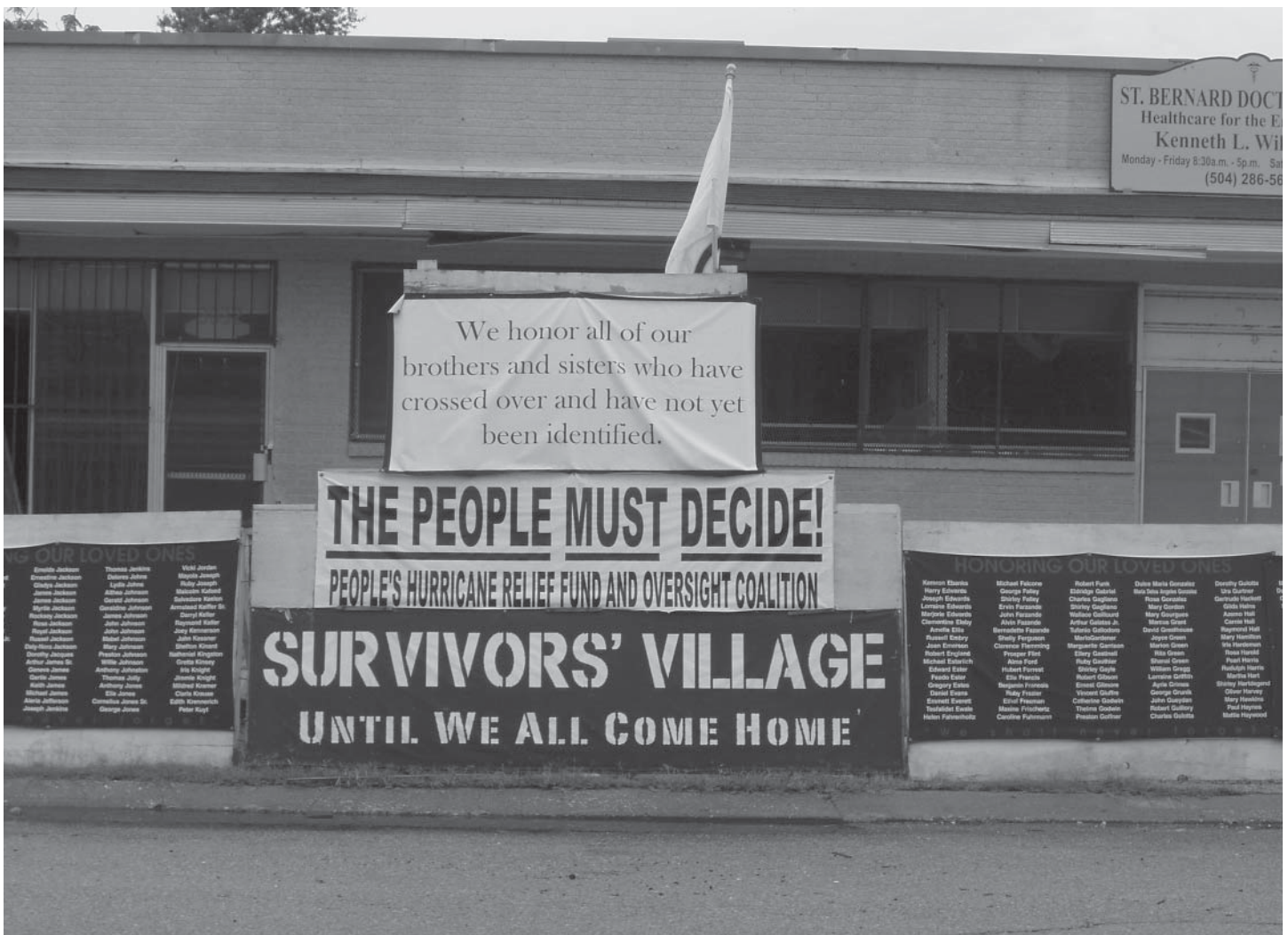


Progressive Planning

The Magazine of Planners Network

Post Katrina Planning and Organizing



Tom Angotti

Also In This Issue:

The Highs and Lows of Urban Redevelopment
Planners Network Election Results

The Seventh Generation

"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."

-From the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy

Grassroots Disaster Recovery Planning: New Orleans and Beyond

by JASON NEVILLE AND CLARA IRAZÁBAL

Weeks have turned to months and months to years as New Orleanians—both those living in the city and those yet to return—have waited in vain for leadership and resources from local, state and federal sources. In the face of such neglect, and united with a determination to rebuild their lives and communities, many residents and grassroots organizations have begun planning for their devastated communities on their own, far too committed to restoring their city and neighborhoods to continue to wait for “help from above.” The unprecedented scale of autonomous neighborhood-based planning activities are not simply taking place in *absence* of official planning, but to *counteract* the inept and non-participatory planning processes that have plagued post-Katrina New Orleans.

Attendees at this year’s Planners Network conference in New Orleans were intimately exposed to these grassroots phenomena through community-based panels and workshops. While most planners that have come to New Orleans have typically spent their time promoting their own ideas for the city’s recovery, the conference attendees embarked on a kind of “listening tour” in this increasingly plan-weary town. Whether touring the city’s commercial recovery areas by bike, helping gut a new community center outside the St. Bernard housing project or visiting a community-based urban design project hosted by residents, Planners Network members got to see and hear about the community-based recovery efforts led by residents and grassroots leaders. In doing so, conference attendees were able to observe firsthand the prospects—and limits—of this grassroots planning surge.

As Lauren Andersen, an organizer with the non-profit Neighborhood Housing Services, told us in an August 2006 interview, “What’s happening in New Orleans right now is really almost revolutionary.” Another non-profit housing leader working in Central City, Paul Baricos, told us that the surge of autonomous neighborhood planning was

a great sign for participatory planning in New Orleans. There are scores of these [autonomous neighborhood-based] meetings taking place across the city to do ‘planning.’ It’s a truly indigenous phenomenon. Much of it was a reaction to the Bring New Orleans Back Commission’s mandate that neighborhoods prove their own ‘viability,’ but it would’ve happened anyway. These groups all came together through the neighborhoods themselves. The City Planning Commission has had *zero* role. And the mayor’s Bring New Orleans Back Commission said that they’d provide assistance, but it has yet to materialize.

One of the best examples of this grassroots planning has been in the Broadmoor neighborhood—an ethnically and economically diverse community located on some of the lowest elevations in the city, and one of the several neighborhoods that the *Bring New Orleans Back Commission* recommended be reverted to green space. According to the *Times-Picayune*, the commission’s proposal “electrified a diverse group of homeowners who reached out to each other, determined to save their community”

Summer 2007 Issue Contents:

2. **Grassroots Disaster Recovery Planning: New Orleans and Beyond**
by Jason Neville and Clara Irazábal

Post Katrina Planning and Organizing

8. **Social Justice in New Orleans: Planning after Katrina**
by Peter Marcuse
13. **Transforming Top-Down to Bottom-Up Planning in Post-Katrina Mississippi**
by Jennifer Evans-Cowley and Meghan Z. Gough
18. **Involving Students in Reconstructing New Orleans: An Example from Richmond**
by Thad Williamson with Steve Horvath, Corrie Mixon and Erica Coleman
23. **(Re) Constructioning Community: The United Houma Nation and Iowa State University**
by Breann Marsh-Narigon, Clare Cardinal-Pett, Lynn Paxson and Tara Lynne Clapp
25. **Integrating Community and Youth**
by Eric Jensen

27. **Form-Based Codes and Social Equity: Working in New Orleans**
by Alison Kopyt

Highs and Lows of Urban Redevelopment

30. **Being on the Other End(s) of Things...**
by Amory Starr
34. **Developing Sustainable Housing: Moving Beyond Green**
by David A. Turcotte
38. **Making Preservation Pay: State Historic Tax Credits Generate Big Investment, So Why Ruin a Good Thing?**
by Joseph Heathcott
40. **Community Organizing and Rebellion: Neighborhood Councils in El Alto, Bolivia**
by Emily Achtenberg

Departments

44. **PN Resources**
46. **How to Join, Purchase Back Issues, etc.**

www.plannersnetwork.org

Planners Network
106 West Sibley Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853, USA
Ph: 607.254.8890
Fx: 612.626.0600
Email: sbs17@cornell.edu

WEBSITE
www.plannersnetwork.org

EDITORS
Tom Angotti and Ann Forsyth

EDITORIAL BOARD
Eve Baron, Jason Blackman, Kara Heffeman, Chester Hartman, Marie Kennedy, Norma Rantisi

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Guillaume Neault, Katherine Rankin, Norma Rantisi, Alejandro Rofman

LAYOUT
Donovan Finn

Progressive Planning is published quarterly by Planners Network, Inc., a non-profit corporation in the State of New York. Copyright 2007 by Planners Network. Reprinting and distribution of portions of this magazine for non-commercial purposes are encouraged. Reprints for commercial purposes require writtem permission from the publisher. Progressive Planning is indexed in the Alternative Press Index.

PLANNERS NETWORK
STEERING COMMITTEE
Tom Angotti, Lee Deuben, Josh Lemer, Richard Milgrom, Norma Rantisi, Alex Schafran, Amy Siciliano

PLANNERS NETWORK
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Chester Hartman, Chair, Teresa Cordova, Dana R. Driskell, Ann Forsyth, Marie Kennedy, Patricia Nolan, Arturo Sanchez, Peg Seip, Ruth Yabes, Ayse Yonder

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS
please see www.plannersnetwork.org

and “turned their once sleepy Broadmoor Improvement Association into a grassroots planning powerhouse.” This was no weekend charette; according to the local newspaper, the neighborhood “conducted resident surveys, shared information on contractors, established a system of block captains and began talking about how their neighborhood should be fixed.”

