Plan for the 21st Century

NEW ORLEANS 2030 1 | PLANNING FRAMEWORK
To the Memory of Marshall Truehill

When members of the Planning Commission, its staff, and the consultant team first asked one another if New Orleans’ Plan for the 21st Century should include a dedication, the answer was immediate and unanimous: The plan should be dedicated to the memory and life of the Reverend Marshall Truehill, Jr.

Marshall, who grew up in New Orleans’ Calliope public housing development, inspired New Orleanians from every neighborhood and livelihood to understand each other better and to work together for a better city. A lifelong advocate for public housing residents, pastor of an interracial congregation, chair of the City Planning Commission, and founding member of City-Works, an organization that fosters civic engagement, Marshall moved all of us who worked on this plan to pursue an equal commitment to “every person and every place” in New Orleans. He was deeply committed to inclusive planning, and planning team members were honored to be present when Marshall received his Ph.D. in planning from the University of New Orleans in December, 2008. His life, which came to an untimely end on Christmas Day that same month, will inspire generations of New Orleanians to cross lines of diversity and collaborate to build a better community for all.
The fleur de lis has a history stretching back to medieval times. It came to New Orleans in 1718 with the first French settlers as the emblem of the French monarchy and was used to mark the symbols and property of the royal state, from flags, military uniforms, and official buildings to the slaves who produced colonial wealth. While the emblem is also used in other places colonized by the French, it has become a particular cultural icon of the City of New Orleans, symbolizing its people, culture and spirit.
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How the Master Plan is organized

The Master Plan contains three volumes. This is Volume I, the Planning Framework, which sets out the overall approach and provides a condensed version of the plan’s goals and strategies. Volume 2, the Technical Plan, presents analysis, policies, and strategies. Volume 3, Appendices, includes background materials. The entire Master Plan will be available at www.cityofno.com and through the City Planning Commission (504-658-7000).
Overview and key recommendations

New Orleans has emerged from a crucible of harsh realities unique among American cities. With no model to follow, in this Master Plan the city has invented its own. More than 5,000 New Orleanians have helped assemble this visionary blueprint for moving the city squarely into the 21st century, mixing in equal measure their hard-won experience and their dreams for the future.

Leading the way as the sponsors and stewards of this plan, the citizen members of the City Planning Commission (CPC) insisted that the path to the future begin with the intensive, neighborhood-based planning that followed Hurricane Katrina. They also insisted that every aspect of the Master Plan—starting with its vision—be rooted in a new round of vigorous public participation. The community responded, and a process that began with widespread complaints of “planning fatigue” ended with a level of community engagement far beyond levels of master plan participation seen in other cities.

Values, policies, and strategies for a proud future

To a surprising degree, a process that began with sharp debate about potentially explosive issues—Should this plan serve

New Orleans was a city of over 600,000 people in 1960...
...that suffered economic decline in the 1980s...
...and then experienced the worst urban disaster in U.S. history.
But many people returned to rebuild their beloved city better than before.
A series of recovery planning processes helped get the city back on its feet...
...but enormous challenges still remained...
people who had returned, those still in exile, or new residents eager to help with rebuilding? Should the city’s footprint shrink? Did the city have too much or too little affordable housing? Was “uptown” or “downtown” controlling the process?—ended in broad accord as the roughly 5,000 people who participated turned their focus to the values, policies, and strategies that should guide the city’s future.

**Key recommendations**

The plan’s focus matches these priorities, which combine respect and love for New Orleans’ past with bold new aspirations for a proud future:

- Enhance livability and opportunity for everyone who lives in New Orleans today; enable the city to create the high-quality housing and jobs needed to persuade people to return; and nurture the heritage and amenities that will attract new residents to help build the city’s future.
- Preserve and restore all neighborhoods—whether wet or dry, historic or contemporary, rich or poor—with tangible steps to reverse the blight and vacancy that began in the 1980s and spread across the city after Hurricane Katrina.
- Reinvent failed housing policies in ways that serve the entire community and support local commercial districts.
• Redevelop underutilized “opportunity” sites and corridors as 21st-century neighborhoods that honor and build on the city’s rich traditions.
• Celebrate, preserve, and interpret the city’s rich and diverse history and culture.
• Match preservation of the city’s proud heritage with economic and technological innovation.
• Build a newly diverse economy that will flourish in the 21st century and create an era of economic opportunity not seen since the 1960s.
• Extend opportunity to everyone and provide people with the skills and education so that everyone contributes to building a stronger economy.
• Make New Orleans one of America’s most sustainable cities, marked by innovative approaches to protecting the city from heavy rains and storms.
• Extend sustainability with improvements in transit, parks, worn-out streets and utilities, and other elements that will make the city more livable and competitive.
• Build on innovations in green building, environmentally sustainable living, and planning for climate change to establish New Orleans as a national leader in environmental quality.
• Inaugurate an era of effective and efficient government marked by transparency and communication and capable of providing the leadership New Orleans needs both to finish recovery and to move into a century of renewed promise.
• Support the new approach to governance with new partnerships that draw on every facet of the community to enable people to move beyond long-standing arguments and work together to achieve renewed promise.
• Translate all of these qualities into a state-of-the-art comprehensive zoning ordinance (CZO) that captures New Orleans’ commitment to preserving its heritage and achieving the promises of a new century.

Consensus and debate
This master plan is no prediction, it is a plan. Hard work and difficult decisions remain, and New Orleanians will need to do that work and make those decisions together to achieve these goals. The effort already invested in this plan, however, confers a distinct advantage: it allows New Orleanians to speak with one voice of a resolve to build a better city and a willingness to craft effective strategies to implement this resolve. Perhaps even more important, this plan stands as an invitation to broad, energetic participation and debate about the issues that will continue to shape New Orleans—and a call for the courageous leadership that will translate this debate and dialogue into action that guarantees a brighter future for New Orleans.

A major next step: new zoning
One of the most important steps in implementing the Master Plan will be creation of a new comprehensive zoning ordinance (CZO). After adoption of the Plan, the City Planning Commis-
The role of buildings and civic space in drawing New Orleanians together

Throughout the process out of which this plan grew, participants expressed a yearning for places that would bring New Orleanians together and build stronger citywide civic ties. They loved their neighborhoods but lamented a lack of spaces that breached the many barriers that divide residents. Mirroring this aspiration was their pride in and enthusiasm for the unifying experience of Mardi Gras and a shared heritage of music and food. But such experiences only underscored the need for civic spaces that reinforce and build New Orleanians’ common bonds on a day-to-day basis.

Aububon Park and the proposed Reinventing the Crescent parks along the Mississippi (shown at right) represent that kind of civic space. A proposal by the mayor to purchase a new city hall and redevelop the current city hall and adjacent Duncan Plaza—a proposal whose fate remains undetermined—suggests that the time has come for New Orleans to plan for a 21st-century city hall and a signature civic space that celebrates the city’s history and its contemporary vitality.

The Project for Public Places (PPP), a nationally respected nonprofit group dedicated to “creating and sustaining public places that build communities,” defines a successful civic space as a location that “serves as a stage for our public lives…settings where celebrations are held (and) cultures mix. They are the ‘front porches’ of our public institutions…where we can interact with each other and with government.” In cities with a good supply of popular and appealing civic spaces, PPP has found, “residents have a strong sense of community; conversely, when such spaces are lacking, people may feel less connected to each other.”

So how might New Orleanians envision a new civic space that serves as a “front porch” all residents can share? The planning criteria are straightforward: a downtown location that is prominent and accessible by public transportation; uses that include a variety of civic buildings and elements such as fountains that invite diverse people to enjoy the space together; and exciting design that broadcasts New Orleans’ rich heritage and renewed vitality.
As the urban core of a region that shares many of the opportunities and challenges addressed in this Master Plan, the City of New Orleans must work in tandem with its neighbors to tackle the numerous, complex, interrelated issues that affect all of Southeastern Louisiana. The scale of these physical and fiscal challenges—restoring coastal wetlands, expanding regional transportation, equitably allocating affordable housing, and delivering adequate health care to all residents—is so vast that no city can hope to address these issues on its own. Only by banding together, particularly through greater intergovernmental cooperation focused on mastering these and other important challenges, can the communities of Southeastern Louisiana reach their full potential and collectively create a more livable, prosperous, and sustainable region.
What is the Master Plan?

This comprehensive, citywide plan will guide the city's growth for the next 20 years. Building on previous plans for New Orleans and extensive public participation, this plan adapts global best practices to support the goals and objectives of a broad cross section of New Orleanians.

As New Orleans turns from post-Katrina recovery planning to long-range planning for the next several decades, this plan seeks to provide guidance in addressing some fundamental questions:

• How do we keep the city safe from flooding and natural hazards?
• How do we fund and rebuild our infrastructure?
• How do we grow the city's economy to provide economic opportunity for all residents and a prosperous future for our children?
• How do we insure that all residents have access to basic needs such as decent and affordable housing, quality education, reliable health care, a robust transportation system, a diversity of places of worship, parks and open space, and community facilities?
• How do we preserve New Orleans' architectural, cultural and artistic heritage and sustain its cultural traditions (including ingenuity, inventiveness, cultural diversity, and the ability to adapt to change) for future generations?
• How do we meet the needs of current residents while making a place for residents displaced by Hurricane Katrina who still have not been able to return home and attracting new residents from around the country and the world?
• How do we provide predictable land-use and zoning guidelines that meet the needs of residents and developers alike, preserve historic character, and foster innovative growth?
• How do we insure fair and meaningful public participation in implementing this plan and in future investment decisions—both public and private—that affect local quality of life?

In answer to these questions, the plan provides:

• A summary of the context that shapes the Master Plan;
• A practical, and measurable set of citywide goals and objectives (both short- and long-term);
• Clear, step-by-step strategies and actions that public and private actors can take to meet those goals;
• A set of policies to guide civic leaders and public agencies in making decisions about public investments and priorities, including capital budgets;
• A future land use map that describes the kinds of places we want to preserve and create and guides the zoning regulations that will help to achieve them;
• Benchmarks for the public to use in monitoring progress.
of the plan’s implementation and against which to review capital budget and development proposals; and

- A basis for advocacy for state and federal resources to support projects that the city cannot carry out on its own.

The Master Plan is prepared for use by residents, businesses and developers, elected and appointed officials, the City’s administration and staff, and others with a stake in the future of New Orleans. Its citywide policies and strategies represent critical tools for implementing the letter and spirit of neighborhood and other place-based plans. It has three volumes: the Planning Framework, which is this shorter document; the Technical Plan, which contains more extensive analysis, discussion, and implementation information; and an Appendix. This Planning Framework sets out the overall strategic approach and provides a condensed version of the goals and strategies of the Master Plan.

As the city’s primary policy and planning document, the Master Plan is of particular interest to elected officials who must adopt it and fund its implementation; appointed officials who will use it as a guide to discretionary decisions; and municipal agency heads charged with implementing the plan and revising other plans to conform with it. This Plan is also of critical importance to the government agencies that are not directly under City control, and to all present and future civic leaders in understanding their constituencies’ objectives and framing their own leadership roles in these terms. Finally, the plan is a guide for residents to understand—from a citywide perspective—recent trends, current and future opportunities, constraints, and critical issues that must be addressed if New Orleans is to thrive, and the role that each individual can play in achieving.

How does the Master Plan have the “force of law” and how does it get approved?

In November 2008, voters approved a city charter amendment that provides specific language that links the Master Plan with the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, the capital improvement program and the annual capital budget, and land use actions such as approvals of subdivision plans, site plans, and so on. The amendment states that zoning, the capital improvement program and capital budget, and land use actions must be consistent with the goals and policies of the plan. The Master Plan itself does not contain any zoning regulations. Detailed zoning is separate from the plan and simply has to be generally consistent with the plan. The City Council still has final authority over and right of approval of the capital improvement program, the capital budget, and all zoning changes.

Approval and amendment process

The 2008 city charter amendment did not approve this Master Plan or any other specific plan. To be approved, a master plan has to be based on a process of community participation; it has to go through public hearings at the City Planning Commission and be approved by the CPC; and it has to go through public hearings at the City Council and be approved by the City Council. An approved master plan can be amended once a year, again going through a process of public meetings, public hearings before the CPC and approval by the CPC; and public hearings before the City Council and approval by the City Council.
Public outreach

Summary

Given the city’s recent history and the range of issues it faces, the short timeframe provided for producing the Master Plan (and CZO that will follow it) meant that outreach has been essentially continuous—and often intense—over the course of the project. The planning process began in August, 2008 amid expressions of “planning fatigue,” but interest built steadily, particularly after passage of an amendment to the city charter giving the Master Plan and subsequent CZO “the force of law.” By the midpoint of the process the planning team could barely keep up with requests to tour neighborhoods with local residents; brief elected officials, neighborhood groups, and citywide organizations; and respond to inquiries submitted through the project’s website (www.nolamasterplan.org).

Public engagement included a series of five, day-long citywide forums held throughout the planning process in different parts of the city. The forums

Thousands of participants lent their creativity, values, ingenuity, and hard work to help shape this Master Plan.
Frequently asked questions about the Master Plan

How can I be sure that the Master Plan includes improvements for every neighborhood in the city?
As a citywide plan, this Master Plan is committed to the principle of “every place and every person,” and shows future improvements for every part of the city. Every planning district will have a planner assigned to work with the residents and businesses of that district, identify the improvements needed, and coordinate with public and private agencies to get the work done. Community centers, parks and recreation areas, schools and libraries will be the civic heart of every district and accessible from every neighborhood.

How will the master plan be approved and how can we change it after it is approved?
Approvals: The master plan has to go through two rounds of public hearings and approvals before it becomes official. First, the City Planning Commission (CPC) will hold public hearings on the plan, make any needed revisions, and then approve the plan. The CPC then sends the plan to the City Council. The Council will hold public hearings and then decide if it wants to send the Plan back to the CPC for further revision or approve it. If it is sent back, the CPC will resolve any questions that came up and send the revised version to the Council. On approval by the Council, the plan is officially adopted.

Changes: The law allows and requires opportunities to change the Master Plan to make sure it stays relevant to New Orleans. The Master Plan may be amended once a year through a process that requires public hearings. The Master Plan must be reviewed and, if needed, updated every five years, with even more public participation required.

What role do the Mayor and City Council have in the implementation and management of the Master Plan?
Elected officials will lead the implementation of the Master Plan. The Mayor and the administration will use the goals and strategies of the Master Plan as a guide in setting priorities and allocating resources to make improvements in the city. The authority to make zoning changes and any other laws will continue to reside with the City Council. As the Council exercises its powers to approve the city budget and the capital plan, the Council will also be making decisions about how the Master Plan is implemented.

How can implementation of this plan make a difference to me and my neighborhood?
The Master Plan calls for a park within walking distance of every resident; strategies to make sure that new development fits in with existing neighborhoods; more transportation alternatives—bike routes and expanded transit—as well as better roads and sidewalks; planting enough trees along sidewalks, in neutral grounds, and elsewhere to bring half the city under shade; and more retail and services to support neighborhoods. The plan contains a framework for implementing a system of neighborhood and community participation in decisions about private and public development, so residents can make their voices heard through a mandated and structured process.

How does the plan give everybody the chance to share in economic opportunity?
The Master Plan focuses on strengthening the “building blocks” of a successful economy, linking education and workforce development, support for small businesses and the cultural economy, cultivation of an entrepreneurial culture, promotion of potential new industries with health science and green jobs, and support for the existing successful sectors of the economy.

How will the plan help our city bounce back quickly from hurricanes, floods and other disasters?
First, the Master Plan recommends that the City take the lead, through a strong Department of Environmental Affairs, in understanding, communicating, and coordinating everything to do with protecting the city from natural disasters, adapting to climate change, and becoming more resilient. The Plan calls for making evacuations a thing of the past with public facilities that can withstand a 1 in 500 year storm at a minimum and a community discussion on the role that every level of government and every household can do. The new agency will explore the feasibility of following Dutch models of living with water through a system of beautiful open canals. Finally, the Plan calls for New Orleans to lead American cities in securing a new minimum 1 in 1,000-year storm standard of protection and resilience comparable to the minimum standard in Europe and Japan.
focused on the core themes articulated in the vision and on implementation strategies. Two rounds of well-attended district meetings focused on both citywide and neighborhood issues. In response to requests from the community to review a working draft before the second round of district meetings, the planning team issued a full rough draft in late March 2009. As grass-roots interest in the Master Plan grew, neighborhood leaders asked for additional outreach and the planning team began working with the Neighborhood Partnership Network, City-works, Preservation Resource Center, the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation, the Greater New Orleans Foundation, and other organizations to take advantage of networking and outreach opportunities that they could provide.

The public process also included a Citizen Advisory Group comprising representatives from all over the city; Working Groups focused on specific topics in the Master Plan and the zoning ordinance; and committees on planning and on zoning that advised the City Planning Commission. Informal opportunities for public engagement included numerous interviews and small focus groups, meetings with communities of interest (business, environment, historic preservation, Latino and Vietnamese organizations are examples), and interviews with the media.

Throughout the process, the planning team used the project website to announce upcoming public events, share meeting materials and outcomes, post draft versions of the plan itself, and collect and respond to comments and questions. In response to requests for more time for community members to review the plan, the planning team posted a rough draft in late March and followed up with a citywide briefing for neighborhood and citywide organization leaders.
Key issues

Participants raised a broad range of issues. Some advocated “shrinking the footprint,” a concept that most participants opposed—yielding a commitment to “plan for every place and every person.” Proposals for the Medical District from outside of this planning process and other initiatives prompted calls for a stronger city role in planning for major projects going forward. Participants grappled with the complexities of fighting blight and meeting citywide affordable housing needs while taking into account the city’s limited resources and the unique conditions in individual neighborhoods. Both the fairness of the geographic distribution of recovery dollars and the sincerity of efforts to bring back residents who had not yet returned stirred debate, yet most participants did agree that New Orleans should expand job training and other programs that enhanced opportunities for all residents.

Throughout the planning process, citizens expressed reservations—and sometimes outright cynicism—about the City’s ability to enforce laws and implement plans. Other widely held concerns that emerged included a need for more effective communication and information-sharing with citizens and more accountability for government performance.

Many participants called for a greater focus on historic preservation, expanded transit, and support for neighborhood commercial districts. Likewise, the gradual shift from recovery mode into long-range planning focused increasing attention on issues of environmental sustainability such as renewable energy generation and urban agriculture.

Three concerns prompted support across the community. Participants endorsed the need to address basic challenges: blight, crumbling infrastructure, enforcement related to zoning and building codes, and economic stagnation. Residents from every neighborhood focused on the draft Future Land Use Map to insures that it respected their neighborhood’s traditional character. Participants across the board called for a stronger municipal role in protecting the city from the impact of future storms and intensified planning to address the impacts of climate change.
Vision: New Orleans in 2030

Livability, Opportunity, Sustainability

The stories the people of New Orleans tell are deeply bound in family, religion, music, race, art, and the city’s river delta setting. People share a cultural memory that blends legacies from Europe, West Africa, Native American tradition, and other cultures. They also burnish a line of cultural continuity and continuously renew it. Every aspect of the city’s life is shaped today by the strength and richness of this continuity, unique among American cities. This remarkable city and its people have defied wars, booms and busts, and river floods, and now are well on the way to recovering from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. The purpose of this Master Plan is to carry New Orleans’ stories into the future.

Moving forward begins with the recognition that the years of economic stagnation that followed the oil and gas bust in the 1980s created pessimistic stories, as some New Orleanians lost confidence. Many residents saw the city as a place with a golden past it could never hope to recapture. Competition over a shrinking economic pie eroded a sense of shared destiny.

Yet with effective government, a new era of partnerships, and the shared political will to make tough decisions, New Orleans is poised over the next twenty years for a transformation that brings new economic growth, opportunity, and innovation into a city that continues to honor its roots. By 2030, the city will achieve the promise of this vision, adding to its story in tangible, visible and subtle ways.

How will this happen? Hurricane Katrina could have broken the city’s spirit, but it did just the reverse. In houses of worship, at dinner tables, and in the aisles of grocery stores in Houston, Memphis and Atlanta, New Orleanians told their Katrina stories to each other—often complete strangers—who in turn shared, listened, and were moved. As people found common threads in their stories, they returned and wove them together, finding the collective will to write a remarkable new chapter together:

New Orleans will build its future on a rich cultural legacy and long-standing traditions of creativity, innovation and adaptation to change.

New Orleans 2030—Livability, Opportunity, Sustainability. This Master Plan contains their voices, hopes and determination. It sets the stage for the stories to come.
New Orleans in 2030

**LIVABILITY | ENHANCED QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL THAT PRESERVES THE CITY’S CHARACTER**

**In 2030** New Orleans is a city of unique historic character and ethnic and cultural diversity. The hard work of recovery and resettlement has restored the city’s neighborhoods. Rehabilitated and new homes fill once-empty lots in “dry” and “wet” neighborhoods alike. Known as one of America’s most walkable cities, New Orleans is a place where everyone can walk to transit, shopping and parks. Bikeways and excellent transit service offer appealing alternatives to the car. A new generation of mixed-use neighborhoods has replaced faded shopping centers and long-vacant industrial sites. These new neighborhoods incorporate stores, small businesses and restaurants, and offer expanded housing choices for people of all economic circumstances and at all stages of life. Many people choose to live downtown, now a thriving center of intensified urban living, business and a “common ground” that draws people together from across the city. Visitors from around the world mix with residents in downtown’s restaurants and shops.

**OPPORTUNITY | EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY AND INSURING THAT EVERYONE HAS AN EQUITABLE CHANCE TO SHARE THE BENEFITS**

**In 2030**, New Orleans has built on its rich legacy of place and culture and its established industries to strengthen its role as the creative core of its region.

New Orleans will be one of the most livable cities in America as neighborhoods are knitted together by convenient and walkable mixed-use neighborhood hubs that replace faded shopping centers and long-vacant industrial sites and by transforming barriers like the I-10 Claiborne expressway into tree-lined boulevards.

New Orleans’ role as the region’s economic engine will be strengthened by comprehensive workforce-development opportunities and a diversified economy that blends traditional and emerging sectors, including a new generation of creative and knowledge-based entrepreneurs.
It has become an incubator of innovation among river delta cities worldwide. Recognizing that modern economies depend first and foremost on people and their skills, New Orleans has invested in lifelong workforce training, effective and cost-efficient government, and enhanced quality of life. Better education, expanded job training, workforce readiness, and similar programs have extended new opportunities to native New Orleanians as well. From culture, tourism, and maritime trade, to life sciences and media, to alternative energy and coastal protection and restoration technology, New Orleans has diversified and created a new era of jobs, built both on the skills brought by new residents attracted to the city’s creativity and quality of life and the on the innovative work of city natives.

**SUSTAINABILITY | A MORE RESILIENT CITY WITH SHARED ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AT EVERY LEVEL**

**In 2030,** New Orleans has become one of America’s greenest cities: resource-efficient, environmentally healthy, and resilient. The city’s building and zoning codes are national models for preservation and sustainability. The city’s success has drawn new regional growth into enhanced neighborhoods from Audubon to a thriving New Orleans East, reversing regional sprawl. A global center of knowledge about managing natural and man-made systems to prevent flooding in low-lying cities, the city now boasts landscaped canals, parks with water features, and shady, tree-lined streets that contribute to its unique beauty while reducing subsidence and managing water from storms.

*New Orleans can become a city that celebrates its relationship to water and uses water-management strategies to provide amenities to neighborhoods wherever possible.*
New Orleans in 2030

A CITY WHOSE CHARACTER CELEBRATES PRESERVATION AND INNOVATION

New Orleans’ unique character and timeless quality should be enhanced, not changed. In 2030 the city will offer a choice of neighborhoods dating from the 18th to the 21st centuries, whose tree-lined streets invite walking and whose lively commercial districts invite lingering and meeting friends. Well designed new and rehabilitated housing, shaped by city design guidelines and zoning will reinforce the character of existing neighborhoods. Nearby, vibrant new neighborhoods will replace former strip malls and underutilized industrial corridors. Characterized by three- to five-story buildings—with lofts and other housing above shops, restaurants, and services, offering residents expanded housing choices—these new neighborhoods will be designed with public spaces to extend the tree-lined character and human scale of the city’s historic streets and parks.

A network of street cars, bicycle ways, and other transportation choices tie the city’s neighborhoods together. Neutral grounds, filled with thousands of trees, will take on a park-like quality and tree cover will shade 50% of the city during hot summer months. The city’s “main streets” such as Freret, Newton-Teche (Old Algiers), and Broad Street

The historic character and scale of traditional New Orleans neighborhoods will be preserved, while vacant and underutilized areas will be transformed into new neighborhoods that expand the range of housing choices and provide public amenities such as public open space along the waterfront.
Promoting Equity

will be joined by new, walkable main streets in New Orleans East and other parts of the city. The animated farmers markets, arts festivals, and performance venues to which these streets play host will draw people to enjoy each other’s neighborhoods. St. Claude, North and South Rampart, and O. C. Haley will form a network of main streets that draws thousands of people on weekends to explore the city’s cultural diversity. A beautiful system of blueways—landscaped canals, rain gardens, and water-filled parks—will add a new signature to the city … and reduce flooding during heavy rains.

This proud historic city’s innovative aspirations will also enhance every part of the city. Exciting small businesses will convey the unique spirit of individual neighborhoods. Downtown’s skyline will reflect the addition of mixed-use neighborhoods along South Rampart Street and the river near the convention center, cloaked in architecture that embodies New Orleans’ 21st-century vitality. Downtown’s streets will become livelier as thousands of new residents support restaurants, cafés, shops and galleries. Across the city the medical district, university campuses, and new neighborhoods will add a 21st-century chapter of architectural and urban design quality.

The “reinvented crescent” system of riverfront parks, along with reopened lakefront beaches, will draw people from every walk of life together to enjoy the city’s natural setting, renewing the city’s tradition of landscape design leadership.

