for-profit, nonprofit or government entity. Meanwhile, the authors contend, levels capture the dimension of position; organizations can be positioned in one of four, level zero, one, two or three. The distinction between levels of organizations is telling of their capacity to identify with a community and provide the needed resources for ongoing development:

- Level-zero organizations are grassroots and often comprise residents as individuals and households, operating often in housing developments and neighborhoods, employment settings, clubs, churches and schools. Voluntary community groups are included in this category of organizations.
- Level-one organizations comprise frontline institutions -those directly involved in providing goods and services to residents. They are namely nonprofit, for-profit and public sector that use paid staff, and like level-zero organizations, function to serve or represent residents. Their reliance on paid staff is the major difference between this level of organizations and those that are level-zero. There is often overlap between the two levels but most community-based organizations that are large enough to be diversified and to reach any significant economies of scale are categorized as level-one.
- Level-two organizations comprise local policymakers, funders, and providers of technical assistance, often authorizing and supporting the efforts of level-one organizations.
- Level-three organizations are the state, regional and national counterpart to level two and function to support level two and one organizations. Neither level two or three organizations directly represent residents, but both are crucial to community development because they make laws and regulations within which the system operates and they assemble and control resources that fund projects and pay salaries.

Level-zero and one organizations exist in both communities studied in this thesis; their attempts to connect with level-two and three organizations are detailed in the following chapters. Because relationships across sectors and levels are needed to channel resources, including information, technical assistance and funding, members from all levels and sectors of the community development system must network to devise strategies, make policies, fight political battles, run programs and mount projects. Ferguson and Stoutland (1999) suggest that trust is integral to the proper functioning of the community development system, thus strengthening the system will require helping more participants to appear increasingly trustworthy in the eyes of potential allies.

In *Networks, Trust and Values*, Wallis (1994) presents a framework for conceptualizing and analyzing the relationship of organizations providing human services to clients in the same community, that is the relationship of community organizations. The findings put forth are that:

- Attempts to improve coordination and collaboration among human service providers are frequently in the form of one of four models: partnerships, hierarchies, markets and networks.
- Networks are useful for analyzing both the formal and informal relations among human service providers
- Networks rely on shared norms and values to build bonds of trust and reciprocal obligations
- Attempts to improve network coordination and collaboration must address issues of value conflicts which undermine trust, and
- Human service networks are embedded in a local community. The civic and political culture of the local community significantly affects the structure and capacity of its service networks

Networks are the relationships most relevant to this thesis as they structure relationships between organizations as horizontal and relying on shared norms and values to build bonds of trust and reciprocal obligations; networks typically involve many public and nonprofit organizations. Though often, significant value differences exist between these sectors, the largely voluntary and reciprocal nature of networks, Wallis (1994) writes, can reinforce trust as the basis for substantive interaction. The presence of value differences does not mean that trust among member organizations will be difficult or impossible to establish. In fact, efforts at improving coordination and structuring collaboration often begin with an agreement to disagree, but then progress to finding ways to deal effectively with differences, thus acknowledging them, but striving to identify what common values or vision link the organizations. The challenge is often to address value differences in a manner that bolsters trust across organizations as the central purpose of networks existing in a community is to coordinate and collaborate in response to the local community's needs. Wallis (1994)

In theory, the strongest human services networks – that is, networks rich in organizational capacity, with high levels of coordination and collaboration—are most likely to occur in communities where there is a strong civic culture as well as a proactive political culture. Civic culture consists of the bonds of reciprocity—the willingness to assist one another—that tie members of a community together. Political culture reflects the capacity of a community to act collectively; it consists of action occurring in and through the use of public power. Wallis (1994) notes that at the local level political culture strongly aligns with civic culture because local elected officials tend to accurately represent the values of their communities, but as the scale of representation increases the correspondence of values and norms becomes less direct. Successful networks also tend to have leaders who are involved with people and activities in other communities. These leaders provide a communication and resource link to whatever else happens in a broader context. (Mattessich and Monsey p.35) Briggs (2007) further notes that there is increasingly more evidence that building inclusive institutions with clear benefits for those who engage—such that people will invest scarce time, energy, and confidence over time—rather than interpersonal relationship building in isolation from institutions, is also critical.

Community organizations have played a dynamic role in the planning and implementation processes that have occurred in neighborhoods across New Orleans since the storms. Their efforts to fine-tune their approach, build networks and expand their capacity are detailed in the following chapters.

The concepts and contexts detailed above provide a framework for both understanding the series of events that have transpired in New Orleans since the storm and the reasons they unfolded in the manner in which they did. The following sections detail those events, from the planning process, to the establishment of a city government office to manage implementation, to the designation of target areas and the processes target area communities have pursued in their efforts to carry out projects and priorities that were outlined in plans developed during the planning process.

### ***The New Orleans Planning Process***<sup>1</sup>

As earlier stated, four plans characterized the city's recovery planning process. One key objective of each of the planning processes was to develop a plan that complied with the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) regulations and would enable the organization to release funding for recovery and rebuilding. The LRA was established in the aftermath of the storm, by then Governor Kathleen Blanco and was tasked with guiding state government in the process of rebuilding. The LRA required a single city-wide recovery and rebuilding plan be created before releasing certain federal and state recovery funds that were available for residents and the city to rebuild. Ideally the plan would enable city and state officials to coordinate post-disaster recovery more efficiently and effectively and help New Orleans comply with necessary federal mandates. Furthermore, any such plan would ideally help identify critical needs of investment, so private and public entities would know how to best provide help in New Orleans. Initially, separate government bodies acted independently to create rebuilding plans for the city, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to the Mayor's Office, and the New Orleans City Council. FEMA's Emergency Support Function #14 (ESF-14) or Long-Term Community Recovery was the first formal planning process undertaken, soon after followed by Mayor Ray Nagin's Bring New Orleans Back (BNOB) plan, the City-Council-backed Lambert plan and eventually the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP). As the planning process evolved the need for these government bodies to collaborate became increasingly evident; it was the only way to ensure consensus from all interested stakeholders.

### **ESF-14/LTCR**

FEMA invoked ESF-14 shortly after Katrina in September 2005, and work on the plan continued through the end of April 2006. The final plan was released in mid-August 2006. This was an effort undertaken in all Louisiana parishes affected by the storm. FEMA's stated objective for

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<sup>1</sup> Brendan Nee and Jedidiah Horne, two graduate students from the University of California, Berkeley prepared a document, "An Overview of Post-Katrina Planning in New Orleans". The paper presents their preliminary research results based on a series of interviews and meetings held between late August and the end of September, 2006. Much of their descriptions of the plans has been detailed here, having been verified by other available documentation of the planning process in newspaper articles and on the respective plans' websites.

this intervention was to ‘assist state and local governments in defining and addressing their long-term community recovery needs and goals while maximizing the impact and cost-effectiveness of recovery efforts through coordination of federal, state, local, non-profit, academic and private sector resources.’ Leading the process were permanent FEMA staff, local experts and top consultants.

The process involved daily meetings with local government officials to offer technical assistance, help with joint problem solution and gather information that is used in plan production. There were also regular meetings with city and non-governmental leaders to discuss activities of common concern. The mission was to plan with local government officials, thus the focus was primarily on local officials and administrative agencies. Perhaps the greatest challenge to this effort then was the initiative failed to effectively and adequately involve community members and residents. Furthermore, other planning efforts, such as BNOB were soon underway. While the ESF-14 team made attempts to support these other efforts, they did not take a lead role, nor were they asked to do so.

The recovery vision, goals and recommendations presented by ESF-14 personnel were broad and attempted to incorporate many concerns, from environmental, housing, community and economic development issues, to public health, infrastructure and education challenges. In addition, of the projects proposed were those brought up, discussed and agreed upon for inclusion at BNOB meetings. To date, ESF-14 has not been incorporated into any other planning processes nor has it been discussed by the major participants in any of the other efforts in New Orleans. The process was considered more successful in other hurricane-damaged parishes of Louisiana. It is interesting to note that at the end of the process, there was acknowledgement that no specific individual or office had been identified as a principle point of contact for implementation. There was further acknowledgement that it was unlikely that any one person or agency would be identified due to the complexity of the disaster response in New Orleans.<sup>2</sup>

## **BNOB**

The second attempt at a planning process was announced by city Mayor Ray C. Nagin, one month after the storm, on September 30, 2005. He created the Bring New Orleans Back (BNOB) committee in October 2005 to oversee the development of a rebuilding plan for the city, with the timeline of a year to complete the plan. The committee took a series of missteps, two of which spelled ultimate failure for the effort.

Early on, the committee contracted with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to develop recommendations. ULI proposed shrinking the footprint of New Orleans by converting the lowest lying neighborhoods to green space, a proposal promptly and publicly denounced by Mayor Nagin.<sup>3</sup> The proposal was based on population projections that suggested the city could not hope to recover its pre-Katrina population for many years, and furthermore the expense of providing city services to all neighborhoods threatened to be extreme.

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<sup>2</sup> From ESF-14/LTCR Executive Summary.

<[http://www.louisianaspeakparishplans.org/IndParishHomepage\\_CommunityInvolvement.cfm?EntID=11](http://www.louisianaspeakparishplans.org/IndParishHomepage_CommunityInvolvement.cfm?EntID=11)>

<sup>3</sup> Presented at a public forum on November 18, 2006, this was an early pre-plan proposal that rebuilding should begin on higher ground in the less-damaged neighborhoods, and that the city’s footprint should shrink to adapt to the new environmental realities. The plan immediately ignited a furor, and BNOB committee members were shouted down as “land thieves” for proposing to eliminate neighborhoods in some of the city’s lowest-lying ground. Many residents in some of the areas responded with hostility to the suggestion that their neighborhoods—New Orleans East, the Lower Ninth Ward and Gentilly—would be abandoned for green space. To some, such proposals seemed to represent how some residents of the city had historically been exploited pre-Katrina, and were again being exploited. ([http://www.rockfound.org/library/no\\_better\\_future.pdf](http://www.rockfound.org/library/no_better_future.pdf))



The committee in later months made a second recommendation, proposing an immediate moratorium on building permits in the most heavily damaged neighborhoods as well as a three year window for returning residents to prove the ‘viability’ of their neighborhoods. Backlash from local residents (fearing they would be denied building permits as a result) pushed the Mayor to again oppose a proposal offered by the committee. When the committee presented its final report in March 2006, FEMA refused to fund the plan’s proposals. The public’s trust in the planning process began to falter as no real plan had yet emerged.

### **The Lambert Plan**

The Lambert Plan, or the New Orleans Neighborhoods Rebuilding Plan, was the third in the series of planning efforts undertaken in the city. The City Council hired a team led by Miami-based housing consultant Paul Lambert, and New Orleans-based Shelia Denzy in April 2006 to draw up plans for the 46 neighborhoods that were significantly flooded by Katrina. Each of the neighborhoods was assigned a team of architects and planners. The major criticisms of this process were that hiring decisions were made with little public input and the neighborhood boundaries used often did not line up with informal boundaries understood by active neighborhood associations. Furthermore, it was unclear if the process (which produced 46 separate plans) would satisfy the LRA requirements for an apolitical process and a plan for the entire city, not only hurricane-flooded neighborhoods.<sup>4</sup> The planners did manage to sidestep the political discussion of neighborhood ‘viability’ that doomed the BNOB process, and instead made the assumption that the basic form of the city was sound and should be left intact.

Teams of architects and planners were assigned to the 46 neighborhoods, along the same district boundaries used by BNOB. This assignment process was done in a manner to ensure neighborhoods within the same district generally had the same planning team. The result of the process were 46 individual plans, each produced with a funding matrix for various projects prioritized into short, near and long term categories. Each plan was meant to be a stand alone document, an idea many found perplexing, especially since projects that required city-wide infrastructure improvements would be almost impossible to coordinate at the neighborhood level. The unwillingness of the Lambert to knit the multiple plans into a single city-wide plan was one of the primary critiques of the effort.

### **Ongoing non-government Initiated Plans**

In addition to the formal process, several grass roots efforts occurred (without government initiation or sanction), that produced plans for specific neighborhoods within New Orleans. Most notable were efforts led by Mary Queen of Vietnam CDC in New Orleans East, the Broadmoor neighborhood, the Holy Cross neighborhood of the Upper Ninth Ward, and the plans developed in the Central City neighborhood in 2004, a year prior to the storm.

In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, MQVN CDC took the lead role in providing emergency relief assistance as well as organizing Vietnamese-American residents to play an active role in the rebuilding of the community surrounding New Orleans East area. From providing emergency relief assistance to over 2,000 Vietnamese-American residents, to shutting down the controversial Chef Menteur landfill, developing a trailer site that provided 199 trailer homes to hundreds of returnees, forming a business association to advocate for increased funding

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<sup>4</sup> Horne and Nee. “An Overview of Post-Katrina Planning in New Orleans.” 2006

support to revitalize neighborhood business districts, and engaging hundreds of community members in creating a vision for rebuilding a more just and equitable community, the efforts in the Vietnamese community of New Orleans are often praised.

Though few would deny that since Katrina, the Broadmoor Improvement Association (BIA) has been a “grassroots powerhouse”, prior to the storm, the BIA had also worked continuously to improve the neighborhood. Pre-storm efforts focused on maintaining a high quality of life for the community through crime reduction, the opening of the Rosa Keller Library, repairing homes for the area’s low-income elderly or handicapped residents and replanting the neighborhoods neutral grounds and the MLK park area. In the aftermath of storm, the BIA made great strides to unite residents to rebuild a stronger neighborhood, by developing and carrying out their own reconstruction plan.

These planning efforts and the many others initiated by neighborhood level groups were important in the process because they both sent the message that neighborhoods had specific ideas of how they wanted to see rebuilding unfold and were also building the capacity to actualize their vision. This would prove even more crucial in the implementation phase as the city and funders sought a strategy to move forward. Often, it was those neighborhoods that had a vision and plan ready that were quickly identified as targets for initial funding.

## **UNOP**

In spring 2006, the fourth and final planning process was attempted. This process was aimed at creating a final plan and process that the Mayor, City Council and Governor would accept. An added incentive was the generous funding provided from the Rockefeller Foundation in the amount of \$3.5 million.<sup>5</sup> The UNOP plan has three crucial elements that distinguish it from the three prior planning attempts. First, it was meant to unify plans for all of the city’s 79 neighborhoods in one final document (not just those neighborhoods that were significantly flooded). In addition, it built on the previous planning efforts that had already transpired, making an active effort to incorporate the BNOB and Lambert plans, and planning efforts by numerous neighborhood groups. The goal was to find a way for neighborhoods to decide how to incorporate earlier ideas into the final deliverable. Thirdly, it attempted to make the process apolitical by using by a non-governmental entity to oversee the process. After being endorsed by the City Planning Commission, the City Council, and the Mayor, the LRA passed a resolution to approve the plan in June 2007, thereby guaranteeing the release of funding for citywide and neighborhood recovery efforts.

The process undertaken in UNOP was also unique in that it began at the neighborhood level, expanded to the district level, then eventually to a citywide plan incorporating the two initial steps. The objective of this multi-level planning process was to integrate community input and professional planning expertise into a citywide recovery and rebuilding Plan and was facilitated by a Citywide Planning Team, four District Planning Teams and several Neighborhood Planning Teams across New Orleans’s 13 planning districts.

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<sup>5</sup> The LRA approached the Rockefeller Foundation in 2006 after the failed attempts of BNOB and Lambert plans to produce substantive rebuilding strategies for the city. The Bush-Clinton Foundation and the Greater New Orleans Fund also contributed \$1 million each to the effort.  
[http://www.rockfound.org/initiatives/new\\_orleans/0907chron\\_phil.pdf](http://www.rockfound.org/initiatives/new_orleans/0907chron_phil.pdf)

Public relations and outreach were the major challenges of this planning effort. Planning teams were again selected for various neighborhoods, but this time, residents were asked to express preferences through a survey conducted in person, through the mail and over the internet. Many neighborhoods expressed confusion about the process, and although all districts ultimately had a planning team assigned from their top two choices, the process moving forward was laden with criticism about public engagement.<sup>6</sup>

### ***The Implementation Process and Designation of Target Areas***

By January 2007, many plans in various forms existed on the neighborhood, district, and city-wide levels, yet there still was no clear path forward in terms of how to implement them. With the adoption of the UNOP plan, it was clear that the LRA would finally release the funding it had available to invest in recovery, but the age-old question of who would manage the process had not been sufficiently addressed. Were neighborhoods individually responsible? What role would the city and state government's play? Who would spearhead the process?

Mayor Nagin established the Office of Recovery Management (ORM) in January 2007, giving the office oversight of the financing and implementation of all public recovery initiatives in the city. The ORM was charged with identifying sources of public and private funds, finalizing repair and rebuilding estimates, setting rebuilding priorities and schedules and coordinating the numerous city agencies and quasi-governmental authorities engaged in repair and rebuilding. Tapped to head the ORM was Dr. Edward Blakely, a leading regional planner and disaster recovery expert. Dr. Blakely had helped coordinate recovery planning in California after two natural disasters and in New York City after Sept. 11; in this new capacity, he was expected to serve as coordinator of a rebuilding and recovery process that critics were complaining was too slow and had no strong direction.

The UNOP informed the ORM Target Area Development Plan and has been used as a tool in selecting the initial 17 geographic target areas in New Orleans as the focus priorities for rebuilding and city investments to support rebuilding. These initiatives include citywide and neighborhood projects as identified by the UNOP.

The idea of target area development was included in the UNOP, as "clustering." Because available resources were not sufficient to rebuild everything all at once, the city adopted a strategy where rebuilding would start by focusing on a few places, and grow from there. The initial Target Areas were intended to catalyze development in areas across the city. There were three categories of target areas to include, rebuild (2) redevelop (6) and renew (9).<sup>7</sup> The Target Areas were chosen with the following criteria in mind:

- Visibility
- On traditional transit corridors
- Sites of New Orleans' original markets and retail clusters
- Sufficient amount of land available

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<sup>6</sup> Home and Nee, 2006

<sup>7</sup> ReBuild Areas experienced severe destruction of physical structures and social networks and required major rebuilding and significant public and private investment. ReDevelop Areas were in need of redevelopment even before the storms and flooding and involved major redevelopment. ReNew areas required relatively modest public resources to complement the investments of the private and non-profit sectors that were already underway.

- City resources available nearby to anchor the development
- Agreement among the various New Orleans public planning processes about how to redevelop
- Location in a variety of settings to test the concept and to make it repeatable in all areas of the City

Furthermore, the ORM identified the following five principles for implementation:

- Continue the healing and the consultation
- Improve Safety and Security in all communities
- Develop a more diverse and robust economy
- Build Infrastructure for the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Centuries, and
- Establish sustainable settlement patterns

The purpose of these principles was to emphasize continued engagement with New Orleans residents and reiterate the role city government would contribute in the recovery process, that is, ensuring the city was more robust and would not remain at risk of another disaster. The magnitude and depth of the project tasks however, meant that challenges inevitably lay ahead for both the city and the target area communities.

### **Implementation Challenges**

To assess the implementation process, it is necessary to first acknowledge the specific challenges that New Orleans' neighborhoods in general and target areas specifically face in this rebuilding process. A case study of communities impacted by the tsunami that struck communities along the Indian Ocean on December 26, 2004 provides a useful context for identifying key challenges communities in New Orleans face today. The case of Sri Lanka is particularly insightful since the ultimate approach used for planning and rebuilding in New Orleans, closely resembles that taken in Sri Lanka. Although the scale of reconstruction is on the national level in Sri Lanka (because much of the country was decimated), as the following reveals, the nature of the challenges in New Orleans, are the same.

In Sri Lanka, the tsunami left in its wake extensive destruction; over 38,000 people were killed and close to 100,000 homes destroyed. Furthermore it damaged the natural ecosystems, and coastal infrastructure, ultimately creating immeasurable human devastation. Among the most vulnerable groups impacted by the tsunami were fishermen and the poorer societies, whose communities, characterized by simple houses and shelters, were close to the shore. More devastating, the tsunami also exacerbated existing social problems in Sri Lanka, namely over a decade of conflict that had come to a ceasefire only two years before the tsunami struck.<sup>8</sup>

The nation's President established The Taskforce for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN) mere days after the tsunami, on January 3, 2005. TAFREN was tasked with spearheading rebuilding operations focused on restoring infrastructure and livelihoods, trading, commerce and business and recreating normal life in the affected areas in a better and sustainable manner, as quickly as possible.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "Post-Tsunami Recovery and Reconstruction Strategy" Issued by the Government of Sri Lanka in May 2005

<sup>9</sup> Tittawella, Mano. "Tsunami Recovery Program - Needs Assessment And Reconstruction Phase"

Formally, TAFREN objectives were to:

- Coordinate, facilitate and assist the implementing organizations i.e. line Ministries, Departments, District and Divisional level Government Institutions.
- Coordinate donor assistance, fund raising activities and other financial avenues to enable implementing organizations to achieve rebuilding implementing organizations to actives rebuilding objectives.
- Facilitate expeditious procurement process to commence projects quickly, and
- Enable implementing organizations by capacity building.