In another potent example, and one which was part of a conference community-based workshop, the Vietnamese community of New Orleans East developed a community plan that included resident surveys and proposals for an improved

Rachel Breunlin



A meeting of the Porch Seventh Ward Cultural organization in January of 2006, to build a cultural center in collaboration with the University of Kansas School of Architecture and Urban Design.

business district, linear parks along canals and a community housing development adjacent to the prominent Mary Queen of Vietnam Catholic Church. The report issued, complete with plan and section view drawings of the proposed new districts, was developed solely by the community with no support or coordination from the local, state or federal governments. Reverend Vien Ngyuen, the leader of the church, was quoted in the *Times-Picayune*: “We were never invited to the table [to plan for our community]. . . we have the right to be part of the community-driven process.” In addition to becoming a relief center and a community planning entity, the church also became “one of the community’s key political

voices in opposing a new 88-acre landfill the city wants to open in eastern New Orleans.”

Radical political activists have played a prominent role in the grassroots recovery efforts, working to ensure the right of return for working-class African-American residents still trying to get home. In January 2007, a group of housing activists and former residents illegally entered the St. Bernard housing project—closed and gated by HUD since Katrina—to clean the mildly damaged apartments and restore them as decent affordable housing. HUD officials stood by helplessly as dozens of residents stormed the gates and began gutting and painting the apartments. During the conference, some attendees assisted with these efforts by helping to clean and gut a new community center across from the condemned housing project.

A contingent of community leaders from the New Orleans Survivor Council recently traveled to Venezuela to learn from that country’s *consejos comunales* (communal councils), part of the Venezuelan government’s national planning strategy to decentralize, democratize and fund planning efforts at the neighborhood level. They also solicited community organizers and funding from the Venezuelan government for recovery efforts in New Orleans, denouncing the abandonment of their own governments in the U.S.

The tendency for informal, collective, transformative action in New Orleans, particularly in working-class African-American neighborhoods, predates the post-disaster recovery efforts. The extraordinary “second-line parades” that often erupt in the working-class African-American neighborhoods are hosted by “social aid and pleasure clubs” with fantastic names like the Tremé Sidewalk Steppers, the Double Nine High Steppers, The Moneywasters and the Happy House Social and Pleasure Club. These organizations began as neighborhood-based mutual aid societies that pooled resources for insurance, funeral arrangements, direct financial assistance and other forms of socio-economic support for needy members who

lacked access to formal institutions during the discriminatory era of Jim Crow New Orleans.

The autonomous, informal mutual aid societies and their symbiotic street celebration extensions reflect a strong inclination toward collective action, an auspicious demonstration of the possibilities of grassroots celebratory democracy in New Orleans. One 7th Ward-based anthropologist, Helen Regis, working with Rachel Breulin, writes that most of the participants in these organizations “are not ‘owners’ of homes, real estate or large public businesses. Yet through the transformative experiences of the parade, *they become owners of the streets* ... experiencing a transcendent power in this collective celebration [and] continuing to speak to the contemporary struggles of the city’s majority black and working-class population.”

Comparison Cases from the U.S. and Beyond

Communities in both the U.S. and the so-called developing world have used “openings” in the political order that often arise after disasters to autonomously transform their neighborhoods and cities. In the U.S., some important reforms have been advanced during disaster recovery efforts. Like for Katrina, federal response was also slow in arriving for Hurricane Andrew and consequently, community organizations in Florida played an important role in the immediate disaster recovery efforts, feeding, housing and counseling victims. In addition, some lasting policy reforms were initiated after Andrew, such as the creation of state-backed insurance programs to provide coverage after many major insurers abandoned coastal Florida and new building codes to make homes more “hurricane-proof.” After the 1994 Northridge earthquake in Los Angeles, community-based housing organizations were able to use the post-disaster context to expedite the development of almost 150 new housing units, all of which were designed to meet the needs of the larger (yet neglected) Latino households that dominate the area.

Yet the grassroots post-disaster planning in the “developing world” has particular salience

because of the capacity for more radical transformation that emerges in the face of nearly total state abandonment, as is the case in New Orleans. Indeed, as Faranak Miraftab suggests, transformative planning may be more possible in developing world contexts because of the minimal attention to these communities paid by the state. For instance, following two back-to-back earthquakes in Mexico City in 1985 that killed 5,000 people and left 2 million homeless, residents initiated a disaster recovery and planning effort without any assistance or

Radical political activists have played a prominent role in the grassroots recovery efforts

guidance from the government. This included delivering housing and medical services while maintaining a strong vigilance for social justice and equality, directly contradicting the government’s top-down approach. Most important, writes Diane Davis in her account of this grassroots planning effort, is that the residents’ “self-organization around recovery efforts in turn produced lasting changes in the politics of the city [and] served as a central political force in subsequent struggles for the democratic reform of the city government.”

Additionally, the government’s preoccupation with restoring the “macroeconomic standing” of the city and country—i.e., rebuilding high-profile buildings and institutions and accepting World Bank loans for long-term infrastructure projects, rather than addressing immediate humanitarian needs—called the entire logic of Mexico’s political economy into question among ordinary residents. This suggests that disasters such as Hurricane Katrina can also trigger a broadening of political consciousness beyond material concerns, exposing contradictions and failures in the overall political economy.

Another example of transformative post-disaster planning followed the 1999 earthquake measuring 7.4 in magnitude in Golcuk, Turkey.

The quake damaged almost 250,000 residential and commercial units and killed 17,480 people. Meager recovery assistance and planning by the government shattered the people's trust in the centralized and elite Turkish government, which had fostered a weak civil society. Facing the deep incapacity of the government, "civil society rose to fill its void by playing an active role in the quake zone, gaining broader trust and respect" that was likened to a great "awakening" of civil society.

Jason Neville



A photo of a wall in the 9th ward taken in August 2006.

Self-organized groups worked to not only provide immediate search and rescue efforts, but also to begin the process of delivering longer-term services, such as medical, housing, food, clothing and financial aid. While some members of the government were appreciative of these groups' work, the reaction from the state was one of skepticism and at times open hostility. Sensing the potential for larger political agitation to emerge from such organized and democratic institution-building, the government attempted to halt some activities by imposing strict measures on their operations, encouraging international aid to be channeled through state-controlled institutions and threatening lawsuits. Reflecting on this experience, Emel Ganapati asserts that disasters can act as catalysts for rapid development and the unleashing of dormant social capital.

New Orleans as Caribbean Capital: A New Context for Transformative Planning

New Orleans is often (and rightly) criticized for its parochialism, insularity and unwillingness to accept outside help, even when it would be in the city's best interest. What Katrina has demonstrated, however, is that while many New Orleanians think of the city as a kind of non-American "Banana Republic," so do the national and state governments—in a far more damaging way. Planners can see this disownment of New Orleans by the state as an opportunity to engage in directly transformative action.

The neighborhood solidarities, celebratory and supportive social aid clubs, instincts for self-help, deep suspicions of state interventions and the overall socio-cultural resilience of residents are all deeply rooted in the city's Afro-Caribbean essence, auspicious indicators of the potential for broader democratic transformations during this historic city-making moment. The recovery examples above from "third world" cities speak to the transformative potential of grassroots planning efforts in New Orleans. If conceived of as a city in the Caribbean Rim, rather than as an antiquated and backwards American city, new possibilities emerge that allow us to imagine creative and progressive ways to rebuild and transform New Orleans into a more democratic and equitable city. Planners must pay critical attention to facilitating the return of New Orleans residents who want to return and capitalizing on the vibrant social capital of New Orleans' neighborhoods for that process.

Planners should consider the resilient social networks and working-class solidarities of the city as unique strengths upon which to build a community-based recovery strategy that formalizes a participatory planning process without bureaucratically bludgeoning the democratic instincts of residents. Progressive planners can work to incorporate new planning tools, such as community-based design and

Planners Network 2007 Steering Committee Election Results

The new Planners Network Steering Committee is:

Tom Angotti	(62 votes)	Josh Lerner	(50 votes)
Carlos Balsas	(47 votes)	Richard Milgrom	(56 votes)
Jocelyne Chait	(37 votes)	Marla Nelson	(49 votes)
Lee Deuben	(46 votes)	Libby Porter	(44 votes)
Ann Forsyth	(62 votes)	Norma Rantisi	(53 votes)
Stacy Harwood	(40 votes)	Alex Schafran	(49 votes)
Marie Kennedy	(54 votes)	Amy Siciliano	(43 votes)

Election Officials: Joanne Richardson and David Lowe

A note on the redesign of Progressive Planning magazine:

For the first time in five years Progressive Planning magazine has a new look. It is part of a number of changes aimed at improving Planners Network communications. Other changes include revisions to the web site and new renewal letters. The new magazine was designed by a team led by Whitney Parks with help from Tom Hilde and Jorge Salcedo.

participatory budgeting, to democratize the physical and institutional structures of the city. Planners can also help to resolve the biggest question of all—where (and where not) to rebuild—by helping to reestablish neighborhoods and their critical social networks on “drier” areas of the city, protecting those communities from future disasters without sacrificing the vibrant cultures that have sustained them for generations or marginalizing any particular class of residents from the recovery.

To restore social networks and facilitate more transformative planning cultures in the city, the remaining residents who are still living in a nationwide diaspora must be allowed, encouraged and directly assisted to return immediately. Planners must play a dual role, that of professionals working from within the political system as well as that of activists organizing from outside of it. We must acknowledge the

inherently political nature of planning and the racist and classist contexts in which it is situated, agitate for structural change and ally ourselves with the marginalized communities of New Orleans, taking leadership from them and building community capacity to transform the system from the neighborhoods up.

Jason Neville is from New Orleans, moved to Los Angeles one month before Katrina and is now a planner at the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency. Clara Irazábal is an assistant professor at the University of Southern California. This article draws on half a dozen return trips to New Orleans since the flooding as well as experiences at the PN 2007 Conference, and is based upon the forthcoming article “Neighborhoods in the Lead: Grassroots Planning for Social Transformation in Post-Katrina New Orleans?” in Planning Practice and Research (abbreviated with permission).