Not by accident will New Orleans have become one of America’s most...
New Orleans in 2030

walkable, culturally rich, and intriguing cities in 2030. Its beauty will grow from a partnership between a city committed to planning and a community committed to working together. Heroic efforts by the preservation community reclaimed New Orleans’ soul when urban renewal was destroying other U.S. cities. Preservationists have been joined by people just as committed: entrepreneurs who celebrate cultural diversity along O. C. Haley and in the emerging arts scene along St. Claude; neighborhood activists who say no to the wrong buildings and developers who work with them to make these buildings right; the untiring champions of neighborhoods like New Orleans East, Gentilly and the Lower Ninth who will not give up; and many others. This kind of partnership between city and community holds the key to building successful 21st-century cities.

New neighborhood commercial centers will serve as community hubs, increase the availability of neighborhood-serving retail, and revitalize commercial corridors such as the I-10 Service Road in New Orleans East (depicted above).
Achieving the vision

Other cities—facing far tougher conditions of poverty and disinvestment—have turned themselves around by taking four critical steps: restoring confidence in their own futures, building effective and efficient governments, forging a new sense of shared destiny, and creating an achievable vision that articulates long-term plans and realistic early actions. Moving into a future of greater livability, opportunity, and sustainability will require New Orleans to travel that same road.

To begin restoring confidence in the city’s future, New Orleanians need to recognize what may seem like a startling fact: the city’s economic prospects are brighter in 2009 than at any time in the last 50 years. And with improved storm-protection systems nearing completion, the city will be far safer than it was before Hurricane Katrina. Working from this new reality, the city can begin to build an efficient and effective municipal government staffed by people who no longer have to operate in crisis mode and without sufficient resources, as has been the case since Katrina. Forging a new sense of shared destiny will encourage and equip members of the larger community to work with each other and with city government to address significant challenges. A community with confidence, effective leadership, and a shared will can begin to work effectively toward realizing ambitious goals over the next twenty years.

**Restoring confidence** begins with:

- **New leadership in making New Orleans resilient in the face of storms and global climate changes.** Create an enhanced Office of Environmental Affairs that can partner with residents, institutions, and the business community and take local and national leadership in making New Orleans environmentally resilient. This office should offer community education about storm probabilities and risk; offer guidance to residents about elevating houses; coordinate development of neighborhood- and industry-wide plans to reduce the costs of future storms; create a climate-change plan for the city; and educate residents about how they can contribute to a more sustainable future.

*Increased municipal capacity to deliver basic services will be essential to eliminating blight and sustaining the city’s recovery progress.*
• Partnerships of nonprofits, the business community, institutions, and others that work to expand the economy and extend opportunity to everyone. Fund and staff a public/private economic development partnership at the levels needed to support traditional, emerging and new industries and meet the needs of creative entrepreneurs, neighborhood retailers, and large businesses alike. Expand access to job training and other programs that give everyone an opportunity to participate fully in a skilled and educated workforce. Remove obstacles to small and disadvantaged businesses.

Building efficient and effective city government involves:
• A “resident-centered” approach that equips government to meet basic mandates. Deliver quality, cost-effective services and enforce policies and codes. Reinvent the approach to affordable housing in order to produce high-quality, mixed-income housing that both serves those in need and contributes to neighborhood quality and character. Adopt a state-of-the-art, rehabilitation-oriented building code that facilitates preserving New Orleans’ legacy.

New Orleans’ ability to attract investment and grow its economy will depend on building and maintaining a highly skilled workforce through broader workforce-development opportunities for residents at all stages of their career life and expanding research connected to competitive industries. Educational institutions will be critical partners in achieving this vision. • Added capacity to accelerate recovery and position New Orleans for a new era of opportunities and challenges. Acknowledge that New Orleans faces an unprecedented level of blight and vacancy that undermines “dry” neighborhoods and overwhelms “wet” neighborhoods; take steps to integrate and expand the work of NORA, Code Enforcement, Community Development, and the CPC to match the scope of this challenge. Build a 21st-century network of roads, utilities, and technology and create a transportation strategy that prepares New Orleans to compete in an era of expensive energy. Accelerate redevelopment of empty shopping centers in New Orleans.
East and other “opportunity sites” and study replacing the Claiborne Expressway with an attractive urban boulevard.

- **A new generation of outreach to the community and other levels of government.** Launch a program of district planners and a formal community-participation program to strengthen the City’s ability to take full planning leadership on all projects that affect New Orleans’ welfare and to foster collaborative planning among the City, its neighborhoods, business interests, developers, advocates, and others. Strengthen working relationships with state and federal agencies and leaders to communicate more clearly the city’s opportunities and challenges, the kinds of help it needs, and the robust steps that municipal government is taking.

**Forging a new sense of shared destiny** begins with citywide conversations that cross lines of race, ethnicity, economic status, neighborhood affiliation, and other differences. It supports the sense of shared destiny and common purpose essential to making tough decisions. It extends to taking tangible steps, shared across the community, to invite back those who have not yet returned in a responsible manner that begins with a survey to determine why they have not returned and includes realistic strategies to insure that New Orleans has the resources and capacity to welcome them back to quality housing and jobs. A united New Orleans will have the local confidence and national credibility to restore its neighborhoods, build a diversified economy, and strengthen its resilience.

**Creating an achievable vision** begins with participating in citywide planning initiatives such as this one and involves three critical steps:

- Articulating long-term goals that address core issues of enhancing neighborhood quality, expanding economic opportunity, creating state-of-the-art infrastructure, finding a better and safer fit with the surrounding environment, and similar goals New Orleanians identify as important.
- Identifying policies and effective mid- and long-term strategies for achieving these goals.
- Establishing early and immediate-action strategies that over the next five years will help the City to acquire capacity, funding, and other resources necessary to implement effective mid- and long-term strategies.
Promoting equity: Expanding economic opportunity for all New Orleanians

Equity means fairness, equal opportunity, and treating everyone with respect and dignity. It is a concept of fundamental importance to every New Orleanian regardless of background, economic standing, or other kind of difference.

Louisiana’s constitution bans racial bias; the city charter states that New Orleans does not tolerate discrimination. Beyond basic fairness, equity today stands as an essential component of economic development: cities that compete most successfully for jobs and investment make sure that no one is denied basic rights and opportunities because of race, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. Although the recession in 2009 disguises this fact, New Orleans and other regions face a long-term shortage of skilled and educated workers. Regions that fail to actively train people for a diversified economy and emerging industries struggle to attract investment in growing economic sectors. More broadly, taking advantage of the city’s strengthening economic potential will require building the community-wide consensus needed for reaching difficult political decisions, making infrastructure investments, removing blight and vacancy, enhancing resilience, and other core goals of this Master Plan.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans has gone through a period of rapid change, and some of these changes have brought unintended impacts to particular elements of the community—the sharp decline in the number of city employees and public school teachers, for example, had a dramatic impact on the city’s African-Americans middle class. Equity is about stepping back and insuring that problems like this are addressed by helping everyone find their place in a changing economy. Addressing equity does not mean preserving jobs no longer required; it means making sure that the hard-working people who held those jobs are helped to take advantage of new opportunities. In the process, New Orleans will be better able to protect one of its strongest assets—educated residents who can help the city’s economy diversify.

Cities like Atlanta, Baltimore, and Chicago have learned that when residents don’t trust city government to be fair and to serve everybody’s needs, residents compete for control of the levers of power rather than joining in community-wide efforts to solve deeply rooted problems. Like all of the plan’s core policies, those related to equity should be monitored annually, and these and other cities offer effective models of how that can be done.

While usually conceived of in purely economic terms, achieving equity takes many forms.

Employment: Enhancing Workforce Development

An educated and skilled workforce forms the bedrock of a region’s economic competitiveness and directly correlates to residents’ earning power. The Master Plan outlines strategies for offering people of every education and skill level more opportunities for lifelong education and career development:

- Providing training for entry-level workers that focuses on long-term “ladders of opportunity.”
- Strengthening career preparation programs in the K-12 school system.
- Providing retraining programs for experienced workers in times of economic transition.
- Building partnerships with private-sector industries to provide internship and apprenticeship programs and job-recruitment opportunities for high school and college students.
- Focusing workforce-development initiatives on emerging industries with high earnings potential, such as health care, life sciences, media, construction, renewable-energy technology, and coastal restoration.
- Opening more sites for adult technical education.
- Providing comprehensive rehabilitation and job-readiness training to help at-risk populations enter or re-enter the workforce.

Entrepreneurship: Creating an Environment Friendly to Small Business

Small, locally-owned and minority-owned businesses represent a significant source of job creation and can play
Promoting Equity

an important role in revitalizing neighborhood business districts. Ensuring that economic-development initiatives benefit the full spectrum of the community will require building the principle of inclusion into all economic development efforts by measures such as:

- Assembling new public-private partnerships to help small and minority-owned businesses become fully competitive for a wider range of city contracts.
- Showing preference for locally-owned small and minority businesses to help them become more competitive.
- Encouraging and promoting joint ventures and partnerships with larger businesses.
- Making DBE/WBE/MBE* programs more accessible and consistent across public agencies.
- Increasing access to bonding for small contractors.

Rebuilding: Making Strategic Investment in Neighborhoods According to Condition and Need

Like all American cities, New Orleans must address disparities among neighborhoods by ensuring that each one receives the public investment in facilities and infrastructure it requires in order to thrive. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans also faces a disparity between neighborhoods severely damaged by the storm and those that avoided significant damage.

The city remains committed to the concept that every resident and every part of New Orleans should participate in recovery and growth. The Master Plan outlines a range of condition-specific strategies for making public policy and investments that take into account differing neighborhood challenges and needs:

- **Revitalization neighborhoods** faced significant blight and vacancy before Katrina and, in many cases, suffered serious flooding. Bringing these neighborhoods back will require dramatic new approaches to land assembly—enabling the City to work with residents to revive multiple blocks at a time—and significant levels of investment. Road Home reimbursements compound the challenges because they often failed to cover rebuilding costs in these neighborhoods.
- **Recovery neighborhoods** faced some blight before Katrina. Wet neighborhoods will require dramatic new approaches to land assembly, while dry neighborhoods would benefit from targeted efforts to remove blight. These neighborhoods will require targeted investment; Road Home reimbursements did not always cover rebuilding costs here.
- **Stable neighborhoods**, while more affluent, also experience pockets of blight. They need greater attention from code enforcement and an increased ability to take blighted buildings for redevelopment.
- In all neighborhoods, expand and aggressively enforce nuisance-business laws to remove the negative impacts of businesses that pollute or in other ways degrade quality of life and discourage investment in residential neighborhoods.

Civic: Creating a Business-Friendly Culture Within City Government

A streamlined, business-friendly culture within city government plays an essential role in economic development at every level. It contributes to equity by assuring access to business assistance and services for businesses of any size and instills confidence in both residents and potential investors from outside New Orleans. The Master Plan outlines steps the City can take to build a more transparent, responsive, and fair business climate, including:

- Ensuring transparency and accountability in all agencies by
  - Making city information readily available and user-friendly.
  - Making government procurement processes fair and transparent to ensure that they are fully competitive.
- Promoting a culture of entrepreneurship and a business-friendly environment by…
  - Streamlining and modernizing licensing and permitting.
Promoting Equity

Promoting equity: Expanding economic opportunity for all New Orleanians (continued)

> Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of small-business assistance services through a one-stop shop.
> Developing a business-retention and -expansion program.
> Establishing and supporting the New Orleans Economic Development Council.

- Providing efficient and cost-effective delivery of services and maintenance of City facilities and infrastructure by...
  > Using tax revenues efficiently to minimize the tax burden; distributing the tax burden equitably among different classes of businesses and between businesses and residents.
  > Providing the basic public services— from roads to utilities to technology—on which businesses depend to carry out their day-to-day operations.
  > Improving access to public contracting opportunities for small and minority-owned businesses.
  > Investing in infrastructure that supports economic development.

Cultural: Support the Creative Contributions of Every Member of the New Orleans Community

Cuts in federal assistance and increased demands on public education budgets across the U.S. have combined to reduce opportunities for cultivating individuals’ creative skills. New Orleans residents talk about lost access to music, crafts, arts, and dance programs that have disappeared in recent years. Minneapolis/St. Paul and other cities have initiated programs that focus on using the arts to keep at-risk youth in school and move people into creative roles in the workforce. A New Orleans Cultural Commission could help recapture the human potential lost with these programs—while extending the city’s rich cultural legacy and strengthening competitiveness for high-value heritage tourism—by collaborating with nonprofits, schools, and other partners on efforts such as:

- A cultural-equity grants initiative, similar to programs in San Francisco other cities, that provides funds to artists and other creative individuals to undertake projects that benefit neighborhoods.
- Pursuit of funding to support programs that help artists and other creative individuals start small businesses based on their unique skills, ranging from furniture making to music performance, catering, and event planning. Some of these businesses have demonstrated particular success in employing at-risk youth and adults without conventional employment skills.
- A cultural commission would also be well-placed to work with the National Park Service, other potential funders, and the historic preservation community to find artful ways of showcasing the unique traditions and richness of neighborhoods and cultural communities across New Orleans.

Environmental: Promote Environmental Equity

The City must also introduce environmental measures designed to promote fair treatment and access to opportunity for every New Orleans neighborhood:

- Beautify the city through water management, creating a network of water features and rain gardens designed to relieve flooding in low-lying neighborhoods—and enhance their appearance at other times. Historically, flood-prone neighborhoods have drawn the least benefit from a healthy New Orleans economy.
- Protect neighborhoods from pollution and related impacts of some industrial uses. Institute programs to control noise, soil or water contamination, trash, light spill, and related health, safety, and other quality-of-life concerns. Where necessary, help businesses find more appropriate locations. Identify innovative solutions to solid-waste disposal and similar uses to preserve and enhance the city’s environmental quality.
Setting the stage

Every stage of New Orleans’ rich history helped shape the context for this Master Plan and subsequent CZO. Similarly, the plan reflects the city’s recent planning legacy, the past and future challenges of protecting a river delta city from the impacts of global climate change, and the city’s recent and current economic and social dynamics.

History: 1718 to 2005

New Orleans became the capital of French Louisiana because it had a plan. An ambitious city plan helped persuade the French Company of the Indies to designate New Orleans the capital at the end of 1721.

The three-year-old ramshackle settlement perched on the river bank was laid out on the military model of Spanish and French colonialism—a grid of 66 blocks with a central plaza to set off the church and governor’s palace (today’s French Quarter), surrounded by fortifications (Rampart

New Orleans’ first city plan laid out a street grid on the military model of French and Spanish colonialism in 1721. This map of 1728 shows the grid in what became the French Quarter.
Street. At the same time, the French began building the first river levees.\textsuperscript{7} That gridded town served New Orleans until a disastrous fire in 1788, when the growing city began to expand, initially to adjacent land along the river. Over time, the 19th-century city expanded into land more upriver than downriver, as planned suburbs were carved from plantations, platted and urbanized.\textsuperscript{8}

\textbf{A legacy of cultural diversity.} The early mix of European and then American settlers, drawn by opportunity, and involuntary immigrants from Africa, imported as slaves, created a cultural and racial diversity that still enriches New Orleans. By the 19th century, the form of the historic city also dictated ethnic and racial geography—French, Spanish, and Creole in the French Quarter, Americans across Canal Street and in subdivided plantations in Uptown, free blacks and then former slaves and other immigrants in less salubrious, lower-lying areas.

\textbf{A tradition of innovation.} As it grew into a port of worldwide significance, New Orleans' self image became more international than that of most American cities, and the city looked beyond its southern roots for models. While it did not develop the planning tradition that emerged in northern cities in reaction to industrialization, New Orleans earned a progressive reputation early in the 20th century. While, in hindsight, the huge drainage system designed and built between 1896 and 1925 to eliminate the backswamp between the historic city and Lake Pontchartrain has had unforeseen consequences, it was justly seen as a triumph of modern engineering and local expertise at the time, dramatically improving public health and raising property values citywide.\textsuperscript{9} Modernization efforts—streetcar lines, the Industrial Canal, “slum” clearance (demolition of Storyville), expansion of streets and subdivisions toward the lake, and similar projects made the twentieth-century city possible.

\textbf{Experimentation with urban renewal.} Modernization produced its own reaction, a planning initiative that launched the national preservation movement and creation of the Vieux Carré Commission in 1936. In the face of the urban decline that plagued most American cities after 1960, however, New Orleans embarked on an era of urban renewal. Construction of I-10 obliterated the historic African-American commercial district and famous oak trees along N. Claiborne Avenue; all streetcars except for the St. Charles line were discontinued; a proposed Riverfront Expressway would have run through French Quarter (activists successfully defeated the plan); blocks of the Tremé neighborhood were demolished to create Louis Armstrong Park and the Theater for the Performing Arts; and the Superdome and convention center were built after widening of Poydras Street. The oil and gas boom in the 1970s and 80s drove high-rise development downtown, yet by the mid-1980s more of the city's historic core remained

\textsuperscript{7} Richard Campanella, \textit{Bienville’s Dilemma} (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 2008), pp.111-112, 123-125.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., pp. 154-157.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., pp. 220-221.
intact than in virtually any other major American city. Planning for the 1984 World’s Fair emphasized preserving and enhancing much of the downtown’s traditional character.

**Rebuilding the economy on the city’s cultural legacy.** After 1960, newer tree-lined neighborhoods such as Gentilly, Lakeview, and New Orleans East continued to expand, but New Orleans did not diversify its economy, and growth slowed. The city benefited in many ways from the oil and gas boom of the 1970s and 80s, but it entered the 1980s more dependent than most American cities on federal aid. The dual impact of the oil and gas bust and declining federal funding for urban programs devastated the city’s economy after 1985. New Orleans turned to its heritage of music, architecture, and food traditions to build a tourism economy that by the mid-1990s had begun to attract entrepreneurs and investment drawn by historic neighborhoods and the city’s cultural amenities. By 2005, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the tourism sector ranked as one of the city’s largest employers and the city’s creative industries were among its fastest-growing.

**Cataclysmic storms and ongoing recovery.** The aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 brought devastation unprecedented among U.S. cities, and the human and economic toll of the evacuation will never be fully understood. By many measures, recovery has been remarkable: As of December, 2008, more than 311,000 people had returned to the City of New Orleans, and the region had regained more than 88 percent of its pre-storm population. By August, 2008 the city had regained more than 70 percent of the jobs it had in August, 2005 (just before Katrina). In other ways New Orleans has only begun to recover. A diminished tax base forced the municipality to reduce its work force by one-third from pre-Katrina levels even as recovery added complex new tasks. Rebuilding of the hospital infrastructure—an integral part of the health care industry,

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10 Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Greater New Orleans Community Data Center.

11 Source: Louisiana Department of Labor, 2008.
which employed one-eighth of the city’s pre-hurricane population—has not moved out of the planning stage. Almost one-third of the city’s residential property still sits vacant or blighted. While New Orleans shares with many cities the task of planning for a rapidly changing future, it must also continue to plan for recovery.

Economic and social context

1985–2005

The oil and gas boom, which ended abruptly in 1985, masked underlying weakness in a regional economy still heavily dependent on the port: lack of investment in education and infrastructure, limited investment capital, and a failure to duplicate the efforts of other regions that diversified their economies. While New Orleans’ population had declined from its 1960 peak and some of this loss stemmed from “white flight,” much of the decline reflected shrinking household sizes rather than an absolute drop in numbers of households. From 1980 to 1990, the number of households in New Orleans declined by more than 9% and median family income fell by more than 12% in comparison to median income for the United States as a whole. The vacancy, blight, and poverty that evoked so much concern before Katrina stemmed largely from this decade of stagnation. During the 1990s, however, census data show that the city’s population stabilized: The 12,000-person decline between 1990 and 2000 was entirely due to smaller household sizes. During the same period, the number of households inched upward from 188,235 to 188,251, and median family income also increased as compared to the national median.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^{12}\) U.S. Census Bureau
Post-Katrina recovery

The forces driving this reversal of fortune mirrored national trends that grew more apparent during the 1990s. Historic, walkable, culturally rich cities across America saw signs of revival during this period. After years of falling behind their respective regions, cities like Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Cleveland—and New Orleans—began to increase their share of regional wealth. Growing numbers of “empty nesters,” people aged 25 to 34, singles and households without children, and immigrants in the housing market drove demand for urban neighborhoods. Instead of people following jobs, a reverse pattern emerged. Mixed-use, walkable environments claimed significant market premiums for housing, office, retail and other uses. These trends, which continued into this decade, loomed large in New Orleans’ recovery from Hurricane Katrina. Magnified to some extent by a slower rate of return among low-income residents and by recovery dollars flooding into the city, they reflected the city’s growing appeal and stoked a sharp increase in median household income, which has risen two or three times faster than “comeback” cities like Baltimore and Memphis since 2000. Growing wealth has so far had little impact on New Orleans’ diversity: 10% of the current population did not live in the city before Katrina, but the city’s racial composition continues to comprise slightly more than three-fifths African American, one-third white, and the balance Hispanic and Asian.

Looking forward to 2030

“Demographics are destiny,” says development expert Maureen McAvey, a proposition that bodes well for New Orleans. Despite the current global recession, underlying demographic, economic, and consumer-preference trends—
**Urban economic competitiveness in the 21st century**

During much of the period following World War II jobs—and people—moved out of older cities to newer suburbs and regions. Recent demographic and economic shifts, however, have made historic cities like New Orleans more competitive economically. Four trends stand out.

- Singles and households without children increasingly dominate housing markets and have chosen in growing numbers to live in urban neighborhoods. According to urban economist Arthur Nelson, the U.S. already has roughly all the large-lot suburban housing it will need in 2030 but only half the closer-in, small-lot and urban housing it will need then.
- CEOs for Cities President Carol Coletta reports that companies increasingly look to where millennials (25- to 34-year-olds) are moving to make investment decisions. These young people increasingly value the ability to live in or near a vibrant walkable downtown.
- Chris Leinberger, a Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution who specializes in land use, reports that walkable, mixed-use developments now command a sizable value premium over single-use developments. In addition, urban households with access to public transportation often spend half or less as much of their disposable income on transportation as do “auto-dependent” suburban households.
- Peter Kwass, the Master Plan’s economic development consultant, reports that across America jobs have started to follow where educated and skilled workers back into cities where these workers want to live.

Increasing national awareness of the health benefits of living in walkable communities; and a long-term increase in transportation energy costs (driven in part by rising global competition for energy sources like petroleum that Americans have long taken for granted, expensive energy will make walkable cities with transit options highly desirable places to live). The best practices outlined in Section E, “Achieving the Vision,” above, reflect the experience of other cities and can position New Orleans to benefit from these national trends.

**Planning**

**Pre-Katrina**

The *New Century New Orleans* master plan, initiated by Mayor Marc Morial in 1990, envisioned many of the goals that New Orleanians call for today—eliminate blight, expand economic opportunity, and build governmental effectiveness—and included the idea of enhancing the planning commission’s capacity to create and implement plans. Planning continued with periodic delays over more than a decade, and the CPC...
was one-third of the way through a detailed, multivolume comprehensive plan before the storm. A draft CZO was commissioned to replace the ordinance originally written in the 1970s, but lack of consensus—including divisions between divided neighborhood leaders and developers—led to its withdrawal in 2002.

Post-Katrina
New Orleans faced recovery without the benefit of an approved, completed master plan or CZO. However, as initial planning demonstrated, New Orleans had the benefit of a strong underlying consensus about how city residents wanted to rebuild. When the American Institute of Architects—working with America Speaks, the American Planning Association, and others—organized the Governor’s Conference on Recovery and Rebuilding two months after the storm, its 700 participants restated the goals articulated in New Century New Orleans and added two of their own: New Orleans should emerge from reconstruction as a model for sustainability and innovative approaches to protecting low-lying cities from the impact of global warming, and its planning going forward should be community-based.

Two rounds of citywide planning in late 2005—a visioning process directed by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and the city-sponsored Bring New Orleans Back Commission—reaffirmed these goals. The ULI process raised an important question: Should New Orleans’ footprint shrink? The community and mayor answered “no,” asserting that recovery meant bringing every neighborhood back to life.

In 2006 the Neighborhood Rebuilding Plan (the “Lambert” plan), sponsored by the City Council, and the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP), sponsored by national foundations working with the Greater New Orleans Foundation, launched neighborhood-based planning initiatives across the city that drew active participation. These plans were augmented by plans created by individual neighborhoods, including “Renaissance
Resilience

Flood prevention shaped New Orleans. Natural topography protected the city through the 19th century, but 20th-century drainage initiatives—notably A. Baldwin Wood’s landmark plan—opened expansion into low-lying areas. No initiative, however, anticipated rapidly sinking land (predicted to subside another three feet in many parts of the city by 2100) or globally rising sea levels.

Hurricane Katrina’s disastrous aftermath triggered a more rigorous approach to structural flood defenses—levees, pumps, and gates—that will mean increased safety for all of neighborhoods after completion of the current round of recommendations (scheduled for late 2011). Engineered defenses alone, however, cannot guarantee the city’s security. The Master Plan instead builds on the work of the Flood Protection Alliance, advisors from the Netherlands, and local experts to recommend multiple, complementary lines of defense against flooding. This begins with adoption of a more stringent resilience standard of withstanding 1-in-500-year and eventually 1 in 1,000-year storms (the current goal is a 1-in-100-year event).

The Master Plan outlines specific non-structural strategies under the city’s active control for meeting higher standards, including creation of water-retention areas throughout the city; elevation of structures above anticipated 1-in-500-year flood heights; and hardening critical infrastructure against the most severe storms. A polder system of secondary, internal levees...
Breaking with tradition, the Master Plan advocates learning to live with water rather than fight it. If risk is properly managed, water can become a great asset to neighborhoods and their quality of life, much the way that Bayou St. John is a cherished feature of the Faubourg St. John. The plan calls for transforming canals and other water-management infrastructure into attractive elements of the urban landscape in a New Orleans where safety and resilience set the stage for long-term prosperity in harmony with water.