National plans were developed for each affected District across Sri Lanka outlining objectives for the reconstruction effort, action plans tied to specific projects, financial arrangements, and an implementation strategy and process (the Target Area plans the ORM are reminiscent of this approach).<sup>10</sup>

Six months after the tsunami, Sri Lanka began a transition from the initial stages of post-tsunami recovery and was strategizing for long-term implementation.<sup>11</sup> Having identified critical lessons learned and acknowledging that the needs of the affected communities were changing, the Government made a commitment to incorporate a set of basic “Guiding Principles” into its Tsunami Reconstruction program. These were, in many ways, reflective of challenges faced during the first few months of recovery.

The (Condensed) Guiding Principles of Tsunami Reconstruction were to reflect<sup>12</sup>:

1. Equity/ Needs Assessment without Discrimination - The allocation of resources both domestic and international were to be strictly guided by the identified needs and local priorities, without discrimination on the basis of political, religious, ethnic or gender considerations. Reconstruction interventions were to be done in such a way as to build confidence between different stakeholders in the process.
2. Empowerment and Subsidiarity - Each reconstruction activity would ideally be designed and implemented at the lowest competent tier of government. While the Central Government was to continue in the lead role setting standards, policies and principles, the recovery plan which disaggregated to District level, would provide for capacity building and strengthening at various levels of governance, but especially District, as well as local civil society organizations;
3. Consultation and Communication – Closely tied to the preceding principle, the recovery strategy would strive to focus on the medium and long-term needs of the victims themselves. Therefore, enhanced and sustained consultation with local affected communities and stakeholders was essential, and local communities should be empowered to make their own decisions during recovery, and participate fully in reconstruction activities. In order to maximize the speed of recovery, local capacities would be harnessed as far as possible;

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<sup>10</sup> “Post-Tsunami Recovery and Reconstruction Strategy” Issued by the Government of Sri Lanka in May 2005

<sup>11</sup> Nine field teams, composed of multi-sector experts proposed by the Sri Lankan Government (Colombo and district based), civil society, and donor organizations, visited the tsunami affected districts of Sri Lanka during March-April 2005.

<sup>12</sup> “Post-Tsunami Recovery and Reconstruction Strategy” Issued by the Government of Sri Lanka in May 2005

4. Transparency and Zero tolerance of Corruption/Accountability and Good Governance – There was a critical identified need for better communication and transparency in decision-making and implementation. Mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure access to information regarding policies, entitlements, and implementation procedures, and to permit more regular feedback to implementing authorities, as well as grievance redress. Similarly, mechanisms to ensure transparency in resource use and comprehensive accounting need to be enhanced accompanied by more effective monitoring and evaluation systems;
5. Sensitivity to Disparities and future vulnerabilities - Reconstruction processes would reflect efforts to reduce future vulnerabilities to natural hazards, including floods, cyclones and landslides. A multi-hazard risk approach would ideally be used during the recovery phase to ensure that communities and assets were less vulnerable to impacts of future disasters, while balancing the social costs of excessive resettlement; and
6. Coordination and Efficiency - A coordinated approach is critical. Beyond coordination between Government and donors, all stakeholders - including civil society, the business community and international NGOs, who have resources that will not pass through Government – must be involved. Capacity would need to be created at the local level for such coordination.

The government’s implementation strategy was indicative of issues and challenges that arose in the aftermath of the tsunami, namely:

- Clarifying roles and responsibilities and clearly spelling out which activities agencies were responsible for, indicating when the activities were to be completed, and how the various parties should interact. In particular, the role and responsibility of governmental agencies and local authorities was not clear during the initial stages.
- Ensuring effective coordination mechanisms for implementation were in place, in particular, establishing procedures to bring together the relevant decision makers and stakeholders in the District, so that information was shared and problems were resolved quickly.
- Ensuring sufficient capacity and identifying gaps in capacity required to effectively implement. Also ensuring the corresponding needs (in the form of financial support, personnel, office equipment, and transportation) were communicated to the national government (including TAFREN). Added capacity should allow for establishing dedicated teams to the reconstruction effort in each District.
- Engaging beneficiaries and ensuring adequate mechanisms were in place for consultation and participation of beneficiaries and other local stakeholders, which incorporate existing good practices. Such processes should especially ensure that formal mechanisms are in both during the planning phase, and on an ongoing basis as implementation proceeds.
- Identifying and resolving implementation bottlenecks. Few effective mechanisms were in place, in the Districts, to identify constraints that were impeding progress.

There are clear distinctions between the process that occurred in Sri Lanka in the early phases of implementation and those occurring in New Orleans today, namely the speed with which various decisions and progress was made (assessments of early recovery and the transition to long-term implementation occurred less than a year after the tsunami) and the nature of the extent of international funding available to the country’s government at the time. Yet the example of Sri

Lanka does shed light on various unavoidable challenges communities rebuilding in the aftermath of disaster would encounter. The degree to which I envisioned such challenges impacting plan implementation in New Orleans is based on my understanding of the experience of communities in the city in the immediate aftermath of the storm. Given the political and social landscape of New Orleans, a series of the above challenges emerge as being quite pertinent. Among these challenges were the neighborhoods' ability (or inability) to (1) access resources and funding and understand and manage the role of local government officials, (2) identify leadership and important stakeholders within and outside of the community, (3) build capacity and move things forward, (4) designate which plan or plans are to be implemented, and (5) identify measures of success and progress and impediments to both.

### **Access to Resources, Funding and the Role of Local Officials**

Determining what type of funding could be obtained, and more importantly, how and what the city would fund proved to be a major challenge in this first year of implementation in both the Freret and the Bayou Road communities. The ORM designated target areas to strategically spearhead the rebuilding process, but the question of if there was in fact enough funding to ensure that rebuilding could be fully carried out and completed, continued to loom. Funding for the city was held up initially due to lack of a city-wide recovery plan. Given the scale of recovery needed, it was no surprise then that concerns related to funding abound. For those neighborhoods not designated as target areas, what resources did they have access to? For designated target areas, what did they need to do to begin receiving funds? Have these requirements been adequately communicated to these neighborhoods by the relevant city government bodies and other funding sources?

### **Leadership and Stakeholders**

In each neighborhood, the question of who was spearheading the implementation process was essential to understanding the overall process. How were these individuals identified? Were they a self-selecting group or was the community rallying around a person or organization. If the target area had not taken the initiative, how would the city engage in the process? There were concerns surrounding if and how the city would take the lead in such circumstances given the other competing responsibilities it faced in rebuilding the city as a whole. Furthermore, which stakeholders were involved in the process would likely determine how implementation was carried out. Who was inviting people to the table and what interests were (or were not) being incorporated? Were there pockets of participation being built upon? Was it cumulative? Did the leadership have the ability to move on an agenda? As implementation unfolded, this challenge was crucial to what were considered end goals and spoke to how success would be measured (discussed below).

### **Building Capacity**

Even with strong, visionary and otherwise capable leaders to spearhead the implementation process, the looming question was, do the neighborhoods have capacity – the ability, the skills, knowledge and resources – to get things done? If not, where would it come from? How would neighborhoods approach building long-term capacity? Who would administer and ensure things kept moving forward? What organizations would step forward to the task? City officials were struggling with this same dilemma on the macro scale as they battled rebuilding challenges citywide. As one of the primary sources of funding and other resources for neighborhood

implementation projects, the city's capacity weaknesses raised valid concerns for anyone trying to get things done. Would the city be able to effectively address its capacity gaps? To what extent would these gaps impact neighborhood progress? As neighborhood visions began to take root, the nature of capacity could have a range of effects, from producing quantum leaps in progress to significantly limiting the degree to which implementation success could be realized in various neighborhoods.

### **Designating the Plan to Implement**

Since various plans were developed over the course of the past two years, designating which would be implemented was also a challenge. What projects and needs would these plans address? Would plans be merged? Was there enough structure in the plans providing direction on the appropriate way forward? The various plans at the core of the implementation process would determine the length of the recovery process for the target areas and would inform how well neighborhoods were able to carry out the objectives.

### **Identifying Measures of Success**

Finally, there exist wide disparities in implementation and rebuilding across neighborhoods, and despite the commitment of government resources, political energy, and community support the look of recovery differed from target area to target area. Thus, what would be the metrics for success? How would neighborhoods identify where there was exceptional progress and where there was very little or none and determine why this was the case? Were fewer or more permissions needed to get certain things moving? If so, how did jurisdictional complexities play a role? Was what was being implemented a substantial change from past practice? Could all objectives of a plan be met? What would ensure this? Metrics for success would indeed differ for each target area.

As I began to assess how target areas navigated the early stages of the implementation process, the questions highlighted above were the context for my interviews.

### ***The Target Areas***

The two target areas that serve as case studies are: Bayou Road at Broad Street Cultural Corridor (Bayou Road), and The Freret Street Commercial Corridor (Freret). Both were designated renew target areas by the ORM. As renew target areas, it was determined that both areas would require relatively modest public resources to complement the investments of the private and non-profit sectors already underway. Bayou Road and Freret were chosen for this analysis because of the early signs of progress they exhibited prior to and following the various stages of the planning process, despite the ever increasing unique challenges that each faced. Another reason for focusing on these renew areas was that they were areas that required less extensive investment and development to generate new activity and thus were areas where implementation progress should in theory happen more quickly.

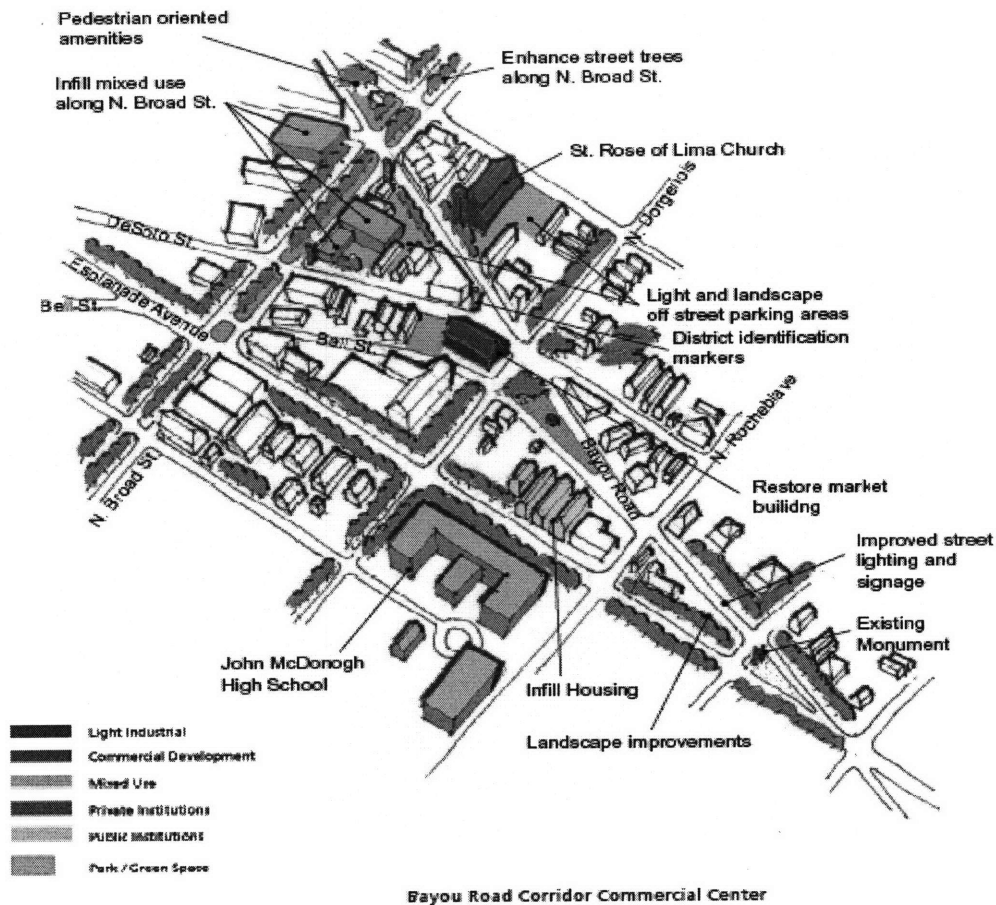
### **Bayou Road**

The Bayou Road Cultural Corridor (in Planning District 4) is situated in a unique position, intersecting the four neighborhoods of Treme/Sixth Ward, Faubourg St. John/Esplanade Ridge,



Mid-City, and the Seventh Ward.<sup>13</sup> As depicted by the diagram below, the Bayou Road target area is the triangle shaped area that runs from Bayou Road and Broad Street to Bayou and North Rocheblave Street, across to Esplanade and back down to Broad Street. A mix of old and new neighborhood businesses characterize Bayou Road and its history and culture strategically weave through these different neighborhoods.

### Bayou Road Corridor Commercial Center<sup>14</sup>



In general, no more than approximately 2 to 3 feet of flooding occurred along much of Bayou Road. Higher levels of flooding, from 3 to 4 feet, affected most of the immediately surrounding neighborhoods. Planners during the UNOP process noted that the damage from wind, fire and vandalism presented the greatest impact from the storm overall, as even areas that were not flooded above the floor levels were still affected by these subsequent storm effects.

In the aftermath of the storm, the Faubourg St John Neighborhood Association initiated a Main Street Initiative for the Broad Avenue Corridor extending from Tulane Avenue to Bayou Road.

<sup>13</sup> There are 17 planning districts in the city of New Orleans.

<sup>14</sup> Map from UNOP District 4 Plan - [http://willdoo-storage.com/Plans/D4/District\\_04\\_Chapter\\_06a\\_Recovery\\_Planning\\_Projects.pdf](http://willdoo-storage.com/Plans/D4/District_04_Chapter_06a_Recovery_Planning_Projects.pdf)

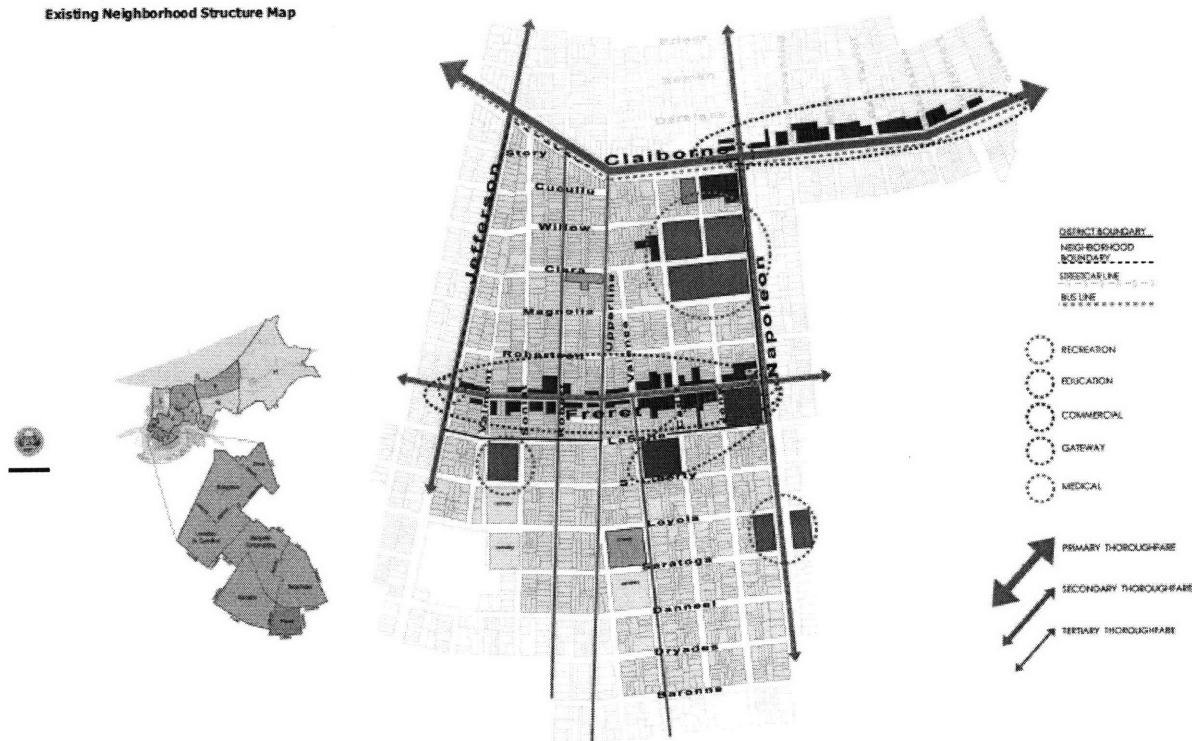
The Broad Avenue corridor is, in general, a rebounding business zone, and many of the abutting neighborhoods, including the Bayou Road enclave support the Main Street initiative. Planning efforts for Bayou Road involved guiding business owners and residents to market the Bayou Road streetscape as a small-scale showcase of the arts, history and culture of the area.

### Freret

The Freret Street Corridor (in Planning District 3), is situated within the Freret neighborhood of Uptown New Orleans, bounded by S. Claiborne Avenue to the north, Jefferson Avenue to the West, LaSalle to the south, and Napoleon Avenue to the east (see diagram below). The Freret neighborhood is primarily residential but boasts a substantial neighborhood friendly business corridor along Freret Street.

### Existing Neighborhood Structure Map<sup>15</sup>

Existing Neighborhood Structure Map



Freret suffered moderate to heavy flooding, with the heaviest flooding along S. Claiborne Avenue. Floodwaters reached nearly 7 feet deep. While damage occurred due to winds and trees, primary damage was the result of flooding. The highest concentration of damage (50% or greater) occurred generally correlating to the heaviest flooding at the northern portion of the neighborhood. The major thoroughfares (S. Claiborne, Jefferson and Napoleon) were in relatively good condition, though neighborhood streets were in various conditions from good to poor. Many sidewalks were in disrepair from tree root and construction damage. Street

<sup>15</sup> Map from Lambert Plans - [http://www.nolanrp.com/Data/Neighborhood/District\\_3\\_Final\\_Freret.pdf](http://www.nolanrp.com/Data/Neighborhood/District_3_Final_Freret.pdf)

improvements needed include paving, curbs, sidewalks, lighting and street signage. All, except one business on the street flooded.

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, Freret Street had a Main Street program that began during Mayor Marc Morial's administration. Among the initiatives supported were a façade program, and the organizing of the Freret Business and Property Owners Association. City funding for the program ended in 2002, yet, at the time the storm hit, the Freret Business District was near the point of being self-sustaining.<sup>16</sup>

After Katrina, Freret Street again applied for Main Street designation through the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Freret was not among those chosen for the program, although the application process brought together a wide range of community support. In support of the application, the University of New Orleans Department of Urban Studies and Planning took photographs, created GIS maps and compiled a building inventory of the neighborhood. The application effort also spurred the resurgence of the Freret Business and Property Owners Association, which began meeting again in August 2006. Because Freret was not as heavily devastated by the storm, it was not initially one of the primary government or foundation focus areas for rebuilding or infrastructure projects in the storm's immediate aftermath. Thus, for Freret, the planning process was an opportunity to be noticed and showcase the positive things happening in the neighborhood while also requesting assistance in addressing the needs of the neighborhood.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter set the stage for understanding the implementation process by detailing how the planning process unfolded at the city-wide level, and specifically in the Freret and Bayou Road communities. The key concepts and contexts outlined in the earlier sections of this chapter, and the criteria for designating target area communities are important to recall later in this discussion when I detail the challenges both communities faced in trying to get things done. The snapshot of Sri Lanka and the challenges that emerged during its initial phase of implementation and recovery are very relevant to the City of New Orleans recovery process because essentially there are implementation challenges that are unavoidable when recovering from a disaster of this magnitude; the fact that this process was documented in Sri Lanka means there are basic models that exist for navigating these challenges.

In the next two chapters, I present the case study for Freret Street, then Bayou Road. Each case study is a timeline of the respective communities' efforts to engage in the planning process and ultimately move forward with implementation and rebuilding.

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<sup>16</sup> Amacker, Editha *The Freret Street Neighborhood: Revitalization and Recovery Planning*. August 2007. Amacker completed a Master's Degree final project researching the Freret Street Neighborhood history and recovery for the University of New Orleans in the summer of 2007. The project begins with a detailed history and overview of the development of the neighborhood, and then explores both past community development initiatives and those arising post-Katrina.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

### **3. CASE STUDY: FRERET STREET (SEPTEMBER 2005 – JANUARY 2008)**

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#### ***Introduction***

This chapter details the experience of stakeholders in the Freret community, briefly detailing the history of organizing in the community pre-Katrina, and recovery efforts in the immediate aftermath of the storm. It then focuses in on major junctures for the community, most notably the first time residents had an opportunity to come together after the storm, the first efforts to plan, the re-formation of the Freret Street Business and Property Owners, and one of the first major projects to be implemented on the corridor, the Freret Market.

Boasting refurbished housing, revitalized businesses and a diverse and committed group of residents, there is general consensus that in the few years leading up to Katrina, the Freret Street Commercial Corridor was in a good place and finally recovering from years of disinvestment. Katrina obliterated over 15 years of progressive strides, however, leaving in its wake streets and infrastructure in need of repair, wind damaged buildings, immobilized businesses and an otherwise uprooted community. Although not as severely damaged or thoroughly flooded as other areas and entire neighborhoods across the city of New Orleans, Freret still emerged from Katrina badly bruised. (Flooding reached 7 feet deep in some of the neighborhoods around Freret; all properties were in poor condition due to wind and rain damage; all except for one business on the street flooded. Many businesses were forced to relocate or close and today at least 50% have been unable to return). What Katrina did not destroy, however, was the spirit of the individuals committed to this community. Such a commitment birthed an aggressiveness in the character of the residents, business owners and institutions in the neighborhood that allowed them to become very involved in the rebuilding planning process and ultimately challenge city government officials to be accountable to the people of the city they were elected to represent. While Freret stakeholders may not have actively sought out designation as a target area or even initially fully grasped what it meant, the designation is no misnomer.

