Action Plan for New Orleans: The New American City

January 11, 2006
Bring New Orleans Back Commission
Urban Planning Committee

Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC – Master Planner
“New Orleans will be a sustainable, environmentally safe, socially equitable community with a vibrant economy.

Its neighborhoods will be planned with its citizens and connect to jobs and the region. Each will preserve and celebrate its heritage of culture, landscape, and architecture.”
Urban Structure

Flood & Stormwater Protection

- River and Canal Levees (Flood Protection)
- Canal (Stormwater Management)
- Rail (Stormwater Management)
- Road (Stormwater Management)
- Open Space (Stormwater Management)
- Industrial Canal Locks
- Pumps
Urban Structure

Transit and Transportation

- Existing Light Rail
- Planned Light Rail
- Planned Commuter Rail
Urban Structure

Parks & Open Space

- City Parks
- Levee
- Canal
- Neutral Ground
Urban Structure

New Orleans Evolving
Neighborhoods Planning Principles
The Neighborhood Center Model

- Neighborhoods are the centers of activity and daily life.

- Neighborhoods require sufficient population to support the equitable and efficient provision of public facilities and services.

- Every neighborhood must have:
  - Basic infrastructure: roads, drainage, utilities, services
  - Public schools
  - Cultural and community facilities
  - Places of worship
  - Health facilities
  - Park and open space within an easy walk
  - Convenience retail
  - Access to public transit
Neighborhood Scale

Flood & Stormwater Protection

Neighborhoods saw flood during frequent torrential rain events. Small stormwater management systems will be created using even the slight elevation changes of roads and railroad tracks. These will be supplemented to create a system of cells to detain and pump stormwater out of neighborhoods before it can cause damage. Stormwater storage and management structures will be buried under unused grounds and in parts of some larger parks — reading as woodland and open space to park users.
Neighborhood Scale

Transit and Transportation

The street/block pattern in much of New Orleans establishes a unique urban design DNA that makes the city a model for others trying to create a sense of place. The streets and blocks reflect the bend of the river and early ownership patterns. The resultant triangles, rather non-rectangular blocks, and sweeping neutral grounds establish a built ensemble unique in North America. These should be preserved, celebrated, and extended.

The enlarged high speed light rail system will connect the neighborhoods with the rest of the city. Transit stops will become the centers of neighborhoods with concentrations of services, activities, and mixed use development. These areas will also provide opportunities for diverse housing for owners, renters, and special populations.
Neighborhood Scale

Parks & Open Space

Sustainable nature – the green infrastructure – of the city will connect and support a returning and growing population. All open space is multi-functional and shared. In addition to their traditional role of recreation, these spaces provide outdoor social space, environmental services, and stormwater management. School fields will enjoy multiple use by residents as well as pupils – forming defining urban space within each neighborhood.
Illustration of the Neighborhood Center Model

- Canal Park and City-Wide System
- Mixed-Use Subcenter with Elementary School and Neighborhood Park
- Neighborhood Greenways
- New Housing
- Environmental Center and Wetland Park
- Central Park with Recreation Fields
- Neighborhood High School with Library, Cultural and Community Center
- Medium Density Housing on Central Park
- Mixed-Use Community Commercial Boulevard
- Transit-Oriented Mixed-Use Center with Retail and Services
- Light Rail Transit on Neutral Ground connecting to CBD and City
Progress So Far

- The Plan established the framework for discussion: Order from chaos.
- To date, the only comprehensive rebuilding plan for New Orleans.
- Neighborhood and city-wide planning processes have begun.
- Specific action recommendations implemented:
  - Consolidation of levee boards
  - Grants from Rockefeller Foundation and Greater New Orleans Foundation received for next planning steps
  - Repairs to breaches in levees by Army Corps of Engineers
It Is Not Just New Orleans

A direct hit from a category 1 storm on lower Manhattan would have a storm surge of 12 – 13 feet; Category 3: probably 30 feet +

In 1821 storm driven tides rose more than 12 feet in a hour over lower Manhattan: “only the fact that the storm hit at low tide saved the city.”

NYC Official Hurricane Evacuation Map: It is assumed that all subway, train, and auto tunnels will flood
It Is Not Just New Orleans
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Zones showing the probability of earthquakes in the U.S.
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