This map highlights blocks where houses would need to be elevated to avoid flooding from a 100-year storm after 2011 (projected completion date of the U.S. Army Corps’ flood-protection system).

This map highlights blocks where houses would need to be elevated to avoid flooding from a 500-year storm after 2011.

Breaking with tradition, the Master Plan advocates learning to live with water rather than fight it. If risk is properly managed, water can become a great asset to neighborhoods and their quality of life, much the way that Bayou St. John is a cherished feature of the Faubourg St. John. The plan calls for transforming canals and other water-management infrastructure into attractive elements of the urban landscape in a New Orleans where safety and resilience set the stage for long-term prosperity in harmony with water.

The Master Plan calls for creation of water-management infrastructure that adds to the character of its surroundings. Canals and rain gardens can become integral and appealing features of every neighborhood in the way that Bayou St. John is a cherished feature of the Faubourg St. John.
New Orleans’ historic neighborhoods

New Orleans boasts a tremendous breadth of historic neighborhoods, ranging from the early 18th century to post-WWII. It is critical that each area be preserved and restored in a manner that perpetuates and enhances its specific and unique character. The typical physical characteristics of distinct areas in every part of the city will guide place-making concepts that will underlie the forthcoming zoning ordinance (in development as of 2009). The ordinance will reflect the policies of the Master Plan and will ensure that preservation of existing structures and new development will be harmonious with the existing, distinct historic character of each area.

Pre-Louisiana Purchase

The earliest structures still standing in New Orleans date from the early 18th century to before the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and show the influence of French and Spanish inhabitants during that time. These earliest areas of development are in the city’s areas of highest elevation, adjacent to the Mississippi River and along natural ridges leading inland from the river’s edge. Because they were not prone to significant flooding, most buildings of this era have ground floors at or near ground level. Streets are laid out in regular grids, and buildings tend to be situated close together and close to the street, forming an intimate, pedestrian-oriented public realm. Creole Cottages and brick townhouses with ornate ironwork are typical building types of this era. Many structures are attached townhouses and have vertically-mixed uses, with residences on upper floors and commercial uses below. Others are single-story buildings spaced close to one another, often with commercial uses interspersed on street corners and major thoroughfares. Small yards and interior courtyards are common, and Jackson Square in the French Quarter serves as this era’s iconic public open space. Preservation and new infill development in these oldest areas of the city should reflect and enhance their distinctive architectural and urban character while incorporating contemporary best practices such as energy-efficient design strategies and use of renewable energy sources.

Louisiana Purchase to WWII

Neighborhoods built after 1803 and before the World War II era (early 1940s) are not as densely developed as their predecessors—many were constructed in the early days of the automobile—but are still fairly dense as compared to, for instance, the typical American suburb. Broad boulevards, many with wide neutral grounds,
across all housing styles built in this era. Preserving the historic character of these areas will involve maintaining and enhancing the overall scale and massing of individual streets, while avoiding prescribing any one particular building style.

**Post-WWII**

Post-World War II neighborhoods in New Orleans also exhibit a unique character that reflects the historical era of their development. These areas were largely developed from large tracts of land subdivided and transformed into new neighborhoods for the baby boomer generation. Developed in the golden age of the automobile, these areas are generally characterized by wider streets—typically in a regular grid pattern—larger lot sizes, and lower densities than other areas of the city. Lots are typically evenly spaced and equal in size within a single subdivision; however, street patterns and lot sizes vary from one neighborhood or subdivision to another. Cul-de-sacs were also introduced during this era. Commercial uses in these areas are typically separate from residential areas and found primarily along major boulevards and highways. Large neighborhood parks are also common. Architectural styles vary widely, and range from Mid-Century Modernist ranches to Neo-Classical contemporary suburban. Street-facing and side-attached garages and large yards are common. To preserve and enhance the historic character of these post-war areas, renovations and new infill developments should reflect their traditional
scale, massing, setback, and density. Because of the variety of architectural styles present in these areas, it is important not to prescribe any one single style. Restoration and new development should also promote enhanced transportation choice and walkability, including features such as restored sidewalks and new bike paths, to enhance quality of life.
Putting the plan to work

A SUMMARY OF THE PLAN AND HOW TO GET STARTED

Themes from the Master Plan

Plan for the 21st Century: New Orleans 2030 is a 20-year citywide plan created from the hopes and aspirations of the thousands of New Orleanians who participated in the planning process because they want New Orleans to reclaim its place as a great world city.

Many of them know from their own hard-won experience since Hurricane Katrina that if you organize, you can have an impact. Understandably, along with their aspirations for the city, many people occasionally voiced cynicism, resignation, pessimism, distrust, or bitterness. The citywide plan is built on the positive aspirations for the future, but it recognizes that there are also obstacles to overcome and practical questions to be resolved. It provides strategies to overcome the obstacles and answer those questions. Ultimately, it is New Orleanians working together who will achieve the goals of the plan.

The overarching themes of this plan encompass a respect and love for the city’s past and its roots combined with forward-thinking opportunities for the 21st century.

Livability (Detailed discussion in “How We Live”)  
- Protect New Orleans’ physical and cultural heritage.  
- Shape future development through active planning with smart growth principles that promote New Orleans as the core of the region.  
- Promote information-sharing, transparency, efficiency and accountability inside and outside of government, enforcing rules and regulations to benefit everyone.

Opportunity (Detailed discussion in “How We Prosper”)  
- Ensure that every New Orleanian has the education and skills for a good job.  
- Maintain and enhance the city’s traditional industries.  
- Diversify the economy to establish emerging industries like life sciences and nurture potential industries linked to the city’s coastal location.
**Sustainability** (Detailed discussion in “Sustainable Systems”)

- Make New Orleans a resilient city that successfully manages the risks inherent in its location to become an international leader among river delta cities that face similar risks.
- Rebuild, maintain and sustain the city’s infrastructure.
- Use recovery to build better and greener.

And who should implement the Master Plan? Everybody – the success of the Master Plan depends on partnership: all levels of government, residents, business owners, institutions, and nonprofit organizations in alignment to work together towards achieving the goals of the plan.

**A consensus master plan attracts funding**

A good plan supported by a community consensus and a government committed to implementing the plan attracts funding and private investment. (Consensus is not an alternative to honest differences and healthy debate; it means that people have identified areas of common benefit and agreement even as they continue to differ about other issues.) How does that work?

- **A plan shows that the community knows what it wants.** Funders and investors like to know what to expect and what is expected of them because it means that their initiatives and investments can go to work more quickly.

- **A plan shows that the community is willing to invest some of its own resources to achieve its goals.** For example, when a community makes public improvements or works hard to improve its effectiveness, it demonstrates its seriousness about making the plan a reality.

- **A plan shows that a community knows what to do with new resources.** Federal funds increasingly come with requirements for coordinated planning. Without a plan, funds can go unspent, even though needs are evident in the community. A citywide plan provides a framework of policies and strategies to use resources to accomplish goals.

As a 20-year plan, *New Orleans 2030* includes many recommendations and strategies. Before Hurricane Katrina, city finances were tight, with annual city budgets, typically in the $400–$500 million range, that were insufficient to pay for infrastructure maintenance and repair. The greatest single source of revenue for the general fund is sales tax. Per capita general fund dollars are about half the amount available in cities like Atlanta and Baltimore. Funds for capital expenses come from bond proceeds. Certain important systems and services are administered and funded separately, such as the water, sewer and drainage system, and have many millions of dollars in long-term maintenance needs in addition to storm damage. The disaster decimated municipal revenue sources, but the city and the region have also received millions in recovery dollars.

Once the disaster-related funds and incentives have been spent, the City will need to make the most of its existing revenue sources, attract new private investment that provides both sales tax and property tax, and, at the same time, make an effective appeal on the state and federal levels for continued funding to achieve many of the goals of this plan. By 2030, the City should have doubled (in 2009 dollars) its per capita general fund, leveraged entitlement funds more effectively, and developed a track record of success in...
getting grants to move projects forward and state and federal funds to implement public projects. There is a growing national understanding of the need for a new generation of infrastructure funding that only the federal government can provide. It is critical that the City of New Orleans coordinate with the Sewerage and Water Board, the Regional Transportation Authority, and Entergy to make sure that New Orleans gets its fair share of funding for innovative, 21st-century projects, as well as repair and upgrade funds.

- **Make the most of existing resources.**
  - **Evaluate potential cost savings from operating efficiencies.**
    Effective and efficient city government and use of resources can be promoted through establishment of a data-based performance-measurement system that would help city leaders identify how to make city government work better and target training for city staff.
  - **Implement Master Plan recommendations on housing policy** to ensure that the city gets the most benefit from its annual entitlement funding (CDBG, HOME, and so on), both in terms of leveraging private investment and enhancing quality of life for New Orleanians. Entitlement funds should not go unspent.
  - **Invest in adequate staff to get discretionary funding from government and foundations through grant writing.** The grant writers should either be professionals within city departments or, if in a separate grant-writing office, should work closely with city departments.
  - **Establish fees targeted to specific users and for specific purposes.** User fees and betterment fees for certain services or improvements can help fund them.

**Helping bring displaced residents back home**

Many residents displaced by Hurricane Katrina still want to return to New Orleans but for various reasons have been unable to do so. The Master Plan will help by enhancing quality of life, expanding economic opportunity, and making the city safer and more resilient for everyone, including new and returning New Orleanians.

**Enhanced quality of life.** A comprehensive and integrated approach to eliminating blight will make neighborhoods more attractive to residents who still hope to return by restoring livability and quality of life. A rethinking of municipal housing policies will ensure more varied housing types to meet a broader range of needs across the city. Increased capacity for housing-recovery programs like the Road Home and Small Rental Property Assistance programs will help pre-Katrina owners with the costs of rebuilding and help renters find more high-quality, affordable rentals. Additionally, strategies for expanding neighborhood-based health and human service delivery will make these services more affordable and accessible than they were before Katrina.

**Expanded economic opportunity.** Strategies for broadening New Orleans’ economic base while fostering new and emerging industries will ensure continued economic growth. Expanded workforce-development programs will help ensure that economic opportunity is available to all, including retraining to make experienced workers competitive in new job sectors.

**A safer, more resilient city.** Continued implementation of multiple lines of defense against flooding, storms and natural hazards will encourage displaced residents to return with the knowledge that New Orleans will be resilient and safe.
and promote desired actions. For example, many communities charge fees for removing more than one bag of trash a week as a way to fund services and also to reduce solid waste. Rather than making certain services completely free or extremely low cost across the board, provide for sliding-scale fees or similar approaches to ensure that income is not a barrier to participation.

- **Link innovations in systems and service delivery to the bonds and rate increases needed to pay for them.**
  - New Orleans property owners have shown that they are willing to vote for bonds to pay for street improvements and to provide millages for specific activities. Clear communication about costs and criteria for improvements will raise public awareness about the need to support bond funding and rate increases. Programs should be put in place for low-income elderly or others who may need assistance.
  - Utility rate increases will have to be part of the funding mix to pay for repairs and upgrades, but ratepayers need to see that better services, cost-efficient innovations, and resource conservation will result.

- **Increase sales and property tax revenues from private investment.**
  - Implement Master Plan recommendations for coordinated and proactive planning to attract businesses that are sales-tax and property-tax generators—while maintaining quality-of-life commitments. Orleans Parish residents contribute millions of dollars to the tax coffers of adjoining parishes because the city is “under-retailed”—that is, it has fewer stores than its population could support, a rarity today. Many retailers need to have the opportunities in New Orleans demonstrated to them, especially early entrants, so recruitment is critical. The Master Plan’s preliminary market analyses for the opportunity sites are one place to start.
  - Use public investment to upgrade conditions in areas where investment is desired.
  - Use carefully targeted incentives to attract desired investment.

- **Join with other municipalities to lobby for federal infrastructure funding.**
  - The parlous state of the nation’s infrastructure is increasingly under discussion, as are a federal infrastructure bank and similar solutions. New Orleans needs to make the case that a return to pre-Hurricane Katrina conditions still leaves the city with infrastructure-upgrade needs.
  - New Orleans has the opportunity to take a leadership role in a coalition of cities that will be affected by climate change. Cities like Miami, New York, Boston, and others are at risk, just like New Orleans.
How to use this plan

The plan's findings are organized into four sections: How we live (livability), How we prosper (opportunity), Sustainable systems (sustainability), and From plan to action (implementation). Each of these sections is divided into several more finely focused subsections—for example How we live is divided into neighborhoods and housing, historic preservation, green infrastructure and health and human services. In turn, each subsection is organized around basic issues, goals for responding to these issues, strategies for achieving these goals, and related land use principles. As noted earlier, the accompanying Technical Plan provides greater detail on the material summarized in this Planning Framework.

**GETTING STARTED**

**The First Five Years**

This plan charts directions for twenty years and reflects the appropriately high aspirations that New Orleanians have for their city. As you review the plan it will be clear that in many cases, achieving this plan will require new resources and the time to collect them. However, it is important to focus on the steps the City and its partners can begin right away that will position them to acquire the resources and capacity to implement increasingly ambitious strategies. Many of these early actions focus on how the City can organize itself to be more effective and cost-efficient; how it can communicate and share information internally and with the public; and how it can work with partners in the neighborhoods, institutions, business, and the nonprofit section to align goals and make progress toward achieving them. The action items below are among the short-term activities that are critical to establishing the foundation for success in the longer term.

**How We Live:**

- Establishing a Housing Working Group.
- Creating a citywide Preservation Plan.
- Establishing an interagency parks and recreation coordinating group.
- Establishing a citywide health care consortium and a citywide human services consortium.

**How We Prosper:**

- Establishing the proposed economic development public-private partnership.
- Centralizing and streamlining available assistance to small businesses.

**Sustainable Systems:**

- Expanding the Office of Environmental Affairs.
- Establishing an asset management system for all city property and facilities.
- Establishing a permanent transportation planner position within the CPC.
- Completing a Climate Action Plan.
I. How We Live

Every day we go out to meet the city from our homes, our streets, and our neighborhoods. Where we live and how we live, our local shopping areas, the parks we visit, family and friends in the neighborhood, and the health and human services that we need close by—all of this is the fabric of daily life. The detailed Master Plan begins with this section—encompassing neighborhoods and housing, historic preservation, green infrastructure, and health and human services—because livability is critical to every resident who lives in New Orleans today and to every potential resident.

Our overall goals for livability

- Strong, safe, comfortable and distinctive neighborhoods that provide a high quality of life and a good place to live for everyone
- Preservation and celebration of all the city’s historic neighborhoods and their cultural heritage by broadening the constituency for historic preservation
- A connected network of green infrastructure—neutral grounds, parks, recreation areas, natural areas, and tree canopy—and a park within walking distance of every resident.
- Locating health care and support services in clusters with the traditional anchors of neighborhood life—schools, libraries, and community centers.
- A clean, healthy and safe living environment for all residents.

Our overall zoning principles

- Provide a range of neighborhood zoning districts that fit existing character and create compatible future development.
- Create design standards that fit the aesthetic and functional character of individual neighborhoods.

First Five Years:

- Establishing a Housing Working Group.
- Incorporating development standards and design guidelines in zoning.
- Creating a citywide Preservation Plan.
- Creating a sustainable preservation plan.
- Creating a 2018 Tricentennial Committee.
- Establishing an interagency parks and recreation coordinating group.
- Establishing a citywide health care consortium and a citywide human services consortium.
- Creating a network of neighborhood-based health and human service centers.
- Expanding enrollment of eligible residents in available low-cost or free insurance programs.
Neighborhoods and Housing

A network of neighborhoods with high quality of life is one of the most important keys to a successful city. New Orleans is famously a city of neighborhoods—crucibles of culture and cuisine, and networks of family roots. In many parts of the city, neighborhood identification has become even stronger since Hurricane Katrina as people banded together to rebuild homes and communities, creating a vibrant network of grass-roots activists. Almost every previous planning document examined for the Master Plan process and every Master Plan public meeting made neighborhood protection, enhancement and revitalization the cornerstone of New Orleanians’ vision for the city’s future.

Enhancing the livability of all New Orleans neighborhoods, while preserving their unique character, is an overarching goal of this Master Plan. It is critical to retaining residents who have returned and invested in the city—and making sure that their children will be able to stay in New Orleans—and to attracting new residents to make the city their home, too. As jobs increasingly follow people in the 21st century, rather than the other way around, investing in a high quality of life also represents an economic development strategy.

Policies and strategies for neighborhood livability must be comprehensive and integrated, taking into account neighborhoods’ differing needs: stable neighborhoods that need vigilance to maintain stability; recovery neighborhoods that were doing well before the storm but are still working toward recovery; and revitalization neighborhoods that face pre-Katrina and, in some cases, additional post-Katrina challenges. Following completion of the post-Katrina recovery plans, ORDA (the Office of Recovery and Development Administration) used those plans to designate 17 target zones and housing opportunity zones for focused recovery investment and activities. Fragmentation of city agencies and authorities, however, has tended to result in fragmented policy and strategic focus. Implementing Master Plan strategies can accelerate recovery and provide a foundation for continued enhancement of livability into the future.

7 Chapter 5 in the Technical Plan
Residential lots that became vacant—or that contain dwelling units that became vacant—between July, 2005 and August, 2008, based on utility account data.
KEY ISSUES

• **A comprehensive approach to eliminating blight.** New Orleans counted some 20,000 blighted properties before Hurricane Katrina, but the storm and subsequent flooding have added another 30,000–40,000 vacant or blighted properties—a complex challenge of widespread patchwork blight combined with pre-Katrina disinvestment. Almost every neighborhood has pockets of blight that need attention. Because the scale of the problem is so great, the city needs a multifaceted approach that combines traditional tools with innovative solutions.

• **Reinvention of the City’s approach to housing.** New Orleans must reinvent the way it thinks about housing, both to serve residents with deep roots in the city and to welcome newcomers who want to help with the city’s renaissance. A new policy will guide decision makers on community building and will transform the City’s approach to affordable housing. Devising this policy will require a thorough understanding of housing markets and housing needs for both market-rate and subsidized housing. One of its basic principles will call for spending affordable-housing funds to support the rehabilitation of blighted housing. A new policy will also mean moving from the crisis mode in which Hurricane Katrina forced the City to operate to a sustainable approach that benefits all residents.

• **Neighborhood-level plans and audits tailored to specific areas.** A system of district planners is needed to work with residents, businesses and others to get policies and plans in place on the neighborhood level. Although some neighborhoods in today’s New Orleans are doing well, others face substantial challenges stemming from

The Townhomes on Capitol Hill is a mixed-income development in Washington, D.C. that transformed a blighted public housing site into a neighborhood of townhouses reflecting the historic character and scale of surrounding neighborhoods.

Strong public leadership, a City Planning Commission with expanded staff and expertise, and coordination among municipal agencies will play a critical role in increasing the City’s capacity to combat blight and restore quality of life citywide.

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Strong public leadership, a City Planning Commission with expanded staff and expertise, and coordination among municipal agencies will play a critical role in increasing the City’s capacity to combat blight and restore quality of life citywide.
both pre- and post-Hurricane Katrina conditions. Every neighborhood can benefit from enhanced attention to city services, infrastructure and amenities. Neighborhoods have different assets, and district planners will work with neighborhood stakeholders to create plans, coordinate implementation, and organize community process around development proposals.

- **Neighborhoods that are healthy and safe from environmental hazards.** Environmental hazards such as lead contamination of soils, industrial pollutants, and health hazards due to vacancy and blight erode the livability of neighborhoods and harm the health and wellness of residents. Combating environmental health hazards will require partnerships and coordinated efforts on the part of code-enforcement agencies, the Department of Health, residents, and neighborhood-based organizations, and the numerous private and nonprofit health organizations working to improve the physical environment.

### GOALS
**What we want to achieve**

- Enhanced character and livability for existing neighborhoods, investing to make every neighborhood a “neighborhood of choice”
- Redevelopment of blighted and vacant properties in all neighborhoods
- Accelerated redevelopment of flooded neighborhoods
- Reinvented housing policies to support quality neighborhoods and meet the housing needs of all households, including enforcement against nuisance properties.
- Access to retail and services from all neighborhoods
- High-capacity community development corporations and similar community-based groups
- Elimination of nuisance businesses and problem properties through neighborhood and City partnerships to resolve problems through negotiation and regulatory actions

### STRATEGIES
**How we can achieve it**

**Accelerating the redevelopment of blighted and vacant sites through a comprehensive blight-elimination program under unified management that coordinates the efforts of city agencies.**

No neighborhood in New Orleans is immune to blight and vacancy. Although strategies for addressing these related problems will need to be tailored to fit neighborhood-specific conditions, across the city these strategies share five elements:

- Eliminating blight and vacancy, whether it involves several blocks or a few scattered properties, requires a plan and guidelines to insure that redevelopment achieves community goals and standards.
- In every neighborhood it will be important for new district councils and other stakeholders to have a role in developing these plans.
- Redevelopment needs to be managed to insure that it is carried out by responsible parties in a timely manner.
- Redevelopment plans need to be approved by the CPC to insure that they reflect official city policy related to...
Public housing redevelopment can help spur neighborhood revitalization

Before Hurricane Katrina, the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) had begun planning to revitalize the city’s four largest public housing developments. Severe functional problems—stemming from poor design, construction and management—had created substandard conditions for both residents of these developments and the neighborhoods around them. By 2012, this overhaul of the “Big Four” will result in 4,075 new housing units, a mix of public housing units, affordable rentals, affordable ownership homes, and market-rate rentals and ownership. Private and nonprofit developers who are experienced property managers will carry out the redevelopment, investing some $550 million of public funds and tax-credit equity in their revitalization. Design of the revitalized housing will reflect traditional New Orleans styles and types, and new streets will align with the prevailing street grid with the goal of integrating the new housing seamlessly into the surrounding neighborhoods. Plans for improvements at other public housing sites are also underway. Redevelopment plans include a variety of new housing, street and utility improvements, new street trees and landscaping, and new and improved parks and community facilities.

The Big Four are all located in or near the City’s Housing Opportunity Zones, which have been targeted for first-time homebuyer and housing-rehabilitation programs. The City can build on this significant investment by targeting these areas for complementary public improvements, such as support for neighborhood-serving retail (e.g., Main Streets programs), grocery store recruitment, development of neighborhood-based health and wellness centers, and increased workforce development and after-school programs. By reinforcing private investment with public programs such as these, the City can help to insure successful redevelopment of entire neighborhoods as attractive, stable, and livable communities for both current and future residents.

Key steps include:

- Institute coordinated direction of all agencies that address blight and vacancy.
  - To give blight-eradication programs the highest priority and signal the city’s commitment, coordinate the work of all public agencies that address blight and vacancy directly through the Mayor’s office.
  - To take full advantage of City resources, use public agencies for the tasks that reflect their missions and capabilities. CPC—ensuring appropriate planning is in place and conducting community engagement; Community Development—insuring strategic application of community development funding and programs; NORA—conducting land acquisition and disposition and managing redevelopment; Code Enforcement and other enforcement agencies—identifying all properties that present health and safety risks and insuring either that
problems are remedied or that properties move forward for rehabilitation or redevelopment; agencies charged with housing policies and investments—insuring that redevelopment aligns with the goals of the Housing Working Group; and HDLC—insuring adherence to historic preservation policies.

> To insure that all redevelopment stays consistent with the Master Plan, area plans, and other relevant city goals and policies, all redevelopment sponsored by public agencies should be based on a neighborhood or other plan approved by the CPC. Where plans do not currently exist, create a memorandum of understanding with the CPC.

> Substantially increase staff and funding for NORA and Code Enforcement.

> Make comprehensive, GIS-based property information systems available to all city agencies and to the public.

> Expand the role of Code Enforcement as a tool to promote more livable neighborhoods.

> Use an open and public process to establish clear criteria for addressing vacancy and targeting blight-removal and code-enforcement efforts.

> Allocate additional funding for expanding code-enforcement sweeps of occupied and vacant buildings.

> Establish performance standards for all code-enforcement activities and monitor progress at citywide and neighborhood levels:

- Create an ordinance requiring registration of vacant lots with the city.
- Expand “clean and green” programs for vacant lots.
- Pursue enforcement actions against “nuisance” businesses and problem residential properties identified by neighborhood groups and others by coordinating code enforcement, issuance of use and occupancy permits and business licenses, and controls on non-conforming rights.
- Provide technical and financial assistance in remedying code violations to low- and moderate-income property owners.

> Early Action Item: Establish annual inspections for vacant lots, rental properties and houses at sale, to be
funded by landlords and sellers through fees.

> Early Action Item: Establish a ticketing program for quality-of-life violations, to be funded by fines collected.

> Early Action Item: Review how the existing fine schedule performs to determine if higher fines are merited for failure to comply with code standards, including building codes, particularly for large-scale development.

> Ensure that fines are reinvested in code enforcement.

- Pursue innovative approaches that accelerate and expand the city’s ability to acquire land for redevelopment and creation of public amenities.

> Amend state law to allow immediate foreclosure on liens after the City records them and to make tax sale and adjudication a judicial process.

> Expand the city’s ability to take properties that pose health and safety problems and move them quickly to a sheriff’s sale with appropriate use and design requirements.

> Pursue innovative approaches to larger-scale land assembly.

> Provide incentives to owners to assemble sites in recovery and revitalization areas with reasonably strong markets.

> Support innovative land-assembly solutions, such as land readjustment (see “Land readjustment” box on page 48), to create larger contiguous parcels for community amenities or efficient redevelopment, and to facilitate targeted, block-by-block redevelopment.

> Support scattered site assembly to take advantage of scale in rehabilitation or redevelopment.

> Continue the Lot Next Door program, including credits for fencing or landscaping adjacent vacant properties.

> Explore taxing vacant or underutilized land at a higher rate than land in productive use to encourage redevelopment. Include exemptions for lower-income owners and technical and/or financial assistance to encourage redevelopment.

> Require property-liability insurance for all owners.