It is important to note the key stakeholders in Freret, both residents and property owners, as well as the major organizations and institutions that were present in Freret long before the storm, and those which emerged more forcefully in its aftermath. Neighborhood Housing Services of New Orleans (NHS) provides homeownership counseling throughout the region, and has been located on the Freret Commercial Corridor for over 15 years. While the primary activity of NHS is counseling, they have also been committed to targeted revitalization in the Freret neighborhood, partnering with existing neighborhood associations and other neighborhood institutions offering resources and capacity to ongoing initiatives in Freret. Neighbors' United Association (NU) is the formal body that has represented Freret and the nearby Milan neighborhood residents for over 30 years. When asked to define the Freret Target Area, though broadly speaking, many would include Milan, arguing that any revitalization efforts and measures taken in the area would ultimately impact Freret and Milan. NU has gone through a series of phases from being very active in the 80s to being simply informational through the early 2000s, and has often relied heavily on NHS for facilitation and capacity for much of its existence. Today, while all residents of the Freret community are not actively involved in the organization, about 30 people are consistently in attendance at meetings, up from about 15 regular attendees pre-Katrina. The organization continues to grow, seeking ways to draw in more residents, and function independently. The Freret Business and Property Owners (FBPOA), like NU, has also gone

through phases from being very active to being almost nonexistent. It was last most active in the late 1990s, but emerged once more as a powerhouse to be reckoned with a year after the storm, pushing for more development in Freret and seeking ways to bring more activity to the neighborhood. Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church and Parish was a long standing institution in Freret for many years providing neighborhood activities for the community, meeting space and leaders. Many members of the Parish were also heavily involved in NU and continue to be today. In the aftermath of the storms, the Orleans Parish Archdiocese made the decision not to reopen the Parish or its school. An ongoing planning process is taking place to determine the future for the Parish. Finally, the newest organization to be formed is the Freret Neighborhood Center, a project of NHS. In an effort to provide a community space and allow individuals not tied to any of the aforementioned organizations to have a voice, the Neighborhood Center is continuously evolving and seeks to encourage and support resident driven initiatives. Since the storm all of these organizations have taken a more aggressive role in pushing for the recovery for Freret and advertise the neighborhood as an up and coming destination. Though a trying and difficult task, their efforts have not been in vain.

For approximately four months, in the immediate aftermath of the storms, Freret saw very little activity. For those few residents that were able to return in those early months, the primary focus was assessing damage to personal property, trying to rebuild and rehab. While neighbors lent a helping hand when possible, these efforts were largely individual and many relied on their personal resources to try and recover and get things done. Long time residents of the community basically struggled to gain firm footing. NHS offices were in such a state of disrepair that they were unable to return to Freret until a full year later, in late August/early September of 2006. In fact, NHS was operating out of temporary offices in Covington and trying to locate staff. Working out of RVs, their priorities had been offering the usual services NHS would: mediating homeowner conflicts with mortgage companies around issues that arose citywide regarding repayment of loans on properties that were destroyed, providing free home inspections and doing roving counseling to help families apply for FEMA assistance and property insurance. There is no record of any organizing or planning specific to Freret taking place at this time. Concurrent to this period, the city was making desperate attempts to devise a recovery plan. Members of the Freret community were not involved in the early attempts at developing a plan through the FEMA and the Mayor's Bring New Orleans Back Commission processes. While some acknowledge being aware of these processes, many were simply unclear as to the purpose or were just not invited to participate in the otherwise top down approach to planning that was taking place.

By January 2006, a steadier stream of residents were returning to Freret. Also by this time, the concept of the planning process was catching on; the urge to participate soon intensified, especially since the earlier federal led and mayor initiated processes were under intense scrutiny and receiving major criticisms. In March 2006, Neighbors United (under the leadership of its pre-storm leaders), hosted a barbeque for those members of the community that had been able to return; over 100 people were in attendance. Primarily a social event, this barbeque also represented the first attempt to see who was around, and get a sense of where the neighborhood was, and find out what was going on. Though they were not physically back on Freret Street, it was also around this time that NHS was able to begin focusing on Freret again. NHS began working with their board to build NU capacity. Also by that time, less than half of the former businesses had returned to the corridor.

In early summer, NU began holding meetings once a month drawing approximately 15 regular attendees (a change from the pre-Katrina practice of meeting every other month), with NHS convening and providing administrative and facilitation support. Key residents were stepping up in their roles as leaders, preparing for the planning process that soon emerged in Freret. Among them were Andrew and Editha Amacker (both only came to be involved with NU after the storm; the couple were residents of the neighborhood prior to the storm, although Editha lived in Freret as a child; furthermore, Editha as a University of New Orleans (UNO) planning student and AmeriCorps volunteer at NHS found herself intertwined in many capacities in the planning that soon ensued for Freret). A core group of 6 additional long time residents were also intimately involved in the planning process that eventually took place, attending meetings regularly and providing the critical input of visioning and goals that constitute the current plan for the area.

May 2006 marked the official start of a concrete planning process in Freret. The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) held the Restoration 2006: Community and Economic Recovery After a Disaster conference in New Orleans May 15-16. As one of ICMA's local partners hosting the conference, NHS helped to arrange a follow-up planning workshop for residents of Freret on May 17. Freret's first community planning meeting on rebuilding in the wake of the storm, the workshop was a major catalyst for the neighborhood's visioning efforts. Over 60 residents and members of the Freret community were at this meeting (more than four times the usual attendance for NU meetings up until that point). The final product of this visioning was a report in the form of two action plans, one community project oriented, and the other, more infrastructure project oriented. Action items listed as community projects were those the neighborhood association felt it could implement independently, at the neighborhood level, while the infrastructure projects were primarily those that NU anticipated would be implemented through the city. "[Infrastructure action items] were things that we had to bring to a city agency if we wanted to see these things done," recalled Editha Amacker. Among the priorities listed in the Community Plan were developing partnerships/strengthening communication with schools and churches, increasing political involvement, developing mechanisms to combat crime, increasing community involvement, establishing a community center, treescaping and conducting research to determine ways to promote the area as a destination. Among the infrastructure projects were enforcing zoning and sanitation codes and regulations; repairing blighted and storm damaged properties; addressing crime through building a police substation, installing cameras in crime hot-spots and making housing available for first responders; securing tax incentives and grants for businesses; streetscaping; maintaining regional transit in the area; and upgrading the area's open spaces and parks. Having a Farmer's Market was listed on both plans.

The ICMA visioning process allowed the community to vet many of their concerns, ideas about, and frustrations with the recovery efforts up until that time. Yet that was only one benefit of the meeting. The Lambert process soon came to Freret. Initially focused on flooded neighborhoods, the process actually started in early spring elsewhere in the city. Since Freret was not considered a thoroughly flooded neighborhood, the neighborhood was only added to the process in June when the City Council determined that a plan for each neighborhood in the city should be developed. The ICMA meeting allowed Freret to approach the process, already knowing what they wanted in the Lambert plan, and with a document that could be easily incorporated into the Lambert framework, which is what happened. Many have noted that the final version of the proposed projects listed in the Freret Neighborhood plan, drafted through the Lambert process, is

a very close version of the ICMA plans, with minor revisions. In fact, the original ICMA plans and action items lists were added to the appendices of the Lambert Plan for Freret. Sixty people attended the next NU meeting in June 2006, eager to discuss strategies for approaching the planning process. At that meeting, members formed the Planning Committee, which would consist of their representatives to future planning meetings for the neighborhood and district.

For Freret, the Lambert process consisted of a series of meetings that lasted into mid-August 2006. During this period, a series of overlaps occurred. The UNOP planning process (the attempt at a citywide as opposed to the Lambert neighborhood level plan) began at the end of July. The NU Planning Committee met three times between the first and last Lambert planning meetings to further vet their priorities for rebuilding the neighborhood. Many of these ideas were later incorporated into the final version of the UNOP. UNOP had a more global scope than Lambert, and included more infrastructure type projects causing some in NU to express disappointment with it; the expectation was that UNOP would advance Lambert. Instead, some would argue, all it did was broadly incorporate Lambert. "UNOP planners dispelled many expectations when they informed residents that the process was focused on recovery planning only. They would not deal with zoning issues, for example," recalled Editha Amacker. As noted above, Freret's Final Project List in the Lambert Plan was identical to the ICMA plan, with very few exceptions. A grocery store was added to the list, for example, and a few of the action items were detailed more thoroughly in the Lambert Plan. In contrast, the UNOP District Plan grouped priorities related to Freret under one project named 'Revitalize Freret Street Commercial Corridor.' It limited the scope of recovery projects to the eight blocks that represent the core of Freret's commercial activity (Napoleon to Jefferson Avenues); the projects highlighted included streetscaping needs, securing tax incentives for businesses lacking the resources to reopen, and the community's expressed desire for a farmers market. In general, other proposals from the neighborhood level [Lambert] plan were mentioned in [UNOP's] descriptions of the pre- and post-Katrina situations for neighborhoods throughout District 3. (Amacker, 2007)

With the planning process well underway during the summer of 2006, the idea of reforming the Freret Business and Property Owner's Association (FBPOA) was gaining momentum. NHS began seriously thinking about this in conjunction with thoughts of reviving the Main Street program, recognizing that building an active business association would be a key component of that goal. In addition, NHS secured the help of the University of New Orleans, Department of Planning and Urban Studies to develop the Main Street application. A number of business owners were stepping up as leaders and NHS sought the help and resources of Good Work Network, Seedco, and a few other technical assistance providers to offer the business owners information on how to get help with funding to restart businesses. The first FBPOA meeting was held in early September.

The period from September 2006 through January 2007, was one of waiting and much anticipation of what the city was planning, given the information obtained through the UNOP planning process. Planning fatigue began to set in and not as many people were attending NU meetings, which were now held every other month. Once more, individuals turned their attentions to personal rehabilitation of their properties. The FBPOA and NU began researching towards getting a zoning change approved that would designate the Freret Commercial Corridor as an Arts and Culture Overlay District. Though not explicitly listed as a priority during the planning process, NU and FBPOA envisioned the Arts and Culture Overlay as a tool that would encourage nighttime foot traffic and arts-related businesses by legalizing such uses along the



commercial corridor, making it easier for them to get city permits; active organizing in the community for support did not occur until spring of 2007, however, and approval would not come until the fall of the same year. One thing worth noting is that by the end of 2006, 20 new and returning businesses were back on the block, more than half of which, were present pre-Katrina.

The waiting period continued into early 2007, when UNOP wrapped up city-wide and the City Council deliberated through the spring before eventually granting approval. “We were trying to get a hold of the plan and go through it to ensure we were represented accurately. What we encountered, however were curious omissions, confusion about projects and inconsistencies in the process across districts,” recalls Editha Amacker. Nevertheless, the rationale of many people was that now the plan was written, the city would begin implementing it. There was little clarity as to what was supposed to happen next. Later in March many in the neighborhood were shocked to learn from news outlets that the newly formed Office of Recovery Management (now Office of Recovery and Development Administration – ORDA) had chosen Freret as one of its 17 recovery target areas. This built up expectation even further, though no formal meeting (defining what target area designation even meant) was held until the end of May.

In the interim, with no official funding released through the city, Freret was determined to press forward with rebuilding and recovery. NHS, in an effort to further its own community building initiatives, began working towards opening the community center on Freret Street. Visioning sessions for the Center began in January 2007 and the center’s first accomplishment was hosting a summer camp for area children. The official grand opening of the center was later that summer in July, and coincided with the end of the summer camp. NU organized a series of neighborhood block clean-up days, and Stanford University MBA students developed business plans for several businesses in collaboration with Idea Village in March 2007.<sup>18</sup> In addition, University of Texas at Arlington, School of Architecture students completed work on the redesign of businesses and residences along the Freret Corridor during the spring. The FBPOA meanwhile began organizing in an effort to charge forward with The Freret Market. Progress with the market was markedly slow, however. At the time, one key member of FBPOA, Peter Gardner, was the main impetus behind the market start-up. Due to personal business, he traveled out of the country during this period of time and no one else really picked up on the initiative, thus the push to establish the market was placed on the back burner. Even had he not traveled, progress may have still been stagnant. The reality was, many were fatigued from the planning process, and were still waiting for the ORM to provide details of its plan. As Editha Amacker recalled, “We waited for them to iron out details of priorities that were adopted; [the understanding was], we’ve done our part, what are they going to do; there were a lot of things that did not initiate; we were waiting on what we could expect on that.”

In late May, ORM sent out invitations to all target areas to meet with Director Ed Blakely and his staff. The purpose was to try and present an overview of what ORM was doing and request that every target area prioritize their project list. Representatives from Freret resubmitted the initial ICMA list that was drawn up the previous year. Still, they expressed frustration that not much was clarified regarding how ORM would begin implementing its Recovery Plan. It was not until late June, that the LRA approved the UNOP plan, giving Freret a new sense of hope that implementation would finally occur in the near future. Also in June, a week or two before LRA

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<sup>18</sup> Idea Village is a local non-profit providing business strategies and technical resources to entrepreneurs.



approved the UNOP, leaders of the FBPOA revived their efforts to get the Freret Market up and running. Determined to start the market with or without ORM's financial support, they set a grand opening date of September 8, 2007. FBPOA was in talks with both NHS and NU to garner the necessary support to ensure the successful start date at the end of the summer. By mid-July NHS and FBPOA were collaborating to develop a business plan and budget for the market, while in the background members of all three organizations were pushing their Councilmember Stacy Head to help them set up a personal meeting with the ORM to try and sort through its plan for Freret as a target area.

In late July, the persistent efforts to coordinate and schedule a meeting with the ORM were finally rewarded. The meeting, which took place with Dr. Blakely, two members of his staff, Councilmember Head, and representatives from FBPOA, NHS and NU played a critical role in fundamentally shaping Freret's relationship with ORM and the neighborhood's overall approach to implementing plans for their community. The neighborhood representatives raised three critical issues: code enforcement, streetscape improvements, and the desire to have the Freret Market up and running by the end of the summer. Dr. Blakely acknowledged that code enforcement issues would be a long-term issue, but that his office was committed to addressing it. Regarding streetscape improvements, he encouraged the group to prioritize the very broad scope of improvements they hoped to see. Members of his staff would be sent to tour the neighborhood later the same week to get a sense of its current conditions. The issue of the Market however seemed more feasible and easier to implement, thus Dr. Blakely suggested the neighborhood focus on the positive momentum of the Farmer's Market and those things they could control at the current time to improve the corridor. He committed to providing some initial funding (offering an approximate figure) within a matter of weeks from Foundation sources (as opposed to city or state funds) to help with promotion and marketing of the Farmer's Market. In addition, since the site for the proposed market was owned by the City, he committed the resources of his office to help them acquire it either through a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) or long term lease for a small amount of money as long as the organization would maintain the lot. The group left the meeting quite surprised by the level of optimism they encountered on the part of Dr. Blakely, and also hoping they had finally made a connection with the ORM.

A few days later, the ORM staff members present in that critical meeting came to Freret and took a walking tour of the eight block commercial corridor. Prior to the tour they first met with representatives from FBPOA, NHS and NU to further flesh out priorities for the target area and re-emphasize the necessary next steps for the area moving forward. A business plan for the Freret Market was to be submitted before any funding would be released. In addition, the neighborhood needed to develop a similar plan for streetscape improvements, listing their priorities. At this stage, the reality that more work was needed on the part of the neighborhood before any implementation occurred became very evident; the idea that ORM was in a position to begin implementation of the plan was a diminishing hope. Because the Freret Market was already an active project with the business plan nearly completed, FBPOA and NHS set a goal to complete it by the end of the month to see if the ORM would indeed come through with the necessary funding. There was still a general sense, however, that the ORM had not been very effective in communicating their expectations when designating the area as a target area. Despite this disappointing realization the neighborhood was not turned off by the still long and arduous road ahead that would require them to deliberately detail their next steps.

The neighborhood submitted a completed business plan for the Freret Market to the ORM two weeks later. Another two weeks passed before they heard anything, but at the end of August the representatives were called to another meeting with Councilmember Head and a representative from the ORM where the exact amount of funding budgeted for the startup of the market was approved. The fact that the funding was not only approved but then dispersed the next day came as a complete shock to the neighborhood parties involved. Also at this meeting, the representatives for the first time saw a hardcopy of the ORM Redevelopment plan for Freret. The laundry list of priorities that were in the Lambert and UNOP, had been condensed into five broad categories with a tentative budget for each line item. In addition to the market, acquiring and redeveloping blighted housing, streetscape and façade improvements, as well as establishing a small business program, were listed as critical projects for the area. It would be a month before the contents of the report were leaked to the city paper and the ORM plans for all 17 target areas were released to the public.

Having secured the necessary startup funds, FBPOA was on track to have the market's grand opening on September 8, 2007. Freret held its first market day as planned and celebrated (with the Mayor and Dr. Blakely in attendance) the feat of implementing one of the first major projects in the city since the storm. Over 1500 people came out to support the market and it was declared a success on many fronts. The Freret Market, held the first Saturday of each month, has grown in success and acclaim, and continues to draw over 1500 each month. Behind the scenes planning continues as the neighborhood tries to shape it into an effective economic development tool. Freret celebrated another mini-victory a little over a month later. The long push to gain designation as an Arts and Culture Overlay district was finally approved by the City Council on October 18. Yet, even with the aforementioned major accomplishments, Freret did not lose sight of the various other unmet priorities still on the table. High on the list was addressing blighted properties through zoning code enforcement; another priority was streetscape improvements. Aware now that an ORM Redevelopment Plan existed for Freret, the representatives of the community again sought to meet with ORM and clarify objectives and expectations. How would funding be dispersed and to what type of entity? What did the ORM need from Freret? Was there a time frame? Who should be their point of contact?

With the help of Councilmember Head, the Freret representatives were finally able to sit down with ORM in October 2007. In this meeting, ORM made it clear that they would require a detailed list of projects with approximate cost and duration from each target area. An initial draft of the proposal would be due by the end of the month with the final product due by the end of the year. Still the Freret representatives had many questions for ORM, to include, was there a format for the proposals? When were they going to let the collective group of target areas know ORM's expectations? Was ORM going to write a check directly to liaisons in the target areas? Or were they going to bid the work out to contractors? Freret decided to approach the task from a standpoint of outlining those projects they felt they could make happen more quickly. "We never got a template for what they wanted to see however. There was no example of how things of were going to happen," recalled David Lessinger of NHS.