Social Justice in New Orleans: Planning after Katrina

by PETER MARCUSE

This is intended by the author as a framework for discussion, and it should be stated at the outset that, if limits to what has been accomplished emerge, that is in no way a reflection on the quality of the effort, the integrity of the participants, or the solid contribution they have made in many specific instances to implementing the progressive goals that they pursued.

Progressive planning, in the words of the Statement of Principles of the Planners Network, is “an important voice for progressive planning, social equity, and environmental justice.”

What exactly is “progressive planning?” This article hopes to contribute to a discussion of what the answer should be, first laying out some theoretical approaches, then using the example of planning in New Orleans after Katrina to test the approach.

New Orleans after Katrina has probably seen more planning activities from more directions by more diverse planners in a shorter time than any city in the United States in recent years. Many Planners Network

members have been actively involved, mostly on a pro bono basis and largely through university schools of planning, with energetic contributions made by faculty and students. The Cornell experience, resulting in the People’s Plan for the Lower Ninth Ward, is a dramatic example of one of the largest of these Planners Network-inspired efforts (http://www.crp2.net/outreach/nopi/Peoples_Plan_for_9th_Ward.pdf).

What kind of efforts have these been, and what have been their achievements and limits?

This article does not attempt to answer that question, but rather to suggest a theoretical framework, grounded in a progressive planning theory appropriate to the mission of Planners Network, by which the answers might be approached, and then to suggest some possibilities for their practical interpretation in the New Orleans context.

* * *

The framework suggested is as follows:

Varieties of Planning

- Sham planning
- Predatory planning
- Conventional planning
- Ethical planning
- Justice planning
- Critical planning
- Utopian planning

Sham planning – planning is here used in the sense of public planning, the planning of public policy – is planning that abdicates any independent role and permits the market and planners working for private clients to make all decisions. Any public planning that does not deal realistically with the resources necessary for the plan’s implementation is sham planning. *Predatory planning* often builds on sham planning; it is unethical planning that knowingly fosters segregation, inequality, pollution, injustice. *Conventional planning* is the range of planning as it is generally practiced today. *Narrowly ethical planning* is conventional planning with explicit acknowledgment of ethical aspects

Justice planning, which may build on the concept of the just

Post Katrina Planning and



Damaged housing still visible almost two years after Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans

Organizing

city, makes ethical objectives and the amelioration of injustices its primary goal and is essentially redistributive of existing resources and relationships.

Critical planning looks to the roots of problems as well as their symptoms and pursues a vision of something beyond the pragmatic and beyond what is immediately doable

Critical planning looks to the roots of problems as well as their symptoms and pursues a vision of something beyond the pragmatic.

today. It might be spelled out to include *exposing* the power and exploitative relations that create problems such as poverty, inadequate housing, pollution, and insecurity; *proposing* measures that would tackle these sources of problems not just their symptoms, pursuing a vision of new a different relations society-wide; *politicizing* the planning process, to make clear that it is not the logic of plans, but the organizing and political action behind them that will produce results; and always *disclosing* the limits of the planning process, so that no illusions are created and the focus on political action towards implementation remains clear.

Critical Planning — exposes, proposes, politicizes, and discloses.

Utopian planning focuses solely on the vision behind critical planning, generally

in abstract and physically stylized terms, but does not deal with implementation. It is not sham planning, however, for it does not purport to deal with implementation, but is in a sense pure vision.

New Orleans before Katrina had a small planning department, and Katrina crippled what ability it had to plan comprehensively for

the city. Many welcomed the absence of formal public control over development in the immediate aftermath of the hurricane; not even sham planning was required to justify U.S. Representative Richard H. Baker, referring to the damage inflicted by the hurricane on public housing in the city, saying, “we finally claimed up public housing in neo. We couldn’t do it, but God did.”

When the Secretary of HUD says New Orleans “is not going to be so black as it was for along time, if ever again,” the statement, coming from the top federal official concerned with urban issues, certainly constitutes a sham form of planning, an abject surrender to presumed private market forces. And when he shortly thereafter announces a plan to demolish 5,000 units of public housing, the borderline to predatory planning has been crossed.

The *Bring New Orleans Back* plan, by contrast, which called for the permanent abandonment of the poorer and predominantly African-American neighborhoods in the city decimated by the floods, was the product of sham planning in spades, bleeding into predatory planning territory had it actually been implemented. Its provenance is linked to its conclusion, the commission issuing it having been led by the largest private real estate developer in the city. The proposals of the Urban Land Institute, the national trade body of commercial real estate developers, were classically conventional planning, seeing economic development and opportunities for private profit-making as identical goals and the primary goal of public policy. Andrés Duany’s gloss on such plans took the form of proposals for physical development along new urbanist lines, assuming middle class forms diluted by lower incomes and resources.

The *Unified New Orleans Plan* (UNOP) moves in the direction of more ethical planning. It picks out seventeen neighborhoods for priority public attention, including those lower-income ones hardest hit by the hurricane. The plan diplomatically includes a range of neighborhoods and neighborhood types, including much of the Ninth Ward as well as both commercial and

industrial areas, such that all interests might see themselves as being treated equally.

A number of private, voluntary, community-based, non-profit efforts have also flourished over the last year in New Orleans. One of these is the *People's Plan for the Ninth Ward*, undertaken by a set of universities, Cornell and Pratt Institute the principals, for and with ACORN, strong in New Orleans, the home of its national headquarters. This plan is a model of sensitive, professionally competent, ethical planning. It is not only a physical plan, although it includes many physical proposals, including suggestions for housing of a variety of types and for a variety of incomes. It also addresses education, jobs, health care, recreation, open space and environmental quality. Its ethical basis and practical virtues are indisputable. It pays attention to immediate needs and in practice contributed immediate services where they were immediately needed, even before getting into planning. It calls for housing assistance for homeowners, rent stabilization for tenants and preservation and improvement of housing units for public housing residents. It is, given the circumstances of its production, a very competent, very ethically-oriented plan.

Justice planning might go further (although certainly elements of the *People's Plan* go in this direction already). Justice planning might mean

dealing with planning for areas of New Orleans far outside of the Ninth Ward, and indeed outside of the city and the state. For the redistribution that justice planning would necessarily seek, resources would be required, not only from New Orleans' very profitable real estate and commercial interests, but also from the federal government, and to a much lesser extent, the state government. The Congressional Black Caucus pressed for legislation toward that end. It is revealing that Ed Blakely, the city's reconstruction administrator, not relying on any such resources becoming available, estimates that it will be fifteen years before the city reaches the goals his plans postulate. Justice would require greater speed.

And, almost by nature of its self-assignment and the need to get a plan done quickly and in a format that could actually tap available resources, the *People's Plan* stops short of dealing explicitly with deep issues of social justice or looking critically at the limits of the practical. There are many reasons for this—not least the fast time frame for the plan, compressed even more when the team was fired from the mainstream UNOP planning process. To attract attention, the team under advice from their partner ACORN, opted to complete the plan two weeks before

the remaining UNOP plans, working with borrowed funds and little assistance. However, next stages of the planning could go further. For instance, it calls for minimizing speculation in real property, not eliminating it, and protecting public housing, not expanding it. Economic development is by way of workforce training, not living wage legislation or public works programs. And proposals for education are limited to elementary schools and to the prioritization of construction jobs in vocational-technical education. Future disasters, specifically hurricane-related, are dealt with by calls for evacuation planning, not restoration of wetlands, construction of more effective levees or changes to other major infrastructure, such as closing the Mr. Go canal.

What might a critical planning perspective add to plans such as the *People's Plan*, as part of a next phase of planning, not so limited by the need to focus on one place in a short period of time?

It might *expose*:

- The class, race and gender roots of current problems by examining or calling for an inquiry into the specific extent to which the shipping, oil and real estate industries, as well as governmental corruption, have

contributed to the disaster.

- The class, race and gender roots of power by looking at the links among the various holders of power in New Orleans, including elected officials, regulatory agency members, the business community and political leaders.
- How the benefits and costs of public budgets are distributed by class, race, gender and neighborhood through an examination of local, state and federal budgets.
- The great contrasts between neighborhoods and cities, and their correlations with class, race and gender.
- The way in which market forces have contributed to inequality and segregation, making certain communities and individuals more vulnerable to Katrina and determining how Katrina's damages have been handled.
- The role of shipping companies, oil companies and real estate developers in magnifying the destructive impact of Katrina and the failures of the Army Corps of Engineers in preventing damage.

It might *propose*:

- A fully funded right to return at full cost, for renters and owners.
- Decentralization of power to the community level,

including provisions for a public planning process with full democratic participation resulting in legally binding plans.

- Living wages that are enforced, include local hiring preferences and offer full protection for immigrant residents and immigrants brought in by labor recruiters for temporary work.
- Alternatives to present canals and shipping lanes and forms of levee construction.
- Recovery of damages from shipping and oil companies and the Corps of Engineers.
- Wetlands restoration.
- Preservation, improvement and expansion of public housing.
- Acquisition of land for affordable housing in all parts of the city, including takings by eminent domain where necessary.
- A participatory budgeting process.
- A steeply progressive tax on speculation.
- Addressing all social justice issues as planning issues, i.e., education, criminal justice, the environment, immigration, discrimination, wage levels.

It might *politicize*:

- Highlight limitations of planning without active organizing behind it.
- Clarify likely conflicts, power relations, coalition

possibilities.

- Prepare an implementation schedule with a proposed timetable and recommend a procedure for monitoring.
- Formulate the plan as an organizing tool.
- Create a visioning process that deals with appropriate relations of power.

It might *disclose*:

- The limits of planning.
- An inventory of tasks not accomplished.
- A strategic plan for accomplishing them.

These are not tasks that can be expected of a volunteer, short-term, largely unfunded private effort. These are tasks that should be the responsibility of planners working with and for communities in a transparent and participatory public planning process. The net result might be to add a longer-term challenge to the existing structures of power to a set of immediate and needed improvements in conditions as they are. We are a far cry away from such a planning process, not only in New Orleans, but in most cities in our country. But it seems to me this is what progressive planning should aim to be.