> Place redevelopment covenants, design and performance standards (including deadlines for completion), and any appropriate use or other restrictions on vacant or blighted properties sold for redevelopment by public entities:

  - Encourage redevelopment of individual houses/small
groups of houses by neighbors, faith-based organizations, CDCs, community land trusts, non-profits, and smaller-scale developers that demonstrate their ability to meet covenants and design and performance standards.

- Encourage redevelopment of large parcels by CDCs, developers, nonprofits, and others with demonstrated capacity.

> Set design and performance standards and any special use or other appropriate restrictions on properties sold at tax sales.

> Establish clear and transparent criteria for health and safety takings; for identifying properties with historic or community fabric value; and for demolitions.

> Enhance planning and design criteria for properties—including design guidelines, performance standards, and any special use or other restrictions that are appropriate—in collaboration with the CPC.

> Provide additional funding to close gaps between current recovery funding (Road Home) and the real costs of rebuilding lost housing.

> Work with neighborhood associations to prioritize code enforcement and/or demolition and to perform neighborhood audits of needed public improvements and problem properties.

**Utilizing tools to address blight and vacancy that are tailored to the specific conditions in each neighborhood.**

Although blight and vacancy affect every part of the city to a degree, they do so in different ways in different areas, depending on a variety of conditions. Factors such as a strong or weak housing and real estate market, degree of Katrina-related flooding, quality of existing and pre-storm housing, and pre-Katrina blighted conditions all dictate the form and degree of blight and vacancy in each neighborhood how vacancy and blight should be addressed in different areas of the city, and how the tools described above can be used in each condition. Though every neighborhood is to some extent unique, three broad categories of blighted conditions occur throughout the city:

- **Revitalization Neighborhoods**—formerly wet areas still recovering from widespread devastation and dry neighborhoods that had faced significant blight and vacancy before the storm—will require new approaches to land assembly that enable redevelopment to proceed a block or several blocks at a time, together with financial incentives to make redevelopment feasible. NORA will play a critical role—working closely with CPC, other agencies, developers, and homeowners—to insure the restoration of stores, services, public facilities, health care facilities and other “infrastructure of livability.” Addressing gaps in Road Home funding that did not cover the cost of rebuilding in many of these neighborhoods will also be important.

- **Recovering Neighborhoods**—largely wet neighborhoods that possessed stronger housing markets before the storm—will benefit from a mix of similar creative approaches to large-scale redevelopment, led by NORA. They will also benefit from more targeted approaches to taking and redeveloping property through Code Enforcement liens in response to health and safety hazards and more targeted NORA initiatives. Like larger-scale redevelopment, these targeted efforts should be accompanied by planning and guidelines to insure high-quality redevelopment. These neighborhoods also need
help in rebuilding a broader infrastructure of livability and addressing gaps in Road Home funding.

- **Stable Neighborhoods**—generally dry neighborhoods with stronger housing markets—also face ongoing challenges of blight and vacancy and need stepped up support in taking properties that pose health and safety hazards and support for neighborhood-initiated redevelopment. For example, potential redevelopers need assistance in locating property owners, negotiating interim agreements with the City, and similar tasks.

**Reinventing housing policy by creating a permanent Housing Working Group to guide decision making.** First, the City needs better data to understand the dynamics of New Orleans’ changing housing market and the housing needs of low- and moderate-income households and special-needs groups. Second, it needs to bring together people knowledgeable about housing—representatives of key city agencies; housing advocates; for-profit and nonprofit developers; bankers; realtors; and researchers—as well as representatives of neighborhoods, residents of subsidized housing, and officials. This group would then recommend housing policy for the City, with the following responsibilities.

- **Data collection and analysis:**
  - Monitor all segments of New Orleans’ housing market quarterly, including market-rate rental and for-sale units, subsidized units, vouchers, waiting lists, and identification of strong and weak submarkets, and make the data publicly available. As a beginning, the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center has a grant to provide data analysis in late 2009.

- Develop performance measures to monitor housing needs (housing for elderly, disabled, low- and moderate-income workforce, homeless, etc.) and the extent to which those needs are met (overall housing costs as percent of income for rental, for-sale, repair and rehabilitation, etc.).

- **Policy-making:**
  - Prioritize investments and refine priorities so that resources work to build community, meet needs for affordable and workforce housing, and attract private investment as market conditions change and as appropriate to specific neighborhoods.

  - Communicate local housing needs and priorities to state and federal housing agencies, as well as national nonprofits.

  - Support restoration of single-family housing and return to commerce of rental housing in 1- to 4-unit buildings, with appropriate flood-protection measures.

  - Provide the wide range of market-rate housing choices, with amenities, that reflects the increasing diversity of ages, household types, and backgrounds in the city, while maintaining the land use guidelines in the Master Plan.

  - Evaluate the toolbox of strategies available for deployment as conditions warrant, for example:
    - Management of bonds to ensure appropriate management
    - Incentive zoning and transfer of development rights when, where, and in ways the market could support it
    - An affordable housing trust fund
Mixed-income housing tailored to market and neighborhood conditions

- Public communication:
  - Hold an annual public meeting to review the market information and performance measures and discuss future priorities.
  - Communicate housing needs to neighborhoods and the community at large.

Complementing the policies set by the Housing Working Group with inter-agency coordination and partnerships with nonprofits:

- Reorganize the way that the city delivers housing assistance services and funding for housing development so that it expends funds efficiently, quickly, and according to plans and priorities set by the Working Group.
- Involve both the CPC and NORA in planning for property redevelopment.
- Report to a monthly cross-departmental housing meeting on performance measures by program, funds expended, units in process, and future production schedule, as well as production of rehabilitated and new units in the private market.
- Require any housing built with public funds or property to meet neighborhood-appropriate design standards and income mixes in order to avoid one-size-fits-all requirements.
- Foster a network of strong neighborhood-based community development corporations through capacity-building efforts.

### Housing markets

Between 1980 and 2009 New Orleans lost roughly 60,000 households (families or individuals who live in the city). By aggressively implementing actions identified in this Master Plan, New Orleans could position itself to attract these households back over the next 20 years and generate an influx of new households that could banish most blight and vacancy from the city’s neighborhoods.

**What is the New Orleans housing market like today?**

A market study looking covering the next seven years—completed for this Master Plan—indicates that more than 20,000 households have an interest in existing and new housing in New Orleans each year, including net new “market rate” demand for as many as 3,000 units of unsubsidized housing—if the City implements strategies for redeveloping blighted and vacant property, fixing infrastructure, diversifying the economy, and similar recommendations contained in this plan. If the City fails to act, net new demand will likely only reach about half this number.

Housing demand has shifted toward younger singles and couples—good news for New Orleans. These demographic groups help diversify economies and often seek out the older neighborhoods that have struggled since the 1980s. Younger households tend to prefer lofts, apartments and condominiums in renovated houses or new buildings, and smaller or attached single-family houses. Families with children and empty nesters tend to prefer attached and detached single-family houses. Looking at the entire market, interest in ownership should continue to represent slightly less than half the market, while demand for high-quality, market-rate rental units (particularly from better-off younger households and families with children) should increase substantially in comparison to recent decades.

As in virtually every U.S. city, demographic trends point to a growing...
Neighborhoods & Housing

Housing markets

The population of homeowners in New Orleans who will want to sell single-family houses as they age. The supply of younger buyers will grow more slowly, and one statewide study suggests the two trends will produce an over-supply of single-family houses beginning about 2013. Rising interest in urban living works in favor of New Orleans’ neighborhoods, but the growing imbalance between sellers and buyers underscores the need to make improvements such as those identified in this plan to enhance the city’s ability to compete for new residents.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How have American housing markets changed over the past 30 years... and is New Orleans different? The number of younger and single households has increased dramatically, to more than half the market in many cities, including New Orleans. While roughly three-quarters of households seeking housing in 1970 included children, today their proportion has shrunk to roughly one-quarter, and this trend holds true for New Orleans. Additionally, only one in ten younger households wanted to live in or close to downtown just a decade ago; that share has risen to one-third. The housing market in 2010 will be much more diverse in terms of the kinds of housing people seek, and more households will seek out urban neighborhoods—characteristics that will likely hold true over the 20 years of this plan.

Can every neighborhood in New Orleans compete in a growing market? Yes. In a market best described as “diverse,” households will seek new and old neighborhoods across the city. In addition to the factors noted above, providing a broad range of housing options, including high-quality rental and ownership at a variety of price levels, will accelerate redevelopment.

Does every empty lot need to be redeveloped to refill neighborhoods? No. The Lot Next Door program, a general preference for larger units, replacement of some flooded multifamily complexes, and other influences mean that some neighborhoods can come back with fewer households.

Why develop lofts and other new housing on “opportunity sites”? Won’t this new housing just siphon demand from existing neighborhoods? No, the two don’t compete with each other. The housing proposed for opportunity sites appeals to households that want convenience, vibrancy, mixed-use, and new design. Initial market studies show near-term demand could fill a total of 5,000 to 6,000 units on these sites. While this represents only a small percentage of likely demand over 20 years, it accounts for a significant slice of demand over five to seven years. Developing these sites to capture this potential market will support local businesses, expand the citywide tax base, and strengthen existing neighborhoods, making them more competitive.

How do other cities make mixed-income housing successful? First, they emphasize high-quality design that enhances the character of “host” neighborhoods. Second, they mix market-rate, moderate, and lower-income units, which keeps the market-rate component competitive under the market conditions that prevail in each neighborhood. Third, they involve local residents in planning the developments.

Over the next five to seven years...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where people who want housing in New Orleans come from:</th>
<th>Kinds of households that will make up the housing market:</th>
<th>Anticipated demand for market-rate housing:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57% Orleans Parish</td>
<td>17% Empty-nesters &amp; Retirees</td>
<td>With limited economic development and no significant increase in resolving blight and vacancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17% Surrounding Region</td>
<td>32% Traditional &amp; Non-Traditional Families</td>
<td>about 1,500 units per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5% Rest of Louisiana</td>
<td>51% Younger singles &amp; Couples</td>
<td>With effective economic development and expanded efforts to resolve blight and vacancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% Balance of the U.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td>up to 3,750 units per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Housing markets

Opportunity Sites

The planning team identified several large “opportunity sites” across the city that could support significant redevelopment. Located along existing or proposed transit routes, these vacant or underutilized light-industrial and commercial areas offer New Orleans a unique opportunity to build vibrant, contemporary, transit-oriented neighborhoods, main streets, and commercial centers. Of varying densities, these new developments would incorporate the best qualities of existing historic neighborhoods. Housing- and commercial-market analyses suggest that sufficient demand will exist over the next five to seven years to assure the success of redevelopment on these sites. The results of the market analyses shaped the recommendations for each of these sites, which collectively would bring New Orleans broadened housing choices, expanded retail offerings, increased sales tax revenues, and new jobs.
Opportunity Sites

SITE 1: NEW ORLEANS EAST
The vacant Plaza at Lake Forest mall site—bounded by the I-10 Service Road, Read Boulevard, and Lake Forest Boulevard—should be redeveloped into a pedestrian-friendly, commercial “neighborhood center” and potential hub for bus rapid transit (BRT). The mix of a supermarket, big-box retailers, neighborhood stores, restaurants, and entertainment options would serve as the commercial center for New Orleans East. Future market demand could potentially support housing in adjacent areas, creating a true walkable, transit-supported neighborhood center.

SITE 2: SOUTH OF CONVENTION CENTER
Vast, vacant riverfront parcels—previously designated for a convention center expansion—offer a unique opportunity to develop a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly and transit-supported neighborhood adjacent to the Warehouse District and the central business district. The site and surrounding underutilized parcels could support up to 1,750 residential units, including attractive high rises, and neighborhood amenities such as restaurants, cafés, and supportive retail conveniences. New open-space corridors created as part of redevelopment would connect existing neighborhood areas to riverfront park amenities while preserving river views.
Opportunity Sites

SITE 3: ELYSIAN FIELDS AVENUE
The largely underutilized commercial parcels at the intersection of Elysian Fields and Gentilly Boulevard should be transformed into a compact mixed-use and mixed-income urban village. The new development would serve as a center for surrounding neighborhoods and nearby Dillard University. The area could hold up to 750 housing units (both rental and ownership) and could support a pedestrian-friendly Main Street with such amenities as a small grocery, clothing stores, restaurants and other neighborhood-serving retailers.

SITE 4: EARHART BOULEVARD
Currently a mix of light industrial parcels (many underutilized) and vacant lots adjacent to the B.W. Cooper redevelopment project, the area holds the potential to serve as a city-oriented retail and housing center designed with both pedestrian and auto access in mind. The retail-market analysis determined that the site could hold up to 250,000sf of retail, anchored by a large supermarket or general merchandise store, along with medium-sized big-box and national retailers to serve residents citywide. The commercial development would not only significantly increase retail options within the city, but it could also recapture up to $100 million that New Orleanians spend each year in surrounding parishes.
Opportunity Sites

SITE 5: LINDY BOGGS/ MID-CITY
Redevelopment can transform the former Lindy Boggs Medical Center and a collection of nearby light-industrial and commercial properties (many underutilized or vacant) into a vibrant, transit-supported neighborhood center. The area could include a Main Street corridor with a mix of medium-density, mixed-income housing above ground-floor retail, and step down to lower-density housing where redevelopment meets existing residential edges. New open-space corridors could connect to the Lafitte Greenway to create a unique green network for the entire Mid-City neighborhood.

SITE 6: WOODLAND HIGHWAY
The former Schwegman’s supermarket site could hold a mix of up to 450 single-family, townhouse, and multifamily housing units in a small, village-like setting. Residents of this housing could support a small number of specialty retailers, such as a dry cleaner, small market, wine shop, or other neighborhood conveniences. The addition of a BRT line to downtown would support additional convenience retail serving commuters from neighboring communities.
Auburn Court is a mixed-income infill redevelopment project in historic Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Enhancing neighborhood access to retail and services:
- Provide for corner stores where they are desired by residents.
- Prepare a grocery store market study to recruit stores in underserved areas.
- Locate civic uses as anchors in neighborhood commercial districts, where feasible.

Supporting and enhancing programs that improve the environmental health and quality of neighborhoods (also see “Environmental Quality” section of Sustainable Systems, below.)
- Enhance industrial and commercial performance standards (limits on impacts such as noise, dust, vibration, light, truck idling, and so on) within the zoning ordinance and assist, if needed, in identifying new sites and relocating businesses with adverse impacts on adjacent residences.
- Work with state and federal regulators to deal with pollution caused by non-residential properties.
- Increase lead screenings and deleading programs.
- Pursue recourse and funds for cleanup of brownfield sites to allow for some level of reuse of sites.

Appointing planners for each planning district to work with residents and business owners in neighborhoods. (See section h, From Plan to Action.)
PRINCIPLES
Land use and zoning

- Preserve the overall character of existing residential areas.
- Preserve existing successful mixed-use commercial areas and provide for small-scale stores to serve neighborhoods.
- Promote infill development on vacant lots in existing neighborhoods that is compatible in scale and character.
- Cluster higher-density new development near existing or planned streetcar or bus rapid transit hubs and ensure that the design and scale of multi-family housing reflects sensitivity to neighborhood context.
- Diversify housing stock in new residential development by incorporating a range of unit types to meet residents’ needs throughout their life cycle.
- Tailor zoning to the existing or desired character of the neighborhood.
- Preserve the character of residential streets through appropriate development design standards that reflect the established or desired streetscape as indicated by the pattern of building setbacks, heights and massing in relationship to public streets.
- Regulate the density of new development in residential districts to make it compatible with existing or desired neighborhood-character densities and to create appropriate transitions to adjoining districts of lower density.
- Promote neighborhood commercial clusters that are pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly and have active ground-floor uses.
Historic Preservation

In 2018, New Orleans will celebrate 300 years as a unique and vibrant urban place, and few American cities can match its extensive and living historic character. For residents of the city’s many walkable neighborhoods of shotguns, cottages and bungalows on both banks of the river the city’s history is part of everyday life. More than house forms and architectural details, much of the appeal of these neighborhoods comes from their settings—buildings rhythmically sited on streets lined with canopies of river oaks, parks and neutral grounds. Together, they make up the historic character of the city.

The federal government recognizes 19 National Register historic districts containing roughly 37,000 buildings (plus two pending districts). Within these districts lie 14 local historic districts in which external changes are regulated by historic design guidelines applied by the Vieux Carré Commission and the Historic District Landmarks Commission and its Central Business District arm. The local districts comprise the French Quarter and 16,000 buildings throughout the city. In addition, demolition permits require a review of conditions and historic significance within a Neighborhood Conservation District, which covers all of the city south of City Park Avenue, Wisner Boulevard, I-610, and Florida Boulevard and includes all present and future National Register Districts.

New Orleans residents are fiercely attached to the city’s historic character and the need to preserve that character was a top priority at many Master Plan meetings. The city’s physical connection to its historic roots is essential to the identity of New Orleanians.

Citywide preservation initiatives have succeeded in restoring irreplaceable historic structures one building at a time, such as this house. The historic character of New Orleans’ neighborhoods, however, comes from more than just individual buildings. The tout ensemble of overall setting gives each neighborhood its distinct flavor. This intangible quality will require a comprehensive, strategic approach to preservation planning to assure its survival for future generations of New Orleanians.

**KEY ISSUES**

- Historic preservation programs and historic buildings help tell the story of the city’s roots—not only the people who lived in the houses but also the craftsmen who built them. Linking historic preservation to culture broadens the constituency for preservation.
- 21st-century preservation entails more than saving architecture. Historic preservation can contribute to the broad goals of sustainability, revitalization, and economic development.
- Historic preservation can easily coexist with contemporary infill design that respects the scale of historic areas.
Local historic districts are subject to design controls to preserve historic character. The Neighborhood Conservation District controls demolition. There are no design controls in National Register Districts.
GOALS
What we want to achieve

• An expanded constituency for historic preservation through communication and embracing cultural heritage.

• Affordable preservation through information and funding to support people in all neighborhoods with houses and businesses of historic or “conserving” value.

• Enhanced partnerships to coordinate preservation with neighborhood revitalization, economic development, and sustainability.

STRATEGIES
How we can achieve it

Expanding the constituency for historic preservation through communication and cultural heritage initiatives:

• Prepare a strategic preservation plan that incorporates attention to the city’s physical and cultural heritage in the work of city agencies, community development corporations, developers and lenders, neighborhood groups, and so on.

• Develop criteria and set priorities to rank properties for historic significance, and use this information in making decisions about levels of preservation.

• Communicate regularly with property owners in regulated historic districts about regulations and cost-effective options.

> Early action example: The HDLC should send every household in local historic districts an annual publication with notification that the property is in a local historic district and what that means, along with information on how to preserve historic buildings.

• Prepare illustrated, easily understood design guidelines for owners of historic buildings, whether or not the buildings are in local historic districts.

• Create a one-stop shop for owners to find out about available resources.

Making historic preservation and conservation more affordable:

• Create partnerships with retailers of building materials to produce cost-effective materials that are appropriate for New Orleans historic building styles.
New Orleans holds tremendous opportunity for cultural and heritage tourism development, which could create a lucrative new niche for the tourism industry while extending its economic benefits more broadly throughout the city.

Adopting a holistic approach to historic preservation means looking not just at historic structures in isolation, but also preserving the cultural traditions, community and social structures, and socioeconomic diversity that characterize beloved New Orleans neighborhoods.

- Prepare illustrated, easy to understand design guidelines for owners of historic buildings, whether or not the buildings are in regulated local historic districts.
- Create a “one stop shop” for historic rehabilitation resources.
- Create a directory of contractors skilled in rehabilitation work and training programs that might provide student workers.
- Require salvage of usable historic components when buildings must be demolished.
- Provide rehabilitation assistance for owners who need assistance, including low-income households.

Enhancing partnerships for revitalization, economic development, and sustainability:

- Create workforce-training programs in artisan construction and crafts.
- Expand and foster partnerships among historic preservation advocates and community organizations, small business groups, and other revitalization groups.
- Create a heritage tourism program to expand the visitor experience of historic New Orleans beyond the French Quarter and Garden District—for example, Tremé/St. Bernard; Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard; and landmarks of New Orleans’ jazz tradition.

- Revise regulations to create guidelines for sustainability retrofits for historic properties (addressing energy conservation, stormwater management, and so on).
- Revise regulations and create guidelines for flood-protection retrofits for historic properties (e.g., house elevation).

New Orleans holds tremendous opportunity for cultural and heritage tourism development, which could create a lucrative new niche for the tourism industry while extending its economic benefits more broadly throughout the city.

PRINCIPLES

Land use and zoning

- Preserve the overall character of existing residential areas.
- Respect scale and massing in historic neighborhoods.
Historic preservation can further economic development and sustainability

Historic neighborhoods give New Orleans a competitive edge. The majority of New Orleans residents value their city’s character and heritage, yet economic development interests often view historic preservation efforts as overly restrictive, bureaucratic obstacles that factor into the city’s stagnant economy. Converging market forces and demographics, however, have made cities with historic character—walkable neighborhoods of historic housing peppered with locally owned stores, “main streets,” and unique cultural attractions—the most desirable places to live and do business. Since these forces will continue to shape the economic environment until at least 2020, protecting and restoring the character-giving elements of New Orleans’ historic neighborhoods will be critical in giving the city a distinct edge in competing globally for talent, business, and investment.

First steps. Partnerships between economic development interests (both public and private) and historic preservation initiatives will help leverage the city’s historic assets into a key driver of economic growth. In addition, partnerships between historic preservation and neighborhood revitalization initiatives will support a more holistic approach to preservation that emphasizes all aspects of neighborhood character—not just individual buildings—and strengthen the viability of New Orleans’ beloved neighborhoods for both current and future residents.

Heritage Tourism. Growing New Orleans’ heritage tourism sector represents an opportunity for the city to capitalize on its wealth of historic and cultural assets to expand the city’s tourism economy and spread its benefits to a broader cross-section of New Orleans. Heritage tourists seek authentic experiences “off the beaten path,” typically staying longer and spending more money than other visitor-market segments. New Orleans contains a wealth of potential heritage beyond current popular tourism destinations. The city’s six Main Streets programs, for example, promote historic restoration, marketing and small business development; these districts should be seen as potential heritage tourism destinations.

First Steps. The city should convene a task force on heritage tourism to define and create new heritage tourism experiences such as guided tours, events and trails. The task force should include the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation, historic preservation leaders, historians, interpreters, guides, storytellers, and representatives of the tourism industry. Potential early-action items include developing resource materials such as Web pages, itineraries, maps, audio tours, and training resources for guides. Successful heritage tourism initiatives in Philadelphia (www.gophila.com) and Chicago (www.architecture.org) provide good examples of user-friendly resource and planning materials that the task force should emulate. The city’s tricentennial in 2018 presents a prime opportunity to promote heritage tourism.

Cultural Economies. Neighborhood-based arts and entertainment venues provide opportunities for creating heritage tourism destinations, generating jobs, and enhancing quality of life. The 19 Cultural Products Districts established by the state Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism in 2008 provide state tax credits to support the purchase and restoration of historic structures by artists and others. The heritage tourism task force should work with these districts to promote and develop them as tourist destinations “off the beaten path.”
Green Infrastructure: Open Space, Parks and Recreation

Excellent parks, recreational resources for adults as well as children and youth, and access to water and nature are key ingredients of the quality of life city dwellers desire in the 21st century. New Orleans’ system of parks, open spaces, and recreation resources is one of its most important assets. The city’s beautiful live oaks, neutral grounds, exceptional large parks, good basic neighborhood park system, and the potential of its waterfronts are critical to quality of life.

This is the “green infrastructure” of the city: the network of parks, tree-lined streets, bike trails and pedestrian paths, river and stream corridors, waterfronts and urban wilds. As with the “gray infrastructure” of roads and water lines, green infrastructure must be planned, created, maintained and restored as a system, not as a grab bag of isolated facilities.

GOALS
What we want to achieve

- A green network to enhance environmental sustainability by protecting wetlands, restoring and expanding the urban forest and tree canopy, improving the stormwater-handling capacity of green spaces, and encouraging environmentally valuable uses of vacant land, such as community orchards and rain gardens.

- A parks policy that includes a commitment to “no net loss” of the total amount of public park land; a park within walking distance—one-third mile—of every resident; and more public access to water fronts.

- Recreation programs that provide year-round opportunities for children, youth, adults and seniors.

KEY ISSUES

- Approach the park and parkways system as part of a broader green network connected to the urban forest—the city’s trees—and natural areas.

- Improve coordination among the various entities that provide park and recreation resources to residents. When residents or visitors go looking for a park, they should encounter the same experience regardless of which park they choose and which entity administers the park.

\* Chapter 7 in the Technical Plan
More effective coordination and cost-effective management of park and recreation resources as well as consistent funding and expanded partnerships

**STRATEGIES**

**How we can achieve it**

**Creating a green network:**

- Prohibit further drainage of wetlands for development both inside and outside the levees.
- Seek conservation solutions for privately owned wetlands that reimburse owners for the value of their land, such as conservation servitudes or, in the future, greenhouse gas trading credits.
- Prepare a street tree master plan with the goal of reaching a 50% tree canopy by 2030. Focus first on major corridors and neutral grounds.
- Establish sustainable methods in parks and green space maintenance and operations.
- Secure and promote community gardens, orchards and schoolyard-greening programs.

**Preserving and expanding parks and recreational opportunities:**

- Require enhanced public review of disposition of public parkland.
- Evaluate vacant public property for suitability as a park or recreation site.
- Balance passive and active uses of parks and public spaces.
- Give priority to underserved areas and to waterfronts and other places of citywide importance for creation of new parks.

- Create linear parks and greenways, as well as tree-lined streets, to connect people to parks and neighborhood destinations; coordinate with transit stops.

  > *Early Action Item:* Create the Lafitte Greenway as a model for future greenway projects.

Access to excellent parks, recreational facilities, and natural areas are key ingredients of quality of life. New Orleans’ existing network of parks is a good foundation, but many parks need improvements.
A system of canals and waterways—or “blueways”—could increase water storage capacity while providing a new park for residents, as along Elysian Fields, above.