The eventual proposal Freret submitted in December 2007 was based on input received from residents early on in the planning process. At this stage, only a handful of residents, who were key leaders in NU, were consistently involved in these meetings with ORM, but the group, acting on behalf of the neighborhood, felt they had enough information to still act as representatives. "It was our own proposal but it didn't come from any model. Residents were determined to be

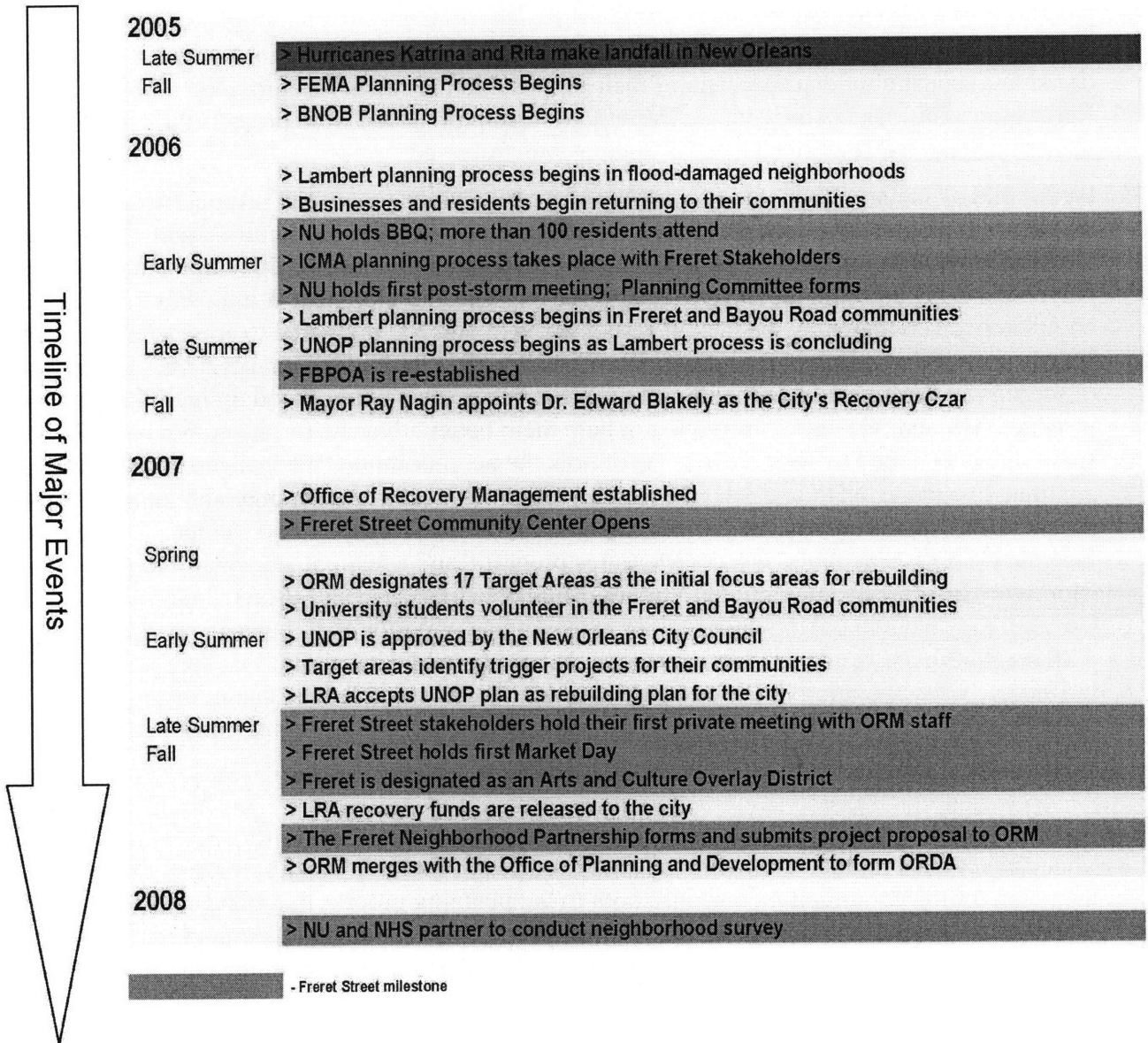
part of implementation and not waiting for the city to come through anymore,” recalled Editha Amacker. The group of representatives began having regular weekly meetings for about 7 or 8 weeks, meeting about 5 to 6 times total, and began to try and align their goals. The approach taken by NHS, FBPOA and NU was to first come to an agreement that they were going to work together as partners, and then submit a proposal focusing on tasks they felt they could accomplish along the commercial corridor. This was the incentive for a memorandum of understanding (MOU) the three organizations signed (before submitting the proposal) forming the Freret Neighborhood Partnership. Thinking strategically about how implementation would be possible and what channels funding would eventually flow through, the organizations wanted to show a willingness to work together and the capacity to do the work themselves. They made the decision to constrain the parameters of their proposal to the categories provided in the ORM Redevelopment Plan. Thus what the Freret Partnership proposed were projects they felt they would have the capacity to take on, if funding were released.

By the end of January 2008, the Partnership had not received an official response from the ORM offices regarding their proposal. In fact, ORM was in a period of restructuring and transitioning. ORM merged with the New Orleans Office of Planning and Economic Development late in November 2007 and became the Office of Recovery and Development Administration. Not completely discouraged by the lack of response, NHS and NU partnered to conduct a community survey project that spanned three days, from January 10 through January 12, 2008. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the impact of initiatives in the neighborhood up until that point and provide NHS and NU with information to help them better advocate for the community. The surveyors also hoped to get a clear sense of how the neighborhood had changed and would continue to change. NHS and NU had worked through the previous summer and into the fall to organize and vet the survey. In partnership with the Freret Neighborhood Center, NeighborWorks America’s Success Measures program, and a team of students from the Monterrey Institute of International Studies, Middlebury College and Bronx Community College, they went knocking door to door extending an opportunity to have an open dialogue with neighborhood residents. Also by this time, Freret could easily boast that approximately 40 businesses were operating in the target area, matching pre-storm levels; that number is expected to continue growing. Freret had also held 5 successful market days, seeing considerable growth in both the number of vendor and attendees.

### ***Conclusion***

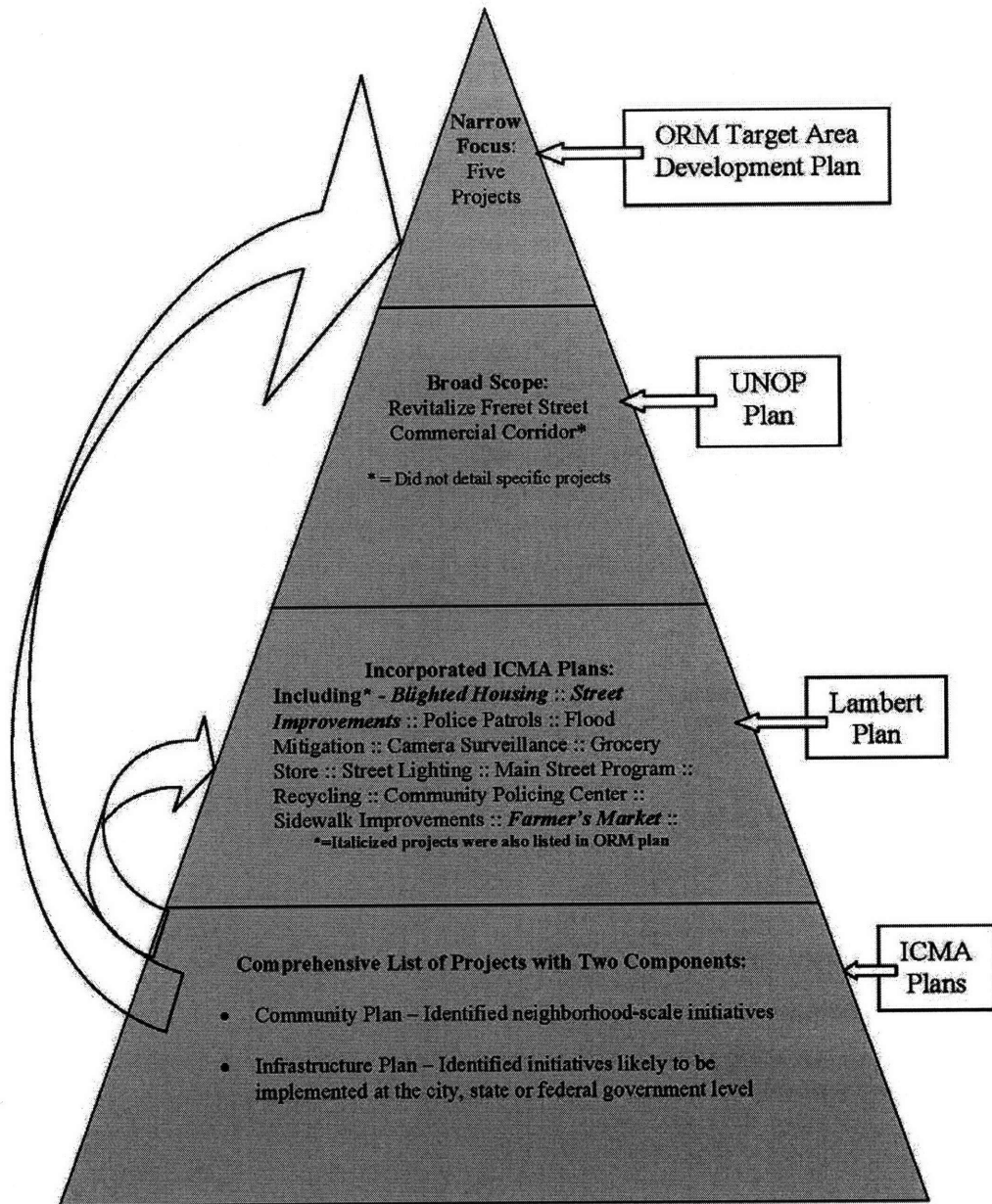
This chapter has provided a timeline of what occurred in Freret in the aftermath of the storm, and the nature of the community’s response both to the planning process that transpired and the efforts to implement these plans in the first full year following the completion of the planning process. Below is a diagram that captures the major milestones that were detailed in this chapter.

## Freret Street Timeline of Major Events (August 2005 to January 2008)



Looking back, the nature of project implementation during the first full year following the planning process has been mixed. A good number of the projects and priorities listed in the community plan component of the ICMA plan were either implemented or had at least been initiated. Prominent among them were: the more active neighborhood association and growing community involvement; strengthened ties to local representatives, namely Freret's City Council representative; the opening of the community center early in the spring; and the grand opening of the Freret Market later that year, in the fall. Approval for zoning as an Arts and Culture Overlay District was also a celebrated milestone for Freret although securing the designation was not explicitly identified as a priority during the planning process. Still, there was an additional set of projects that did not see much progress; these were overwhelmingly infrastructure projects. While there are ongoing efforts to enforce zoning and sanitation codes and regulations, purchasing and repairing blighted and storm-damaged properties has been a slower process. In addition, many streets remain in poor condition. Progress addressing public safety is also mixed; while there are ongoing efforts to publicize emergency and non emergency police phone numbers and increase patrols by police, there are various other crime fighting mechanisms that have yet to be initiated or implemented, such as installed police cameras in crime hot-spots and lighting to deter criminal activity. Stakeholders are generally pleased with the progress but hope to see much more accomplished and the adequate resources made accessible to achieve their goals. Below is a diagram depicting characteristics of the plans developed in this community. The next chapter is an account of the Bayou Road target area experience.

## Characteristics of Freret Street Rebuilding Plans



#### 4. CASE STUDY: BAYOU ROAD (SEPTEMBER 2005 – JANUARY 2008)

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##### *Introduction*

This chapter details the experience of stakeholders in the Bayou Road community, briefly detailing the history of organizing in the community pre-Katrina, and then details efforts undertaken in the aftermath of the storm to implement projects and priorities. Major milestones for the community during the implementation period include the various sources of private funding businesses received, the grand opening of ‘The Belles of Bayou Road’ businesses, the brick repaving of the corridor and the increasingly successful steps to acquiring a church property to house a community center in the area.

Less than five miles east of Freret and only minutes from downtown, the image of The Bayou Road Cultural Corridor in the years immediately leading up to Hurricane Katrina was one of an enclave gradually emerging, though on a different scale from Freret. Quaint red bricks lining the streets, and culturally and architecturally historic buildings, were the trademarks of the corridor. Small business entrepreneurs were on the cusp of raising the profile of Bayou Road and the immediately surrounding neighborhoods when the storm hit. Long an area of disinvestment, individuals seeing potential in the area had slowly begun to invest by purchasing and rehabilitating old decrepit properties, re-opening storefronts along the corridor. The devastation of Katrina brought with it tremendous damage from wind, fire and vandalism as even areas that were not flooded were still greatly impacted by these subsequent storm effects. The response of this community was distinctive in that they rallied together to communally rebuild the corridor, looking first internally for the resources necessary to reestablish themselves. It was the unique and powerful way in which the Bayou Road community came together that eventually drew the attention of onlookers and investors, essentially providing a great opportunity for Bayou Road to compellingly place itself on the map, reinvent its image, and begin to recall the thriving and cultural district it had once been. Bayou Road was designated a target area because in the months after the storm, the energy and resilience of the community promised a future with mounting potential.

The core of stakeholders involved in the revitalization of Bayou Road are key individuals who have been long time residents in the surrounding community and mainstay advocates. Among them are Vera Warren-Williams, owner of the Community Book Center on Bayou Road, and a long time voice for, and institution in the community. In addition, Beverly McKenna, publisher of *The Tribune* owns and has aimed to rehab multiple properties on the corridor. McKenna also lives adjacent to the corridor on Esplanade Avenue. Yet another key individual, Jeanne Nathan, lives in the neighboring Faubourg St. John neighborhood, and has led and engaged in numerous organizing efforts in the community for some time. Warren-Williams, McKenna and Nathan are all on the boards of various neighborhood associations in the community.

What makes Bayou Road particularly unique is that it intersects multiple neighborhoods. Thus, although Bayou Road is largely a commercial corridor, three key neighborhood associations have played a vital role in the area’s recovery efforts. Prior to the storm, the Downtown Neighborhood Improvement Association (DNIA) was perhaps the body that came closest to being a representative neighborhood association for the community. Established a little over one



year before the storm hit, DNIA's efforts to build membership and establish credibility abruptly halted in the wake of the storm. The broad geographical area DNIA represents spans far beyond Bayou Road into much of what is known historically as Treme and the Sixth and Seventh Wards; many of the efforts today to revitalize Bayou Road are expected to have catalytic impacts that reach these neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Partnership Network (NPN), an umbrella organization of neighborhood associations across the city, was established after the storm and located its office nearby on Esplanade Avenue. Though not an association created to solely represent the Bayou Road community, because of this strategic location, NPN is often able to provide resources such as meeting space and is able to draw people to the area for its various events. The nearby Faubourg St. John Neighborhood Association (FSJNA) has also been involved in recovery efforts on Bayou Road. In an attempt to secure needed funding for Broad Street, one of two major commercial corridors that abuts four neighborhoods including Faubourg St. John and hits Bayou Road (the other being North Carrollton Avenue), the FSJNA submitted a Main Streets proposal to the city. Though the proposal was not approved, this effort has led to collaborations amongst the different communities including Bayou Road. The strength of these stakeholders' commitment to their community is the driving force behind their efforts at continued collaboration to effectively achieve long standing goals for the area.

Immediately following the storm, as early as October 2005 some business and property owners were able to return to Bayou Road to assess damage to their properties. The primary focus then was basic clean up. Volunteers chipped in where they could, but the business and property owners on the corridor largely used their own financial resources as they began the task of rehabilitating the damaged properties. The properties ranged in levels of damage, from those properties that suffered minimal damage and could be rehabbed quickly, to others, with roofs destroyed and floors uprooted, requiring substantial reconstruction efforts. For example, prior to the storm, McKenna had made strides to do basic renovations on her four adjacent properties so that she could then rent them at affordable rates to African American entrepreneurs. McKenna had secured one tenant, the Coco Hut Caribbean Restaurant, and was in talks with another entrepreneur, Dwana Makeba, to open a hair salon, Beauty on de Bayou. The necessary salon specific renovations had been made for Makeba, but the storm was a major set back to the salon's plans to open. The Community Book Center also sustained extensive wind damage and made plans to downsize due to the city's decreased population, then relocate to one of McKenna's properties. Overall, by March 2006, however, no major decisions were made. Because the focus was primarily rehabilitating properties and attempting to regain firm footing, participation by community members in the planning processes occurring in the city at that time was negligible. There were a handful, Jeanne Nathan most notably (who was a member of the Bring New Orleans Back Commission), who were at least aware of and to a certain extent, invested in these early processes.

One of the obstacles property owners on Bayou Road faced was not being able receive some of the immediate emergency funding (such as The Blue Roof Program funding) available to residential property owners.<sup>19</sup> Even though some of the storefronts had top floor residential units, they did not qualify. Through the first three months of 2006, more targeted efforts were being made to come back to Bayou Road and restore the business corridor. Of the businesses operating on the corridor pre-Katrina, very few made the decision to return, including

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<sup>19</sup> Operation Blue Roof was a program run by FEMA through the Army Corps of Engineers to cover the roofs of homes damaged during the disaster with temporary plastic sheeting.



Community Book Center and Coco Hut, and another neighborhood institution, McHardy's Chicken on Broad Street. A copy center had shut down, as well as the Caribbean Club at the corner of Bayou and DeSoto, and a carry-out restaurant situated at the center of the block. The St. Rose de Lima Church also on the block never reopened, though two nuns have been living in the rectory since the storm. As an area of the city that was not completely flooded, Bayou Road, like Freret, was not considered in the initial phase of planning for the Lambert process. Organic neighborhood planning and organization was minimal at best at this stage, and unless a major issue arose that would require the businesses to organize, there was little more than clean up and gradual recovery taking place.

In late spring of 2006, the Lambert planning process finally reached District 4 where the Bayou Road Corridor is situated, and key stakeholders, business owners and residents alike, attended the meetings. The residents would argue that they had certain priorities prior to the storm and those things never changed. From streetscape improvements and beautification, and establishing a community center, to façade improvements and marketing Bayou Road as a historical and cultural destination in the city, Bayou Road advocates simply pushed for these ideas to be incorporated into the plan. Not unlike other neighborhoods going through the same process, they believed that the Lambert plan was an opportunity to draw attention to long festering issues in the community and perhaps secure the adequate funding necessary to address them. DNIA was still not fully functioning especially since some key leaders in the organization did not return to the city. Efforts to revive the association, largely on the part of Jeanne Nathan and others, and bring the community together outside of the city's planning processes, proved immensely difficult. Since rebuilding was proving to be an unremitting task it remained business and property owners' main focus. When people could participate, they did, but with resources stretched and little time for much else than immediately pressing recovery issues, active participation in the organization by residents and business owners did not occur during the first half of 2006.

Despite the decidedly weak organization of DNIA during the Lambert planning process, it was, what Nathan describes as the "centrifugal pull" of Bayou Road that caused the abutting communities of the Treme/6<sup>th</sup> Ward, 7<sup>th</sup> Ward and Faubourg St. John to each advocate to incorporate some aspect of Bayou Road recovery into the Lambert Plans for their individual neighborhoods. "Though I think it may have been at one time, Bayou Road is not perceived as a center though it runs down the middle of [these neighborhoods]. We presented it as a catalytic center for the community though it really isn't yet," explained Nathan. Bookstore owner Warren-Williams goes on to explain, "Bayou Road is a very clear identifiable commercial corridor with businesses that are up and running and potential for growth [beyond Bayou Road] north along Broad." The strategy was thus to focus on Bayou Road, since there was some organization and activity on the corridor prior to the storm. The rationale was that as the corridor blossomed and was able to draw a critical mass, it would have a rippling effect on the broader community beyond the historic corridor itself spreading into the Treme, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Wards. The Lambert plan for the Historic 7<sup>th</sup> Ward thus included the redevelopment of the historic Indian Market building on Bayou Road as a specific project. In addition, raising the profile of, and revitalizing the Bayou Road Historic Corridor, was a project listed in the Treme/6<sup>th</sup> Ward Lambert plan. Furthermore, pursuing Main Street designation for the Broad Street Corridor (which as described earlier, abuts several neighborhoods, including the Bayou Road community) was listed as a priority for the Treme, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Wards, and the Faubourg St. John neighborhood. Advocates believed the success of the Broad Street Main Street Initiative would

both unify the neighborhoods and serve to attract resources that would be shared among the neighboring communities. In general, the few projects identified in the Lambert plan addressing Bayou Road focused heavily on infrastructure redevelopment.

As the planning process transpired through the summer of 2006, restoration continued along the corridor in a very ad-hoc fashion, and still no businesses had officially reopened on Bayou Road. The Coco Hut restaurant was still cleaning and renovating and McKenna chipped in, providing assistance for the renovations of her properties and subsidizing rent. The hair salon entrepreneur, Makeba, expressed a continued interest in locating to Bayou Road, and McKenna hoped to prepare the other two properties for new tenants. As a potential tenant of one of McKenna's properties, the bookstore planned to lease its bigger space to a non-profit. Momentum grew and progress was at last, noticeable, as the summer continued.

The UNOP process began ramping up late in the summer, though business owners focused primarily on getting the corridor back up and running, and there was no evident sustained engagement with the planning process. This is not to say, however, that members of the community did not attend the series of UNOP meetings when they could; in fact they determinedly continued to push for the priorities that they identified during the Lambert process. Throughout the UNOP process the community was very adamant that the plan convey their desire to bring the story of Bayou Road to life, recalling its historical and cultural significance as the first settlement in the city. Beyond technical designation as a cultural corridor, they sought to establish an official interpretive route and ultimately create a destination for tourists and city residents alike, on par with prominent national routes like the Boston Freedom Trail. The UNOP District 4 plan thus listed the Bayou Road/Governor Nicholls Cultural Corridor as one of the 29 recovery planning projects for the district. It described in some detail Bayou Road's significance, and the goal for the corridor. UNOP also identified revitalization of the Broad Street Commercial Corridor through the Main Street Program as a recovery project for the district. Since Bayou Road was a component of the initiative for Broad Street, this was seen as a gain for the corridor's advocates, including the FSJNA, DNIA, the various business owners like Makeba and Warren-Williams, and residents of the surrounding neighborhoods. While it acknowledged the need to invest in businesses struggling to reopen, and the goal of revitalizing the area's retail economy, similar to the outcomes in Freret, the UNOP plan addressed Bayou Road very broadly and did not identify specific priorities to be initiated or implemented on the corridor. Evident from this lack of more detail was the planning fatigue that began to take root in the community as the process concluded in early fall.

Efforts to revive business activity, however, did not diminish. Late in August, a daycare owner expressed interest in locating her center on Bayou Road; she made plans to move into one of McKenna's properties before the end of the year. The path to recovery was rife with setbacks, however. When a water leak ruined new floors in one of McKenna's other properties, it stalled Warren-Williams' plans to move her bookstore there. Further delaying the progress was the non-profit's decision not to move into the Community Book Center site. In addition, McHardy's Chicken (on Broad St) suffered a fire in June. The businesses and merchants along the corridor made every effort to provide moral support to each other, also looking to their families for the drive to remain committed. Beyond moral support they also pooled resources, from telephone landlines to Internet service access. It was during this period that a series of new businesses and organizations also began locating in the neighborhood, extending beyond Bayou Road onto Broad Street, to include The Children's Defense Fund Freedom School which had its grand

opening in May, and began programming by late summer. In addition, The Neighborhood Partnership Network (NPN) began programming during the summer, having settled into its location around the corner on Esplanade Avenue. NPN began reaching out to neighborhood associations citywide by hosting regular forums, workshops, and trainings for neighborhood activists and leaders, aiming to strengthen the city's communities and provide valuable resources and opportunities to collaborate.