Peter Marcuse is a faculty member at Columbia University. For more on planning in New Orleans, including Ken Reardon's article on the People's Plan, see Progressive Planning issue 171.

Transforming Top-Down to Bottom-Up Planning in Post-Katrina Mississippi

by JENNIFER EVANS-COWLEY AND MEGHAN Z. GOUGH

Hurricane Katrina affected every community in Harrison County, Mississippi. Following the storm, Governor Haley Barbour created the Governor's Commission for Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal to develop a vision for a better Mississippi Gulf Coast. The commission subsequently partnered with the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) to host the Mississippi Renewal Forum, an event that brought together teams of planners and designers tasked to work with communities along the coast to prepare rebuilding plans. This article first describes the top-down planning approach used during the forum, followed by the bottom-up approach used in Harrison County with a team from Ohio State University (OSU). Despite the challenges inherent in working so closely with citizens who are not accustomed to inclusive planning processes, the bottom-up planning process resulted in a high level of acceptance for the community plans.

Mississippi Renewal Forum

The CNU forum was held six weeks after Hurricane Katrina and involved over 100 planning and design experts from across the country, along with approximately 100 local

officials, planners, architects and other professionals. These groups worked in teams with each of the eleven incorporated cities along the Mississippi Gulf Coast to create long-range redevelopment plans. Teams were also assigned to work on specific topics, such as architecture, transportation, commercial development, social issues and zoning.

The structure of the forum offered no opportunity for direct citizen involvement in plan development. In fact, the only citizen representation came from the public officials who were invited to participate. The forum was held in a casino behind barbed wire fencing guarded by the Army National Guard. The media reported daily on the forum, while the Governor's commission operated a website (www.mississippirenewal.com) that provided updates to citizens and offered them opportunities for discussion.

While many of the ideas in the plan that resulted from the forum were well-received, citizens—in interviews with us, at public meetings and in the media—raised concerns about the process. Many citizens thought it was a closed-door planning process that did not

allow them the opportunity to voice their interests or concerns. Regarding the intended process of the forum, Governor Barbour stated, "The commission will lead, but local governments and the private sector will decide." Citizens felt that this statement, in combination with the way the forum was structured, signified that they would not have the opportunity to voice their opinions about the rebuilding process. The intent of the forum, however, was not to create a closed-door process exclusive of citizen input, but rather to generate preliminary rebuilding plans. Each community could then engage in additional planning that would include more thorough citizen participation.

Post-Forum Efforts

Following the forum, many communities chose to continue their planning efforts by engaging the firms involved in the forum, and in the process, local citizens. Since the key elements of the plan had already been set through the forum efforts, citizen participation mainly focused on refining the details of the plans. This method reflected a top-down approach to planning, where citizens

were consulted after many of the planning ideas had already been decided.

While county planners were invited to participate in the forum, no planning was done for their jurisdictions, which include unincorporated areas. Immediately following the forum, Harrison County invited Ohio State University's City and Regional Planning program to partner with it to develop comprehensive community plans for each of the unincorporated communities in Harrison County. The planning process for the first set of communities began in November 2005; planning for the last two communities will begin in September 2007.

In the first planning studio in Harrison County, students

were divided into teams to work with the communities of DeLisle and Saucier on zoning issues. This studio was funded with \$17,000 in grants raised by the instructor through the university, the Ohio Planning Conference, the Mississippi Chapter of the APA and the Small Town and Rural Planning Division of the APA. Twelve students participated in the studio, creating comprehensive community rebuilding plans that would address community needs.

To build on the work of the first studio, the university was awarded a \$266,000 grant from HUD's Universities Rebuilding America Partnership for planning efforts in Harrison County through March 2008. The second studio class worked with the communities of

Henderson Point and Pineville, and the third studio, currently in progress, is working with the communities of Woolmarket/D'Iberville/North Biloxi (West Planning Area) and Vidalia/Lizana/Lyman/Riceville (East Planning Area).

Bottom-Up Planning in Harrison County

Harrison County expressed strong support for developing plans that integrated the principles of new urbanism and ideas from the forum. The planning team decided not to use any of these ideas, however, until after community residents expressed their thoughts about what they wanted for their community. These unincorporated communities had never before participated in a planning process. Though Harrison County adopted its first comprehensive plan in 1999, it did not make any effort to engage citizens in the planning. Citizens, therefore, had few notions about what planning could do.

In addition to dealing with citizens' inexperience with planning, the Ohio State team also faced the challenge of how to reach out to citizens who had been displaced by the hurricane. In DeLisle, for example, mail was not being delivered to individual addresses; instead, recipients had to go to a central post office outside their community to get their mail. For those living outside the community,

Source: Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District



Harrison County includes five incorporated cities and six unincorporated planning areas.

people were moving from place to place and did not always have their mail forwarded. Phones were of limited use because some people were still living in tents.

The team designed a multi-pronged approach to try to maximize the likelihood of reaching citizens, using citizen leaders, message centers, mailings and town hall meetings. County elected officials appointed a six-person citizen steering committee charged with talking to neighbors. Postcards and newsletters announced meetings and updated property owners. A 1-800 number allowed citizens to call in and leave messages, while an online discussion board allowed those with internet capabilities to stay connected to the planning process, ask questions and provide comments. Where possible, the teams worked with elementary school students to get their ideas, while town hall meetings gave citizens a public forum for sharing their ideas. Prior to the town hall meetings, the team went door-to-door to inform people about the meetings. Flyers advertising the meeting were also sent home with elementary school students and posted in local businesses.

The outreach methods resulted in well-attended town hall meetings. In Henderson Point, where only twenty-four houses were left standing and

less than twenty people were living, more than 400 people attended the first town hall meeting, approximately half of the community's residents. The process for the town hall meetings involved small group discussions about what citizens liked best and least about



Hundreds of Henderson Point citizens gather to discuss planning for the rebuilding of their community.

their community before the storm and what they would do to improve it. The term new urbanism was never used in initial meetings to allow community members to freely express their ideas. Written surveys and a Visual Preference Survey were also used.

A newsletter summary of each town hall meeting allowed those who could not attend to learn what the community said and to respond. Information summarized from the town hall meeting also established the priorities of the plan. Before presenting the draft plan to the community, it was reviewed by an elected member of the Harrison County Board of Supervisors and the county's

zoning administrator. About a month after the town hall meeting, the team made the draft plan available to citizens for their review and feedback, placing it at several locations in the community as well as online. Feedback received was integrated back into the plan.

At a second town hall meeting, citizens used electronic voting to support or oppose the plan's goals and then were provided with a variety of alternatives on how to achieve a particular goal. For example, if a goal was to preserve land along a bayou, different ways to do this were suggested and then voted on. The results of the second town hall meeting informed the team about final revisions needed before the plan could be presented to the Harrison County Board of Supervisors for adoption.

The Highs and Lows of Bottom-Up Planning

The citizen engagement process used in Harrison

County had its highs and lows. Team members appreciated the openness of citizens, many of whom invited them into FEMA trailers for cookies and to hear stories of the rich history of the Gulf Coast communities. Citizens, on the other hand, expressed their gratitude for being invited to participate for the first time in such a process, and for really being listened to. Several citizens noted that they could see how their suggestions were directly integrated into their community's plan. While the process resulted in many positive experiences and outcomes, there were also several challenges that served as reflection moments for the students.

One of the major challenges was the repercussions of the top-down approach used not only in the forum, but also historically in governmental decision-making in Mississippi. Some citizens had a general distrust of government, of outsiders and of special interests. For example, in the Pineville community a citizen continually inquired about a "hidden agenda." This particular citizen arrived at the first town hall meeting ready to argue that it was not a citizen-based process and despite attempts to engage him, all of his concerns were not resolved. This citizen posted a comment on the community discussion board:

My belief is that there were serious preconceptions that were engineered by the professionals involved in this process... I am convinced that this was intentional and have given the authors plenty of opportunity to refute the foregoing to no avail ... The 'plan' does not represent the will of the people and should be taken as only the plan of Dr. Cowley.

The team was disheartened because they had built so much community support for the plan and felt as if this one citizen was purposely trying to undermine the situation. Eventually, after months of back and forth to try to understand the citizen's perspective on the situation, the instructor was able to have a reasoned conversation that fully explored the history of decision-making in the county. After the final discussion, the citizen posted another note to the community discussion board stating, "I think that it [the plan] does represent, by and large, the recommendations and feelings of the true Pineville community."

Another major challenge included understanding the depth of the loss the community felt after Hurricane Katrina and the effect that this had on their interactions with the team. The planning team was also viewed suspiciously

by the steering committee in Henderson Point, which felt that the ideas being presented by the team were not consistent with what the community wanted. Steering committee members argued that the instructor had an agenda to bring unwanted development and ruin the community, even though these ideas for development came directly from the citizens. Until raw data was provided, the steering committee suspected that the team falsified survey results to achieve an outcome that met the team's "agenda." In order to try to provide a rebuttal to the steering committee's concerns, the instructor began documenting every phone conversation and e-mail from citizens and providing a weekly update to the steering committee. At one point one of the steering committee members tried to have OSU fired. Fortunately, a member of the district's Board of Supervisor's had been working with the team and knew that it was making a good-faith effort to represent the community.

The breakthrough in Henderson Point finally came when the first draft of the plan was released. The steering committee realized the quality of the plan and how well it represented the community's voice. From that point forward the committee focused on the details of the plan rather than broad accusations of wrongdoing. The most satisfying moment for the team came at the end of the process when a

committee member called to say he thought theirs was the best plan created for the coast. He appreciated how the team got involved in a personal way, which was very different from the experience in other coastal communities. He admitted that the anger behind the committee's suspicions and accusations stemmed from grief about what was lost in the hurricane and an unwillingness to accept that change would have to come. He believed that the plan and the planning process would help people in Henderson Point move beyond their grief.