- Include “blueways,” or recreational corridors, in planning for canals as amenities.
- Expand and revise recreation offerings to meet citizen needs, including adults and seniors.
- Provide multi-use indoor/outdoor recreation centers within five miles of every resident.

**Improving coordination and management of park and recreation agencies:**

- Establish an inter-agency parks and recreation coordinating group for all relevant city, nonprofit, private and parish agencies involved in parks and recreation.
- Create a new, single city department with holistic responsibility for the city’s green spaces, urban forest and parks, and its recreation programming—for more flexible service to all residents, coordination, management efficiency, and cost savings.
- Establish a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to work with the single Parks and Recreation Department.
- Create systems for community input into programs, park and facility design.
- Work to provide consistent and adequate per capita funding, as well as funding from outside partners.
Like the “gray infrastructure” of roads and water lines, “green infrastructure” requires a planned, created, maintained, restored, and coordinated system.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

**LEGEND**

- Parks and recreational facilities
- General areas of contiguous tree canopy
- Walking and bike paths (existing)
- Open levees
- Large neutral grounds
- Wetlands*

*Includes estuarine emergent and scrub/shrub/wetlands, and palustrine emergent, forested, and scrub/shrub wetland areas.

Source: City of New Orleans, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Multi-purpose community centers such as this Central City YMCA provide recreational, educational, and wellness programs for residents of all ages and serve as anchors of neighborhood revitalization.

**PRINCIPLES**

**Land use and zoning**

- Promote wetlands preservation in land-use categories and zoning.
- Enhance municipal regulations and enforcement systems to protect wetlands.
Health and Human Services

A robust and integrated system of health care and human services is vital to ensuring the productivity and competitiveness of a city and a high quality of life for all of its residents. A healthy city not only provides adequate health care but also a living environment with access to healthy practices in everyday life and adequate services for all citizens to ensure that they become independent, productive, and fulfilled members of the community.

- **Health.** Compared to other states, Louisiana consistently ranks at or near the bottom on a range of overall health measures. A 2008 survey of New Orleanians found that a majority had health problems and difficulties getting access to health care.

- **Human services.** The many service providers in New Orleans and its region lack sufficient communication and coordination.

- **Youth.** One third of New Orleans children live below the poverty level; less than a quarter of school-aged children are served by after-school programs; the city lacks an adequate number of day care facilities.

- **Homelessness.** The city’s homeless population is estimated at 12,000. Most homeless persons suffer from physical or mental disabilities and about 20% are substance abusers. The agencies that serve homeless persons are linked in a network, as required by the federal government in order to receive funding.

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10 Chapter 8 in the Technical Plan
• **Crime.** New Orleans remained high on national lists of crime in 2008, despite improving statistics. Survey respondents in 2008 ranked crime as the single biggest problem facing the city, though 70% felt somewhat or very safe in their own neighborhoods.

The City’s Department of Public Health administers certain public health funding programs, including the Ryan White AIDS program, lead poisoning prevention, and nutrition programs for pregnant women, infants and young children and elderly persons. It also operates six clinics and enforces the health code. The department focuses on public health and preventive programs. The city’s Department of Human Services operates the Youth Study Center, the city’s youth detention center. City departments also coordinate some state and federal funding for health and human service programs carried out by nonprofit organizations.

► **KEY ISSUES**

• Focus and coordinate delivery of many kinds of services at the neighborhood level in civic centers or clusters that include schools, community centers, libraries and similar facilities.

• Better coordination of the multiplicity of agencies and service providers—and their relationships to city government—will greatly improve understanding of service needs, enable more cost-effective service delivery, reduce duplication, and yield better service to the public.
KEY ISSUES

- Improved measures of overall public health and the physical, mental, social and emotional health for children and youth
- A physical and social environment that promotes health and healthy behaviors
- Support services and programs that enhance crime prevention and promote safety.

STRATEGIES

How we can achieve it

Improving public health and human service delivery:
A broad spectrum of nonprofit organizations, local, and state agencies provides health and human services in New Orleans. In many cases needs outstrip available resources. City support for enhanced communication, collaboration, resource sharing and efficient service provision will help stretch resources to deliver services where most needed.

- Provide clustered services in neighborhoods
  > Co-locate city Health Department services with schools, community centers and other neighborhood anchors.
  > Collaborate with service providers to follow national best practices by creating Multi-Service Centers through public-private partnerships that link independent service providers and public agencies. These centers should include health clinics that provide “medical homes” for residents; human services; one-stop shops for public benefits; public health education and outreach; and emergency planning for evacuation needs of residents, including special-needs populations.

- Provide convenient hospital and emergency care to areas such as New Orleans East, parts of the West Bank, and the Lower Ninth Ward, planning for projected additional demand for hospital beds according to best-practice measures.

- Collaborate with providers to create a Human Services Consortium for New Orleans to foster coordination and communication among service providers.

  > Early Action Item: Create a task force to coordinate services such as VIALINK, 311 and the Office of Public Advocacy to avoid duplication, use resources efficiently and make clear to the public where to find complete information about health and human services.

- Continue to support programs for children and youth
  > Collaborate with program providers to pursue grants from all federal programs with funding for after-school programs.
Following national best practices as exemplified by the Harlem Children’s Zone, collaborate with the state’s project to create a comprehensive and holistic continuum of support for children from infancy through college.

Providing walkable neighborhoods with access to recreation, healthy activities and healthy food (See sections on neighborhoods and housing, transportation, and environmental health.)
- Coordinate city policies and services to promote exercise and healthy diets.

**Promoting community-based safety and crime prevention programs**
- Support Community Policing and programs such as Crime Watch and Neighborhood Night Out:
  - Support and expand innovative programs such as alternative sentencing, community justice centers, life-skill training, and workforce re-entry programs.
  - Work with neighborhoods to identify crime-related blight and call in enforcement.

**PRINCIPLES**

**Land use and zoning**
- Ensure that multi-use centers are designed to respect neighborhood scale and are pedestrian-friendly.
- Locate multi-use centers with neighborhood anchors and/or on neighborhood commercial districts.
II. How We Prosper

New Orleans is a city that encompasses musicians and artists, hotel workers, professors, oil and gas engineers, port workers, and life science researchers, space ship builders, and digital media entrepreneurs. The city is in an economic transition, still relying on many of its traditional industries while fostering emerging sectors. Many key industries, such as tourism, maritime trade and advanced manufacturing, have rebounded since Hurricane Katrina. Already-committed funding for rebuilding will continue to prime the economy and provide significant employment, softening the effects of the national recession that began in 2008. Whatever the short-term economic prognosis, over the mid to long term, as the city completes its recovery, it also has the opportunity to reposition itself for economic growth, more and better jobs, and leadership in emerging 21st-century industries.

Key issues

• Understanding the competitive challenges and opportunities facing the city’s economy and taking the actions necessary to maintain and expand the city’s base industries
• Investing in the “building blocks” of the economy by creating a local environment that combines good city services and efficient regulation, excellent quality of life for residents and for businesses, and a well-educated workforce

Our overall goals for opportunity

• Build a more competitive and diversified economy
• Continued support for established industries while diversifying the economy by fostering emerging industries and nurturing potential green industries
• Greater economic opportunity for everyone by expanding school-career partnerships and workforce training
• An entrepreneurial culture
• Efficient government services and streamlined regulation
• Support for downtown as a key economic engine
• Support for small business

Our overall zoning principles

• Create a range of zoning districts for attractive and marketable employment centers—downtown and in mixed-use neighborhood centers, and for institutions, business and industrial uses.
• Establish planned development review for larger projects.

Getting Started

• Establishing the proposed economic development public-private partnership.
• Expanding partnerships between business interests, higher education, and workforce training programs.
• Advocating for increased resources to support local community colleges, universities and colleges.
• Centralizing and streamline available assistance to small businesses.
Sustaining and Expanding the Economy

Economic base industries are the key to wealth creation and economic prosperity. They sell their products and services to business and consumers from elsewhere—regionally, nationally, and internationally—which brings new income that creates jobs and increases business as it circulates within the local economy. Over the next 20 years, New Orleans must continue to support its established base industries, foster emerging industries that are small now but show strong prospects for growth, and nurture the emergence of potential industries that are embryonic now but where New Orleans has competitive advantages.

- **Established industries**: tourism, arts and culture, the port and maritime trade, advanced manufacturing, and oil and gas.
- **Emerging industries**: life sciences, media and film.
- **Potential industries**: segments of alternative energy technology, coastal protection and restoration technology, and advanced building technology.

**GOALS**

What we want to achieve

- An effective, public-private partnership, to retain, recruit and expand the economic base
- Expansion of established industries
- Fostering of emerging industries
- Promotion of potential industries

**STRATEGIES**

How we can achieve it

**Supporting the public-private partnership**

- **Early Action Item**: Work with the public-private partnership to build a coordinated and unified strategic alignment among businesses, government and the diverse existing organizations that support economic development.

- Create strategic working groups for industry sectors (tourism, cultural economy, port and maritime industry, advanced manufacturing, oil and gas, life sciences, film and digital media, green industries) and for workforce development.

**Expanding established industries**

- Tourism

- Expand the tourism marketing budget to match comparable tourist destinations (New Orleans spends 10% of what Las Vegas spends).
A state-of-the-art medical district will require a new level of city-planning leadership

N
o set of projects holds greater potential to enhance quality of life, economic opportunity, character, and sustainability than the proposed Southeastern Regional Veterans Administration Hospital (VA) and Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (LSU). The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) stepped forward following Hurricane Katrina and launched planning for a medical district more vital and nationally competitive than before the storm—particularly critical for a city in which one in eight residents held a job related to health care in 2005.

Placing a high priority on securing commitments from the two hospitals to locate in the medical district, the City proposed sites that were subsequently endorsed by LSU and the VA. Building on the RPC’s planning, the City envisions a medical district anchored by these hospitals and Tulane Medical School that would attract significant development of research and other health-care-related industries. The BioInnovation Center is an early example of the commitment to take effective steps to insure spin-off economic-development benefits from health care.

Projects of this scale would generate public debate in any city, and while there is widespread enthusiasm for the hospitals themselves, the specific sites endorsed by LSU and the VA have drawn widespread criticism. A citywide coalition of neighborhood and community organizations, the Foundation for Historical Louisiana (FHL), the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and other groups have urged LSU to rehabilitate historic Charity Hospital and the VA to avoid displacing an existing neighborhood. A study by RMJM Hillier, a nationally recognized architecture and preservation firm, concludes that rehabilitating the Charity building would save time and costs, assessments that LSU disputes. Others suggest that hospitals with comparable facilities and location could readily share the site identified for LSU and avoid the need to remove the adjacent neighborhood.

While the agreements covering the hospitals’ siting and other aspects of planning for the district do not include a specific role for the CPC, the controversy over the proposals led residents and City Council members to ask the CPC to host a public forum in May, 2009, to determine how the Master Plan should address the hospitals and other issues raised by the medical district. Based on the forum and an assessment of the planning process to date, the Master Plan includes four core recommendations:

- **Planning leadership.** Although state and federal projects are exempt from local zoning, the sweep of the medical district’s impacts—and intense public interest—demonstrate the importance of City-led and community-based planning for projects that affect the welfare of the city and its neighborhoods. New Orleans would be well-served going forward by a model that has worked in many cities in which city government carries out community-based planning that includes key stakeholders and state and federal agencies. The CPC should work closely with ORDA/Community Development, the Greater New Orleans Biosciences Economic Development District, the RPC, NORA and other agencies to create plans that meet the needs of proponents and reflect the values of the community. Plans approved by the CPC would represent an appropriate basis for inviting NORA to take advantage of its redevelopment capabilities to insure that the City is well placed in terms of site control and development incentives to maximize the medical district’s economic-development benefits. Promoting residents’ access to top-quality health-care facilities as soon as possible; insuring that planning and design honors the city’s unique character; preserving historic resources; protecting nearby neighborhoods’ interests; overseeing district development to ascertain that it makes good use
of scarce land; guaranteeing that the project yields a full range of jobs and other economic benefits—all these tasks represent responsibilities that require community-based planning and cannot be assigned away.

• Community engagement. The Master Plan proposes a community participation process—summarized in section H, “From plan to action,” and described more fully in Chapter 17 of the Technical Plan—that should be implemented as soon as possible for the medical district. This process would include assigning a district planner to work with surrounding neighborhoods and with the proponents, accelerating formation of a district council, appointing a task force that includes the full range of citywide perspectives to work with the district council (whose members would be appointed by the mayor or city council), and holding periodic public review meetings. The CPC would invite the district council and task force to work closely with planners for the medical district and the hospitals to insure that all stakeholders understand each other and work together to achieve the nationally competitive medical district envisioned by the RPC in a manner that merits active community support.

• Reuse of the historic Charity Hospital building. Cities bear a responsibility to protect their historic resources, and in 2008 the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed the Charity campus as one of America’s Most Endangered Places. Uncertainty over the landmark’s future undermines the ability of key stakeholders to work to promote the medical district. The CPC may not be in a position to determine whether the Charity building should be rehabilitated to house the new hospital, but the CPC should take the lead on behalf of the City to insure that further planning includes a strategy for re-using and preserving it.

• Planning and land use guidelines. While state and federal facilities can override zoning, the CPC retains responsibility for promoting planning for the medical district that advances the city’s core interests. It should apply the three central planning and urban design values that emerged from this Master Plan process:
  > Cultivate livability:
    ■ Create respectful transitions to adjacent neighborhoods—stepping down in scale, avoiding negative traffic impacts, facing neighborhoods with pedestrian-friendly uses at street level.
    ■ Extend New Orleans’ “signature” qualities to the district, including walkability created in part by buildings whose uses frame and enliven sidewalks along major streets, tree-lined streets, a mix of uses, and similar qualities.
  > Use the growth of the medical district to support nearby vibrant neighborhoods, commercial districts, convenient transit, lively parks, and similar amenities.
  > Promote sustainability:
    ■ Help reduce the city’s carbon footprint by becoming New Orleans’ greenest district—beginning with green building and energy and extending to reuse of existing structures and enhancement of livability in adjacent neighborhoods.
    ■ Celebrate the city’s relationship to water by creating rain gardens, a day-lighted and landscaped canal in place of the Galvez culvert, and similar steps that add beauty and help protect the city from rain-driven flooding.

> Foster opportunity:
  ■ Provide the education and services that offer people at every education and economic level new opportunity.
  ■ Offer a well designed and lively environment that attracts people to live, work, and invest in and near the medical district, including support for nearby housing that accommodates potential employees of every income and background.
> Invest in new attractions like the downtown performing arts district; heritage tourism (such as a Tremé center for African-American culture and history); walking tours; and general connectivity and transit improvements that can deliver visitors to neighborhoods not currently on the tourism circuit.

- Cultural industries
  > Support more comprehensive and coordinated cultural entrepreneurship training and a marketing approaches for different cultural industry segments, including music, visual arts, and other traditional forms of cultural expression.
  > Market and invest in the state-designated Cultural Products Districts.
  > Create a welcoming environment for artists by taking their housing and work space needs into account in housing programs and regulation, advocating for artists’ income tax credits, and providing grant-writing and business assistance.
  > Create a Cultural Commission to coordinate city support for culture and the arts.

- Maritime-related industries
  > Increase coordination among the Port Authority, city agencies, and economic development organizations to address issues and advocate for funding.
  > Seek to increase value-added manufacturing and distribution activities on port-owned industrial land.
  > Advocate for a cohesive state ports policy.

- Advanced manufacturing
  > Monitor and advocate for continued NASA commitment to Michoud.
  > Recruit NASA subcontractor businesses by investing in the New Orleans Regional Business Park with upgraded infrastructure, roads, landscaping and signage.
  > Continue to rebuild engineering programs in city universities.
  > Continue to increase the availability of workers in the skilled trades through training programs.
  > Leverage the existing research base to attract other industries such as civilian aerospace and wind energy.

- Oil and gas
  > Support the retention of energy-services firms and their high-paying jobs by working with them to identify their needs and taking steps to address them

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New Orleans’ visitor industry

New Orleans’ visitor industry has consistently been one of the largest employers (in persons employed) in the city, and since Katrina has been the city’s largest employment sector and one of the fastest to recover. In 2008, total visitor spending in the city exceeded that of 2004 (before the storm), totaling more than $5.1 billion, and nearly 25,000 people were employed in food service and accommodation. The visitor industry offers significant opportunity for entry-level employment for unskilled workers and those new to the workforce. Importantly, it also provides opportunities for progressive advancement and professional growth due to built-in “ladders” of increasing responsibility. The sustained growth of the visitor industry is therefore critical to the continued expansion of economic opportunity for all levels of workers in New Orleans.

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**Foster emerging industries**

- Life sciences
  - Secure full funding for the LSU medical center and the Louisiana Cancer Research Consortium joint research center.
  - Provide planning leadership for the Medical District to resolve issues, provide design standards and make initial infrastructure investments, and identify appropriate uses for underutilized properties.
    - *Early Action Item:* Complete and attract tenants to the BioInnovation Center to provide a concrete sign of the viability of the proposed Medical District and life sciences sector.
  - Promote more collaboration among institutions to leverage research synergies.
- Film/video, digital media, and other creative industries
  - Attract talent through marketing, incentives and professional contacts.
  - Develop production and post-production facilities and support services for film/television production and music production.
  - Provide business startup and entrepreneurial assistance, especially for digital media.
  - Expand education and workforce programs to meet the needs of film and digital media industries.
  - Ensure reauthorization of state tax incentives.

**Nurture potential industries:**

- Promote coastal-protection and restoration industries by
  - Marketing to firms in the sector
  - Expanding the research capacity of local research institutions
  - Preparing the workforce for jobs in this industry at all skill levels
  - Supporting local firms in exporting these services internationally
- Promote renewable-energy–industry opportunities by
  - Providing incentives for location of research and production facilities in hydrokinetic, solar and wind energy
Supporting culture and the arts in New Orleans

In New Orleans, culture is a way of life, a calling, a business, and an industry. World-renowned as the crucible of jazz and other American arts, the neighborhoods of New Orleans continue to nurture musical, visual, performing, culinary, and traditional artists, as well as traditional cultural activities in social clubs. Many of today’s artists are natives of the city, but others are drawn to this fertile cultural ground from all over the world. New Orleans’ culture is one of the pillars of the tourism industry, but individual artists and cultural groups often struggle to survive as artists. Moreover, innovative arts- and culture-related industries like film and digital media are creating new opportunities in the cultural economy.

What can the City do to give more robust support to the arts and culture community?

• Recognize its critical role in New Orleans economy: This Master Plan recommends that the cultural economy be one of the industry working groups convened inside the New Orleans Economic Development Council to develop a coordinated strategy.

• Assist cultural organizations and artists in securing outside funding: Include culture and the arts in the city’s grant-seeking and grant-making system.

• Make sure the regulatory system and community development programs encompass the special requirements of artists: Assist artists in accessing affordable housing; encourage arts projects to apply for community development funds for neighborhood development projects, especially within Cultural Products Districts; ensure that artist live-work situations are permitted in appropriate zoning districts.

• Create a city Cultural Commission: A commission might be modeled on the San Francisco Arts Commission, which in 2008 spent about $5 per person in San Francisco on six neighborhood cultural centers, community arts and education programs, a civic design review commission, and a program they call Cultural Equity Grants, which focuses on celebrating “the City’s vast ethnic diversity and variety of cultural traditions” and includes grants to individual artists, programs and projects, and professional development, as well as other initiatives.

As part of a focus on neighborhood quality of life and local economic development, City support for the arts can be most effective at the neighborhood level, nurturing the grass-roots cultural and artistic expression unique to New Orleans and ensuring its continuation into the future.
> Promoting expansion of relevant university research capacity
> Training workers for renewable energy jobs
> Developing sufficient capacity for energy production and the transmission infrastructure to export power outside the region

- Promote sustainable building design and construction by
  > Providing regulatory incentives and training for construction companies to adopt advanced construction methods
  > Marketing New Orleans as a center of advanced construction to attract more companies
  > Providing construction workers with relevant skills
  > Supporting export of expertise to other construction markets

- Capitalize on the emerging carbon-credit market through energy-efficient construction to generate income for property developers and government.
- Link existing industries with emerging and new industries—for example, the oil and gas services industry with coastal restoration, wind power, and other green opportunities.
- Invest in capital improvements to support base industries, such as port infrastructure.
Reinforcing the Building Blocks of Prosperity

The “building blocks” of the New Orleans’ economy are those factors that most influence the pace and quality of economic development: human capital, based on education and workforce development; an entrepreneurial culture and risk-oriented investment community; cost-effective and efficient government; and reducing poverty by providing opportunity. These building blocks of prosperity are interconnected with improvements in human development and community livability. It is important to build public awareness of how these building blocks not only serve as the foundation for more and better jobs and businesses, but can also help reduce crime and move all New Orleanians into the mainstream of opportunity, bringing benefits to everyone in the city.

Jobs follow educated and skilled people. In the past, people followed jobs, migrating to businesses that chose their locations based on factors such as proximity to markets or raw materials and access to transportation. Today, jobs follow people. Cities that educate their youth to become highly productive workers and that offer the quality of life that attracts and retains highly skilled professional and technical talent are in a better position to attract and grow the high-value-added, high-growth companies whose workforces are their most important assets. Key human capital building blocks include high-quality education and workforce training at all life stages, cultural and recreational amenities, and vibrant, safe, convenient, and environmentally sustainable neighborhoods.

An entrepreneurial culture needs the right mix to grow. Key entrepreneurial building blocks include a robust academic...
research base that aggressively moves technology into the commercial marketplace, a risk-oriented investment community, a critical mass of professional services and technical assistance, appropriately designed and priced building space, and, in an age of increasing connectivity, ample opportunities for networking and collaboration. Cities that develop a strong entrepreneurial culture can attract and retain footloose entrepreneurs seeking to exploit new product and market opportunities.

**New Orleans cannot truly prosper unless all its residents prosper.** Cities with less economic disparity and lower poverty rates also have healthier economies because of the high correlation between skills and income. The presence of a large undereducated class not only creates social distress but also represents lost economic opportunity. The most reliable indicator of regional economic growth over the last decade has been the presence of an educated and skilled workforce. In an age when economic prosperity is so closely tied to human capital, New Orleans cannot afford to leave a significant portion of its workforce ill-prepared to fill the high-skill, high-paying jobs that every city covets. This concern extends across education and skill levels. In a changing economy, New Orleans needs to train people who need skills to enter the workforce and others who may have lost middle-class jobs that no longer exist (in the public sector or elsewhere) and need new skills to reenter the workforce. Enhancing economic success and wealth creation for all also requires redoubling efforts to bring more businesses owned by disadvantaged groups into the economic mainstream, incorporating the principle of equity and inclusion into all economic development efforts.

**Governmental functions influence the business environment.** Local government must use tax revenues as efficiently as possible to minimize the tax burden, and it must distribute the tax burden equitably among different classes of businesses and between businesses and residents. Further, it must minimize regulatory burdens while carrying out legitimate regulatory functions. At the same time, government must...
effectively provide the infrastructure and basic public services that businesses depend on to carry out day-to-day operations.

**GOALS**

*What we want to achieve*

- Good jobs at all levels, with opportunities to move up
- A well-educated and skilled workforce with state-of-the-art workforce-development programs
- An entrepreneurial culture
- A vibrant small-business base and neighborhood commercial districts
- A 24-hour downtown to support its role as an economic driver
- Local government that supports a high quality of life by delivering cost-effective and efficient services to both businesses and residents

**STRATEGIES**

*How we can achieve it*

**Creating a well-educated and skilled workforce:**

- Maintain and strengthen the role of higher education in economic development:
  - *Early Action Item:* Advocate for increased funding for local universities and colleges.
  - Work with higher education to identify the research needs of key industries.
  - Increase efforts to retain and attract young professionals and entrepreneurs.

- Strengthen career preparation programs in the K-12 school system and dramatically expand and enhance adult workforce development programs.
  - Establish a Business-School Partnership for Career Preparation that involves all schools and functions as a single contact point for businesses to work with such programs.
  - Establish an early-college-education program in high school to promote acquisition of a postsecondary credential, even for students who do not plan on pursuing a four-year college program.
  - Expand sites and technical education programs for adult workforce training at Delgado Community College—ensuring on-time completion of the planned Delgado campus in New Orleans (with $11.9 million in state bond funding) by 2013.
  - Expand the number of satellite adult education and career centers by providing classroom space and computer banks in city libraries or other city facilities.
A 21st-century downtown marked by a unique blend of preservation and innovation

The president of CEO’s for Cities notes that cities with vibrant downtowns “out-compete” others in attracting investment and jobs, in part because housing in their regions has proven to be a better investment; educated workers necessary for economic diversity seek regions with vibrant downtowns; conventions that build bridges to other cities seek venues in lively and historic downtowns; and the tolerance for diversity that serves as a litmus test for many companies flourishes in healthy downtowns.

New Orleans is increasingly successful in these and other dimensions. More important, downtown is New Orleans’ birthplace and common ground.

Dedicated stewardship—and active engagement by a substantial residential population—continue to preserve and enhance a rich mix of historic and cultural amenities, reinforcing downtown as a regional economic engine that fosters investment in the medical district; fast-growing creative and green “industries of the mind”; higher-value “cultural tourism”; and similar benefits. Market support exists to double downtown’s residential population over the next seven years and create new neighborhoods along the South Rampart corridor and on the vacant Convention Center expansion site.

The Downtown Development District’s collaborations with the Canal Street Development Corporation, the French Quarter and other partners are critical to taking steps essential to achieving the downtown’s full promise:

- Bring Canal Street’s historic theaters and upper floors back to life with a rehabilitation building code and targeted financial incentives (recouped as investors respond to public leadership).
- Restore the historic former Charity Hospital and nearby buildings to create a vibrant seam with the medical district.
- Manage development in all of the historic districts to preserve their integrity and character.
- Animate key walking streets like Julia, Magazine, and Royal to encourage convention and Superdome event attendees, French Quarter visitors, medical district employees, Warehouse District gallery visitors, and others to explore other parts of downtown. In the process, all of downtown will become more competitive as a place to live, work, shop, visit, and invest.
- Aggregate land to set the stage for creation of new mixed-use downtown neighborhoods, and work with the Iberville public housing residents on further planning.
- Undertake a series of transit and other transportation initiatives to enhance connections to the city’s neighborhoods and the larger city and region.