The fall of 2006 was marked by intense planning for the grand opening of the four major businesses on Bayou Road. McKenna had secured tenants for three of her properties and Warren-Williams of the Community Book Center was also putting finishing touches on her store. McKenna who had been awarded a grant for her paper, *The Tribune*, by technical assistance provider Idea Village not long after the storm, approached the organization again that fall, and made a case for the entrepreneurs on Bayou Road. She relayed the remarkable story of how they had managed to support and establish themselves using independent resources over the course of the year, and planned to officially open in December. Idea Village was impressed with the accomplishments of the entrepreneurs and the various challenges they overcame, and made a decision to meet with each business owner to determine what resources Idea Village could provide to further assist their endeavors. Through grants, business plan assistance, marketing, and their 'pay it forward' program, Idea Village began a six-month intensive technical assistance outreach program to the businesses.<sup>20</sup> A grand opening for the four businesses, marketed as 'The Belles of Bayou Road', took place on December 11, 2006. City Council members, along with other supporters from across the city came to tour the Bayou Road businesses and celebrate their achievements.

By early 2007, a few more businesses were planning to open on Bayou Road, including Domino Record Shack and a second hair salon. In addition, students from universities across the country were partnering with local organizations to further propel rebuilding efforts. MIT's Department of Urban Studies Main Streets Practicum began a semester long project, partnering with the FSJNA in an effort to raise the profile of the Broad Street Commercial Corridor, with special emphasis on three key nodes, one being Bayou Road at Broad Street, (noting its cultural history and prime location on the path to the city's annual Jazz Fest). The MIT plan in addition to emphasizing the infrastructure improvements described in the Lambert and UNOP plans, also highlighted the streetscape and beautification needs expressed by the community. In addition, MBA students from Stanford and University of Pennsylvania partnered with Idea Village on various projects through their IDEAcorns program.<sup>21</sup> Thus the timing of ORM's decision to designate Bayou Road as a target area was strategic. Like Freret, and perhaps various other designated target areas, news of the ORM decision reached residents of the community via news outlets at the end of March 2007. It is interesting to note that though thrilled at the potential investment the designation could garner, the community's approach to the decision was markedly different from Freret's. The idea was, if the ORM had targeted Bayou Road for investment, then ORM would at some point invest; the issue seemed to be one of timing. So

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<sup>20</sup> The PAY IT FORWARD FUND™ is a grant fund with a civic mission. This fund was originally established under the title, "IV Business Relief Fund," in September 2005 in response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. The fund was initially capitalized by contributions of \$100,000 from individual, corporate and foundation investors, who invested for the good of the city and without expectation of financial returns. Realized gains are reinvested in other worthwhile projects. To date, The Idea Village has allocated private contributions over \$600,000 and has allocated these grants to 110 local entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are asked to "pay it forward" when they are in a better financial situation by contributing to the fund and supporting future generations of entrepreneurs. Six Idea Village entrepreneurs have "paid forward" \$79,000.

<sup>21</sup> IDEAcorns™ is an effort to engage local and national students in the revitalization of New Orleans. IDEAcorns™, formed in partnership with Tulane University, connects civic and business-minded college and graduate students to New Orleans-based entrepreneurial ventures.

business owners continued to invest in their businesses and make strides to improve the area, However, unlike Freret, there were no efforts to coordinate local actions and to negotiate with ORM over where and how to invest. Furthermore, the expectation was that ORM would communicate how it planned to move forward; however, at the time ORM announced its target area initiative, no projects were proposed for the area. There was no coordinated effort; business owners and other stakeholders were waiting on ORM to act, but also moving forward with other pressing priorities.

Investment continued to flow to Bayou Road through the spring and into the summer of 2007, though not without challenges. NewCorp Business Assistance Center partnered with the Community Book Center to house a business incubation facility in the bookstore.<sup>22</sup> Owner Warren-Williams had been a client of NewCorp pre-Katrina, but the relationship evolved and became more robust after the storm. NewCorp provided funding to have the floors of the bookstore redone and as one of the state of Louisiana's small business loan intermediaries, NewCorp helped to secure a state small business loan for the bookstore. Other entrepreneurs on Bayou Road also applied for small business loans, but were not as successful, citing inconsistencies and lack of communication regarding clear expectations and guidelines on the part of the state. Bayou Road stakeholders were also invited to ORM's initial target area strategizing meeting with Director Ed Blakely and his staff. Hair salon entrepreneur Makeba recalls that, "People were trying to establish consistency and we never changed the story. Our plan for the area stayed the same [from the initial planning meetings through the ORM strategizing meeting]." Representatives from Bayou Road thus identified two projects as critical for them; one was establishing a community center. The other, in remaining consistent with goals of profiling the area as a historic and cultural destination, was to create a pedestrian mall stretching for multiple blocks along Bayou Road. Given that neither, the Lambert, or UNOP plans had identified specific projects, Nathan explains, "The selection of the projects was from charrettes and follow up meetings with our group. Their [UNOP] representative for us went beyond the program to give the input that did not come through clearly at [the previous year's] charrettes and planning meetings since everyone was not around." As was the case for Freret representatives, however, Bayou Road stakeholders left the meeting with no clear sense of how ORM would begin implementing its Target Area Recovery Plan. Communication with the ORM was minimal at best following the May meeting, and there was a growing sense that perhaps funding would not come through to support projects outlined in the ORM plan.

By late summer, 2007, the FSJNA Steering Committee who managed the MIT project, decided to take action on some recommendations proposed by the students, namely forming a non-profit, Broad Street Community Connections. The goal of the non-profit would be to work to foster development of the Broad Street corridor and seek investment for projects proposed in the UNOP plans for the neighboring communities. Though UNOP did not specifically address Broad Street as a continuous corridor, the plan the MIT students provided helped the Steering Committee focus their priorities. Individual members of FSJNA and DNIA also pursued one project they proposed to the ORM, identifying a property for the community center that the neighborhood had long sought to establish on Esplanade Avenue. At the end of the summer in early September, the ORM's budget and critical projects for the target areas were leaked to the

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<sup>22</sup> NewCorp, Inc. is a private non-profit Community Development Financial institution (CDFI) operating as a business assistance center specializing in small, minority, and women owned businesses. NewCorp also assists corporations, banks, other financial institutions, universities, and governmental agencies achieve the goal of doing business with minority and women owned business.

local paper. The priority list and budget for Bayou Road included the community center and streetscape enhancements (which incorporated the pedestrian mall) that were identified as priorities at the initial ORM meeting in late May 2007. Also among the priorities was renovation of the historic market building (the Bayou Road project identified in the Lambert plan for the Historic 7<sup>th</sup> Ward), establishment of a small business assistance program, and façade improvements. The ORM plan thus represented the most detailed list to date of projects and priorities for the area as Lambert and UNOP did not outline specific projects.

Even where no initiated efforts were required on the part of the community, various projects continued to benefit the area. In September, the New Orleans Parks and Parkways Commission announced a plan to use a funding grant the Commission received to plant trees along Broad Street from the Interstate (near its intersection with Tulane Avenue) through Gentilly (a neighborhood east of Bayou Road). This type of beautification project was one the surrounding communities enthusiastically welcomed, as it was a long-standing vision many had expressed they wanted to see. The ReLeaf New Orleans initiative was a project of Parkway Partners, the non-profit arm of the Parks and Parkways Commission. The objective was not only replanting neutral ground trees on major traffic corridors with the assistance of volunteers under the direction of professional arborists, but also replacing street trees in surrounding neighborhoods through volunteer efforts of neighborhood associations and organizing residents. By early December, the FSJNA and DNIA were organizing their memberships to volunteer to plant trees. During the planting, residents were instructed by trained volunteers and provided with instruction on how to care for the trees. Once the trees were planted, the neighborhood committed to being responsible for watering, mulching and weeding the trees until they were mature.

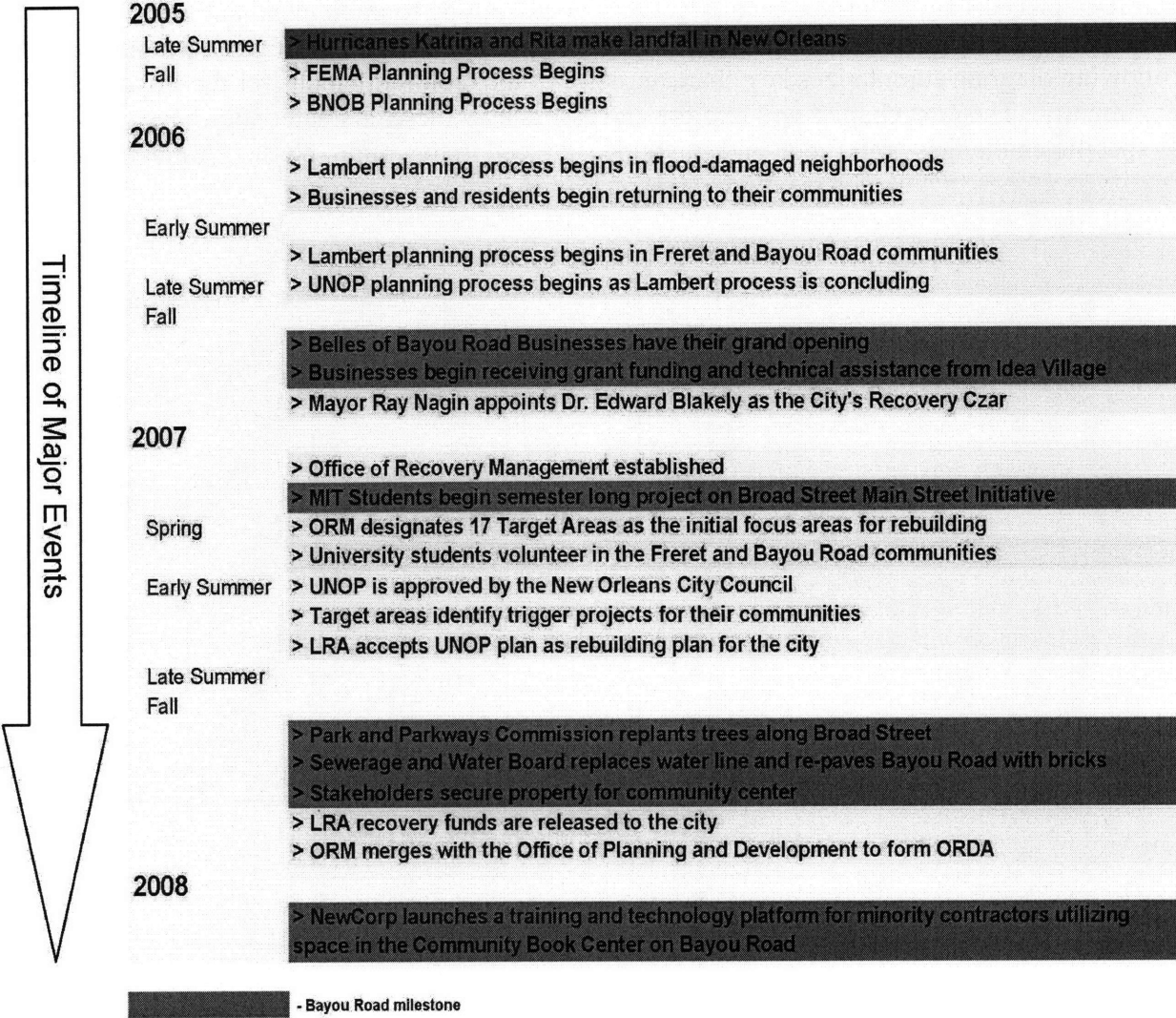
Another project that was not initiated by the community was carried out in November 2007 when the Sewerage and Water Board endeavored to replace a faulty water line on Bayou Road. Though initially viewed as progress (flooding on the street was a recurrence after every rain and repairing failing drainage systems was a priority identified across districts during the citywide planning process), the implementation of this project soon became a nightmare for the businesses on Bayou Road. The businesses were not notified of the plans to repair the water line and so at this busy season of the year, they were not prepared to have the streets completely closed. Furthermore, the project required removing the historic red bricks from Bayou Road, which, workers expressed, was not their intention to replace. This angered the business owners who quickly rallied together to protest not being informed of the project and the decision not to repave the road with the bricks. The efforts took time because initially they attempted to contact ORM, thinking it was a project they sanctioned. Later, learning they would need to contact the Sewerage and Water Board (SWB), stakeholders redirected their efforts, and were able to (over the course of a few weeks) negotiate to have the bricks pave the entire road, not just where they had initially lain. This was a bittersweet victory for the businesses on Bayou Road because having the entire street paved with bricks was something they desired to see (in the efforts of recapturing its historic significance), yet, they also lost substantial business activity during the period the repairs took place. Thus they argue, if SWB had attempted to coordinate the project with them, the agency would have known not to begin work until after the most profitable time of the year for businesses on the corridor. This is a major lesson the area will carry forward as it embarks on its second year as a functioning business corridor and target area.

Early in 2008, there were still efforts to strengthen DNIA and leverage a partnership with Broad Street Community Connections. In addition, NewCorp had revised its plan to house a small business incubator in the Community Book Center. Instead, planning to still utilize the bookstore's facilities, efforts were underway to launch a training and technology platform for minority contractors across the city. The goal was to feed into the recovery of Bayou Road by promoting its location as a prominent training ground and resource depot for minority entrepreneurs. From the NewCorp training and technology platform, to the financing and technical assistance the 'Belles of Bayou Road' businesswomen received, and the tree planting along Broad Street made possible by Parkway Partners, the Bayou Road target area had moved forward with the implementation of various projects that were not explicitly outlined in the very broad Lambert and UNOP plans that initially highlighted the area. Furthermore, private investors funded these and various other projects that were implemented and initiated during the period following the planning process. Still, the Sewerage and Water Board's (a city agency's) work to repave Bayou Road with brick signaled movement in the direction of reviving the area's historical character. In addition to focusing on strengthening neighborhood collaboration, other ongoing projects include purchasing the Presbyterian Church property for the community center, deciding how to move forward with ideas for the historic market building, and initiating streetscape and façade improvements that highlight Bayou Road as a historic corridor.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter was a timeline of what occurred in the Bayou Road community in the aftermath of the storm, depicting the nature of the response both to the planning process as it unfolded, and the efforts to implement priorities in the first full year following the completion of the planning process. The diagram on the following page captures key milestones for the community.

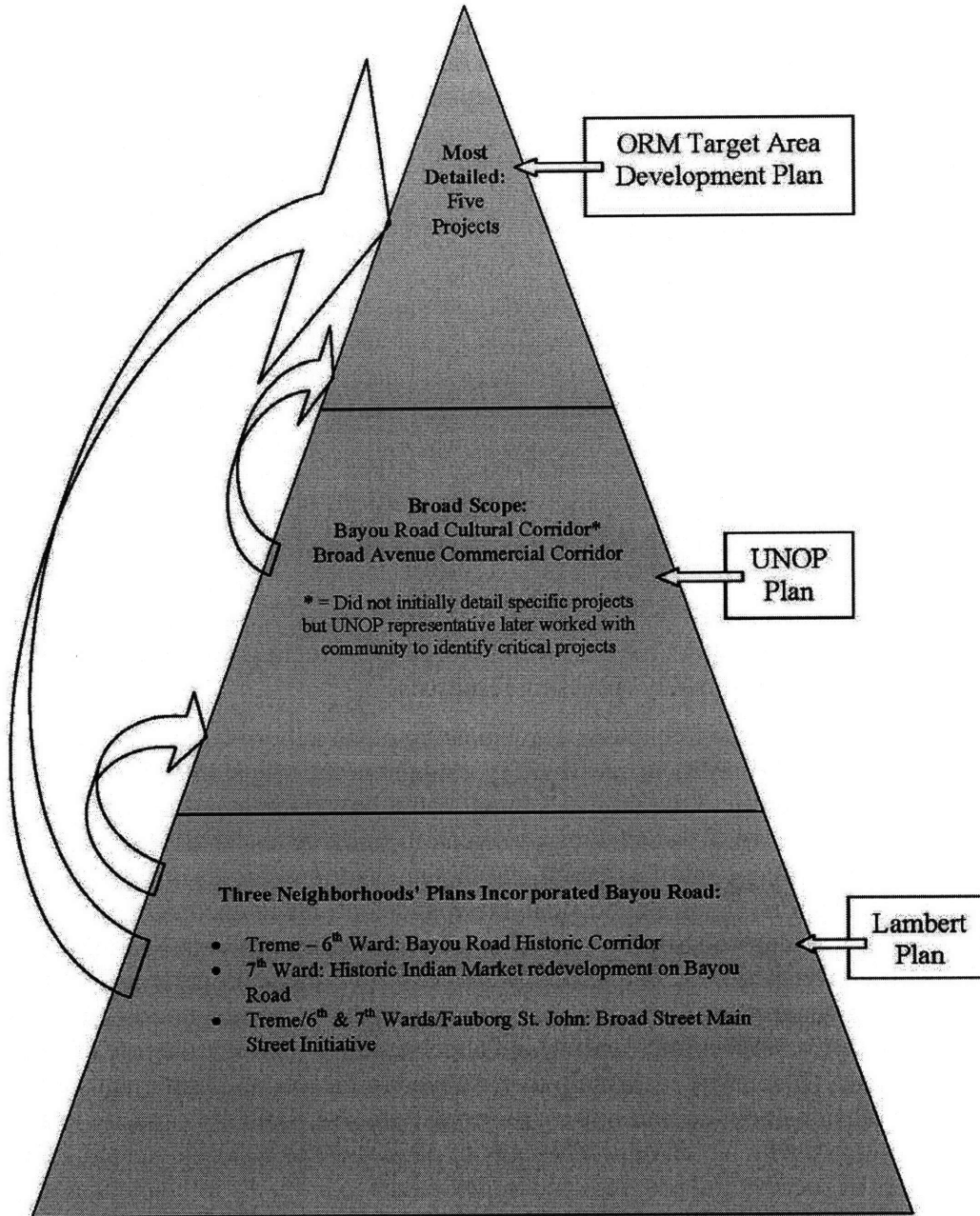
## Bayou Road Timeline of Major Events (August 2005 to January 2008)



The approach to planning and implementation on the Bayou Road Cultural and Historic Corridor contrasts the approach taken on the Freret Street Commercial Corridor, in that Freret has prioritized pushing the city to be responsive and release funding for various initiatives, while Bayou Road has (with the help of alternative investors) made strides to independently carry out what it can, often with far less public resources than Freret. While Bayou Road has received public funding and Freret has benefited from private investments, the general contrast that exists can also be attributed to the depth of the different plans initially developed for each area, the nature of projects and priorities each target area is attempting to implement, and also the structure of the neighborhood organizations that are prominent in the different communities. The following diagram summarizes key characteristics of the rebuilding plans for the Bayou Road community. The next chapter will explore and assess how these characteristics have contributed to specific challenges both Freret and Bayou Road faced in this initial phase of implementation.



## Characteristics of Bayou Road Rebuilding Plans



## 5. UN-PACKAGING CHALLENGES: OBSTACLES TO IMPLEMENTATION

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### *Introduction*

In this chapter, I present the barriers and challenges that stakeholders in the Freret Street Commercial Corridor and the Bayou Road Cultural Corridor communities encountered as they endeavored to implement projects and priorities in this initial implementation phase. Reference to both as target areas in this chapter primarily encompasses the leaders living and working in the area and the organizations working in the interests of each respective community represented by the geographic boundaries of the target areas. Three recurring challenges emerged in both communities; they were issues of communication, accessing resources, and building capacity. These challenges were not only closely tied, but each impacted the degree to which the other two challenges would ultimately affect implementation progress. Thus although communication with the city posed one of the initial challenges to getting things done in both target areas, the issue was compounded by the target areas' protracted quest for adequate resources to rebuild, in addition to the challenges they faced strengthening certain capacities. I found that Freret was able to more quickly combat communication challenges due to the more established institutional and organizational structures present in the community; Bayou Road, on the other hand struggled to establish a representative body that could effectively buffer communication challenges. Both struggled to obtain adequate resources with Bayou Road attracting more private investment and focusing on smaller scale, individual projects, and Freret Street more intent on holding the city accountable to tap into whatever resources were publicly available. Building capacity was the overarching challenge that linked the two, as the more each respective community progressed in developing its capacity, the better able they were to organize, creating effective structures for better communication and ultimately accessing resources.