Conclusions

Each of the plans developed by the OSU team has been adopted by Harrison County, with the support of the community. The planning team repeatedly heard from citizens who attended planning meetings in other

communities that the team was "doing it right" and that it was actually asking people what they wanted, not telling them what to do. While the state-initiated planning process led to good ideas for possible ways to rebuild, in Harrison County the citizens decided what their future would be from the start, and in many cases the citizens chose to integrate ideas generated from the forum.

Creating a good plan was just the starting point in Harrison County. A major component of the planning process was to build planning capacity in each community to empower citizens with the ability to express their opinions and use their ideas to inform the future. The steering committee was charged with forming a non-profit organization to implement the plan. Due to the high

level of citizen participation that led to such passionate support for the plans, citizens also remain involved in the implementation process. At each meeting, citizens were asked to volunteer to help with the future implementation of the plan. While Hurricane Katrina presented communities with a major struggle to rebuild their lives, many still commit time to ensure that the plans they helped create are properly implemented.

Jennifer Evans-Cowley is an assistant professor in the City and Regional Planning program at Ohio State University. She has served as the project manager for the Harrison County planning process. Meghan Z. Gough is a Ph.D. Candidate in the same program and is writing her dissertation on intergovernmental cooperation in the rebuilding process in Mississippi.

Planners Network is Moving!

Our email and internet addresses stay the same, but we have a new paper mail, phone and fax numbers.

Sarah Smith, PN Administrator info@plannersnetwork.org
Planners Network
106 West Sibley Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853, USA
Voice: 607-254-8890
Fax: 607-255-1971
www.plannersnetwork.org

Involving Students in Reconstructing New Orleans: An Example from Richmond

by THAD WILLIAMSON WITH STEVE HORVATH, CORRIE MIXON AND ERICA COLEMAN

"This is the student movement of our time!"

So claims Sarah Potter, one of the student organizers of the Collegiate Disaster Relief Team (CDRT) at the University of Richmond (UR), in a March 2007 article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. CDRT has organized large-scale work trips to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast over the past two years. While claims to being a "movement" may be over-exuberant hyperbole, Potter has a point: One of the striking features of post-Katrina life in New Orleans has been the parade of student groups offering assistance and participating in the clean-up—most typically via the mundane work of gutting houses and clearing damaged buildings.

What follows is a brief account of CDRT's efforts, particularly its 2007 trip to New Orleans. While I have served as a faculty advisor to this group, I should stress that the impetus, planning and organization came from students. Those who have participated in CDRT trips have helped gut and rebuild a few houses. They also have listened to the stories of local residents, read and

reflected on the causes and consequences of the social disaster set in motion by Katrina and witnessed firsthand the devastation and neglect of a major American city. In the process, these students have had some of the most profound educational experiences of their collegiate careers.

No one has ever mistaken the University of Richmond for UC-Berkeley or Cornell. It is a selective liberal arts college of 3,000 students, nestled in a quasi-suburban, affluent neighborhood on the western edge of Richmond's city limits. The college's geographic isolation from the rest of the city leads many students to refer to the campus as a "bubble," and local residents have often perceived it as socially complacent. (If it's outspoken activism you're looking for, locals may tell you, go to Virginia Commonwealth University in downtown Richmond.)

In recent years the school has made strides to counter this image, in particular by encouraging students to get involved in the local community. The Jepson School of Leadership Studies (where I teach) requires its students to

take a service-learning course ("Justice and Civil Society") that combines the study of theories of justice and social policy with firsthand service work with disadvantaged local populations; the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) offers a wide array of programming on social issues while acting as a clearinghouse for student engagement with the community; and the Bonner Scholars Program involves over 100 students in sustained community service in the city over a four-year period.

Roughly twenty of the Bonner Scholars (accompanied by faculty advisor Teresa Williams) made an initial fall break trip to Mississippi in October 2005 to participate in cleanup activities. As it happened, a number of those students were also taking "Justice and Civil Society" with me. Given a few minutes at the end of class to describe what they had seen, the students who went to Mississippi spoke movingly and disturbingly about the destruction and expressed a sincere determination to do more to help. "We want to go back!" was the common theme.

Consequently, an initial leadership team of six

students created an organization ("Destination Gulf Coast") to plan and carry out a large-scale trip to the Mississippi region in March 2006 over spring break. Out of a pool of seventy student applicants, forty were selected to go, along with several professional carpenters and parents and a faculty advisor (myself). The student group raised over \$25,000 to finance the trip from a variety of university and private sources.

The 2006 trip focused on relief work in and around Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. Students stayed in a church building on the campus of the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, then traveled by bus to a variety of work sites each day. Work consisted primarily of gutting homes, many of which were still untouched seven months after Katrina.

A key part of the trip was the integration of rebuilding work with critical academic reflection on Katrina and its aftermath. In conjunction with the CCE, I compiled a sourcebook of readings consisting of newspaper articles, government reports and analyses from Gulf Coast Reconstruction Watch and other non-profit organizations. Additionally, students were each given a copy of Michael Eric Dyson's provocative book *Come Hell or High Water*, one

of the first substantial books addressing the social and political dimensions of Katrina. During the trip, I led a "teach-in" that discussed the reading material and what we had seen to that point. After the trip, students were required to write a reflection paper and to participate in follow-up discussions led by myself and Amy Howard of the CCE.

Those follow-up discussions were important for reinforcing a desire on the part of students to make a lasting commitment to

to work in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans as a principal goal.

This time, over 100 students applied for the forty spots. Students were housed in a Methodist church in Arabi (St. Bernard Parish), a few blocks away from the Lower Ninth Ward. After arriving late Saturday night, two local ministers gave students a tour of the Ninth Ward, as well as a running political and social commentary. During the week, the group divided into teams, working on as many as six



Damaged housing still visible almost two years after Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans.

helping the Gulf Coast region. Consequently, the students formed and chartered a permanent student organization called the Collegiate Disaster Relief Team. Early in the 2006-07 academic year, students set a weeklong spring break trip

sites simultaneously; again this work involved gutting, demolishing and rebuilding damaged and neglected housing throughout the ward.

In the latter part of the week, the group focused its energy on clearing and

refurbishing two church buildings that will form part of the headquarters of the Neighborhood Empowerment Network Association, a local group involved in advocacy on behalf of Lower Ninth Ward residents. Fortuitously, this work site was located across the street from the home of the legendary Fats

students had any number of impromptu discussions with local residents about both the work at hand and the condition of the city.

Students were also provided with another extensive reading package, including the *People's Plan* for rebuilding the Ninth Ward, produced by

The second session consisted of a guided discussion I led focused on questions of how the Ninth Ward and the city itself could and should be rebuilt. Lastly, the third session consisted of small group discussions among students focusing on what they had learned during the week. Again, students were required to write a reflection paper or produce a multimedia project about the trip and to participate in reflection and discussion after returning to campus.

Where students' efforts go from here remains to be seen, but the students are determined to stay involved and try to get even more UR students to join them. (A striking feature of both trips was that participating students were not all drawn from the liberal-leaning civic engagement crowd, but represented a cross-section of the student population, from fraternity leaders to musicians to athletes.)

What is certain is that these students have been pulled out of the "bubble" and led to consider some fundamental questions confronting American democracy: What do we owe our fellow citizens when they are harmed by forces beyond their control? What do race and class have to do with the neglect the Lower Ninth Ward has received both before and after Katrina? What does it say about America that it can let a

Ann Forsyth



Acorn members and PN conference attendees outside Acorn-sponsored housing in the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans.

Domino, who stopped by to say hello and pose for pictures with students.

Again, service learning was a crucial part of the trip. Students spent Wednesday morning meeting with a variety of city officials at City Hall, including Health Department head Kevin Stephens, a legislative assistant to the City Council and the head of EMS during the hurricane. Equally important,

local residents in conjunction with planners from Cornell. This time, three reflection sessions were held during the week. The first session consisted of a lecture and question-and-answer period with criminologist Peter Scharf of the University of New Orleans, a prominent critic of the New Orleans Police Department (before and after Katrina), who discussed the sources of the city's ongoing homicide crisis.

major city literally drown, yet mount no large-scale, systemic response for over two years while much of the city remains in conditions reminiscent of the developing world?

Students also were led, especially during the week in the Ninth Ward, to consider some fundamental questions about planning: What makes for a healthy neighborhood? How can we bolster the resources and employment opportunities available to residents of poor neighborhoods? Who should control the rebuilding process in New Orleans? Should redevelopment be focused in “clusters”? What (if anything) should be done about property that remains abandoned nearly three years after the hurricane?

Equally important, students were able to see firsthand why each of those questions is so crucial. Whatever the CDRT undertakes in the future, that in itself is a success. And as the following excerpts from student reflection papers on the trip illustrate, having the chance to spend substantial time in post-Katrina New Orleans has made an indelible impact on these students.

But have student initiatives of this sort made any tangible impact on the city itself? That is a more difficult question to assess. At a very practical level, it’s certainly the case that whatever else is done to rebuild the city, someone at some

point has to gut and clear out structures seriously damaged by Katrina, and student groups are quite capable of doing that kind of work.

It’s also the case that, in the case of UR at least, students have been warmly welcomed by local residents as well as city officials. One city resident with whom I spoke on the first day of the most recent trip continually shook his head with wonder at the work that had been accomplished in one day on the home adjacent to his own (already refurbished) property. “They’ve all been working so hard together, the women and the men, and working as a team,” he said appreciatively.

Whether collegiate groups such as CDRT can take the next step from sporadic but generally very positive interactions with New Orleans residents to sustained relationships is unclear. Interestingly, those students who had the opportunity to spend significant time with local residents—such as Erica Coleman (quoted below), who spent an afternoon shopping for hardware supplies with the co-founders of the Neighborhood Empowerment Network Association—often came away with a surprisingly buoyant assessment of the city’s future, as well as a deep appreciation of the determination of New Orleans residents to rebuild their city.