As this Master Plan is being completed, the mayor has raised the issue of the need to rebuild City Hall or find a replacement. Over the longer term this move offers New Orleans the opportunity to plan for a vital new civic center and city hall that can emerge as a national symbol of New Orleans’ spirit, energy, and inclusiveness…and make an important contribution to downtown’s vitality.
• Retain and attract educated and skilled workers at all levels.
  > Expand and broaden existing talent-retention initiatives and cultivate young leaders in civic activities.
  > Include lifestyle preferences of young professionals in planning for housing, urban design and transportation.
  > Support retraining programs for mid-career workers.
  > Expand workforce re-entry programs for ex-offenders.

**Fostering an entrepreneurial culture:**
• Support the development of new entrepreneurial ventures.
  > Develop the infrastructure for university technology transfer and technology-based enterprise development.
  > Conduct an early-stage-capital study to identify needs and sources of pre-seed, seed and venture capital financing in the region.
  > Assure the availability of commercial space for startup ventures.

**Nurturing vibrant small businesses and neighborhood commercial districts:**
• Sustain and grow the city’s small- and micro-business base.
  > Coordinate small business assistance services.
  > Streamline business regulatory processes.

> Attracting and retaining a skilled workforce involves cultivating young leadership in civic activities.

The continued success of small and locally-owned businesses will require improved business-assistance services and streamlined regulatory processes.

> Improve small business access to public contracting opportunities.

> Fast-track creation of a one-stop shop and comprehensive resource guide to opening and operating a business in New Orleans.

> Promote development of small business associations and alliances to serve as a voice of small business interests.

> Market existing business incentives to small business owners through the New Orleans Economic Development Council.

> Facilitate access to credit and capital for small business through microfinance and revolving loan programs.
PRINCIPLES
Land use and zoning

- Allocate sufficient land for key economic sectors in the future land use plan, including for supportive infrastructure.
- Provide commercial and industrial space for start-up businesses.
- Provide zoning to accommodate the needs of artists, performance, film, and other cultural industries.
- Provide commercial space for start-up and small businesses.
- Improve and enhance downtown as a vibrant mix of urban districts for work, entertainment, shopping, and living:
  > A center of business and commerce
  > A marketplace of mixed-use development
  > The world’s meeting place in the convention center
  > Lively mixed-use neighborhoods and cultural districts
  > A crossroads of tourism and entertainment
III. SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS

Citywide systems of facilities, services, and infrastructure support the life of New Orleans residents and the city’s economy. Like hundreds of other cities, New Orleans has moved toward sustainability—efficient use of land, energy and water, and resilient systems of multifaceted protection from, and adaptation to, natural hazards and climate change.

With FEMA investments and other disaster-related funding, New Orleans in the short term will have a significant number of new public facilities, such as police and fire stations, libraries, and community centers. Making these facilities hazard-resistant and functional in emergencies, energy- and water-efficient in their day-to-day operations, and maintained on a regular basis will allow them to provide many years of service.

The water, sewer, and drainage infrastructure owned by the Sewerage & Water Board is being upgraded with disaster-related funding. This system’s needs are so great, however, that funds from bonding and other sources are essential to bringing them up to standard.

Road infrastructure is also being repaired with disaster-related funds, but regular bonding will continue to be essential to upgrading all city streets; federal funds can be pursued for larger-scale projects. Transit expansions and upgrades, coupled with improved bicycle and pedestrian conditions, will provide more transportation choice to New Orleans residents.

In addition, New Orleans—like every coastal city—must both adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change and the significant sea level rise that is predicted to occur within the 21st century. The City has already begun the process of planning for climate change by joining ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability’s Cities for Climate Protection Campaign and pledging to develop and implement a climate action plan.
Our overall goals for sustainability

- Create 21st-century facilities and infrastructure systems appropriately hardened to withstand major storms and hazards.
- Deliver efficient and cost-effective city services.
- Invest in systems to assure timely maintenance of city assets.
- Provide transportation choice for quality of life through a robust, multimodal transportation system integrated with land use.
- Make New Orleans resilient in the face of storms, hazards, and climate change.
- Transform the city into a model for green practices.

Our overall zoning principles

- Create design standards in the zoning ordinance that mitigate natural hazards, and promote the conservation of water, air and land resources.

Getting Started

- Expanding the Office of Environmental Affairs.
- Establishing an asset management system for all city property and facilities.
- Establishing a stormwater management unit within the Sewerage and Water Board.
- Establishing a community standard of resilience of at least 1 in 500 year protection standards.
- Promoting wetland preservation through land use and zoning.
- Ensuring community involvement in the Hazard Mitigation Plan Update.
- Updating the Coastal Management Plan.
- Enhancing urban green spaces as water storage assets.
- Establishing a permanent transportation planner position within the CPC.
- Completing a Climate Action Plan.
- Establishing citywide initiatives that showcase local environmental leadership and innovation.
- Continuing to implement the Energy Smart New Orleans plan to increase energy efficiency.
- Supporting community purchasing initiatives to expand the adoption of renewable energy technologies.
- Removing zoning barriers to small-scale urban agriculture on residential properties.
- Establishing a “green” procurement policy for all municipal facilities and processes.
Like all older cities, New Orleans faces the huge costs of upgrading aging infrastructure, including elements that are nearly 100 years old. The New Orleans Sewerage & Water Board (SWB) owns and operates the city’s complex water, sewer and drainage infrastructure. SWB oversees a special district that receives funds from ratepayers, property tax millages, and bond proceeds, but the City Council has the right to approve rate increases. Although the SWB had begun repairs and upgrades before Hurricane Katrina, the impacts of the storm caused new damage and accelerated existing problems. A 2006 estimate sets the cost of total capital investment required for the water, sewer and drainage systems by 2030 at $5.7 billion, much of which is currently unfunded. As was the case in the 1970s, when Clean Water Act requirements spurred water and sewer upgrades with federal funding throughout the country, the scale of funding needed will necessitate additional federal assistance combined with bonds and, possibly, rate increases.

**KEY ISSUES**

- Issues of deferred maintenance will remain serious even with new, post-storm facilities
- Identifying funding for repair and upgrading of the sewer, water and drainage infrastructure is a critical concern

**GOALS**

**What we want to achieve**

- Public safety services and facilities that meet best practices performance standards for all areas of the city and can continue to function during 1 in 500 year storm events.
• Cost-efficient, resource-efficient, well maintained public facilities and services.
• Water, sewer, and drainage infrastructure repaired, upgraded, safe and resilient.
• Reduce the amount of solid waste produced in the city.
• State-of-the-art public school campuses and facilities accessible to all neighborhoods.
• Up-to-date justice facilities and programs.
• Energy efficiency and utility service reliability and reasonable cost.
• State-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure.

STRATEGIES
How we can achieve it

Enhancing public safety—police, fire, EMS
• Provide improved public safety response times and security in all neighborhoods through facility, staff, and program upgrades for police, fire and EMS.
• Design state-of-the-art, integrated facilities to withstand Category 5 hurricanes.
  • Provide state of the art response times through use of technology and interagency management teams.

Upgraded police and fire stations will provide more reliable service in case of emergencies and can also serve as emergency shelters during storm events.

• Continue to expand community-policing efforts.
• Continue to implement the Fire Department master plan.
• Improve the 311 system with email and Internet access and make the 311 system an effective information source during storm and other citywide emergencies.

Public school campuses and facilities accessible to all neighborhoods
• Create a network of public facilities and service clusters to function as neighborhood civic centers designed to fit into neighborhood character.
• Promote collaboration among city agencies, community and neighborhood groups, and the school board in implementation of the School Facilities Master Plan.
• Where feasible, combine school facilities with other, community serving functions like libraries and community health centers.

**Rebuilding water, sewer and drainage systems**

• Rebuild the city's water and sewer systems to add resiliency, improve efficiency, and preserve public health.
• Reduce water leakage to meet best-practice standards.
• Where feasible, pursue innovative, nonstructural solutions for treating effluent, such as wetlands restoration, and for managing stormwater, such as natural drainage, thereby reducing the need for more expensive structural approaches.

**Enhancing justice system facilities and services**

• Keep Civic Courts downtown in order to contribute to downtown’s health as an office and civic center.
• Continue to establish best practice programs of alternative sentencing and rehabilitative justice.

**Promoting energy efficiency (also see the Environmental Quality section)**

• Adopt regulatory standards that promote conservation and renewable energy standards.
• Reorganize incentives to utility company and to households and businesses to emphasize conservation, reliability and reasonable cost.
• Expand implementation of the Energy Smart New Orleans Plan.

**Promoting state-of-the-art telecommunications**

• Make capital investments and implement strategies to ensure the resilience of the city’s communications and telecommunications.
• Promote “fiber to the home” upgrades of broadband technology.

**Establishing cost-effective and resource-efficient services and an asset management system for all city properties**

• *Early Action Item:* Establish an asset management system for all city property and facilities, including streets, to be fully operating by 2015.
• Reduce the amount of solid waste generated in the city by implementing recycling and other waste-reduction strategies.

*Constructed wetlands are artificial ponds planted with aquatic plants capable of treating wastewater. Successful examples include sites in Arizona, Massachusetts, and South Carolina (on the Savannah River, pictured here). The Sewerage and Water Board is developing a project to restore degraded wetlands as a way of treating effluent from the East Bank wastewater-treatment plant. If successful, this project could eliminate the need for more expensive infrastructure investments.*
• Promote cost-effective solid waste management, ensure long-term access to the Riverbirch regional landfill, and identify a potential location for a transfer station in an industrial area.

▶ PRINCIPLES
    Land use and zoning

• Locate neighborhood-based public facilities together or close to each other as a way of creating neighborhood civic centers where residents can easily find a variety of needed services.

• Residential land use categories should provide for location of civic uses, but neighborhoods should be involved in the siting and design of facilities.
**Transportation**

New Orleanians get around the city by all transportation modes—foot, car, bicycle, bus, streetcar, and ferry. Although much of New Orleans is a walking city, car travel still tends to dominate, particularly in areas built after 1960. Public transit is typically seen as transportation of last resort, or—in the case of streetcars—for tourists.

**Streets.** The city’s Department of Public Works (DPW) has responsibility for the city’s streets—except for federal and state highways—streetlights, traffic and street signs, traffic signals, drain lines, catch basins and manholes, and parking management. Because DPW’s operating revenue, from general funds and parking control, has been inadequate to maintain streets, capital improvements before the storm were funded through bond referendums of approximately $100 million every five years. Remaining funds from a pre-Katrina bond and federal storm-related funds, a total of approximately $630 million, are being applied to street and bridge repair in 2009.

**Transit.** The New Orleans Regional Transportation Authority is a state agency created to take over the city's bus and streetcar system from a private company that ran them until 1983. Storm-related damage and a reduced number of passengers have slowed service recovery. A long-term...
management agreement with a private company is expected to be established by 2010.

During the Master Plan meetings, street repair and broader transportation choice received strong and repeated support from participants.

**KEY ISSUES**

- Restoring the city’s aging and flood-impacted street infrastructure and maintaining it regularly in the future.
- Anticipated increases in energy costs and traffic congestion will make transit and transportation choice increasingly important to cities’ economic competitiveness. Cities that attract investment will have transportation systems that support efficient movement of goods and information, and that enhance quality of life for workers and residents at all income levels by offering connections to work, retail, and entertainment with affordable alternatives to private automobiles.
- The most successful urban places in America offer a variety of ways to travel around the city. They also connect land use policy to transit investments. Because of its dense street grid and existing streetcar lines, New Orleans has the foundation to become a truly multimodal community.

**GOALS**

**What we want to achieve**

- Fix It First: continued investment in rebuilding and then maintaining roads and bridges
- Integration of land-use decision making with transportation projects
- Transportation choice through a multimodal system that integrates public transit, biking, and walking with vehicle transportation
- Enhanced intercity transportation with an upgraded airport, better passenger service, and ultimately, regional high-speed rail
- Freight transportation systems that serve the economy while respecting neighborhoods

**STRATEGIES**

**How we can achieve it**

**Fixing streets and bridges**

- *Early Action Item*: Identify and publicize criteria for road and bridge improvements.
- Repave or reconstruct all damaged streets within the city, whether from Hurricane Katrina or pre-existing conditions.
  > Work with the RPC to ensure that New Orleans receives and uses all federal transportation funds allocated to the city.
- Regularly monitor streets, diagnose level of failure, and advance projects to address problems before they grow larger and more expensive to fix.
- Coordinate road repairs with other infrastructure projects to increase efficiency, limit infrastructure costs, and preserve roadway quality and operations.
- Establish a pavement-management program as part of a city asset management program and communicate the needs and potential costs of improvements.
- *Early Action Item*. Seek grant funding for a feasibility study of the potential benefits and costs of removing the

**Transportation**
Claiborne Expressway and replacing it with a multilane boulevard to restore links between Tremé and downtown—while preserving good highway links from the lake area, New Orleans East, and the West Bank to downtown.

Integrating land use and transportation policies

- Early Action Item: Recruit a transportation planner for the CPC.
- Coordinate higher-density land uses with existing and future transit hubs. A minimum of 15-20 households per acre, or 50 employees per acre, within walkable distance, are needed to support rail or BRT transit.

Providing transportation choice

- Focus on reaching the “choice” transit rider and invest in a premium transit system, including expanded streetcar lines on the East Bank, as well as bus rapid transit on exclusive busways from New Orleans East to downtown and the West Bank to downtown.
- Improve the reliability and comfort of transit with shorter waiting times, amenities at stops and stations, and enhanced operations.
- Establish a “complete streets” policy to provide for pedestrians and bicycles, as well as vehicles, in upgrades of major streets with design guidelines.

Enhancing inter-city transportation

- Continue making improvements at Louis Armstrong International Airport, including new and enhanced concourses and passenger amenities.
- Support light rail to Baton Rouge and the Gulf Coast high-speed rail proposal.
- Integrate arterial corridors into evacuation plans by expanding counter-flow strategies.

Managing freight transportation systems

- Integrate freight-rail needs into land use decision making.
- Manage truck traffic to mitigate neighborhood impacts while supporting the needs of goods transport and distribution.
- Coordinate port distribution activities with rail and with land use planning.
Communities around the world—from small towns to the largest cities—have adopted “complete streets” policies to make streets safer and more functional, convenient, and enjoyable. The complete streets approach focuses design and operation on enabling safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities must be able to move along and across a complete street safely. Street-design guidelines such as these can help ensure that street improvements include street trees and landscaping, bicycle and transit lanes, and widened sidewalks wherever possible.
A multimodal system will bring transportation choice by 2030

The most successful cities in America offer a wide array of choices to their residents—in neighborhoods, employment, culture, and in transportation. As energy costs rise due to increased global demand, as emissions standards grow stricter, and as market demand swells for living in walkable, transit-accessible neighborhoods, New Orleans can build on its existing transportation infrastructure over the next two decades to provide a 21st-century multimodal transportation system of choice. Expanding and enhancing an urban transportation system of choice is a long-term process that requires careful and coordinated planning, community process, advocacy for funding, and step-by-step implementation. It also involves coordinating land-use decision making with plans to ensure facilities for pedestrians, bicycles, and transit, as well as automobiles.

New Orleans has an advantage over other American cities in that it already has the foundation for a great multimodal system and has begun to make some of the investments necessary in pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements. The City is working to include enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities as it upgrades streets and streetscapes, and it is studying potential streetcar routes to increase connectivity throughout the downtown core and better connect residents to jobs and cultural attractions.

Decisions made today that lay the foundation for a modernized system will not only make the city more livable for residents, but will play a key role in attracting investment to the city and the region it anchors by helping New Orleans compete globally with cities that continue to make significant investments in regional transportation. A choice transportation system in New Orleans will recognize the range of trips needed for everyday life as well as for regional economic prosperity. It will provide for the movement of both people and goods over long distances in trains, trucks, and cars and make trips for daily needs comfortable, convenient, and safe. These characteristics will build neighborhoods where people want to live and sustain businesses by helping them move customers and workers, receive goods, services, and information rapidly and efficiently.

By 2030, this modern, comprehensive transportation system of choice will provide a higher level of street maintenance and management in tandem with an extensive range of integrated transportation alternatives that better connect people to their homes, jobs, and shopping destinations throughout New Orleans. Elements of the plan include:

- Complete and connected streets: Street improvements and upgrades that not only accommodate motorized vehicles but also provide a safe and attractive environment for bikes and pedestrians, with particular focus on pedestrian generators such as schools, transit stops, shopping and employment districts.

- Premium transit: New and improved streetcar lines and rapid bus routes that move people throughout the city more dependably, comfortably, and quickly, often along lanes reserved for transit vehicles that receive priority at traffic signals. Bus and rail shelters—some new, others improved—that offer route maps, schedules, and real-time service updates to help make the expanded system attractive, easy to navigate, and reliable for residents and visitors alike.

- Bicycle mobility: A network of bike lanes along major streets that feed into larger bicycle boulevards and greenways (e.g., Lafitte Greenway), creating an efficient, healthy, and green alternative to commuting and a recreational amenity that reaches all parts of the city.

- Transit-oriented communities: Clusters of medium- to high-density, mixed-use and mixed-income developments adjacent to frequent and reliable transit (streetcars or BRT routes). These walkable live, work and play neighborhoods are designed to fit among lower-density residential communities.

- Regional connections: A light rail line from downtown to the airport that improves business access, continuing on to Baton Rouge, and planning for high-speed rail to Houston and other Gulf Coast cities that would cement New Orleans as the accessible center for the Gulf Coast economy.
Study replacing the I-10 Claiborne Expressway with a boulevard that can knit neighborhoods back together

The possibility of removing the elevated I-10 Claiborne Expressway has attracted extensive comment. The benefits of the undertaking are widely recognized: removal would right a decades-old wrong committed in the name of urban renewal; it would enhance the livability and character of adjacent neighborhoods like Tremé; it would promote investment in the neglected blocks along the expressway; and it would set the stage for restoring historic Claiborne as a grand, tree-lined boulevard. Concerns focus on the ability to move the I-10's current traffic through the city without overwhelming neighborhood streets, serve downtown's traffic needs, and avoid widening other expressways such as I-610.

The process of replacing the expressway would begin with feasibility and environmental-impact studies, largely funded through federal grants, to address these concerns and insure that the transportation, economic, social, environmental, and other benefits of removing the expressway outweigh the considerable costs. These studies would start by determining the sizable costs of maintaining the aging overpass and would identify alternatives such as:

- Increasing I-610's capacity by improving its safety and taking advantage of the unused space between its inbound and outbound lanes.
- Creating a tree-lined boulevard that captures the qualities of historic Claiborne Avenue.
- Providing transit to serve New Orleans East and neighborhoods along the restored boulevard.
- Using land freed by removal of the overpass and on-ramps for parks, housing, and other amenities
- Protecting neighborhoods from cut-through traffic.

Boston and San Francisco have completed comparable initiatives, and studies for similar projects are underway in Hartford, Baltimore, Oklahoma City, and Seattle. In every case, the process began with federal and state help in financing studies of costs, benefits, and a wide range of transit and roadway alternatives.

Frequently asked questions:

**What is the next step?** Seek a federal grant to begin a community-based study of the options for the future of the overpass that includes all affected neighborhoods and community groups.

**Will removing the overpass require widening I-610?** The goal is to avoid widening I-610; the neighborhoods located along I-610 will be involved in planning.

**Would New Orleans need to plan for the future of I-10 whether or not it is removed?** Yes. Parade Magazine recently ranked I-10 among American elevated highways most in need of repair. The I-10 was planned and designed to meet the city’s needs in the 1970s, not the 21st century.
PRINCIPLES

Land use and zoning

- Preserve land for transportation and drainage rights of way where needed, including rail, multiuse paths (for biking and walking), and canals and water-storage opportunities.
- Cluster higher-density new development near transit stations.
- Locate mixed-use neighborhood centers on neighborhood edges to draw customers within walking and biking distance of residences.
- Build the needs of bicycle transportation into development standards.
- Promote shared and off-site parking with simplified processes.
- Promote bicycle use by establishing new standards for bicycle parking.
- Reduce the influence of automobiles on community character by establishing parking thresholds and maximums in commercial districts, locating parking away from the street frontage, and requiring ground-floor retail or similar active uses where parking occupies the ground floor.

Resilience—Living with Water and Natural Hazards

Resilience is the capacity to recover from stress or adapt to change. A resilient community will plan to manage the physical, environmental, social and economic stress of storms and flooding so that it can effectively rebound from crisis situations.

New Orleans has always depended for its existence and prosperity on its location in a place prone to storms, floods, and other natural challenges. Understanding and managing risks to secure opportunity and value was critical to the city’s growth and cultural development, allowing it to become one of the world’s great cities. Understanding and managing risk remain central to the city’s future. The primary hazard that New Orleans continues to face is flooding, a risk that comes from three distinct sources: flooding from the Mississippi River, heavy rains, and hurricane-related storm surge. Wind damage from hurricanes is an additional risk factor.

Increased resilience against storms will come from both collective and individual measures. The City can advocate for increased flood protection from the Army Corps of Engineers and other federal sources while also upholding building code regulations that require individuals to raise buildings above flood levels.

15 Chapter 12 in the Technical Plan
Risk is not just a function of the probability of a storm event. For example, the annual 1% probability of a so-called 100-year storm (which is a 39% probability over 50 years) can be more or less risky, depending on actions taken to reduce the consequences of the storm. Mitigating risk is nothing more than the act of taking steps to avoid or reduce the negative impacts of foreseeable events. It is something people and communities do—and have done forever—under any number of other names such as common sense, prudence, responsibility, or experience. To be effective, hazard mitigation must be targeted to classes and types of hazards; it must be comprehensive in approach, integrated in implementation, and mindful of the community interests it is designed to protect or enhance.

Storm probabilities and intensities can change (climate change is likely to bring stronger and more frequent storms), and they cannot be controlled. Risks, however, can be managed.

**KEY ISSUES**

- The city must become the expert on its own protection, hazard mitigation, and resilience issues. Technical expertise within city government must be combined with broad community dialogue and understanding about probabilities, managing risks, and the interrelated responsibilities of individual households, the City, and the state and federal government.

**GOALS**

**What we want to achieve**

- A resilient city that no longer needs to depend on evacuation for safety.
- A city in charge of understanding and advocating for its own protection, with a strong City agency that puts New Orleans in charge of protecting itself and makes it a leader among world communities planning for global warming.

The multiple-lines-of-defense strategy is a methodology to design flood control and wetlands restoration that employs both manmade and natural features to ensure protection against hurricane surges.
Water planning in New Orleans

Living with the Water

South Louisiana, like the Netherlands, must adapt to the threats inherent in living on a subsiding delta. This is not an either/or proposition: it is an ordering principle. “Safety first” is the key organizing water-management principle in the Netherlands, as it must be here. History repeatedly shows the folly of living in a delta, where disasters are common. To ignore, however, the water’s magic, the unique, abundant opportunities that can and should be exploited for economic, societal, and cultural gain is equally foolhardy. New Orleans has turned its back on its water—and thus its nature—viewing water as a menace or nuisance, yet historical connections to water still exist within the city. Navigation and drainage canals and bayous have been covered, walled, and hidden, but their restoration is feasible because rights of way still exist and are unencumbered. Bayou St. John is a vivid example of an attractive, historic waterway that could serve as a model for future canal restorations. Both safety and amenity from water are crucial to a future in which New Orleans is robust, vibrant, and secure.
Systematic Approach
An integrated, holistic approach to planning at all scales, with water infrastructure as its foundation, is necessary in New Orleans. Stormwater, rainwater, groundwater, and sea-level risks must be identified and mitigated. Periodic rainfall as well as hurricane-driven repetitive loss rates must be reduced for human as well as economic reasons. Gates and pumps at the lakefront or near the water’s edge need to be designed as all-purpose stations, replacing internal walls along the outfall canals. Consideration should be given to compartmentalization, or division, of the overall bowl into sub-basins to limit the potential for catastrophic citywide flooding from a single levee’s overtopping. Stormwater control should enhance retention, facilitate groundwater balance, reduce polluted discharge, decrease reliance on pumping capacity, and create useful and attractive public space. The stabilization of groundwater can reduce subsidence and stresses on infrastructure. Opportunities for water storage exist in vacant sites, backyards, rooftops, and parking lots, while existing and previously covered waterways and canals could be restored. A potential blue-water network, coordinated with green space, can provide ecological balance and space for water storage, as well as opportunities to improve quality of life and economic. Safety, stormwater storage, a healthy environment, and a high quality of life are the principles that underpin sound water-planning approach.

Water Planning Principles:
1. Safety First
2. Make it resilient and adaptable.
3. Make it attractive and sustainable.
5. Use all water-storage opportunities.

All images courtesy of Waggonner & Ball Architects
**Creating consensus on a community standard for risk and resilience:**

- Launch a comprehensive community-education program and conversation about risk levels, building standards, and land use practice, with information on specific ways that individual households can manage their risk. The U.S. Geological Service’s materials on managing earthquake risks, written for San Francisco residents, offer a valuable model.
- Take a systematic, “multiple lines of defense” approach to managing storm and flood risk, combining structural levee improvements with:
  > Coastal wetlands restoration
  > Limits on further development in wetland areas
  > Creation of water-storage areas throughout the city
  > Elevation of structures to withstand a minimum 1-in-500-year flood

**How we can achieve it: our strategies**

**Creating a strong City agency that puts New Orleans in charge of protecting itself.**

- Expand, fund and staff the City’s Department of Environmental Affairs to create, in effect, a new agency with responsibility for hazard mitigation, resilience, climate change, and environmental-protection responsibilities.