As is evident from the preceding chapters, implementing plans in both target areas was not without its challenges. The ability to successfully implement the target area plans in this first year, and more importantly, into the future, is inextricably linked to the nature of the challenges the areas faced and the degree to which they presented formidable obstacles to getting priorities accomplished. A key component of assessing the implementation process is thus to explore the specific challenges that Freret and Bayou Road faced and continue to encounter, in this rebuilding process. Conceptualizing both target areas in the context of post-Katrina New Orleans, I identified five major challenges that were likely to impede progress, particularly in the initial stages of implementation. These challenges were linked to the neighborhoods' ability (or inability) to (1) access resources and funding and understand and manage the role of local government officials, (2) identify leadership to spearhead initiatives and important stakeholders from within and outside of the community to inform the process, (3) build capacity to advance priorities, (4) designate which plan or components of plans were to be implemented, and (5) identify measures of success and progress and impediments to both. As implementation unfolded in Freret and on Bayou Road, all of these challenges surfaced. Contributing to the complexity of these challenges was the reality that no one issue emerged in isolation of the others; instead often intricately intertwined, these five challenges essentially subsumed into three broader categories. It is thus more useful to assess the challenges Bayou Road and Freret encountered through the lens of the following: issues of communication and coordinating, accessing needed funding and resources, and building capacity. The degree to which these challenges materialized is detailed

in the following chapter. In both target areas, the communities were generally pleased with the priorities designated in the ORM plan. Though a condensed version of both the UNOP and the Lambert neighborhood plans, most agreed that the ORM plan was consistent enough with the initial proposals raised during the preceding year's planning processes. Furthermore, in an effort to prioritize projects, the idea was to approach rebuilding in phases. Trigger projects have thus been the focus in the early stages of implementation, while other projects and ideas (outlined in the plans preceding the ORM plan) have not been targeted as vigorously for implementation.

### ***Communicating Expectations and the Roles of Government and Target Areas***

Many stakeholders across the city initially assumed that in designating the 17 target areas, the ORM also identified specific priorities and expectations, both for itself as an implementation body, and the leadership and institutions in the target areas. They expected the office could answer questions regarding, how ORM would engage with the target areas, what type of funding would be forthcoming, and what target area designation meant in terms of attracting outside investment. Furthermore, they expected the ORM to identify a possible timeline and process for projects. In fact, in speaking to various ORM staff, it seems their agenda was always to encourage these communities to constantly engage with their local government representatives, identify their priorities, and be proactive. Communicating these expectations to the target areas, however, proved immensely challenging during the first year of implementation and in various instances stymied rebuilding efforts in both communities. "We haven't communicated well enough with the communities to get them to understand what we've gone through to get to this process. We've tried to get information out, but it hasn't been effective. We're realizing we made mistakes and we need to figure out how we can communicate effectively going forward," acknowledged one ORM staff member. Even during the preceding year's drawn out planning process (long before the ORM was established), the issue of effective communication surfaced as a vital proficiency government officials needed to nail, in order to ensure expectations were clear and the rebuilding communities were on board with specified projects moving forward. Then, effective communication required conveying, 1) the value of attending the numerous planning meetings, and 2) what was supposed to happen once the plans were completed, then approved. In this early phase of implementation, communicating the responsibilities of target areas and how funding was to be allocated, proved to be what was most essential to convey. The timeline of implementation and the nature of specific projects have also been critical and must be briefly addressed. The reality is that some projects were and are quicker to implement than others (requiring less authorizations, funding or limited capacity to see results). If the target areas were able to move forward with a project independently, oftentimes, they did, with or without ORM or other government input.

The implementation challenges associated with communication are multifaceted in nature. One aspect of the issue, speaks to communicating expectations, thus, how effective was the ORM in communicating its plan moving forward to Freret and Bayou Road, once they were designated target areas. Was a timeline laid out? Were expectations clearly outlined and expressed to the communities? Did target areas have an opportunity to express their expectations? Another major aspect of communication challenges to implementation had to do with the issue of how implementation was carried out; how well, if at all, did implementation progress (and projects in the process of being implemented) align with the needs and priorities of the respective communities? Were target areas effective in communicating those needs? In most accounts

regarding the Freret and the Bayou Road communities, the answer was no; clear communication of ORM expectations and priorities was markedly deficient across the board. The extent to which the breakdown in communication posed a challenge to implementation however differed between the two target areas. While it seemingly served to drive Freret to demand answers and clarity from the ORM, in the Bayou Road community it bred an air of self-sufficiency; though generally understanding of the challenge and pressure ORM faced with the enormous task of managing implementation, some also expressed a growing sense of disillusionment with city government, as stakeholders in the area tended to find themselves reacting and on the defensive at times when the city did choose to act.

As noted in the two previous chapters, members of both communities learned of their target area status via news outlets at least as early as March 29, 2007. It was not until a few months later in May of 2007, however, that the ORM called a meeting with all target areas to begin discussing what target area status truly entailed. The meeting was also meant to encourage the communities to begin identifying trigger projects—the first projects to be enacted in the target area - as priorities. Another three months would pass before more detailed plans were released in September 2007. As one Times Picayune writer articulated of the plan unveiled that September, “The 86-page draft paint[ed] the most vivid picture yet of the city’s rebuilding priorities since Blakely unveiled his \$1.1 billion recovery blueprint in March.”<sup>23</sup> It was indeed an essential catalyst for inspiring the target areas’ interactions with the ORM, with David Lessinger of NHS noting, “The project matrix gave us something to work from and inspired our whole response.” During the lag period between March and late May, however, many local and a few national news outlets regularly ran articles that envisioned the potential impact of the ORM target area plan and what it would mean for the areas specifically and rebuilding across the city more broadly. Stakeholder expectations in the 17 target areas were heightened, yet very little action was taken, in part because the ORM had not communicated its strategy and expectations to the target area communities. In Freret, between March and June, while there was some talk of getting the proposed Freret Market up and running, very little planning and organizing occurred. While (as detailed in Chapter 3), the individual spearheading the project at the time had traveled, there was a greater sense amongst Freret stakeholders that they had done their part in the planning process, so they were also expecting the ORM to lay out a plan. In the Bayou Road community, organizing around implementing project priorities was ongoing but minimal at best, during that lag period. In describing the nature of communication, Jeanne Nathan (of DNIA) commented, “Information of what they plan to do in support has been ad hoc. We have not been privy to ongoing conversations at the city level.” This is not to say there was no contact with city government officials, but rather to stress how uninformative and lacking in direction such communication tended to be. Looking back, it is evident that the ORM, meanwhile, viewed the process as one that would require an ongoing two-way communication stream. They looked to the target areas to identify priorities at the May meeting, and would later expect the target areas to develop detailed implementation proposals for those projects and priorities. This however was not explicitly articulated to the communities.

Communication deficiencies continued through the summer of 2007 as the target areas waited for ORM to relay how the office planned to act on the trigger projects outlined and selected in the May meeting. As the summer wore on, Freret grew increasingly skeptical of receiving

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<sup>23</sup> Krupa, Michelle. “City Sets Priorities But Details Are Scarce.” The Times Picayune, 12 September 2007 15 September 2007 < [http://blog.nola.com/updates/2007/09/city\\_sets\\_priorities\\_but\\_detai.html](http://blog.nola.com/updates/2007/09/city_sets_priorities_but_detai.html)>

funding for the Freret Market because of such poor communication. This skepticism had a direct impact on the nature of planning around the startup of the market; in particular, visioning for the project was constrained to resources those organizing and managing the market startup thought would be available to them. Since the FBPOA was determined to have the first market day in early September, organizing around the event moved forward even without clear direction or communication from the city and ORM. Fortunately, uncertainty regarding the role of the ORM was not so detrimental to the market so as to completely impede the process; yet, continued uncertainty around implementation strategies moving forward did constitute real road blocks for the additional trigger projects outlined in the ORM plan for the target area. Façade and streetscape improvements were also listed as critical projects for Freret Street. With the initial seed money from the ORM and growing success of the Freret Market, stakeholders in the community looked again to the ORM for direction on how to move forward with the additional projects in October 2007. “What wasn’t clear was would ORM be writing us a check or would they be bidding the work out to someone else, for example approved contractors.” Furthermore they wanted to know, “What is our involvement in this and how can we make it happen quickly,” recalled Lessinger. After Freret stakeholders eventually met with ORM representatives in October 2007 and learned what requirements and expectations the ORM had for future projects (which amounted to a proposal outlining the target area’s goals), there was a marked shift in how the target area approached their future communication with the office. The formation of the Freret Partnership was their response to uncertainty and unclear communication from ORM. With the Partnership, member organizations felt they were strengthening their capacity to carry out and manage the trigger projects for the Freret target area and also providing the ORM with a legitimate and representative intermediary to better communicate with the community.

Meanwhile, in the Bayou Road community, deficient communication was evidenced both through unclear expectations and misaligned visions as implementation unfolded. Communication regarding expectations was no more forthcoming in the Bayou Road community than in Freret, yet the nature of trigger projects differed slightly, impacting how poor communication with the ORM and the city surfaced in the area. While a project like the Freret Market had the potential to be implemented rather quickly, the critical projects for Bayou Road tended to require more time and research. The trigger projects identified for the area were to establish a neighborhood community center, renovate the prominent historic market building on Bayou Road and to enhance the streetscape to highlight the corridor’s historic features. Members of the community had been working for some time to secure a local Presbyterian Church building to house the community center. As noted in the Chapter 4, however, an option to purchase the property was not secured until late in 2007. It was around the same time that stakeholders learned they would need to provide a proposal to the ORM in order to secure the necessary funding to purchase the church building. There was an appreciation that the time it took to secure the option coincided with the timing of learning of this ORM requirement for a proposal. As Jeanne Nathan points out, “We did not have a definite option on the property when we made the proposal [for the community center] to the ORM in May; it is probably beneficial the city was not ready to move immediately because we didn’t have the church.” Though Nathan acknowledges it was not really surprising that a proposal was needed, there was still an expressed sense that it was unexpected. “They should have warned us a while back that was going to come down the pike.” At the end of the day, Nathan and various others agreed that the process would take time, and the projects were not going to be easy to implement notwithstanding communication challenges.

What captured the essence of how lack of communication created serious barriers to progress - totally catching the community unawares and unfolding in a way inconsistent with their needs - was an aspect of the project to enhance the streetscape along Bayou Road. Though the Sewerage and Water Board (SWB) project to repair the road (described in Chapter 4) was not directly under ORM authority to implement, it was still one of the area's critical projects, thus explaining why stakeholders first attempted to reach ORM regarding their dissatisfaction with the implementation of the project. Ideally ORM would have communicated with the Sewerage and Water Board and the target area to establish how and when the project would unfold. Because stakeholders knew exactly how they wanted the streetscape to look, the challenge was really convincing the SWB that re-bricking the corridor was consistent with the target area goal of highlighting the historic features of Bayou Road. The business owners came together to write a letter stating their objections to the nature of the process and were eventually successful in partially achieving those goals. This breakdown in communication, however, led to a process that counteracted other goals for the community, namely those of encouraging and preserving the small business development and character of the corridor. If there was an understanding that the area's most profitable business occurred during the latter months of the year, then better care may have been given to determining when the project would be carried out. What grew out of this process was some disillusionment with city processes, yet more prevalent, was a greater commitment to re-establish DNIA or some representative body that would better articulate the collective needs of the community. "We are looking to become more organized than we are," remarked Jeanne Nathan. Though how the challenges of building capacity have impacted implementation will be discussed later in this chapter, it is important to note here that in both Freret and on Bayou Road, the response to insufficient information and poor communication has been to look internally and strengthen capacity as the ORM on the city level attempts to significantly improve and revamp its communication protocol. The target area plans are very broad in nature and need vetting so that what the communities desire to see is accurately communicated to, and effectively carried out (when appropriate) by the ORM. Since Freret stakeholders have been primarily proactive in advocating their needs to the ORM and their City Council representative, Stacy Head, it was less of a challenge for them to organize around clear objectives early; they have been insistent on maintaining the same goals throughout this initial phase of implementation. This has enabled the community to also more effectively progress with their various efforts. Alternatively, while Bayou Road has found ways to advocate for their needs, stakeholders in the community have often done so as a reaction to the way things are being done in their community. Proactive advocacy would benefit Bayou Road in the future however, as it would not only work as a defense against undesirable interventions by the city, it may also serve as an indication of the community's unified interests.

Beyond poor communication, an even more complex challenge that repeatedly resurfaced in both areas has been accessing funding. Poor communication, while a considerable obstacle, often delaying the initiation of various projects, was clearly identifiable and with deliberate directed efforts to improve it, could potentially become less and less of a challenge to implementation. Yet, without adequate funding the majority of projects would either fail to be implemented or fall short of long term success.

### ***The Arduous Road to Accessing Funding and Adequate Resources***

One sobering question that has consistently been a reality check for the city and target area communities is, "Will there be enough money to implement every project in every target area?"

Furthermore, many are curious as to when the funding will materialize and what (or who) will be the source. At the end of the day, despite the best of intentions, the critical financial resources that will ensure fruitful implementation of priorities have to materialize. Accessing that very funding has been a tremendous barrier to implementation. While there is the issue of trust that enough monies exist, there are also limitations to how funding can be distributed and to whom. Inevitably, the projects yet to be initiated in both the Freret and Bayou Road target areas are those that require outside investment (whether from the city's pool of recovery funds or an interested private investor). A series of projects – that fall under public infrastructure, such as streetscape improvements, and others which involve redevelopment of blighted properties, beautification, such as façade improvements, and even the small business assistance and redevelopment programs outlined in plans for both areas - have been the slowest to implement because adequate financing and resources have not been forthcoming.

Addressing the question of whether sufficient funding is even available has involved repeated attempts to dispel rumors that the money is restrictive and that the funding will dry up before all projects are completed. When the ORM plans were first unveiled in March of 2007, they projected that a total of \$1.1 billion dollars would be spent on recovery in the target areas; at the time, no funding had been released. Through the course of the year (once the LRA had approved the ORM plan), ORM director Dr. Blakely made numerous statements in private meetings, to the public, via newspaper interviews, press releases and reports to the City Council maintaining that the funding had become accessible and was adequate. Much of the federal funding to come through the LRA is Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money, which is reportedly restrictive. The ORM has sought to dispute such reports, thus facing the challenge of trying to explain instead the complexity of distributing the funds. In one private meeting with Freret Street stakeholders, Dr. Blakely suggested that there were discretionary funds available for immediate dispersal to get some projects off the ground. Those, he explained, would be reimbursed to the city as the LRA and others began to release funds. As recent as February 2008, Dr. Blakely attempted to explain to the City Council Recovery Committee that enough funding was available to finance half of the current projects in the implementation pipeline. The remaining funding, though not immediately on hand, would become available at a later date. The ambiguity surrounding the availability of funds simply feeds the growing angst and skepticism that financing is limited or does not exist. Furthermore, the reality that certain projects have moved forward while others seem stagnant does little to stem these otherwise valid concerns.

The nature of funding challenges should thus be conceptualized in the context of the varied types of projects that have been designated priorities for each area. There is one category of projects that primarily requires seed funding in order to move forward. Once funding is released, the target areas can implement these projects at the neighborhood scale. Such projects are distinct from the more complex category of projects that, in addition to needing more than seed funding, require the ongoing engagement of city, and at times, state and federal government agencies; beyond funding, such projects have traditionally been the responsibility of government to carry out. From building cooperation among the relevant government agencies to securing contractors to do the work, managing projects and establishing accountability mechanisms, the ORM's role in these projects is integral and critical from funding through implementation.



The ideal process for funding the first category of projects – neighborhood scale initiatives – has been for the target areas to review their respective trigger project plans, vet them, and develop an implementation proposal to submit to the city or other funding agent for approval of the necessary financial resources; from that point the target areas have been able to then progress somewhat smoothly with implementation. In a very ad hoc way, this is the process by which the Freret Market was able to receive funding. The community center proposed for the Bayou Road target area is to be financed in a similar fashion. What remains unanswered are the questions of "how long will the community have to wait to receive the funding?" and "will delays impede any future progress on the project?" There was and is still an expectation that the city could follow through on small-scale commitments, so the target areas have readily adhered to the city's stipulations for these projects. Freret Street developed a business plan and budget for the Freret Market and submitted it to the ORM in the summer of 2007. Funding was made available mere days later. Stakeholders on Bayou Road are preparing a similar proposal for the community center. Encouraged by their success in obtaining Market financing, the Freret Partnership submitted a more comprehensive plan (outlining a proposed implementation strategy for façade and streetscape improvements as well as blighted properties on Freret Street), to the ORM in December 2007. Funding for these additional projects has not been as quick to materialize, however, signaling the complexity that distinguishes projects, and not only raising the concern that adequate funding may not be available. As Lessinger of NHS argues, "The only thing that has happened in direct concert with ORM is getting the \$11,000 [for the market]; the reason this happened quickly is because it was a very visible and low cost project to get implemented and didn't really require tearing up the street."

Those projects that fall into the second category described above are often tangled in a web of government processes and bureaucracy. One way Freret Street has sought to address this challenge has been to identify projects where they can wrest control of implementation from the hands of government; the goal in this strategy is to be in a position where the target area would only require financial assistance, but be able to manage the implementation process independently. As Lessinger remarked, "We want to know how we can personally get involved in the implementation ourselves since we (NHS) have run similar programs [in the past]. Residents feel like they want to be part of implementation and not wait for the city to come." The Freret façade improvement program may find success in this strategy, and even some streetscape improvements may occur, but acquiring and redeveloping blighted properties may continue to be a priority that is difficult to implement, at least in the short term. Not only are multiple city government agencies tied up in the process (NORA, most notably), the funding for the massive project is likely to come from multiple sources making it more unpredictable. In addition, the very nature of the project is such that it is likely to extend over a long period of time (because of the processes involved), meaning results will not be visible immediately. In many ways, the community's morale is tied to tangible results, and as long as the process is moving slowly, the perception from time to time will be that nothing is happening.

Beyond infrastructure and physical priorities, lies small business development, which has also been identified as a priority in both Freret and on Bayou Road. Due to limited access to resources and information, many businesses primarily on Bayou Road, have not been able to escape the challenges associated with funding implementation. The proposed small business assistance program in its current state, for example, is limited in nature, since all businesses are not eligible to receive the various government-allocated funds. To be eligible for the disaster loans through the federal Small Business Administration (SBA) program for example, applicants must have



had a credit history acceptable to the SBA, and been able to show the ability to repay the loan. The SBA also required collateral for almost all business loans. The state acknowledged early in 2007 that the SBA funding was not as rapid or great as needed and went on to develop the Business Recovery Grant and Loan (BRGL) program. Businesses eligible for BRGL were those that were in operation at least six months prior to the storm. Furthermore, businesses must have reopened or demonstrated the potential to reopen. The only business on Bayou Road that was eligible for and actually received the BRGL grant has been the Community Book Center. Even with approval, bookstore owner Vera Warren-Williams only received half of the budgeted \$20,000 grant in March 2007. As of January 2008, Warren-Williams had not received the remaining \$10,000. Meanwhile Beauty on de Bayou owner, Dwana Makeba and other businesses on the corridor expressed frustration at having applied for the same funding, but not gaining approval. A functional small business assistance program and other similar resources are essential to the full recovery of the area, as the businesses are still struggling to gain firm footing. While the state has a series of programs available to small businesses beyond BRGL, there is a lot of information to sort through and comprehend. Adequate financing and resources are needed to establish and stabilize business operations, and would allow them to grow, expand and even draw new entrepreneurs to the area. The resources and guidance Bayou Road businesses received from technical assistance providers such as Idea Village, and NewCorp provided a considerable boost, but were never intended to single-handedly sustain the area. Business owners are doing what they can with what they have, but progress towards stable business operations is considerably slow, and is likely to remain stagnant as long as adequate resources are not accessible or made available. Such resources include financing to complete the rebuilding of the physical structures housing businesses, ongoing technical assistance, and targeted marketing to raise the profile of the area and draw a growing base of regular customers.

Freret Street businesses have fared slightly better given that the business corridor was more established prior to the storm. Though the number of businesses that have returned to the corridor is at the pre-storm level of 40, the challenge in Freret, like on Bayou Road, is effectively reviving the commercial district. Small businesses would stand to benefit if adequate resources were flowing to the area, but such financing has been stagnant. Lessinger of NHS commented, "What's holding things up is that there aren't experienced developers to do the work; we need people to help structure the financing between businesses and funders." Also, beyond rehabbing buildings is the task of marketing the area. Lessinger went on to explain, "Most developers were rehabbing buildings, but some are actually doing development; we want to make this a viable place to invest and do real estate." Securing government resources to achieve this level of revitalization and development has been considerably slow, but the target area has attempted to accelerate the process by developing a relationship with Seedco Financial. Seedco would help to implement and administer the small business assistance program when funding from the ORM is released. From the nature of their proposal to the ORM, it is evident that the Freret Partnership viewed the slow government financing problem as one where there was not only an issue of businesses gaining approval for funding, but also the question of who the city would hold accountable to ensure funding was utilized according to regulation. By partnering with Seedco, the Partnership hoped the city would not have to go through the extra step of bidding the work to contractors or seek out reliable intermediaries to administer funds. To the extent that they were able, Freret anticipated decreasing the lag time between developing a proposal to the city and the city's response and approval.