--Thad Williamson

Student Notes on Reconstructing New Orleans

Steve Horvath '08:

“After a day of orientation on Sunday, Monday began the actual work. We pulled our tools and supplies out of the truck, and I remember thinking that a few wheel barrows, crow bars and hammers would not be enough to gut a house, but we set to work anyway.

With the air masks on and the front door successfully crow-barred open, we entered the house and started emptying out the bigger items: furniture, ceiling fans, washers and dryers and other miscellany. The house smelled pretty bad, and I actually gagged when I opened a drawer full of water and rusted metal. It reminded me of a what a sunken ship would be like if it was removed from the ocean and placed on the land. It was dark and colorless and fragile. The furniture looked ghostly, all gray and tattered, and the cabinets came off the wall without much effort. Within an hour, we had a pretty big pile of trash next to the road and had removed most of the furniture on the first floor.

The lunch break gave us a moment to reflect. We were, essentially, surrounded by nothing. Broken houses, overgrown brush, empty fence frames and scattered trash appeared everywhere we looked. It was so desolate. I remember thinking the neighborhood looked like the site of semi-urban warfare setting: not only was it completely torn down, but the structural well-being of the neighborhood just didn't matter to anyone who used it. It was simply a place with structures that provided high and low spots and cover from being exposed. It dawned on me how strange it was that people once lived here, given its present condition and neglect.

I started to feel a little hopeless. The rundown houses stretched on and on. I walked to the next house and saw that the inside of this house looked even worse than the house we were working on. What was the use? All the same, after we set back to work, I couldn't help but feel a little pride at our growing pile of trash."

• • •

Corrie Mixon '08:

"The further I delve into the Hurricane Katrina crisis, the more I am overwhelmed with the entire situation. The harder I try to understand everything that went wrong, everything that could have been prevented and the

pitiful recovery effort, the harder it is for me to make any concise conclusions. Having seen the damage for myself for the third time, after conducting research and engaging in discussions, I still cannot wrap my head around the feelings of those for whom this is a staggering reality. I think that the apathy of the American people, and this could be an assumption on my part, their ignorance to the seriousness of this situation is disgusting. On the other hand, I can understand that having no ties to the area, the people, or no means by which they can empathize would result in such an attitude. The phrase 'Out of sight, out of mind' possesses a new truth. I have noticed a cycle within me upon returning to campus, becoming removed from the devastation and the discussion, my passion dwindles until the time comes again when I become engulfed in preparation or presentations. I know that I can combat this trend by reminding myself of my experiences with pictures or artifacts and staying aware of the recovery process. If this is a tendency of someone who is actively involved in addressing the tragedy, how can one begin to reach those that become completely distanced from the enduring sufferings of Hurricane Katrina victims?"

• • •

Erica Coleman '08:

"Nothing could've prepared me for what I was going to see

and experience in New Orleans, Louisiana this past spring break. Nothing. This was my third time going down to the South to assist in Hurricane Katrina relief and, honestly, I was nervous that there wasn't going to be a whole lot of work left to do. There may be a few houses ruined here and there, but I expected so much more than what I found. I found a group of poor, African-American people who were feeling completely abandoned by everyone. A group of people who were living in America, a nation that prides itself on being one of the greatest in the world, yet not feeling like Americans at all. They had been abandoned by the government that they had put their trust in to save them in times of crisis. I found homes that hadn't been touched since the storm first hit. I found abandoned neighborhoods and empty lots where homes had once stood. But, in the midst of all of this, I found people who were in love with their neighborhood and who had no intention of leaving it. People who were determined to rebuild their neighborhood, their homes in the city that they've grown to love, no matter what."

Thad Williamson is assistant professor of leadership studies at the University of Richmond. Steve Horvath, Corrie Mixon and Erica Coleman will graduate from the University of Richmond in 2008.

(Re) Constructing Community: The United Houma Nation and Iowa State University

by BREANN MARSH-NARIGON, CLARE CARDINAL-PETT, LYNN PAXSON AND TARA LYNNE CLAPP

The Houma Nation

The United Houma Nation is an American Indian tribe whose members live throughout the bayous of coastal Louisiana. The tribe's approximately 17,000 members primarily work in traditional occupations tied to the sea, such as shrimping, fishing and boat construction, though many now work in the oil and gas industry. The Nation has no central settlement, and no federally recognized or protected tribal lands. Recently, after Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita, Iowa State University began working with the Nation to plan appropriate housing and landscapes for a new community it wishes to establish. Though the tribe is taking local action, the environmental issues faced by the people of the bayous are complex and cannot be solved at the local level alone.

The Houma people live interspersed with the other groups that occupy the bayous, including Cajuns and Vietnamese. Even before Katrina, ongoing coastal erosion had been affecting the communities in which the Houma lived and worked. According to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), 1,900 square miles of coastal Louisiana

disappeared between 1932 and 2000, an area of land larger than the state of Delaware. Today, the coastal area is losing ground to the Gulf at an estimated rate of 24 square miles per year.

The causes of the rapid



Creating a sign for ISU's table at the annual tribal pow wow, student Jeff Barlett is taught the proper anatomy of a crawfish, which is the tribe's totem.

erosion of the Gulf Coast are complex. The management and channelization of the Mississippi River by the federal government is a major factor. Normally, continental sediment from the Mississippi system would be regularly deposited in the bayou area. Instead, levees retain the sediment within the channel where it is eventually forced out into the Gulf and over the

continental shelf. Additionally, navigation channels cut by the oil and gas industry continue to erode, leaving remaining patches of wetland grasses vulnerable. Rising ocean levels are likely to only further exacerbate the situation.

The loss of land affects the identities and memories of tribal members, who speak emotionally of the changes they have witnessed to their landscape. They point to areas of open water where the grasses once stretched for miles, where they used to run and play as children. Struggling to stay on their traditional lands, tribal members have adapted to

these changes by dramatically elevating their homes, though some have moved to areas better protected by the current levees. Recently, United Houma Nation communities were severely affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The homes of over 5,000 tribal members were damaged or destroyed, and the USGS estimates that a further 217 square miles of wetlands were lost.

Our Work

Iowa State University's involvement with the Houma Nation began with a conversation between Brenda Dardar-Robichaux, tribal chief, and Lynn Paxson of the Architecture Department. Their conversations resulted in an interdisciplinary studio in the spring of 2006. Graduate and undergraduate students worked on physical rebuilding efforts and on articulating

a vision for a new United Houma Nation community, all in collaboration with the tribe. The tribal council is proactively responding to coastal erosion and hopes to establish a new tribal community by purchasing approximately 100 acres on more stable land.

During the course of the studio, students and faculty engaged the tribal council and the larger tribal community in conversations and activities designed to elicit their needs and desires for the new community. They then returned to Iowa where they worked on renderings of community layouts, sustainable landscape features, community buildings, businesses and housing. Recent studios and student projects have further explored environmentally and culturally appropriate concepts for community buildings and housing. While the new community will be a safer

place to live and work from an environmental standpoint, the tribe also hopes that it will serve as a center for the larger tribe, where its sovereignty, cultural traditions and tribal identity can be protected and enhanced for future generations. Members of the university are currently working with the tribe to more actively engage tribal youth in the community design process.

Throughout the past year-and-a-half, United Houma Nation members have been visibly moved by the work the students have done in representing the ideas of tribal members in visual and physical form. In addition, numerous students who have participated in the studios have been enriched with a deeper understanding of the complexities of a new landscape and community, and many have become advocates within the university for future activist community design work.

Issues Raised

The United Houma Nation and the rest of the people of the bayous face environmental issues that cannot be solved at the local level. Interstate and federal action will be required to slow the erosion of the wetlands, notably by replacing the sediment cycle back into the system. Dardar-Robichaux and other members of her tribe, however, hope that the involvement of the university may help give greater political visibility to their community's situation and needs. Regardless, the [Cont'd on page 26]



On Isle de Jean Charles, one of the most threatened communities, tribal member Curtis Hendon shares his experiences of coastal erosion with Iowa State students.

Integrating Community and Youth

by ERIC JENSEN

New Orleans has long flourished based on its rich identity. As it is rebuilt, Communities In Schools of New Orleans (CISNO) is working with the public schools to provide support for students to succeed. As a site coordinator with CISNO, I have witnessed the value of empowering young people by giving them a voice and the success it can breed. Connecting young people and their communities creates an investment on both ends and establishes an important symbiotic relationship that is integral to the rebuilding process of New Orleans. These young planners have much to offer both New Orleans and Planners Network.

What Is Our Mission?

Communities In Schools of New Orleans (CISNO) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to "champion the connection of needed community resources and services with public schools in New Orleans." CISNO is part of a national network of nearly 200 Communities In Schools organizations that help young people across the country learn, stay in school and prepare for life. We do this by working to ensure that every child has what we call the "Five Basics:"

- A one-on-one relationship with a caring adult;
- A safe place to learn and grow;

- A healthy start and a healthy future;
- A marketable skill to use upon graduation; and
- A chance to give back to peers and community.

Since 1996, CISNO has worked within the New Orleans public school system by partnering with schools to determine their greatest needs and then identify, broker and coordinate essential resources, services and donations to meet those needs. In the wake of Katrina we have been continuing to bring local and national resources to public schools, elementary through high school, in order to build local community capacity and create the safety net that has been missing for so many New Orleans schoolchildren.

Empowering Students

In partnership with O. Perry Walker Charter High School in New Orleans, a council of young high school student leaders from the Greater New Orleans area was created in November 2006. The temporary label for the group is the Young Student Leadership Council. The council was created to be a completely student-driven and student-run group that shares the common interest of advocating for youth in New Orleans. To ensure a diverse representation, the council is made up of students

who represent public, charter and private schools. Through CISNO, I have partnered with this group to help facilitate the evolution of the council and ensure they have the proper resources as they grow.