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*Preservation of coastal wetlands is an important component of a multiple-lines-of-defense strategy.*

A holistic community standard of resilience from hurricanes and other hazards at the level of at least a 1-in-500-year-storm, with a longer-term goal of reaching protection from a 1-in-1,000-year storm.

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> Hardening of critical community facilities and infrastructure
  
  - Use natural drainage methods to improve stormwater management and infiltration. Mitigate subsidence through the same strategy.
  - Pursue and provide funding to help low- and moderate-income homeowners to elevate their houses.
  - Evaluate the potential of a system of secondary levees within the city to isolate flooding in smaller areas (a “polder” system).
  - Evaluate the potential for a canal system that would function both as a flood protection measure and as an amenity and recreational resource.

**Land use and zoning principles**

- Preserve environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands, from adverse impacts in order to enhance water storage capacity during storms.
- Give higher ground priority for new residential development outside of existing residential areas.
- Require elevation design standards for new development and major renovation alike.
Environmental Quality

Many New Orleanians have embraced the recovery and rebuilding process as an opportunity to build better—a chance to create a healthier, more environmentally sustainable city. Residents have expressed their support for a city built on “smart growth” principles such as walkability, accessibility, increased transportation options, and protection of critical wetlands and open space. The public and private sectors, individual residents, and grass-roots organization increasingly take “green” and resource-efficient approaches to their redevelopment activities. Innovative and cutting-edge practices in green enterprise, planning, and design have begun to emerge all over the city.

**KEY ISSUES**

- New Orleans has the opportunity to set an example for the nation and the world in planning for and adapting to climate changes expected in the 21st century.
- Energy efficiency plays a central role in sustainability and affects everything from building practices to new energy technologies.
- Sustainable urban food systems—urban farms, community gardens, and markets—provide local, fresh foods, reduce energy used in transporting food, enhance community health, and may provide new livelihoods for city residents.
- Improving soil, water, and air quality benefits every resident.

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16 Chapter 13 in the Technical Plan
• As a tool for capturing a greater proportion of regional growth within the city limits, promote walkable, mixed-use development, compact infill development, and integration of alternative forms of transportation, as recommended in many elements of the Master Plan.

Creating a climate change risk assessment and adaptation plan
• Convene a climate-change policy advisory group or task force to create and publicize an information base on risk assessment. The group should plan the adaptation of city facilities and services and it should integrate that planning with the City’s resilience planning. Use Chicago’s and New York City’s initiatives as models.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting green and energy-efficient practices across the city
• Make the municipality a model of green building and practices through a range of programs, from requiring construction to meet LEED or similar standards to committing to converting the municipal fleet to hybrid vehicles to eliminating toxics in cleaning and maintenance methods and supplies.
• Install low-energy LED lights as street lighting is replaced.
• Seek additional funding for the Energy Smart New Orleans program to make homes and small businesses energy-efficient over 15 years.

Supporting local food systems and increasing access to fresh, healthy foods
• Revise the zoning ordinance to allow and regulate sales of fruits and vegetables grown on residential properties.
A climate plan for New Orleans should lay out policies to cut emissions from municipal operations dramatically. It should also offer tools and incentives to help residents and businesses alike live and prosper in a more environmentally friendly manner. Plan components should include, but not be limited to:

- development of a comprehensive set of policies and strategies designed to reduce emissions from government operations;
- commitment to purchasing municipal electricity from renewable sources;
- reduction in municipal energy and fossil-fuel consumption through adoption of LED technology for street signals, and conversion of the entire municipal fleet to hybrid and electric vehicles;
- investment in new technologies such as river turbines, wind and solar power, and biofuel technology to increase local energy production from renewable sources.
- development of comprehensive, premium transit service and a bike system, both of which will help reduce automobile trips and emissions.
- education of residents and business and support systems to help both become more “green.” (i.e., training in how to calculate a building’s or person’s “carbon footprint” and teaching strategies for reducing or offsetting their impact);
- widespread planting of trees throughout the city to provide shade, reduce heat-island effects, and absorb CO2; and
- introduction of a zoning code that not only allows but actively encourages the use of green building features such as green roofs, use of recycled construction materials, solar and wind power, rain gardens and increased permeable surfaces.

New Orleans can be a leader in climate change policy

Among the greatest challenges facing the global community is adapting to a warming planet and reducing the human activity that has already begun to change climates worldwide. With urban areas responsible for roughly 75 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, the leading contributor to climate change, cities such as New York, Chicago and Portland, Oregon (and many others) have addressed the challenge head on by adopting comprehensive climate action plans that spell out city-level policies for reducing carbon emissions and for reducing, offsetting, or preventing other manmade contributions to global warming.

New Orleans has taken several important steps towards becoming a greener, more sustainable city, including a pre-Hurricane Katrina audit of municipal greenhouse gas emissions, and recent City Council adopted initiatives that aim to make the city more sustainable (the GreenNOLA plan), and individual households and businesses more energy efficient (the Energy Smart program.) Building on these and other important efforts, the city now has a unique opportunity to combine its recovery with increased steps toward a more prosperous and sustainable future by creating its own comprehensive Climate Action Plan. Such a plan can establish the city as the environmental leader for Louisiana, the entire Gulf Coast, and other low-lying regions worldwide. Due to its varied character and geography—from downtown and dense historic neighborhoods to auto-oriented post-war developments to remote maritime communities—New Orleans could develop and export climate-change policies and strategies applicable to communities both wet and dry, and of varying sizes and scales.

- Encourage and promote farmer’s markets, particularly in areas that are underserved by stores that sell fresh food.
- Develop criteria, requirements, and limits for allowing some kinds of livestock (such as poultry and bees) on residential properties.
- Revise the zoning ordinance to allow permanent and temporary urban agriculture sites in appropriate locations.

**PRINCIPLES**

**Land use and zoning**

- Promote the use of water conservation and innovative stormwater management techniques in site planning and new construction.
- Allow (but regulate) urban agriculture through the zoning ordinance.
From plan to action

The purpose of every plan is to get to action. As a 20-year plan, New Orleans 2030 is designed to serve as a guide for decision makers—not only government officials and staff, but also government’s partners in neighborhoods, the business community, educational and other institutions, and the nonprofit sector.

Implementation of the Master Plan occurs within a legal framework, an administrative and management framework, a social framework, a political framework, and a financial-fiscal framework.

The Legal Framework

The Master Plan will have the “force of law.” What does that mean?

In November 2008, New Orleans voters approved a major charter amendment defining the role and legal basis of the Master Plan. The city’s Home Rule Charter has always recognized the significant role of the Master Plan in the city’s future. The charter’s original drafters included sections describing the legal basis of the plan and designating the City Planning Commission as the agency responsible for the Plan. New Orleans voters approved these measures many decades ago.

The 2008 amendment provides the language that officially links the Master Plan with all of the appropriate implementing land-use tools and actions available to the City of New Orleans:

- **Zoning must be consistent with the Master Plan.** The amendment mandates that the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance of the City of New Orleans be consistent with the Master Plan, including any future amendments to the Master Plan.

- **The Capital program and budget must be consistent with the Master Plan.** The City’s Capital Improvement Plan and Annual Capital Budget must be consistent with the Master Plan.

- **Land use actions must be consistent with the Master Plan.** All land-development regulations and amendments, as well as all other land use actions— including preliminary or final approval of a subdivision plan, site plan, approval of a planned unit development, or similar site-specific development plan—must be consistent with, or at a minimum, not interfere with, the goals, policies and strategies of the Land Use Element (Future Land Use Plan chapter) of the Master Plan.

- **Neighborhood participation system.** The amendment requires the City to create “a system for organized and effective neighborhood participation in government.”
• **Review and amendment of the Master Plan.** The Master Plan must be reviewed at least once every five years, but it may not be amended more often than once a year. The review and amendment processes by the CPC and City Council must include opportunities for public comment and participation.

• **Funding for Master Plan activities.** The amendment requires the City Council to provide funding for preparing, reviewing, and updating the Master Plan, as well as for activities designed to insure consistency between the Plan and zoning, land-use actions, and capital plans and budgets. By implication, this means that City decisions and funding need to support implementation of the plan.

*Does this mean that every word of the Master Plan is enforceable?* No. The plan elements and other city actions and documents directly related to the legal enforceability of the plan are the Land Use element of the Plan, including the Future Land Use Map; the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance; the Capital Improvement Program; and the Annual Capital Budget. Capital improvements must generally be consistent with the goals and policies of the relevant chapters of the Master Plan. These goals, policies and strategies, which are based on planning directions that emerged from community dialogue, are intended to guide decision makers as they make choices about the future development of the city.

*What is the approval process for the Master Plan, Capital Improvement Program, and zoning?* In order to be approved, the Master Plan has to be based on a community participation process; it has to go through public hearings at the CPC and be approved by the CPC; and it has to go through public hearings and be approved the City Council. The Council can send it back to the CPC for revisions before final approval. The City Council will continue to have final approval authority over zoning changes, the Capital Improvement Program, and the capital budget.

**The Future Land Use Plan and Map**

The Future Land Use Plan includes a map showing the desired distribution of land uses, by category, with general density and intensity. The map shows land uses that reflect the long-term vision, goals and policies expressed elsewhere in this plan. The Future Land Use Map is not a zoning map and it does not govern design. The Future Land Use Plan also includes a description of land-use categories (such as residential, commercial, industrial, mixed-use and so on) and a table showing how the land use categories correspond to zoning districts. Highlights of the Future Land Use Plan include:

• **No change in the overall existing footprint of the city.** The Future Land Use Plan in the Master Plan assumes that the city’s existing footprint will not change. A few months after Hurricane Katrina, the City decided not to attempt broad reorganization of settlement patterns in New Orleans. Residents were encouraged to demonstrate the viability of their neighborhoods by returning home and rebuilding. This approach also acknowledged that all of New Orleans represents the heart of a much larger region, and from the perspective of environmental responsibility and protection from storms, it makes good sense to focus regional growth into the city. Four years later, almost all parts of the city have regained more than 50% of their pre-Katrina population, and public investment is occurring in or allocated for all neighborhoods.
• **Preservation of neighborhood residential character.**
In existing neighborhoods (including those in the process of recovery from Hurricane Katrina), the Future Land Use Map reinforces the prevailing character of buildings, including such qualities as scale, massing, and density. This means that infill development must be compatible with traditional patterns. Public recreational facilities and community facilities, such as schools and houses of worship, are included within residential neighborhoods, and corner businesses can operate in former or existing neighborhood locations.

• **Mixed-use land-use designations for greater flexibility in areas that would benefit from a variety of mixed-use development.** The Future Land Use Map encourages revitalization of underutilized commercial and industrial areas and similar sites—along major roadways and between or at the edges of existing neighborhoods—as neighborhood centers and “main street” corridors. Designating these areas as medium- to higher-density mixed-use areas will encourage compact, walkable, transit-oriented development and broaden the market available to support nearby neighborhood commercial districts. In addition, a downtown mixed-use category sets the stage for tailoring future zoning to preserving and enhancing the unique character and quality found in different parts of downtown. Large parcels would require a site master plan, design guidelines, and community process through a planned-unit-development (PUD) process to insure that they represent good neighbors to existing neighborhoods.

• **Some existing land uses may be nonconforming.** In a few cases, existing land uses may not fall under the land-use category shown on the Future Land Use Map for their locations. As long as those uses continue and they comply with ordinances about nonconformity, they will remain legal. If the land use changes, however, it can only change to a land use shown for that location on the Future Land Use Map.

After adoption of the Master Plan with the Future Land Use Plan and Map, any changes in land uses must conform to the land use or uses shown on the Map for a given location.

**The Urban Design Framework**

The Future Land Use chapter of the Technical Plan (Volume Two of the Master Plan) also includes a set of general urban design principles to guide future development in the city. These principles are intended to provide property owners and the public on desired characteristics of new development. They focus on the “public realm,” the streets and other public spaces in the city, and on the aspects of private development that affect our experience of the public realm—for example, how parking is located in relation to pedestrians and building facades.

Application of the principles can vary in specific contexts, and the City should encourage creative variations as long as those variations respect the spirit and intent of the principles. Area-specific urban design principles can be found in neighborhood and area plans, and more detailed design guidelines will be created for projects on large sites that require site master plans. According to the 2008 charter amendment, land-use actions must be generally consistent with these urban design principles.

The urban design principles discussed in the Technical Plan emerge from New Orleans’ character as a city of special places with unique qualities. A towering skyscraper can enrich
FUTURE LAND USE MAP

DRAFT September 14, 2009

LEGEND

Future Land Use Categories:
- Residential Semi-Rural
- Post-war Residential Single-Family
- Post-war Residential Low Density
- Post-war Residential Multi-Family
- Pre-war Residential Single-Family
- Pre-war Residential Low Density
- Pre-war Residential Medium Density
- Pre-war Residential Multi-Family
- Neighborhood Commercial
- General Commercial
- Downtown Exposition
- Mixed Use Low Density
- Mixed Use Medium Density
- Mixed Use High Density
- Downtown Mixed-Use
- Mixed Use Health Life Sciences Neighborhood
- Mixed Use Maritime
- Business Park
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Parkland and Open Spaces
- Cemetery
- Natural Area
- Transportation
- Special Planning Area

Planning Districts 10 & 11

Source: City of New Orleans ODL.
**Future land use categories**

- **Natural Areas**
  Natural areas with wetland resources for storm-water storage, public enjoyment, private recreation, and protection of coastal resources.

- **Parkland and Open Space**
  Parks, playgrounds, recreation facilities and athletic fields; neutral grounds and passive open spaces.

- **Cemetery**
  Cemeteries and accessory buildings

- **Semi-Rural Residential Single-Family**
  Single-family residential development only on large lots (minimum 3 acres) to preserve existing semirural character of Lower Algiers.

- **Pre-war Residential Single-Family**
  Single-family dwellings on smaller lots, with minimal setbacks, in neighborhoods developed prior to WWII. Traditional corner store/businesses allowed where currently exist or historically operated.

- **Pre-war Residential Low-Density**
  Single- and two-family residences with minimal setback requirements, and three- to four-family buildings where currently exist, in areas of the city initially developed before WWII. Traditional corner store/businesses allowed where currently exist or historically operated.

- **Pre-war Residential Medium Density**
  Single- and two-family residences, townhomes, and small apartment/condominium structures located on smaller lots in neighborhoods initially developed before WWII. Traditional corner store/businesses allowed where currently exist or historically operated.

- **Pre-war Residential Multi-Family**
  Multifamily residential structures with a maximum density of 100 units per acre in areas of the city developed prior to WWII. Taller high-rise structures may be allowed with design guidelines.

- **Post-war Residential Single-Family**
  Single-family dwellings located on larger lots with front- and side-yard setbacks in neighborhoods primarily developed after WWII.

- **Post-war Residential Low-Density**
  New development limited to single- or two-family dwellings with front- and side-yard setbacks in neighborhoods primarily developed after WWII.

- **Post-war Residential Multifamily**
  Mixed single- and two-family units, and low-rise multifamily residential structures in areas of the city developed after WWII. Maximum of 36 units per acre.

- **Neighborhood Commercial**
  Retail and professional service establishments serving local neighborhood area residents. Live/work spaces and limited upper-story residential also allowed.

- **General Commercial**
  Larger commercial structures including shopping and entertainment centers typically anchored by supermarkets, department stores or big-box establishments with supportive chain retail. Mixed-use development with residential uses on upper floors could possibly be allowed on larger sites subject to a comprehensive planned development process with extensive community input.

- **Downtown Exposition**
  Convention center, sports/entertainment arenas/complexes and supporting uses such as hotels, and office space.

- **Business Center**
  Professional office and light industrial parks (warehouse, distribution, and storage centers) that serve as regional employment centers outside of the Central Business District.

- **Industrial**
  Heavy manufacturing, maritime uses, water treatment and transfer, and large warehousing/distribution facilities.

- **Mixed-Use Maritime**
  Maritime-related residential, business, and commercial uses only on properties directly abutting Chef Menteur Highway and Lake St. Catherine, and surrounding the municipal Yacht Harbor/Orleans Marina along Lake Pontchartrain.

- **Mixed-Use Downtown**
  High-density office, multifamily residential, hotel, government, entertainment and retail uses that together create a vibrant 24-hour live-work-play environment in the Central Business District.

- **Mixed-Use Health/Life Sciences**
  Hospitals, offices, supportive retail and residential uses that together create a vibrant neighborhood center. Special attention needed to ensure proper transitions from higher-density corridors to surrounding historic, low-density residential neighborhoods.

- **Planned Development Area**
  Potential for recreational, residential, commercial or industrial uses on large undeveloped parcels in Planning Districts 9 and 10, only through a planned development process with public participation.

- **Institutional**
  Hospitals, colleges, universities, military and public detention facilities with large campus-like facilities. (Houses of worship, schools, and public safety not included; these uses are permissible in residential, commercial and mixed-use areas.)

- **Transportation**
  Airports (Lakefront Airport), train yards, ferry terminals, and city-owned parking facilities.

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* For full land use descriptions and a table showing correspondence between land use categories and zoning districts, see Chapter 16 of the Technical Plan.
down downtown if it meets the street with details and activities that delight, while a two-story building can diminish nearby Mid City if it interrupts a street’s historic rhythm with a monotonous façade. While details will differ across the city, the core principles should fundamentally promote more livable neighborhoods, greater economic opportunity for everyone, and enhanced sustainability.

**Cultivate livability:**

- **Preserve and enhance established neighborhoods and districts**—wet or dry, historic or new, residential or mixed-use. These places should benefit from design standards that embody the spirit and address the qualities that define character.

- **Extend New Orleans’ “signature” qualities to its new districts and neighborhood centers.** The Medical District, redeveloped shopping centers and other “opportunity sites,” and similar places should benefit from design standards that extend the walkability, tree-lined streets, lively façades on public sidewalks, mixed-use energy, and other qualities that mark the city’s historic neighborhoods.

- **Restore the critical mass to support key ingredients of livability.** Blight, smaller households, and changing lifestyles rob neighborhoods of the critical mass needed to support vibrant commercial districts, walkable streets, convenient transit, lively parks, and similar amenities. Restoring traditional densities and redeveloping opportunity sites will help all parts of the city regain this critical mass and attract a new array of housing and amenities to new and existing neighborhoods.

- **Advance healthy living.** The Center for Disease Control has emphasized the essential importance to public health of neighborhoods that encourage walkability, provide access to healthy food, and include health clinics—all qualities of successful New Orleans neighborhoods.

- **Build community in the midst of diversity.** The proximity in which people of different races, incomes, and ethnic backgrounds live in New Orleans is unusual among U.S. cities. The City can take advantage of this unique and attractive quality to create a renewed sense of community. Emphasizing walkable connections between neighborhoods that give people an opportunity simply to meet, making commercial districts more vital and providing well-programmed parks will draw New Orleans’ diverse residents together across lines of difference. Initiatives like Reinventing the Crescent can reinforce downtown’s critical role as the city’s common ground. Interpreting the city’s rich variety of architectural and cultural traditions can further the critical task of celebrating each other’s stories.

**Foster economic opportunity:**

- **Offer the amenities that attract people to live, work, and invest.** Preserving New Orleans’ historic character—embodied in its walkable streets, cultural richness, and mixed-use environments—and extending these qualities into new neighborhoods and districts is a critical ingredient in spurring growth.

- **Provide the education and services that move people out of poverty and into the workforce.** In building a city whose neighborhoods stand as revitalized, safe, and visible symbols of social cohesion, no amount
of physical intervention will match the value of aggressive efforts to extend opportunity to every resident.

- **Plan for change that is welcomed by neighbors.** Development that responds to the needs of a changing economy—which can take the form of larger floor plates, greater height, new industries, and new types of housing—should respect the scale and character of nearby neighborhoods, and it should reflect the goals described above for new places.

**Promote sustainability:**

- **Work with nature to enhance resilience.** No U.S. city is as conscious of the need to adapt to a changing environment as New Orleans. It can lead all American cities in exploring approaches to wetlands reclamation, elevating and hardening buildings, managing storm water to slow subsidence, integrating levees into the landscape, and other ways of working with nature to protect the city from rising seas and more frequent storms.

- **Reduce the city's carbon footprint.** New Orleans' compact form, strong preservation values, and walkable neighborhoods position it to be one of America's greenest cities in ways that most dramatically shrink its carbon footprint—expanding transit use, attracting more residents to reduce sprawl, adopting green techniques in construction of and operation of new buildings, and similar measures.

- **Celebrate the city's relationship to water.** A new generation of landscaped canals, rain gardens, restored wetlands, and similar steps can add a 21st-century urban design signature that enriches life in New Orleans while protecting the city from rain-driven flooding.

This citywide framework forms the basis for the urban design principles included in the Land Use section of the Technical Plan that accompanies this document.

**The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO)**

The CZO regulates what kind of development can occur on the land, its dimensions and density, and the standards that it must meet. Zoning allows some development to occur “by right.” This means that if a development complies with the uses, dimensions, and standards set out for the zoning district in which a property is located, it can receive a building permit (assuming it meets any other non-zoning requirements). Zoning also typically makes some development types or activities “conditional,” meaning such development must undergo certain processes or provide certain information before permits will be issued.

The charter amendment requires that the CZO reflect the policies of the Master Plan. In practice, this means that the CZO must reflect the Future Land Use Plan and Map. Different zoning districts can share a particular land-use category, but they all have to operate within the limits of use and density or intensity defined for that category. Within the category, small changes in zoning can be made without an amendment to the Master Plan. Any major zoning change that would affect the land-use type, density or intensity requires an
New Orleans has not had a CZO that reflects the actual conditions of many neighborhoods for decades. The CZO will represent a key tool for implementing the plan’s vision of a city marked by increased livability, opportunity and sustainability. Cities today take many approaches to zoning. Some emphasize the form buildings take; others focus on responsible development patterns known as smart growth; others place a priority on encouraging economic growth; still others place a premium on simplifying the rules to foster clarity. For its new CZO, New Orleans has chosen to pursue a direction that blends qualities from these and other approaches that best respond to the city’s unique character and the opportunities and challenges it faces.

This approach, called placemaking, begins by viewing the city as a series of places created by a mix of land use, massing, and design that zoning can reinforce to support a particular sense of character, quality, and identity. One way zoning supports sense of place is by incorporating a level of detail designed to reinforce the aspects of places that people value. These might include the defining characteristics of historic, pre-War, and post-War neighborhoods alike; different approaches to addressing uses that help people distinguish Magazine Street from the Marigny from New Orleans East; or the alternative issues raised by light industry located next to neighborhoods and in large industrial zones. On top of strengthening these place-defining qualities, this approach incorporates state-of-the-art thinking about sustainability, public health, and similar issues, yielding zoning provisions that promote walkability, the integration of transit and land-use planning, preservation of areas that retain water during heavy rains, and similar principles that matter to New Orleans. The placemaking approach recognizes that New Orleans’ heritage is a valuable resource for attracting jobs and investment; at the same time it allows for innovation and significant new development of underutilized shopping centers, industrial sites, and similar opportunities for innovation and significant new development. Finally, the placemaking approach to zoning is user-friendly, because it reflects the way that people from all walks of life experience the environment around them.

Land-use planning forms an important basis for creating new zoning districts. Because the CZO focuses so strongly on the unique qualities of place, the zoning that governs a primarily single-family neighborhood or a local commercial district may include very different requirements in places as distinct from each other as Central City, New Orleans East, and Algiers. At the same time, because zoning will be shaped by the qualities that contribute to community character, it will provide more clarity for neighborhood residents, businesses, developers, and others in proposing new projects. Combined with a formal community participation process (Chapter 15 in the Technical Plan) and the appointment of district planners who will be able to work closely with all those involved in shaping and refining planning and development proposals, the CZO should also contribute significantly to increasing the quality of growth—and decreasing the controversy it can bring.

The CPC and the consultant team will work with the community in the months following adoption of the Master Plan to create the new CZO and, as with the Master Plan, will post all materials for public review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEW MASTER PLAN</th>
<th>NEW ZONING ORDINANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defines the kinds of places that we value</td>
<td>Establishes districts with rules that support these places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describes the qualities of these places—their character</td>
<td>Establishes design rules that reinforce these qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates a land-use map showing the location of these places</td>
<td>Refines the land-use map into specific zoning districts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
amendment to the Master Plan—and that can take place only once a year, and only with an accompanying public process.

Unlike the current zoning ordinance, the new CZO will include design standards that convey the appropriate quality and character for new development. These standards will reflect the letter and spirit of the urban design principles and be developed in more detail as part of the CZO.

The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Capital Budget

The City Charter charges the City Planning Commission with preparation of a capital improvement plan and assisting in preparation of an annual capital budget. The charter amendment passed in November 2008 requires that:

- The City Planning Commission prepare the capital improvement plan, as it does today.
- The CPC assist the City’s Chief Administrative Officer in preparation of the annual capital budget.
- Both the plan and the budget be consistent with the Master Plan.

Of course, the budget will continue to go to the City Council for approval, and citizens will have the opportunity to comment on the capital improvement plan and capital budget during public hearings at the CPC and the Council. Budget documents, including certification of consistency with the Master Plan, will be posted on the City website for public review before public hearings.

Unlike some states, Louisiana has no requirement linking planning, minimum levels of service, capital improvement programs, and financial feasibility.

The Master Plan sets forth a vision for New Orleans’ future, a set of goals, strategies, and action steps to implement those strategies and achieve the goals. As a citywide policy plan intended to give broad guidance for decision making over the next 20 years, the plan focuses on policy and organizational initiatives to achieve the goals more effectively, and it identifies the kinds of projects that are preferred, given the goals of the plan. As the New Orleans plan is reviewed and revised over the years, and as area/neighborhood plans are adopted as part of the plan, the Master Plan may include more specific project information. This will also depend on implementation of recommendations to make the city’s financial policies, plans and operations more transparent.