Despite the reality that government funding and resources have not always been immediately forthcoming, both target areas have managed to benefit from alternative supports. From the investment of personal resources, to the financing Idea Village provided, the multiple volunteers the organization connected to Bayou Road, and the various groups of volunteers that have done work in Freret, both target areas have addressed much of the initial recovery, rehabilitation and cleanup challenges necessary to really reestablish the areas. Beyond volunteers, both target areas have also sought resources from private investors, though, neither have actively established private investors as their main support; the expectation has been that city resources budgeted for specific projects would be more readily available. In a few instances where private resources were explored, public financing eventually materialized. When FBPOA was skeptical that ORM funding would come through for the Freret Market, there was an effort to secure some private financing through banks. ORM funding was made available before private investors supplied any resources. Stakeholders on Bayou Road pooled private resources to purchase the church that is to be converted into a community center; they expect the city to reimburse them. Faced with the possibility of not obtaining needed public resources in a timely enough fashion to implement other projects and priorities, however, the stakeholders in the Freret and Bayou Road communities are shifting their focus to more deliberately pursue private resources. Private resources in the form of bank loans, foundation grants, university partnerships, and technical assistance and financial services providers, for example, are not particularly novel investments and relationships for stakeholders in these communities, but the target areas are increasingly prioritizing them over government recovery resources. Freret's developing partnership with Seedco and plan to utilize of old Main Street funds for façade improvements are some steps the target area is taking in that direction. Meanwhile in the Bayou Road target area, stakeholders are looking to secure a grant to fully staff and build the capacity of DNIA and are hoping to cultivate long-term relationships with universities they have partnered with in the past, including Tulane and MIT.

As they grow beyond a fear that adequate resources are limited, to the reality that financing is invariably tied to a plethora of extenuating issues, stakeholders in the Freret and Bayou Road target areas are realizing that the financial components of implementation are complex and will be an ongoing challenge. Having encountered a wide range of funding challenges, strengthening the areas' capacities to organize and address various impediments to progress, (from approaching city government to demand answers to seeking alternatives of securing funds), has been the fundamental challenge borne out of these circumstances.

### ***Seeking to Build Capacity, Collaborate and Rethink Neighborhood Competition***

Through the planning process, their challenges engaging with government officials and the barriers encountered as they sought to access resources, both Bayou Road and Freret Street stakeholders increasingly recognized their need to be organized and strengthen their capacity. As implementation efforts intensified, the task at times was particularly daunting as the target areas had to contend with developing and honing the critical capacities to effectively organize internally, express a unified voice, and advocate for the resources essential to ensure their communities' longevity. Both communities are making strides in this arena, with Freret Street advancing more quickly because of institutions that were present prior to the storm. What is lacking is consistent community engagement and the capacity to manage and implement more complex projects. As both target areas tirelessly seek to acquire valuable expertise and strategically maneuver the often chaotic and confusing landscape of rebuilding challenges

throughout the city, these communities are regularly confronted with the depth of the catastrophe that swept through their city. It is the reality of the impact of the storm that motivates them to deliberately build communities that are stronger and more unified than they were before the storm.

Building capacity has taken different forms and presented unique challenges in both Freret and on Bayou Road because of the varied approaches these communities have been driven to take to organize. One sentiment stakeholders in both target areas expressed was the challenge of being caught between the least and worst of the storm. “Neighborhoods started in different places and we were somewhere in the middle in Freret. I think that was really frustrating to people [since] this [planning process] was supposed to level the playing field by giving people access to resources. [Instead] it really said go plan; come up with a plan and get back to us, but did not provide access to resources if [communities] didn’t already have the capacity to do so,” explains Shana Sassoon of NHS. Jeanne Nathan expressed a similar frustration in slightly different terms, declaring, “Even with an optimum situation, we would not be moving much faster; it’s just not that easy. It was not just a hurricane or storm, but a cataclysm!! I just don’t know! It’s hard to know what your expectations should be. I think that moving the fastest are neighborhoods that were more devastated or less devastated than ours. For us, being in the middle ground is the hardest place to be.” Building capacity as communities that did not completely escape but were not completely devastated by the storm, has really challenged these target areas to find ways to internally organize in order to not only secure a sufficient and sustained focus on the city government’s radar, but also to attract the attention of potential private investors. The rationale to this approach is well captured in Nathan’s assessment of the current situation: “The neighborhoods that were more devastated have had more resources flow to them. Any neighborhood group that has been able to secure a sustained relationship with a university or foundation is making the most progress. Neighborhood Associations that were very viable and active before are having the easiest time.”

The target areas have thus faced complex decisions in determining what they can do with what they have, and who to look to for additional support. Community organizing had been particularly challenging in both communities pre-Katrina. Jeanne Nathan recalls the efforts of her Tulane Architecture students to establish a community organization at least as early as five years before the storm recalling, “It was hard to find people to get involved. This has always been a more problematic community in terms of organization. It’s really hard to explain other than it is lower income; many find it difficult to organize because the people working here do not have the time to organize.” As mentioned earlier, DNIA was only about a year old when the storm hit. The business corridor was slightly more organized, and although no formal association existed, there were discussions of establishing one linking business owners along Broad Street and including those on Bayou Road. In Freret, NU had been around for years but the organization was largely informational. Advocacy was rarely on the agenda; as for business organization, FBPOA was inactive. Compounding the challenge of weak organizational structures and capacity was the reality that both target areas had also suffered from major economic and physical infrastructure disinvestment over the years. Neither had built up a strong enough capacity or voice to demand the reversal of these trends. In a sense, the storm helped them find a voice. Today, there are leaders in these communities well able and willing to identify capacity needs essential for plan implementation; they more readily demand needed resources and actively challenge the status quo (of faulty infrastructure and poor business activity). As

they seek to leverage old relationships and garner new support to acquire resources, the real challenge is how to negotiate and prioritize their needs and develop the capacities to be effective.

Assessing Freret's strengths today, Lessinger of NHS asserts, "If we're talking about doing things on the ORM budget, we have a substantial capacity to do those things ourselves. If you look at many other neighborhoods, they don't have the same capacity. [In Freret] our relative challenges are less and the relative capacity is more. I think we can do half or even more [of what is budgeted in the ORM plan], since essentially most of the implementation would happen at a local level; most of the project management does not require city involvement; I feel that we have substantial capacity." Freret's capacity has been very strongly tied to the ORM and city government systems functioning accurately. Formalizing a relationship that already existed through the Partnership structure, Freret stakeholders have assembled what they hope are the resources necessary to get things done once funding is provided. NHS managed a Main Street program in the past, and among other ties, has access to training resources through one of their primary sponsors, NeighborWorks America. Meanwhile, FBPOA is led by business owners and developers who have a strong vision for the area. Furthermore, Neighbor's United has seen its most promising activity and commitment in years (during the past year) and has been able to organize and rally support for initiatives. Yet still posing a challenge to building capacity in Freret, has been acquiring resources beyond those the government has to offer. Thus far, the major projects that have been implemented have been primarily supported with government resources. Given the challenges associated with government funding, reliance on the city may not always be a sure strategy so securing access to alternative resources remains a challenge for Freret. Stakeholders in the area have already started seeking out resources, identifying key partners in the comprehensive strategy they submitted to the ORM in December 2007. An additional struggle with capacity in Freret has been sustaining the citizen engagement momentum and ensuring that the Partnership is representative of the collective community's visions and needs. "What we don't have the capacity to deal with are the trickier issues that are social and interpersonal issues; it is something we are working to deal with; but right now it is not something we have a ready made program to kind of immediately address," remarks Lessinger. Social issues related to race and class, for example, have proven more difficult to tackle and require an understanding of the different interests and needs that exist across the entire neighborhood. Furthermore, there is the challenge of bridging interpersonal differences across the varied goals of the member organizations of the Partnership, and more importantly, ensuring that they are continually aligned with the broader community. As the implementation process has evolved, fewer residents have been as regularly or intimately involved in decision making. The neighborhood scan that took place in January 2008 was an attempt to address this growing concern, and ensure that Freret's capacity is continually validated by the approval and input of the local community.

The Bayou Road community, in contrast, has yet to realize its full capacity in that stakeholders in the area have not comprehensively assessed and consolidated the abilities, skills, knowledge and resources that exist within their community to get things done. Furthermore, they have not been able to consistently organize in ways that would achieve effective outcomes. There are many leaders in the community, but they seem to be spearheading related, but disjointed initiatives. With the call to reestablish DNIA, business owners seeking to stabilize operations, and various individuals taking on whatever tasks they can, this is a community that is full of energy and ambition, but has not been able to channel these energies in a way that would ensure they are more successful in their efforts. Throughout this process, they have managed to collaborate at

crucial junctures, but as Jeanne Nathan contends, “Our working together happened but it is not as sustaining a process for Bayou Road as it should be and could be.” Despite this, outside resources have steadily found their way into the community through Idea Village, university student projects, NewCorp’s Procurement Institute for Minority Contractors, the community’s association with the Broad Street Community Connection initiative and a host of other similar initiatives. The challenge for Bayou Road is primarily organizing capacity. There are countless ideas and resources, but even with the ORM budget and plan, stakeholders have not identified a clear focus or process. The community has not been very proactive in approaching the ORM and city likely because very little organization exists. This has not hindered them from initiating projects such as the community center or façade improvements, but larger scale projects like the pedestrian promenade and streetscape improvements would require the capacity of a more organized community. Focusing on resurrecting DNIA or a related body that is representative of the community uniting has been the main thrust that would address this issue of building capacity. Since such an organization would require a committed and involved membership, beginning to address the broader needs of the community that currently are barriers to this type of engagement (struggling businesses, limited time, commitments to other issues) is likely to be a major consideration for those seeking to organize the community.

One final challenge of building capacity relates to the issue of attracting outside investors to bolster internal expertise and sharing resources across communities. Stakeholders increasingly acknowledged that the prevailing situations and circumstances in their communities were not unique to theirs alone, but were really citywide challenges. Yet, not all communities have been able to attract the same levels of investment or resources to address these issues. As indicated by Nathan’s comment quoted earlier in this section, it appears success attracting particular resources was greater where people within the community had ties to universities primarily, or similar deep pocketed investors; by developing long-term partnerships with such investors, some communities have gained access to the research, technical tools, human capital, expertise and various other advantages enabling them to experience progress more rapidly. Both Freret and Bayou Road had tapped into outside resources in the years prior to the storm, with Tulane Architecture making a major impact through community organizing in the neighborhoods surrounding Bayou Road, and a partnership with Freret through an ongoing City Center collaboration on development projects and mapping. Since the storm, university students, non-profit organizations and volunteers have done projects in both target areas, but none have established ongoing partnerships. Nathan explains, ultimately, “It’s not one organization getting what they want but how do we really deal collectively with these situations. If we have a better map of who is working where, then we can see where the gaps are and help each other more.” Thus the capacity to work collaboratively to more comprehensively combat shared challenges is a future ideal that could reap boundless potential across the city.

The storm blatantly exposed deep-seated issues within these communities, drawing out leaders and advocates who were keen on addressing them. I found that an organized community with a unified voice has become vital in these target areas. Beyond organizing, aggressively advocating for essential resources and developing ties with key outside partners like universities are strengths both communities are seeking to rigorously establish. Recognizing the value of a consistently unified voice, however, the challenge they both face moving forward is ensuring the broader community remains engaged. From building up membership in the neighborhood organization, to identifying people who can actively participate, Bayou Road stakeholders acknowledge that among their first steps is to hire a full time staff person to resurrect the

neighborhood organization, for example. “More staff capacity can ensure a little more sustained organizational process than we have had. The pattern has been more sporadic,” insists Nathan. In Freret, stakeholders seek to bolster the newly formed Partnership without neglecting the masses. Lessinger remarks, “We need to build the capacity to do old school organizing [committing to knocking on doors, and really get to know the people in the community].” Though managing projects and priorities has not proved especially challenging in the first year of active implementation, as these target areas begin to tackle projects that are more complex, the capacity to manage and implement them effectively is a potential future challenge. Anticipating this and strategically planning for it however would undoubtedly mitigate the degree of this lurking hurdle on the horizon.

### ***Conclusion***

There is no doubt that those working to spearhead the implementation process in these communities are strong, visionary and very capable leaders. Nevertheless, Freret and Bayou Road have confronted various challenges that are often inevitable barriers to progress in early implementation. “We are transitioning out of the immediate triage phase and now we are going into the long term care phase. It’s not clear how to negotiate it and we are trying to figure it out,” is Nathan’s reminder. Communication with city government was an initial barrier the target areas struggled to overcome, but as time progressed, Freret and Bayou Road stakeholders recognized internal organization would provide a successful means for better communication and advocacy. They have also, continually struggled to access a steady flow of resources, primarily through public funding, but are now, more strategically, working to identify alternative sources of funding and much needed supports, actively looking to the private sector to fulfill this role. Faced still with a long road to recovery and strengthening their ability to combat these present challenges and better manage implementation in the future, they will require key capacities, some of which these target areas already possess (in particular capable and energetic leadership), but others which they will need to strengthen or acquire, (including sustained citizen engagement, and the expertise to carry out more complex initiatives)

The concluding chapter will discuss recommended strategies for implementation progress into the future and will describe what potential measures of successful implementation would look like in each target area, and more broadly for other areas struggling to recover from a similar disaster of the magnitude of the storms.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

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### *Introduction*

In this concluding chapter, I summarize the challenges encountered and lessons learned, and outline strategies for advancing long-term implementation endeavors. Building from plans the target areas have already prioritized as next steps, I detail specific approaches that could potentially bolster these efforts for other communities facing similar challenges. I also emphasize the public sector's role and how city government specifically can help communities to effectively navigate the long road of implementation.

### *Summary of Challenges Encountered and Lessons Learned*

My objective has been to focus on the target areas' approaches to project implementation, and the successes and challenges they encountered in this initial phase of pushing projects forward. Although I have not placed emphasis on the process the city went through during the same time period, ongoing knowledge and insight into these processes will prove very useful moving forward. As the Freret Street and Bayou Road target areas transition from this very critical initial phase of implementation to long-term rebuilding and interventions, they take with them many important lessons learned and have a sense of what lies immediately ahead. The Freret Partnership is in a place where they have a tentative strategy for next steps in the form of the proposal they submitted to the city in December 2007 and the results from the neighborhood survey they conducted in January 2008. Bayou Road, meanwhile, has the opportunity to develop an effective representative body that can begin organizing to build a core membership base and then outline and prioritize an agenda for ongoing future efforts.

The recommendations detailed in this chapter are based on the challenges the Freret Street and Bayou Road communities encountered and the lessons learned navigating this complex process, which are summarized here:

*Communication barriers* – Faulty communication characterized this early phase of implementation from the onset. At the city government level, decisions were made without adequate communication with affected communities. One of these decisions was the designation of target areas, which many communities learned of via media outlets, not directly from the ORM, who made the decision. Further complicating matters, the ORM did not clearly communicate its anticipated responsibilities or relay its expectations of these target areas in a timely manner, and thus contributed to a sense of confusion regarding who would initiate projects, how funding would be distributed and what communities should expect as a reasonable timeline for project implementation. In addition, as the city attempted to carry out projects, there were instances where the nature of implementation conflicted with the needs and vision of the communities. Meanwhile at the neighborhood level, there was initially an expectation that the city would initiate the implementation process, thus for some time there was a period of waiting for city action. The period of waiting and an increased frustration identifying where to focus rebuilding efforts, in time produced a proactive community partnership in Freret and signaled the need to establish a strong representative body in the Bayou Road community. The response to insufficient information and poor communication has been for these communities to look internally and strengthen capacity.

*Accessing resources* - Funding challenges and seemingly limited resources have caused implementation to progress more slowly than many anticipated or would have liked. The release of federal government funding (in the form of CDBG money) was hindered initially because the city lacked a city-wide recovery plan. With the approval of the UNOP plan and the designation of target areas, public funding was still slow to materialize, only becoming available to the city almost a year after the planning process concluded and over two years after the storms hit. Furthermore, even with a dedicated line item in the ORM budget, target areas soon came to the realization that the nature of projects also impacted the speed with which they would be funded and implemented. In both communities, there were projects that were smaller scale and required fewer authorizations, limited government involvement and less funding; implementation of those projects has been most successful. In contrast, various large scale projects, primarily infrastructure projects, remain uninitiated not only because they require more funding, but because they also require coordination across various city government agencies, and traditionally have been the responsibility of government to carry out. As community stakeholders become more skilled navigating the confusing and often frustrating process of determining how they can effectively get things accomplished with seemingly limited resources, they are seeking resources beyond those that are publicly available but remain largely inaccessible. Stakeholders in both communities have identified university partnerships and technical assistance providers as key private supporters to pursue, having recognized (as detailed by Ferguson and Stoutland, 1999) that relationships across sectors and levels would facilitate the flow of resources. Freret Street has generally focused on garnering public resources, but is shifting to also more proactively seek out private partners. Based on the analysis of Ferguson et al. (1999) presented earlier in this text, strong level-zero and one organizations exist in Freret, and through advocacy have been successful in connecting with level-two organizations, primarily local policymakers. The Freret Partnership represented by three community organizations has played a crucial role in bridging gaps and securing resources for the community. Bayou Road, in contrast, has generally had more private funding flowing to the area, though the community has not always proactively advocated for them; the need to more aggressively identify and utilize such resources has become clear. The absence of a strong and established representative body highlights a gap in the community's capacity to consistently and productively advocate for needed resources.

*Building capacity* – One major finding of this research was that building neighborhood capacity would reinforce long-term rebuilding efforts and the vitality of individual communities across the city. The challenges in building capacity that emerged in Freret and on Bayou Road centered on assessing what resources existed within their respective communities and who (or what) would strengthen and develop capacities they sought to acquire. Community organizing had been particularly challenging in both communities pre-Katrina. While Freret emerged not long after the storm with three key institutions organized to act as representatives and advocates for the wider community, the Bayou Road community still faces the challenge of developing a similar representative body. In addition to developing neighborhood institutions and community organizing, the quest to secure adequate resources to move projects forward in both communities has been particularly tricky. As mentioned above, with government funding for projects many times slow to materialize, securing private partners has proven vital. Since the storm, university students, non-profit organizations and volunteers have done projects and provided technical assistance, but none have established permanent partnerships. Thus beyond organizing, aggressively advocating for essential resources and developing ties with key outside partners like



universities is a capacity these communities are seeking to strengthen. Recognizing how a consistently unified front (coordination and collaboration between neighborhood organizations and residents) could attract such resources, however, the challenge they both face moving forward is ensuring the broader community remains engaged to reliably guide community efforts. As referenced earlier in this text, Chaskin et al. (2001) argue that capacity at the community level will be a function of: 1) a sense of community; 2) commitment to the community among its members; 3) the ability to solve problems; and 4) access to resources. While, as Chaskin et al. (2001) contend, a community need not possess a certain threshold of every characteristic to be considered as having capacity, the aim is maintaining and expanding capacity over time. I found that while commitment to the community among its respective members was evident in both Freret and on Bayou Road, the degree of an expressed sense of community, the ability to solve problems and access to resources varied between the two communities.

### ***Recommendations***

The following recommendations are presented as priorities communities and governments should employ to either preempt the challenges associated with implementation or address them as they arise. The findings of this research and existing literature provide extensive opportunities to comprehensively address the challenges that emerged. While most of the recommendations detailed below focus on specific challenges, embedded in three of the recommendations are cross-cutting issues that are relevant to all of the challenges; they emphasize the need for city governments and communities to establish internal organization and build partnerships and networks across sectors. Specific to governments is the recommendation to develop mechanisms that allow for coordination across agencies.

### ***Addressing Cross-Cutting Issues***

*Establish Internal Organization* The ORM was established with the task of managing and coordinating recovery efforts across the city; inevitably, the target areas had expectations of what type of resources they should have received from the ORM. In speaking with ORM staff, I learned that not only were the expectations of the community stakeholders validated, ORM staff reasserted their role to oversee the process and help to ensure sustained recovery throughout the city. To reconcile the challenges these target areas faced with ORM's acknowledged mandate to deliver needed resources then requires understanding the broader issue of managing expectations. With a disaster of the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina, confusion was inevitable. The duration of such confusion was dependent upon how well organized people were and able to re-establish a semblance of normalcy. Initially, that organization was lacking on multiple levels from the government (federal, state and city) through to the local neighborhood level. While some communities were able to organize and reestablish their presence at a more rapid pace than the city, the city was struggling to find its footing and develop a clear set of objectives to effectively implement its mandate. While these communities should not have been expected to moderate their expectations, the reality was, until the city organized itself, it would be unable to effectively deliver needed resources.

The need for internal organization is critical across sectors when considering what the priority should be for communities seeking to implement projects. For rebuilding communities, internal organization allows for an adequate assessment of needs that will then be communicated to the appropriate institutions best suited to provide resources. The capacity to achieve internal organization in communities is, however dependent on the presence of a neighborhood association or other institution that can draw the community together. Among the critical capacities needed to realize internal organization is the ability to engage in community organizing, build consensus and maintain high levels of participation from the larger populace of the community. For city governments, internal organization places policy makers and service providers in a position that enables them to effectively serve communities. Though only a precondition for being able to manage and implement projects in their municipalities, the internal organization of a city government is at the foundation of any successful initiative. One key condition for achieving internal organization at the government level is the presence of a mayor or other manager able to both accurately assess the big picture and coordinate the agencies under their authority in a manner that ensures efficiency and anticipates predictable barriers. Thus the establishment of a body like the ORM to manage the process is a first step; but beyond the creation of such a body, the ability to skillfully and strategically cause other government operations to tie seamlessly into the operations of an ORM-like structure is critical. Additional considerations include clearly defining the role and responsibilities of the organization as well as ensuring the organization has the capacity to fulfill those obligations.