The Young Student Leadership Council has been able to create engaging and meaningful opportunities to participate in dialogue with important leaders in New Orleans. This includes a partnership with Mayor Ray Nagin, who has agreed to meet with the group of young people as often as necessary and offered any applicable resources. Louisiana State Senator Edwin Murray, who represents District 4 in New Orleans, has invited the council to attend and participate in a Louisiana Senate Education Committee meeting. Other public officials who have expressed interest in partnering with the council include New Orleans City Councilwoman and Education Committee Chair Cynthia Hedge-Morrell and the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The Young Student Leadership Council gives students the opportunity to develop innumerable leadership skills that they will be able to use in the future. Youth advocate groups such as this have the ability to redefine the roles of young people through empowerment, transforming youth

from recipients of information and resources into proactive community leaders. As the city begins to choose directions for its rebuilding, it is important that the voices of the city's future—its young people—do not go unheard.

Engagement in Planning

With so much left to be rebuilt or redeveloped in New Orleans, now is an excellent time to expose the students of New Orleans to the planning process early in their education. CISNO brought five students from O. Perry Walker Charter High School together with students from the Y-Plan (Youth—Plan Learn Act Now) program out of Emeryville Secondary School in Emeryville, California, and the Academy of Urban Planning in Brooklyn, New York, to hold the first Young Planners Network (YPN) Conference. This was in conjunction with the 2007 Planners Network Conference in New Orleans.

The first YPN Conference brought together five students and two practitioners/educators from each group, all of whom

were able to bring their distinct experience and expertise in the field of planning to the larger group. The conference was used as an opportunity to create a collaborative learning environment for the participating students. The group shared their projects with each other, highlighting the skills acquired from and lessons learned about participating in planning practice. The young planners also delivered a magnificent workshop entitled “Youth Participation in Planning” to participants of the Planners Network Conference.

For the students of New Orleans, this exposure offered an important lesson about where youth fit into the planning process as a whole. During a debriefing with the New Orleans students after the conference, many expressed how they see the planning process as yet another area in which youth can be overlooked, even though young people are important constituents in a community and bring a unique

perspective to the planning process. The relationships and skills built during this year's YPN Conference were integral to beginning a New Orleans chapter of the Young Planners Network, and thus their exposure to planning.

Why the Investment?

CISNO's philosophy, embodied in the “Five Basics” and programs such as these, is ultimately in pursuit of helping kids stay in school and prepare for life. By working in partnership with other youth-serving organizations, we ensure that needed services are delivered in a thoughtful, coordinated way. By making a front-end investment in students in at-risk environments, CISNO helps ease the burden on schools and increase the opportunities for youth to make positive life choices and achieve academic success.

Eric Jensen is a site coordinator for Communities In Schools of New Orleans (www.cisnet.org). He can be reached at eric.cisno@gmail.com.

Marsh-Narigon, continued from page 24

need for more effective federal action needs to be addressed. Certainly progressive planners and designers must take action on issues pertinent to their local communities. They also have an opportunity, however, to use their professional skills and capacities to raise consciousness about issues national in scale, which demand solutions that are transcendent and creative. In this situation, progressive planners

can inform themselves about coastal erosion and the bayou region's national importance, and can then advocate for change through their state and federal elected representatives. Additionally, they can directly support the work of the Gulf Coast's environmental non-profits and the United Houma Nation with financial contributions or by volunteering their labor or professional skills.

Breann Marsh-Narigon is a graduate planning student at Iowa State University. Clare Cardinal-Pett, Lynn Paxson and Tara Lynne Clapp are faculty members there. For more information about ways to make a positive impact, please visit the websites of the United Houma Nation (www.unitedhoumanation.org), the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana (www.crcl.org) and America's Wetland Campaign (www.americaswetland.com).

Form-Based Codes and Social Equity: Working in New Orleans

by ALISON KOPYT

The Tulane/Gravier neighborhood is one of New Orleans' many historic neighborhoods. The area, often considered Lower Mid-City, part of the well-known Mid-City neighborhood, recently has begun to establish its own independent identity. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, most residents of Tulane/Gravier faced economic hardship, something the Hurricane only exacerbated. According to Census 2000, the community's median income is approximately 62 percent lower than the average household income for the surrounding Orleans Parish. Homeownership rates are also low in the neighborhood. Eighty-one percent of residents rent their homes, compared with 54 percent of residents in Orleans Parish. The $\frac{3}{4}$ square-mile neighborhood is home to a variety of land uses, including residential, commercial, institutional and industrial.

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's School of Architecture and Urban Planning sponsored students to work with the neighborhood to create a regulating plan and form-based code as a flexible planning tool to guide future development in the area. Unfortunately, the document that resulted alone cannot relieve all the pressures on the

neighborhood. The significant loss of population leaves the area feeling barren and uninhabited. In addition, the area is in need of improvements in the realms of health, safety and education, which form-based codes do not directly address. What the document does do is create a starting point and serve as a resource for discussions with developers that want to move into the neighborhood and existing institutions that wish to expand into the neighborhood. The challenge for progressive planners is to connect this work on physical planning to community activism and larger policy processes that can truly promote social equity.

In the immediate wake of Katrina, the Tulane/Gravier neighborhood had flood waters ranging from four to eight feet high. The water did not completely recede until three weeks later, leaving damaged buildings marked with oil-tinged water lines and overtaken by mold. Foundations of many buildings were severely damaged, and a majority of the homes need to be completely gutted or rebuilt. Since the storm, many of the residents and businesses have permanently left the neighborhood. Those who have returned are mostly homeowners and committed

business owners. Many who have not yet returned, including business owners, land owners and residents (renters and homeowners alike), are taking a "wait-and-see" approach as planning and rebuilding efforts move forward and insurance claims are processed.

Beginning in January and continuing through May of 2007, four students in the Masters of Urban Planning program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee worked with the Phoenix of New Orleans (PNOLA) to develop a plan for regulating the development of two corridors in the Tulane/Gravier Neighborhood: Tulane Avenue from Broad Street to Claiborne Avenue and Galvez Street from Tulane Avenue to St. Louis Street. PNOLA is a non-profit association focused on the rebuilding of the Tulane/Gravier neighborhood. It is working to address the immediate needs of the area—gutting homes, helping restore services, assisting residents with a variety of disaster-relief issues—as well as doing long-term planning.

In early 2007, students and faculty visited New Orleans and toured the neighborhood. The trip culminated in a brainstorming session with

PNOLA board members and neighborhood residents. It quickly became evident that a specific plan to guide development pressures did not exist, particularly along the important Tulane Avenue and Galvez Street corridors. Specific guidelines to encourage investment and shape future development at the neighborhood level in ways that embrace the character and historical importance of this area had not yet been produced. PNOLA indicated that these corridors are currently the interest of developers and will continue to be so in the future, as major catalytic projects in the neighborhood move forward and exacerbate development pressures. These projects include the redevelopment of the Falstaff Brewery, construction of the Louisiana Institute of Film Technology (LIFT) facilities and an expansion of the LSU Medical School campus. Furthermore, stakeholders from the Tulane/Gravier neighborhood, in interviews, indicated that revitalization of these corridors is essential for the health of the overall neighborhood.

PNOLA's efforts have contributed in many ways to the recovery and strengthening of the neighborhood. Tools can further help the organization accomplish its larger mission: to preserve the integrity of the Tulane/Gravier neighborhood while making it a better place to live, work and play. The document created for PNOLA

is a regulating plan and form-based code working together to provide specific guidance on how the built environment should take shape. Unlike traditional, restrictive zoning ordinances, regulating plans and form-based codes take a proactive approach to development, encouraging specific design elements as a means of protecting the integrity and character of the neighborhood. New Orleans has achieved its cultural and social importance largely through organic growth—development originating from the investments of land owners and existing cultural norms. This regulating plan and form-based code is a flexible tool aiming to protect these unique growth patterns—guiding future development to complement and build neighborhood character rather than detract from it.

Two specific corridors in the neighborhood were looked at for the document. Tulane Avenue is a commercial corridor and gateway into the downtown area. It experiences high traffic counts from residents all across the city. Although the street had fallen into a pattern of disinvestment in recent years, it has historically represented the neighborhood's importance and vibrancy. Galvez Street is a strong neighborhood artery with wide traffic lanes accommodating moderate traffic patterns. Surrounded by residential properties and

split by a neutral ground (a wide median), Galvez Street encourages social connectivity. The intention of the document is to preserve and enhance the function of these corridors for the future of the Tulane/Gravier neighborhood.

Analysis of the Tulane Avenue and Galvez Street corridors began by describing different street types, or classifications ("neighborhood," "main street," "urban transition," "urban"), for what neighborhood stakeholders identified as desirable (or undesirable) along each of the corridors. For example, a street viewed as a "busy shopping street" is one condition; it varies considerably from another street that is "a quiet, neighborhood street." Arranging these conditions into different classifications not only helps demarcate different areas of the neighborhood from one another in terms of use and feel, it also begins to illustrate a difference in the physical environment. The classifications, then, are used to create specific design standards that ensure new development fits the long-term vision for the neighborhood. The arrangement of the classifications throughout the neighborhood can also be used to create different alternatives, placing each classification where it is most appropriate in the urban landscape.

It was important that the document complement and

build upon the existing planning activities, respond to characteristics and development pressures specific to the neighborhood and promote a community vision and identity. A wide range of input went into the decision to provide a regulating plan and form-based code to PNOLA to help it drive development on the Tulane Avenue and Galvez Street corridors. A comprehensive analysis of the planning activities to date, catalytic projects and stakeholder interviews were essential to ensure the document be as relevant and applicable as possible to the conditions faced by the Tulane/Gravier neighborhood. Over the course of the process, the students learned a great deal about the importance of community and client input.