Compliance with the Master Plan does not mean that a specific type of capital project must be named in the plan, but capital projects should implement policies and strategies that are part of the plan.

In 2009, the City’s Chief Administrative Officer and the CPC coordinate a detailed capital-improvement planning process. Under this system, departments must consult any plans and indicate if a desired project is included in the plan. With the stronger legal connection between the Master Plan and the CIP mandated by the 2008 amendment, departments should be asked to provide a narrative showing how any project will advance Master Plan goals and policies, and/or how it will implement strategies and recommended actions. The CPC should review those narratives and reach an independent judgment about whether to certify any proposed CIP project as
consistent with the Master Plan. The compliance documents should accompany the capital program when it goes to the Mayor’s office and the City Council, and should be posted on the Planning Commission website for public review. The cross-agency Master Plan Implementation Committee, recommended below, should incorporate the capital planning process into its work.

The Master Plan embraces a multitude of topics. By creating a system of compliance, the City will not only go through a thorough process of assuring consistency with the Master Plan, it will be able to demonstrate that process and that compliance to the public.

The Administrative and Management Framework
The City of New Orleans and Orleans Parish were consolidated under the 1954 home rule charter. In addition to city responsibilities, municipal government also has the responsibilities and constraints of parish government: the costs of the state criminal justice system and the inability to pass ad valorem taxes without being subject to a homestead exemption that is controlled by the state. In addition, state legislation has established a number of public agencies that operate independently or semi-independently of city government. Among the most important of these are the Sewerage and Water Board, the Board of Liquidation (which issues bonds and manages the city's debt), the Redevelopment Authority, the Board of Assessors, the Levee Board, and the Orleans Criminal Justice District (sheriff’s office). In addition to city and parish agencies, several special taxing districts in New Orleans collect ad valorem taxes, and 23 neighborhood security and improvement districts collect a fee for each improved lot in those districts.

Authorities and special districts are typically created in order to achieve some special purpose and are given powers that regular government agencies lack. The primary argument for these entities is that achieving the intended public purpose requires giving the agency in question the flexibility to operate like a business. As a result, such agencies tend to evade requirements for sharing information with the public and for being accountable to them. Most are governed by appointed or ex officio board members.

The large number of public agencies in New Orleans has produced significant fragmentation of the city's municipal government; diffused authority and accountability; undermined cross-agency information sharing to solve problems that lie outside the jurisdiction of any single agency; and eroded governmental culture around citizen participation and information. The proliferation of agencies often produces unnecessary additional expenditure of funds for redundant administrative functions. The disadvantages of fragmented government have become especially clear in the post-storm recovery, when the crisis required marshaling resources across the board in a highly integrated fashion.

One thread woven throughout the Master Plan is the need for both the appearance and the reality of greater communication
and information-sharing with citizens and more accountability for government performance. Fragmentation of government does not promote those goals. New Orleans needs stronger, rather than weaker local government in order to achieve the goals of this plan.

**The Role of the City Planning Commission**

The City Planning Commission (CPC) has responsibility for planning to preserve and enhance the welfare of the entire city and each neighborhood and unique district, such as downtown. Providing the CPC with more effective tools for carrying out its mission is a critical element of this Master Plan. Those tools include a state-of-the-art comprehensive zoning ordinance (CZO), a strengthened working relationship with residents of the city's neighborhoods and others in the community, renewed leadership in carrying out the commission's planning functions, and a greater role in ensuring that public and private investment reflects the goals of community-based planning.

In 2009, as this plan is being prepared, the CPC reviews rezoning applications and project applications that require a conditional permit and gives an advisory opinion to the city council. The City Council makes final land use decisions. Because the Council often is unable to base its decisions on a thorough planning process that considers and balances the interests of all stakeholders, decisions on major projects can often be perceived as a political contest.

Planning cannot stop with the adoption of the Master Plan. Area plans, planning around changing uses for closed schools or churches, large projects like the Medical District, land assembly for new development, attraction of grocery stores—all require a planning department that has the time and expertise to think ahead and to convene other city agencies around efforts to ensure that the city receives the maximum quality-of-life and economic benefits from change. With active planning for the future, the city will cease always reacting to change and will begin to shape and drive change towards the goals that New Orleans citizens want to achieve.

The City also needs to make sure that the CPC plays a leadership role on planning projects that affect the welfare of the city and its neighborhoods, whether undertaken by other governmental entities or city and private sponsors. Clear CPC leadership is particularly important in New Orleans because of the city's oversupply of independent authorities and entities. The magnitude of federal and state recovery projects makes this issue even more urgent.

It is the CPC's role and responsibility to look at projects from the point of view both of the entire city and of the neighborhoods or districts, such as downtown, that host new projects; to promote citizen participation in planning, so that resident and other stakeholder interests are appropriately protected and advanced; and to ensure that projects fit into the physical fabric of the city, creating a public realm and a design identity that fits harmoniously into its context, respects the city's historic resources, and in other ways improves urban livability. Ultimately, only city government, through the CPC, can determine whether a project is programmed, planned, and designed in the interests of New Orleans and its community.
Cities with a history of disinvestment sometimes fear being seen as “making demands” on potential investors, whether private or public. However, by convening stakeholders and working to ensure that any project enhances its context (which improves the value of both the project and neighboring properties), the City and the project proponent will typically achieve a speedier and more successful outcome. Instead of responding in an uncoordinated way to criticisms, complaints, and even lawsuits, City leadership defines a framework and the public goals for large projects, and by doing so multiplies the positive impact of private or public investments for the city.

Implementation of the Master Plan and further proactive planning will have to take place through collaboration of many City departments and agencies. The CPC is the appropriate agency to lead cross-agency forward thinking, but it must have the staff and tools to take up that role:

- **Reorganize planning and zoning activities within city government.** The semi-autonomous status of the CPC, as provided in the City Charter, does not match the way that most successful cities organize planning and land use regulation. The CPC’s isolation from agencies that have funding to implement programs and projects tends to create a focus on reacting to project proposals and regulatory issues. This isolation, for example, makes it difficult to adopt a citywide planning perspective and to collaborate with NORA and agencies such as Code Enforcement in attacking blight and vacancy. Powerful options that would give planning more weight include combining Planning with Community Development and/or with the redevelopment authority.

- **Provide the CPC with the staffing and other resources needed to implement the Master Plan.** Staff should include a system of district planners, some of whom could also have special expertise in areas such as transportation, urban design, and economic development.

- **Convene a cross-agency Master Plan implementation committee three times a year.** This committee could build on the existing Planning Advisory Committee made up of departmental representatives. The group should meet three times a year, with one of those meetings occurring during the time when the capital improvement program is being prepared. At these meetings, the agenda should be a report on implementation of Master Plan-related projects, exchange of information about ongoing or new projects, programs and funding sources, and discussion of how to align departmental priorities so that projects and programs can reinforce one another and produce the maximum benefit for the city.

- **Take leadership in planning, design and community processes related to state, federal and other non-municipal government projects.** The CPC should offer to partner with these agencies in project planning to ensure that the project and the surrounding environment are mutually enhancing. As part of this process, the CPC should hold advisory public hearings on siting, planning, design and impacts related to these projects.
Make the Master Plan a living document

Because a Master Plan is much more than Land Use element and the Future Land Use Map, it requires creation of systems and procedures to ensure that it guides municipal decision-making. It requires equally regular evaluation to see if strategies are working and to determine whether it continues to reflect community goals. Individuals move in and out of city government, and day-to-day demands on the attention of elected officials and staff can push the plan into the background as a decision-making tool. Successful implementation of the Master Plan will require the coordinated involvement of multiple departments, of elected leaders, and of partners in the private and nonprofit sectors. The following measures can bring that about.

- **Review progress on the Master Plan in an annual CPC meeting and an annual City Council meeting.** Regular public review of how the City is using the Plan, how Plan objectives have shaped decision-making, what advances and what hinders to implementation, and identification of new circumstances that may affect the Plan's goals and principles will keep the Plan current and remind officials and the public of its provisions.

- **Use the Plan annually in preparing and approving departmental work plans and the City's operational budget, capital-improvement program, and capital budget.** The City will use the new Plan for capital-improvement programming, but a number of cities also use their plans in the annual budget process and in developing department work plans. Among other things, this helps to ensure a certain level of understanding throughout city departments of what is in the Master Plan and how it is being implemented. A statement of how a work plan reflects Master Plan priorities should be required of every department.

- **Use the plan in preparing and approving one- and five-year HUD Consolidated Plan documents.** The required plans for HUD formula grants should also be consistent with the Master Plan; a statement on how those work plans reflects the Master Plan should be required.

- **Review the plan every five years, as required by the charter amendment.** The 2008 Master Plan charter amendment requires a mandatory five-year review of the plan, with public meetings and a public hearing. The five-year review process should include a summary of progress made on implementation, unforeseen circumstances—both opportunities and obstacles—that affect implementation, and a review of the Plan's overall vision, goals and policies. The public should then be asked to confirm, revise, remove, or add to these aspects of the Plan.

- **Completely update the Master Plan at least every 20 years.** Many communities update their comprehensive plans every ten years, but at a minimum, the Master Plan should be thoroughly updated at least every 20 years. This should include a major public-participation process and detailed attention to every plan element.

Create open information systems and performance measures

Information-sharing leaves much to be desired within New Orleans city government, and both staff and citizens often express frustration about their inability to get information.
On the most elementary level, the city website does not consistently provide names and contact information for departmental staff and any board members, and many department Web pages contain obsolete information. In the 21st century, the City website should be a focal point for clear communication with the public.

Beyond the basics, a number of cities, including Baltimore, New York, and Washington, have instituted performance-measurement systems throughout city government and make the results available on their websites. Some New Orleans city departments have taken tentative steps in that direction. The New Orleans Police Department has a form of this practice in its CrimeStat system, and Parks and Parkways and NORD release monthly basic data about their operations, activities, and number of people served.

The Washington system, called CapStat, is the current best-practice model for both performance accountability and information sharing. Washington puts operational data from multiple agencies on its website for download and live data feed—274 data sets in all. This “data warehouse” has allowed comparison of data across agencies, in one case resulting in identification of $12 million in annual revenue that had gone uncollected due to a lack of coordination between departments.

Effective data collection and integration not only can inform public servants and help them improve performance, it can also save money and even find new revenues. By putting all this data on a website for the public to see, Washington's municipal government simultaneously enhances accountability and engages its residents in working for a better city.

Better use of communication technologies can help municipal departments improve performance and enhance the cost-effectiveness of government. Providing more ways to conduct business with the city through the web site, publishing timely information about departmental plans and proposed developments, and enhancing Geographic Information Systems capabilities (both to provide analytical static maps and interactive maps), can open up new opportunities for partnership between the city, residents, and businesses.

- **Enhance the city’s e-government (electronic government) capacity.** Provide contact information, ordinances, agendas, city documents, and similar information in more prominent and less hidden locations on the website, and provide more forms and methods of conducting city business online. The City website should include links to the City Council website as well as those of semi-independent authorities and agencies.

- **Create a performance-measurement system and information warehouse for city staff and to share with the public on the City website.** Local citizen-activists are working on the framework of a system they call “NOLAStat,” modeled on Washington’s CapStat system and designed for internal use by the City to enhance performance as well as being made available to the public. In early 2009, the City Council endorsed development of a NOLAStat open-records system proposed by this group.
The Social Framework

Community Participation Program

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the determination of many residents to save their neighborhoods led to a surge of resident activism. One result has been a dramatic 70% increase in the number of neighborhood organizations since the storm. The recovery planning processes drew on that activism, as did other neighborhood plans.

Reflecting the grass-roots impetus for more open government and wider participation in decisions about land use and public investment in neighborhoods, the 2008 charter amendment included a requirement for a formal neighborhood-participation system in land-use decision making. At the same time, CBNO/MAC (The Committee for a Better New Orleans/Metropolitan Area Committee) revived a pre-Hurricane Katrina initiative to create a Community Participation Program. The Master Plan recommendations have been informed by that process, as well as by previous CPC recommendations and working-group discussions and dialogue with neighborhood leaders, the business community, developers, and city officials.

The Master Plan’s proposed Community Participation Program (CPP) is intended to bring greater transparency to and opportunity for public input into decisions involving plans and projects proposed by private developers and public agencies. Once the CPP is in place, it may be desirable to expand its role to address delivery of city services, enforcement, city capital spending, and similar issues that affect quality of life.

Core principles of a successful community participation program include:

- **Inclusiveness**: All stakeholders “sit at the table” to share information, resolve differences, and chart a future course.
- **Public access to information**: City government makes reliable and current information about proposed plans and projects readily available.
- **Capacity**: Education about core issues and capacity-building helps residents and community organizations participate effectively in decision making.
- **Structure**: A formal process exists for gathering and incorporating community input into decisions about plans and projects.
- **Transparency**: City leadership is committed to open, government that is responsive to its constituents.
- **Predictability**: The processes for review and approval of development applications is timely and predictable.

To meet the letter and spirit of these principles, the Master Plan proposes a CPP that supports strong community engagement at neighborhood, planning-district, and citywide scales. This three-pronged approach recognizes that a substantial portion of the issues that neighborhoods face are local—a new house, business, amendment to a neighborhood plan, or similar issues. At the same time, many of the most important planning and development concerns either affect multiple neighborhoods or raise issues that transcend their location and are best resolved at a district level. A smaller group of plans and projects affect the welfare of the entire city.
The CPP recognizes New Orleans’ existing strong networks of neighborhood and citywide organizations, and it places most emphasis on drawing on these organizations to foster a new level of collaboration. The plan builds on the understanding that at every scale, providing more information, technical support, and opportunities for community-based to work with and to negotiate with project proponents—rather than confronting them—can yield substantial benefits in terms of plans and development that enhance community character and quality, are feasible, and attract investment to New Orleans and its neighborhoods.

The CPP’s core elements include proposals to:

- **Create a system of district planners** who would work directly with community groups to provide information, listen to concerns, and work to resolve pre-emptively problems raised by proposed plans and projects. District planners would provide two key ingredients that would enable these groups to shape plans and projects that are both feasible and enhance the quality and character of the host neighborhood and district: technical support to help community organizations and project proponents resolve differences and a direct communication channel to City agencies to provide groups with critical information.

- **Establish District Councils** to provide a structured format for reviewing plans and development proposals; for working with proponents to shape proposals that are feasible and enhance the surrounding community, and for making formal recommendations about CPC approvals. The councils would be “organizations of organizations” whose membership would be drawn from the entire community—residents (both owners and renters), businesses, property owners, institutions, and others. This diverse membership would enable the councils to resolve differences that arise among stakeholders, insure that a full range of community views is aired. The CPC would invite the appropriate council(s) to offer formal advisory comments on all proposals it reviews and would request that the councils work with project proponents—taking full advantage of the resources offered through district planners—to bring shared proposals for CPC action where possible.

- **For issues of citywide importance, appoint a Standing Advisory Committee.** Because the CPC periodically addresses land use actions that affect the welfare of the larger city as well as a particular Planning District and will need a formal process for inviting community review, the CPC would establish these standing committees based on the model provided by the Riverfront Advisory Committee. The committees would advise the planning commission on planning for unique areas such as the riverfront or Medical District, citywide issues, or plans or development projects of citywide significance. The Committees would not be permanent but would exist for a period of time established by the CPC. Committees focused on unique areas or citywide issues would offer formal advisory comments directly to the planning commission. Committees focused on projects of citywide significance would be urged to meet jointly with the district council representing the area in which the project is located; these committees would also be urged...
to reach joint recommendations with the District council. Standing committees are recommended as opposed to a citywide organization of interest groups for two reasons: it avoids building a parallel structure that could be viewed as competing for influence with district councils, and it insures that the best individuals are available to help shape each proposal.

- **Provide administrative and logistical support for the CPP.** Because the CPP will focus at first on matters that require CPC action, the Master Plan recommends that the CPC administer and fund the program—at least initially. The CPC should work with the Mayor’s Office of Public Advocacy to establish interim rules and procedures for operation (voting, quorums, attendance requirements, conflicts of interest, etc.) of the district councils and to oversee the appointment of members (for example, meeting basic criteria that demonstrate civic responsibility such as not having a record for ignoring code violations, etc.). Potential funding sources to support the district councils and training and capacity building include the city's general fund or CDBG funds, earmarked development application fees (during the planning process several developers said they would be open to this approach under the assumption that a formal community review process would be less expensive than current practice), and/or on an interim basis grants from non-profit.

- **Hold public review meetings** to provide information to and take comments from the larger community. The CPC could work closely with the district councils to schedule and set the agenda for these meetings.

- **Provide training and capacity building** to help neighborhood leaders, district councils, CPC commissioners and staff, and city agency staff understand and implement a more open process of public review of and input into plans and projects. The City will allocate resources to support consultants (experienced individuals, firms, or high-capacity nonprofit organizations) that provide the training and capacity-building services.

The process outlined here is intended to provide a clear and effective path through the development approvals process that is fair to all parties, predictable, and timely. At the same time, it will assure neighborhood and citizen participation in matters that affect the quality of life in neighborhoods and the entire city. Cities with effective participation structures have found that both public and private projects emerge much improved from citizen engagement and they enjoy much stronger support across the community. These forums provide community members, for example, an opportunity to understand issues of financial feasibility while at the same time giving them a chance to advise developers on ways in which proposed development can advance community goals.

The Political Framework

The City of New Orleans operates within a framework of state and federal legislation, policies, programs, and developments. It can do little to directly control the actions of state and federal actors. Federal funds and programs come with requirements. State and federal development projects in the city are exempt from zoning. Special districts created by the
state pepper the city, and the state controls some aspects of the City’s ability to raise revenue.

It is the City’s responsibility to work effectively with both state and federal governments to protect and enhance citywide and neighborhood interests. The City knows the reality on the ground and must play an essential role in guiding state and federal investment. The Master Plan itself and the implementation of the Plan can play a crucial role in city government’s message to the federal and state governments. The Plan’s extensive community participation program brings great legitimacy to its consensus on goals and policies for the future.

The Master Plan goals and policies provide the framework for consensus policies and alignment of interests:

- **The City can stake a claim to federal resources, not just because of its past, but because of what it can be in the future.** New Orleans’ unique contributions to American culture combined with post-Katrina rebuilding needs have been the main threads of the New Orleans story since 2005. This story has served as the foundation of requests for federal assistance. Now the city has a Master Plan that opens up strategies for a long-term future of economic growth linked with sustainability and enhanced livability. Federal commitments to accelerating the Gulf Coast recovery process, to infrastructure financing, and to encouraging green industries and jobs all align with the priorities and goals of the Master Plan.

- **City housing policy can shape state decisions about affordable housing investments.** Because the City has not had a clear housing policy for years, the state has often assigned low-income housing tax credits (LIHTC) to projects with an income mix, design character, and location that the City ends up protesting after the fact. Similarly, the City has served as a pass-through for federal housing entitlement funds by sending out a call for proposed projects, rather than working closely with housing advocates and developers to create the best projects possible. The Master Plan’s recommendations for creation of a permanent Housing Working Group will result in proactive housing policies based on New Orleans actual housing needs and a detailed understanding of sublocal markets and physical character, so that LIHTC and other housing subsidies can be applied in ways that enhance neighborhoods. With clear policy guidance based on evidence of housing need and the support of a diverse working group, City staff can work effectively with state agencies to make sure that New Orleans benefits.

- **The City can shape the physical character of major state and federal investments, despite its limited regulatory authority.** The CPC’s responsibility for the physical development of the city makes it the logical leader in ensuring that major investments and developments, such as the LSU Medical Center and VA Hospital, enhance the physical and social character of the city, as well as contributing jobs and economic benefits.

Working closely with state and federal legislative delegations, as well as directly with the executive, will play a central role in the success of New Orleans’ Master Plan—as it does in the success of all older U.S. cities. Because both state and federal programs and processes have their own bureaucratic and
The Financial And Fiscal Framework

As this Master Plan is being written, the New Orleans’ overall budget has increased substantially because of the disaster-related funding targeted towards recovery projects and programs. Nearly $670 million in non-recurring funds contrast with $486 million general fund revenues in 2009.

The City’s ordinary sources of revenue are relatively constrained and have hovered between $400 million and $500 million in both the pre-Katrina and post-Katrina periods. Sales tax is the single largest source of general fund revenues, but the City receives only a portion of the tax collected. Orleans Parish is subject to a statewide residential property tax homestead exemption of $75,000, making residential property taxes very low. Bond financing approved by voters for public works, infrastructure and other investments are a potential source of capital funds, and the City will receive federal funds as a result of the nationwide recession that began in 2008 and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The City forecasts that non-recurring, targeted revenues will phase out in 2010 and general revenues will rise gradually...
As noted earlier in the Plan, some very important costs—such as water, sewer and drainage investments—are not funded from general revenues. These costs must also be kept in mind to understand the full cost of achieving the goals of the Master Plan. New Orleans’ per capita revenues are estimated to be substantially lower than comparable cities, such as Baltimore, Memphis, or Atlanta.

Increased government funds come through a few basic strategies: development that brings in more property tax; development that brings in more sales tax; and cost efficiencies that make it possible to do more with less. Increased success in accessing discretionary grants and similar funding can also play a critical role in getting projects underway. Successful mixed-use redevelopment that includes retail and other non-residential land uses can help increase New Orleans’ fiscal resources. As detailed in the Technical Plan, New Orleanians pay a lot of sales tax to Jefferson Parish and bringing some of that revenue home would strengthen the city.

Implementation of all of the Master Plan’s strategies and action items simultaneously would clearly be very costly. Repair, reconstruction and improvements to the city’s infrastructure—water, sewer, drainage and roads—will need a combination of bonds, rate increases, and a significant infusion of further federal assistance from the proposed National Infrastructure Bank or other sources. In the short term, however, the Master Plan calls for several actions that focus on reorganization, coordination, and communication as a way to be more effective. The Plan points out a variety of situations that require more effective inter-departmental coordination and cooperation and relatively inexpensive
changes that could help the city save money and get more impact from investing its resources. Examples include:

- The Housing Working Group, by working with a nonprofit funded to collect and analyze data, can make priorities to ensure that the federal funding that the City receives for housing and community development is spent to provide the greatest benefit and that resources are not left on the table.
- Integrated management for removal of vacancy and blight, coupled with a property information system accessible to all city departments are both essential best practices in blight elimination—and both need to be established in New Orleans.

- The Washington, DC CapStat open-records system was created with the hiring of just two computer professionals—and eventually helped save the city millions of dollars. NolaStat could begin the same way.

Ultimately, the city needs to increase its revenues and a thorough study of this topic needs to be a companion piece to the Master Plan because New Orleans needs to thoroughly understand how it can improve its fiscal position. The Master Plan is not the place where such a detailed study can take place and instead recommends a serious, possibly year-long, study to determine how the city can strengthen its fiscal position.

Fiscal opportunities and challenges

New Orleans collects and spends a lower share of median household income than most major American cities (see table). At the same time, high-quality services, well-maintained infrastructure, well-maintained and programmed parks and recreation centers, and similar qualities are essential for any city that hopes to compete for economic growth and the kinds of investment that deepen its tax base. While analyzing the city’s fiscal position was not part of this plan’s scope, New Orleans clearly needs to undertake a serious study of its ability to fund and operate the excellent government that the community deserves and needs in order to thrive.

Implementing the recommendations in this plan will cost money. The city should undertake a study to develop a clearer understanding of its fiscal opportunities and challenges. That study should:

- **Place a strong emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness.** Any study will need to address this issue successfully to command credibility.

- **How efficiently and effectively does the City collect and spend revenue today?**
- **How can the City increase and measure governmental efficiency and effectiveness?**
- **Identify options for broadening the city’s revenue sources** from its excessive reliance on sales tax to a diversified base that enables City revenues to rise with the city’s economy, real incomes, property values, and other sources of revenue on which municipalities commonly rely across America.
- **Realistically assess the need and potential sources for dedicated revenue streams to support parks,** recreation, and similar City responsibilities that are chronically underfunded in most cities, including New Orleans.
- **Identify implementation strategies for each option,** taking note of political, legal, constituency-building, legislative and other factors that could constrain or contribute to an effective strategy.

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**PER CAPITA FISCAL REVENUE FOR THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS**

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**SOURCE: CITY OF NEW ORLEANS REVENUE ESTIMATING CONFERENCE QUARTERLY ECONOMIC REVIEW, APRIL 2009**

**COMPARISON OF PER CAPITA REVENUE WITH OTHER REPRESENTATIVE CITIES IN 2008**

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<th>Baltimore</th>
<th>Memphis</th>
<th>Atlanta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Household Income</td>
<td>$45,902</td>
<td>$45,353</td>
<td>$42,866</td>
<td>$57,367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita Revenue</td>
<td>$1,283</td>
<td>$2,901</td>
<td>$1,458</td>
<td>$2,251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE: 2008 AUDITED BUDGET STATEMENTS FOR CITY OF BALTIMORE, MEMPHIS, AND ATLANTA**
by increasing its revenues and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. The study should be conducted by a team that includes local expertise and national perspective. In order to be credible, the study would identify and evaluate:

• Potential achievable options for increasing revenue that would provide a reasonable return
• Potential implementation strategies attached to each option, taking note of political, state constitutional, constituency-building, legislative and similar aspects related to developing a potentially effective strategy
• Potential approaches to increasing governmental efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
Conclusion

New Orleans is still in the midst of recovery from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina as this Master Plan is being written. This is not at all surprising—experience has shown that it takes an average of ten years for cities to recover from catastrophes. New Orleans 2030 is a Master Plan to take New Orleans through the recovery period and into a new future.

Livability, prosperity, and sustainability—the overall themes of the Master Plan—are at the foundation of all communities in the 21st century. In New Orleans, these themes infused the many goals and policies in this plan that have their roots in the recovery plans created in 2006–2007. Implementation is beginning on many of them as the city rebuilds public facilities damaged by the storm. But as a 20-year plan, the Master Plan also looks forward to attaining new ambitious goals.