*Develop mechanisms that allow for coordination across agencies* Closely tied to internal organization, is lack of coordination across agencies, which presents a major threat to implementation success. “No phrase expresses as frequent a complaint about the federal government as does ‘lack of coordination.’ No suggestion for reform is more common than “what we need is more coordination,” contend Pressman and Wildavsky (1973). Though aimed at the federal government, this claim is applicable and very relevant to all levels of government. Given the inherent complexity of coordination, a practical starting point for governments faced with this dilemma is to provide incentives that encourage agencies to coordinate, identifying key points of initial interface that would facilitate coordination and collaboration. Developing an organizational structure similar to that created when ORM merged with the Office of Planning and Development to form the Mayor’s Office of Recovery and Development Administration (ORDA) is another strategy. As the ORM’s 2007 annual report suggested, “the new structure greatly expands its [ORM’s] operational capacity and better enables the recovery mission to be infused throughout City Hall.” Thus authorizations that were harder to gain previously are more accessible and there are efforts to better coordinate multiple city agencies in order to better serve the city’s population. The issues raised in urban governance theory (discussed in Burns and Thomas, 2006) further stress the need for seamless coordination with the private sector as well, to combat the issues associated with the historic and current non-regime political environment of New Orleans. “The shared understanding of city problems and appropriate solutions, serves as a guide to regime members’ long-term actions and responses. Cooperation and a common agenda facilitate governance in the context of scarce resources. Under the social production model, regime members properly target resources to further their agenda.” (Burns and Thomas, 2006)

Inevitably, when a program depends on multiple actors there are numerous possibilities for disagreement and delay. (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973) Coordination can mean creating unity

in a city that is not unified or compelling federal agencies and their component parts to act in a desired manner at the right time, when achieving this purpose is precisely what you cannot do. (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973) Even in the face of admittedly challenging barriers and in some cases, a feat seemingly next to impossible to accomplish, coordination across agencies must be actively pursued to ensure as smooth an implementation process as possible.

*Build Partnerships and Networks Across Sectors:* Partnerships and networks have the potential to significantly bolster implementation efforts at the neighborhood as well as the city government level. Relationships across sectors and levels are needed to channel resources, including information, technical assistance and funding; consequently, members from all levels and sectors of the community development system must network to devise strategies make policies, fight political battles, run programs and mount projects. (Ferguson and Stoutland, 1999) Given the numerous permutations of partnerships-including those that exist within a community, those the community develops with outside organizations, and those that are established between organizations not providing local community services-it is important to extract the capability they each have to offer.

Partnerships that exist within a community can effectively consolidate the assets present within that community. The Freret Partnership is an example of this. Drawing together the neighborhood association, business leaders and a non-profit invested in the community, there are various strengths that each bring to the table. If a community is able to capitalize on those capacities they already have, there is a degree of accomplishment they can realize without seeking resources outside of the community. While it is unlikely that outside resources will be viewed as unnecessary, internal collaboration and coordination across sectors and issues is indeed a starting point. The ability to network with outside organizations to attract needed resources is also essential. Supporting the efforts of a community and bolstering their capacity, outside organizations can provide resources in such a way that expands the potential of a community that would otherwise be operating independently. For target areas in New Orleans, the city would have ideally provided funding resources to launch trigger projects; when this did not occur, having relationships with other, private funders would have helped to ensure momentum was not lost. Other supports like technical assistance and training to address community efforts like community organizing are also often acquired through networks and partnerships with organizations providing these resources outside of a community. Recognizing what such organizations have to offer and strategically partnering with them will help many communities realize increased implementation success. As Mattessich and Monsey (1997) found in their research, linkages to organizations outside the community produce at least the following benefits:

- Financial input,
- Political support,
- Source of knowledge, and
- Source of technical support

Lastly, because city governments do not have all the resources they need to function successfully, it is necessary for public sector and private resource providers to create develop networks and partnerships that are mutually beneficial. As the partnerships mature, they would

allow members to understand each other, calculate the resources each needs, and learn from experience how their partners will react to policy problems. (Stone and Sanders 1987; Elkin 1987; Mossberger and Stoker 2001; Stone 1989, 1993, 2005 in Burns and Thomas, 2006) Citing the depth of impact a partnership could have, Mack (2005) highlights the case of Hurricane Rita, which created some of the same problems in Houston that Hurricane Katrina produced in New Orleans. For example, traffic in both regions left motorists waiting on highways for hours. However, the Houston regime allowed public and private actors in the city to respond quickly to the problems. Houston's mayor, a county judge, and two power companies exchanged information and coordinated to make certain that the city's water supply continued to flow (Mack 2005 in Burns and Thomas 2006). The absence of stable and long-lasting partnerships in New Orleans, by contrast, prevented the development of such rapid and seamless collaboration. Such mutually beneficial outcomes are harder to visualize in the current non-regime governing environment of New Orleans.

### ***Combating Communication Barriers***

In the aftermath of a disaster, communication barriers are inevitable; the degree to which such barriers can completely hamper any progress or continue to present challenges, however, is dependent upon what mechanisms are in place to anticipate and address the common issues that emerge. Below are key priorities for communities and governments for combating communication barriers.

#### **Priorities for Communities**

*Articulate a Clear Vision:* A community's ability to articulate a clear vision is a major component of the implementation process. The vision is what guides implementation, informs what goals and objectives are set, and what projects the community will pursue. The impact of a clear vision is such that it can strengthen interactions among stakeholders within the community, and also helps to positively shape the nature of relationships developed with city government, potential funders and investors and other partners. As one mechanism that allows a community to express its priorities, a vision can also begin the process of identifying what resources will be most beneficial to the community.

*Establish systems for building consensus:* The vision, objectives and priorities in a community are likely to evolve over time. In order to articulate a consistently unified voice and present a representative front, systems for building consensus must be established. Although the need to build consensus did not present enormous challenges in the initial phase of implementation in the case study target areas, the presence of such systems will be crucial to long-term implementation efforts. As more complex decision-making becomes necessary and agreement around core issues is more difficult to achieve, building consensus could pose potential challenges. Consensus within a community would facilitate communication that is indicative of engagement with a broader segment of the population.

*Engage in Proactive Advocacy:* Proactive advocacy characterized much of the Freret community's interaction with the neighborhood's city council representative and the ORM. This proved to be a successful strategy in that stakeholders' persistent efforts resulted in tangible

outcomes. It can serve as a means of pressuring government representatives to address needs that exist in the community as well as the values the community embraces. Proactive advocacy can also serve to deter unwanted government interventions, causing government agencies to look instead to community stakeholders who are well organized and able to articulate clear and specific objectives to direct government actions. Thus community stakeholders require a degree of internal organization and a clearly defined vision (along with objectives and priorities) to be truly effective at proactive advocacy.

## **Priorities for Governments**

*Establish clear lines of communication:* One unmistakable challenge for the city of New Orleans moving forward is keeping a clear line of communication open to communities, assessing their needs and finding ways to transmit needed funding and resources. “As recovery continues, it is critical that we provide the resources to coordinate the target area implementation, involve citizens in decision making, institutionalize policy changes and make other procedural shifts as needed,” reads the statement that concludes the ORM’s 2007 annual report. What this would require is more capacity to interact directly with target area stakeholders, more transparency in ORM processes, and a flexibility that comes with an acute knowledge of navigating a government that has long been written off by many residents in the city as hopeless.

In a broader context, by adopting strategies that keep communities apprised of the city process and include stakeholders in decision-making, governments can effectively mitigate the inevitable communication challenges that result in the wake of a disaster. In addition, establishing mechanisms that track community progress and continually assess the community pulse can improve communication drastically. Furthermore, being amenable to responding appropriately to issues that are raised will go a long way to building trust and ultimately diminish the degree of confusion that is otherwise unavoidable. To address poor communication, Rohe and Gates (1985) identify “department heads and citizen representatives, neighborhood planners and other departments, citizen representatives, and the council and the mayor,” as the key players to be included in streams of communication. One strategy Rohe and Gates (1985) highlight is how some cities have instituted an ‘early notification process’ to keep citizens informed of upcoming agenda items and other matters of potential concern to neighborhood groups, noting how such processes are “an important component of neighborhood planning programs.” Another strategy is to employ city staff as liaisons who act as points of contacts for community stakeholders and can provide relevant information on an ongoing basis.

*Communicate Clear Goals and Procedures of Programs:* A major critique of the ORM’s target area plan was that the office’s role in the process was unclear, and furthermore, procedures for interacting with the office were not readily publicized. For example, stakeholders only learned of the requirement to provide a proposal further detailing existing plans after pressing the ORM for information. For governments seeking to manage a functional implementation program, it is essential to promptly disseminate such information and specify standards that will ensure consistency. Communicating goals and procedures reduces the level of confusion associated with the process. In addition, it aids in setting expectations for what can be achieved through government processes.

Rohe and Gates (1985) recommend the establishment of well-documented, detailed organizational structures that clearly specify the powers and responsibilities of the various groups involved and the operating procedures to be followed. The authors found that many of the conflicts between neighborhood groups and the city administration can be traced back to differences in expectations concerning how the program would operate and that the lack of specificity over time generates confusion, misunderstanding, and mistrust. Investing the time to outline goals and procedures and demystifying city processes may present a challenge initially since it would require capacity in the form of time and staff to devote to the task, but such an investment will prove valuable in the long run. Furthermore, for citizens to be able to exert influence over the development of their neighborhoods, they must be aware of what the city agencies are planning and be able to work with them in developing acceptable projects. A specific process of notification should be established to ensure that neighborhood organizations are kept informed and involved at all stages of the planning process. (Rohe and Gates, 1985)

*Develop systems of accountability:* Systems of accountability provide insight into how and why the government is pursuing certain priorities, making various policy and funding decisions and establishing particular stances. It is important for governments to remain accountable so as to build trust with communities and adjust the trajectory of their process when their actions are in conflict with their stated objectives. Rohe and Gates (1985) recommend that a monitoring and evaluation process should be built into neighborhood planning programs. In addition, yearly evaluations should be done to assess accomplishments, detect problems, and suggest changes in the program's structure and operation. The nature of planning programs should not be static, but responsive to changing conditions. Experience will provide the most useful ways for adjusting a program, and it is critical to involve communities in the process of making such changes. (Rohe and Gates, 1985) In its efforts to increase its accountability, the ORM, for example, makes regular reports to the City Council Recovery Committee and has created advertisements on local television stations.

### ***Facilitating Access to Resources***

There are critical resources needed for any implementation process to be successful. Funding is often viewed as the primary resource that will ensure projects and priorities are implemented. Two additional essential resources are technical assistance and training. Below are priorities for addressing the barriers to accessing resources.

### **Priorities for Communities**

*Identify needs and projects that require resources:* The neighborhood planning process that transpired across the city of New Orleans provided a mechanism for identifying the needs and projects important to communities. With a clear idea of what needs exist, community stakeholders can more readily determine what resources will prove most useful to them. This knowledge helps to facilitate access to resources because it would allow communities to be more strategic in their efforts to attract needed supports. As mentioned above, developing key partnerships with the private sector will prove valuable, especially given the challenges governments face in acquiring and distributing funding. The decision of who to partner with is less complicated and not as daunting if communities have identified what they need and would

like to see happen in their neighborhoods. This indicates however that the planning process is really an ongoing process. In New Orleans, the first phase of planning only listed specific projects and needs. But as target area communities soon learned, a more comprehensive assessment of those needs was necessary to obtain government funds; private sponsors also often seek a vetted, more detailed outline of needs in the form of a proposal. A commitment to this ongoing process is thus necessary to facilitate access to resources.

### **Priorities for City Government**

*Explore and exhaust all possible sources of funding and other resources* Securing resources to successfully implement projects can at times be difficult and complicated for city governments. If they do not have the capacities to explore what is available and acquire adequate resources implementation initiatives will falter or fail completely. Because their priority should be to provide the resources necessary to rebuild, and furthermore, communities are highly dependent on publicly available resources, the more diverse the pool of resources, the more likely a higher percentage of initiatives will be achievable. Furthermore, reiterating the discussion above, it is essential to cultivate partnerships across sectors in order to sufficiently identify a vast amount of resources.

*Develop mechanisms that ensure effective and timely delivery of resources* Community morale is often tied to the ongoing success of implementation projects. As long as resources are slow to materialize, the sense that nothing is happening and growing frustration will dominate peoples' perceptions of the process. It is therefore imperative that governments prioritize the timely delivery of resources. Having multiple sources to draw from is perhaps one of the best ways to ensure this is possible. In the case of New Orleans, if the city has federal CDBG and FEMA in addition to only a few other funding streams to rebuild the city, it should come as no surprise that implementation would progress slowly. Another mechanism to employ, also discussed above, is ensuring coordination across city government agencies. As long as city agencies and departments are acting independently or at cross-purposes, it will be extremely difficult to deliver resources in a timely manner. Lastly, providing resources that are not as difficult to offer, either by funding small-scale projects or training early on will facilitate engagement with the community, conveying a sense of commitment on the part of government to provide resources. There is a danger of only delivering minimal resources, thus the aim is to build trust by offering those resources that are immediately available but ensuring that increasingly valuable resources can be made available over time as well.

### **Strengthening Community Capacity**

Building capacity is multifaceted and complex, requiring strategic relationships, seamless coordination and active collaboration within and outside of a community. Because of such intricate conditions, capacity should be viewed as an asset that evolves and matures over time. What communities should aim to do then is cultivate and hone their capacity to achieve favorable outcomes. Below are priorities that can lead to strengthened capacity.

## **Priorities for Communities**

*Adopt Strategic Community Building Initiatives:* As Mattessich and Monsey (1997) state, “the outcomes of community building efforts are an improved capacity to accomplish tasks and goals and a heightened sense of community – a strengthening of social and psychological ties to the place and to other residents, not to the actual accomplishments of goals.” Since the degree of a community’s capacity will determine much of what stakeholders can accomplish, a focus on community building must be incorporated into broader goals of implementation. Community building can lead to greater participation among neighborhood citizens in ongoing efforts. Furthermore, Mattessich and Monsey (1997) found that representative participation bolsters community building because:

- It brings the talents and resources of a wider, more diverse group of individuals into the process, this is especially critical for problem solving and task accomplishment
- It increases the likelihood of political acceptability of many activities, programs or policies that grow from the community building effort
- It increases the likelihood of ties to outsiders who may have resources to contribute or who may control elements of the environment that can affect the success of the community’s effort.

Ongoing community engagement can, therefore, substantially expand the capacity of a community to realize its vision.

*Emphasize ongoing community engagement:* Community engagement, an important component of community building, is a mechanism for ensuring the goals, visions and priorities articulated by a community are representative of the whole. To encourage sustained community involvement, ongoing community building activities such as organizing around neighborhood cleanups and service projects are initial steps that can help to sure up a foundation of committed neighbors. Chaskin et al. (2001), acknowledging that the lack of participation is a major problem often encountered by neighborhood planning programs, further suggest giving people specified roles or positions with the neighborhood organizations and sponsoring social events that bring neighborhood residents together. As long as community leaders do not lose sight of the importance of community engagement, thereby deliberately and persistently making efforts to draw people from the periphery, there will be a greater capacity to accurately represent the entire community.

*Establish and develop community organizations to be representative bodies:* An established representative body is vital in bringing the community together to discover common interests, develop targeted objectives, and organize and unify their collective voice. In order to collectively benefit from the efforts to raise the profile of a community, the various leaders in the community must strive to find ways to more effectively come together. Advocates must be proactive participants in advancing the initiative. Indeed, a full time person that can devote time and



energy to strengthening this type of organization is critical. The initial absence of a representative body or facilitator may not be detrimental to a community, but establishing a forum that brings the community together in the long term is also critical. As Chaskin et al. (2001) articulated, there is a connection between strengthening community-based organizations and building community capacity. “The more an organization can develop relationships that are authentic rather than token, mutual rather than one-sided, and flexible rather than rigid, the more an organization is likely to be able to connect effectively to its constituency and, through this connection contribute to community capacity.” (Chaskin et al., 2001)

*Pursue smaller-scale projects to build momentum and boost citizen morale* In their proposal to the ORM, the Freret Partnership articulated their plan to focus their energies on the items that had a high chance of success, and refrain from extending beyond their capacity to nurture, implement and manage them. Underscoring the rationale behind this strategy, Mattessich and Monsey (1997) write, “Successful community building efforts are more likely to occur when the process moves community members from simple to progressively more complex activities.” By focusing on a few attainable goals that can be realized quickly, Freret stakeholders anticipated the success of earlier projects would serve as catalysts for future improvements. Because the nature of projects and priorities is such that some are easier to fund or require less intense planning, authorizations or time to see results, a strategy that starts small and builds momentum is useful. It helps to shape expectations of what is possible given the particular circumstances, but also encourages a positive assessment of the process. Mattessich and Monsey (1997) found in their research that as group confidence increased with success on smaller projects, groups progressed to more complex tasks.

## **Priorities for City Government**

*Support neighborhood scale capacity building initiatives:* Although communities have the potential to build the momentum of their community initiatives over time, government and other supports can go a long way in sustaining such initiatives. Because community building initiatives and ongoing community engagement in particular can potentially lead to disillusionment of leaders if participation levels remain low, the added support from government and other partners can prove to be vital. Rohe and Gates (1985) recommend that support to local groups include financial support and technical assistance. “Small discretionary grants should be offered to participating neighborhood groups for the development of demonstration programs or for basic support services.” The added capacity of a full time paid staff person, for example, is a valuable asset Jean Nathan also articulated, and seeks to incorporate into the new structure of DNIA. Rohe and Gates (1985) also found that financial assistance to neighborhood groups was positively associated with the measure of citizen influence on city officials. In addition, “technical assistance helps neighborhood groups organize and develop local plans, design specific improvement projects, write grant proposals, keep informed of new city plans and policies, and research and evaluate opportunities for improving their areas.” (Rohe and Gates, 1985) In the absence of community-initiated capacity building efforts, governments can also provide a means for strengthening community capacity, either directly or through private partners. According to Chaskin et al. (2001), many formal community capacity-building efforts are catalyzed from outside the community, either by government initiatives or funding from private foundations. In addition, “community capacity is more likely to develop when sponsors

think of themselves as investing in capacity and invite local participants to exercise that capacity in a variety of ways valued by the community. For example, developing a funding system and grant programs (with both government and private sources) to establish full-time staff capacity at neighborhood organizations - getting them from level 0 to level 1 –is another way to support community capacity building.

Perhaps the greatest hurdle rebuilding communities face is adequately assessing the big picture and prioritizing steps that will address inevitable barriers along the way. While the recommendations and priorities detailed above are by no means exhaustive, they highlight and consider some of the more complex issues that are likely to emerge as rebuilding communities seek to implement projects and priorities.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

The nature of natural disasters is such that while predictable in some instances, and possibly avoidable depending on the cause, the destruction left in their wake is enough to level entire neighborhoods and destroy livelihoods. When and if the individuals, families and communities devastated and impacted are able to return to the places they once called home, through picking up the pieces they can begin to envision a place that is better, safer and more resilient than the one that was destroyed. The major challenges the Freret Street and Bayou Road communities encountered during the initial stages of rebuilding plan implementation were not common only to them, and thus offer an opportunity for others to try and approach an otherwise bleak situation with a sense of optimism.

It is important to note first that rebuilding would be almost impossible to do independent of government supports, and the charity of those who are not victims of the disaster; thus state, and federal governments have a role to play. Furthermore, private institutions, foundations, and at times the international community may aid in supplying resources. For a local government, there is still a clear responsibility in the face of disaster to do everything in its power to mitigate the impacts. Organizing, coordinating, and collaborating as quickly and as effectively as the situation would allow, is vital. Communicating with affected communities, encouraging their input, ensuring all processes are transparent and ultimately delivering needed resources will go a long way in ensuring the long-term recovery of these communities. Developing structures and mechanisms that would enable a local government to operate in an effective manner should thus be a top priority.

When government supports are slow to materialize, however, there are still ways communities can reestablish themselves by organizing internally and advocating vigorously for their needs. Of the three challenges that emerged in the case study target areas, building capacity presented the most complexities. Yet, if communities are able to come together and determine what resources are already available to them, they can begin to realize results. Recognizing that all in the community are impacted by the disaster, one way a community can begin to unify is through sharing essential resources as the businesses on Bayou Road did for almost a year in the immediate aftermath of the storm. As individuals are better able to fend for themselves, the community can begin to think of ways to collectively rebuild and organize around a shared vision for the community. If a representative organization or established institution is present (as

NU or NHS were in Freret) in the community, the organization can act to facilitate discussions around shared values and visions. The critical role for the facilitator is to be able to bring everyone to the table not only to ensure all voices are heard, but also to strengthen the capacity of the community to implement the goals and objectives that will help them realize the vision. Recognizing that rebuilding processes in the aftermath of disasters can span many years, for successful implementation to occur, communities must be determined to overcome each barrier that emerges, dedicated and consistent streams of resources must be readily available, and comprehensive support systems that will ensure that communities can rebuild and realize their long-term visions must be accessible and viable.

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Emergency Support Function #14 (ESF-14) Plan

<http://www.louisianaspeaks-parishplans.org/Reports/Rpt96135126398.pdf>

Lambert Plans

<http://www.nolanrp.com/>

Office of Recovery Management (ORM) Target Area Plans

<http://www.nolarecovery.com/taplans.html>

Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP)

<http://www.unifiedneworleansplan.com/home3/>

Freret ICMA Plan

<http://feretneighborsunited.com/?q=node/84>