In general, the partnership was felt to be positive. The students were told that the document was timely, and the director of PNOLA used it in a development meeting the week they received their copy. The strength of the regulating plan and form-based code is that it addresses the concerns of the neighborhood regarding the desire to retain neighborhood scale and character while acknowledging that growth and some change is inevitable as the area rebuilds post-Katrina. By instituting design regulations, such as the ones described in the document, there is a chance of working with developers in a preliminary design process so that all future development follows the same regulations. Because the main focus of the document is on design, however, there are

many important issues the neighborhood is facing that are not addressed. While this project acknowledged the future growth of a neighborhood in a great city, it is just a small part of the larger process that will go on for many years. Such a process will take place at multiple levels, from local to national. The challenge for progressive planners working on short-term projects in physical planning is to link to a planning process engaged at all these levels.

This collaboration was completed as a planning studio and capstone project. Some of the text is adapted from the original document, prepared by Matt Aho, Alison Kopyt, Brad Lenz and Meagan Limberg, describing how historic and other neighborhood qualities can be preserved during the recovery process post-Katrina.

Young Planners Network

On May 28 through June 2, a mini-conference of young planners from across the nation convened as a part of the Planners Network conference in New Orleans. These fifteen youth planners and their adult allies came from Brooklyn, the Bay Area and New Orleans. They spent five days getting to know each other, learning about New Orleans, participating in urban planning activities—including a survey for the City of New Orleans and GIS lesson at University of New Orleans—and facilitating a participatory conference workshop entitled, “Youth Participation in Planning: Where Do We Go from Here?”

As a result of their hard work and talent, the youth were invited to join the Planners Network by the PN Steering Committee! As a result, this year marks the start of the Young Planners Network (YPN), a group of youth and adult allies working together to support authentic youth participation in the field of planning.

Our next conference will be in May in New York City. Here, young delegates to the 2008 PN conference in Manitoba, to be held next summer, will be chosen.

For more information and to get involved with the YPN, please email us at: youngplannersnetwork@gmail.com.

Being on the Other End(s) of Things...

by AMORY STARR

Faith is mad at me today. Faith is an organizer with Power Tenants. I believe in Faith. A recent college grad, she's doing what I urge my favorite students to do—working as a community organizing intern. She's a good organizer. I recognize everything she does. She's trying to get me to organize a house party. She's offering to come by and pick me up for the neighborhood council meeting tomorrow. In a gentrifying neighborhood, fighting eviction from my building for a condo conversion, I've learned what it feels to be on the other side of community organizing—trying to work on an individual problem with a collective, long-term strategy, fighting my own rage, exhaustion and disempowerment. I'm also fighting my internalized classism—my belief that because I don't have money, I don't really deserve anything after all.

Today I was supposed to make a flier to hand out down our street. Rose Avenue is clearly the next wave of gentrification-speculation in Venice. The real estate agents have signs on almost every building now. The homeless services center has been successfully evicted. Four houses that used to have jumbled informal economy-type front yards are now empty. Oh, and the *tienda* that always had a family talking on the concrete patio—gone. I wanted the flier to say something like “Stop the Luxurification of Venice!” Or “Demand an Affordable Rose!” Even “We Have a Right to the City!” But I'm busy writing a new book, and worn out by the fight already. Faith said all the right things: “As tired as you are, you know that if you unite with other people, that's your best chance to share the work and really win.” Yes, I know. I put her off another day.

More than a year ago, my serene loft in a 6-unit live/work building was sold to an

inexperienced outfit called “The Urban Coyotes,” which made clear its plans to flip the building ASAP. It paid \$3.5 million and thinks it'll sell our units for \$900,000 to \$1 million each. A bit uninformed, those involved don't realize that the condos in the neighborhood going for those prices use award-winning architects, while our building, as they have come to learn, leaks from every direction.

There's a lot at stake. As bare-bones live/work spaces like ours are turned into luxury condos, artists and a whole category of small enterprise is eliminated from the neighborhood.

Only two tenants have stuck it out. My neighbor has operated her business in her loft for seventeen years. She's terrified about losing clients in a move. We've resisted two evictions, weathered a 35 percent rent increase and tolerated months of too-loud-to-talk-on-the-phone renovation noise. Under the constant threat of eviction, I haven't traveled for research for over a year.

We have also spent hundreds of hours trying to get help from the city and from attorneys. We have visited the L.A. Department of City Planning in person four times, as well as called them on the phone another seven or eight times. Each time we are told that the landlords *cannot* relocate us until after receiving the final subdivision approval from the real estate commissioner, but in response to our pleading that someone in the planning department *inform* the landlord that this is the case, we hear, “No, we don't do that.” Despite the fact that the municipal ordinance states: “Any dispute regarding an eligible tenant's right to continue tenancy...may be heard by the Advisory Agency when application for such review is made by the subdivider or an

eligible tenant.” Why are they not doing their job? We just don’t understand.

The County Department of Real Estate also confirms our reading of California Subdivision Map Act (66427) and compliant L.A. Municipal Zoning Code governing condo conversion (12.95.2), but it does not tell landlords how to behave. The Los Angeles Housing Department takes complaints and has an enforcement procedure, but because its funding is linked to the municipal Rent Stabilization Ordinance (RSO) it only provides services for buildings covered by rent control, the shrinking stock of buildings built before 1979. Our building was built in 1987. We’ve visited the City Attorney’s office. It doesn’t “do” tenants. We’ve visited Building and Safety, our local Neighborhood Council, repeatedly called the California State Office of Consumer Affairs (which assured us that the City Attorney’s Neighborhood Dispute Resolution office would “take care of us”), and so many other offices. We made a 9-minute video DVD about the situation, including all of the relevant legal citations, and distributed fifteen copies to City Council members, the Housing Department and the Planning Department, along with complete copies of the paper trail and the relevant state and local laws.

We have stopped counting the number of civil servants *and* tenants’ rights attorneys who have told us that we have “no protections” if we are not under the RSO. They just don’t believe us when we tell them to go look at the condo conversion ordinance and notice that it is part of the zoning code and is totally independent from the RSO, which is part of the housing code. The most famous tenants’ rights attorney in town, the one who “never loses a case,” refused to even read 12.95.2 as s/he “doesn’t want to get into condo conversion.” We aren’t poor enough, we aren’t a big enough building and we aren’t close enough to a sheriff’s eviction to qualify for a tenants’ rights attorney. Sadly, the Mello Act, which asserts that 10 percent of units within one mile of the beach must be affordable, only applies to buildings

with at least ten units. We fall between all the cracks, but that means that all of those categories to which we belong are unprotected.

We see what’s happening up and down our street, hoping against hope that the speculation will fall flat because there’s so much new construction on nearby, more desirable, Main Street. The hottest street in the neighborhood, Abbot Kinney, seems to be expanding its modern loft/retail mix south, beyond its former boundary of Venice Blvd.

I try to figure out why I’m feeling so hopeless. I’ve fought the World Trade Organization, repeatedly. Here we’re just talking about a couple of Coyotes, some local real estate companies and an 8-block stretch of Rose Avenue.



Pioneer Bakery mural in better days.

Maybe it’s because there really is something about L.A. In New York, I notice, people spend their leisure time *out*. In L.A., after being *out* (in traffic), we want to stay *home*. In L.A., people don’t answer the phone, make excuses for turning down invitations and pretend to be a lot busier than they are. Home is a refuge. But maybe it’s not L.A.

In 2006, working with the Institute for the Study of Dissent & Social Control (www.dissensio.org), I did forty interviews with all kinds of activists all over the country about their

Amory Starr

experiences of surveillance. What we learned, from Quakers to those now likely to be labeled “enviroterrorists” to those who make art for street protests, is that there is simply no space for heartfelt, authentic citizenship. The much-theorized apathy of non-voters was finding its way into the most committed activists. Most of the people we interviewed remained active, but their attitude about their work had suffered a big change. All started out believing that fierce democratic engagement could eventually move their fellow citizens and their country. They found, however, that their every move within a democratic context and political tradition of civil disobedience was now attacked by a state

Amory Starr



Mural after demolition to make way for a new residential development.

with “zero tolerance” for activism, supported by a media-whipped citizenry quick to agree to the criminalization of political dissent. Now they despair completely, their activism becoming a ritual of moral principle rather than strategy directed at hope.

This brings me to the great hope of the poor and downtrodden of Venice, Councilman Bill Rosendahl. Around the time of our first eviction, Mr. Rosendahl introduced a bill in the City Council proposing a moratorium on condo conversions. About a year later, just a couple of months ago, the City Council modified the existing condo conversion ordinance to require a higher relocation payment to displaced tenants. We dutifully attended the City Council meeting

and cheered when Mr. Rosendahl pounded the table shouting that he won’t tolerate losing eighty units a month in his district. Over the last year, we have briefed five of Mr. Rosendahl’s aides on our situation. We have written a legislative analysis and have defined the kinds of enforcement mechanisms that are needed. At the urging of a tenants’ rights attorney, we have begged these five aides to contact our landlord, express displeasure at his treatment of tenants in his district and let him know that Mr. Rosendahl is eyeing his application with some suspicion. The attorney believes that this is our *best* strategy for getting the landlord to behave. We do not understand why Rosendahl’s office will not take action.

The best moment in the whole thing was the day we were at City Council. I saw one of Rosendahl’s aides and asked if I could give him an update. This was immediately after the staggering rent increase. I explained all the legal details to him and he nodded and blinked. Then he said, “OK, I’m going to introduce you to someone who can help you.” I thought, “At last, he’s going to put someone from Planning or the City Attorney’s office to work on our case!” He walked across the Chamber and introduced me to Larry Gross, executive director of one of the handful of tenants’ rights organizations in Los Angeles. This particular organization defends poor people and is so underfunded that it does not have a single lawyer on staff. Here is the city outsourcing law enforcement to non-profit organizations! I was dumbfounded.

I’ve talked to so many civil servants in the city who *refuse* to do anything other than suggest that I dial the number of another civil servant. I’ve found that the law is meaningless and that something being illegal isn’t enough to get it stopped. I’ve learned that office after office after office of the city and the state that have a mission to provide services and safeguards to the citizens are inactive/unmoving/unresponsive/deflecting. I’ve learned that we have to hire a lawyer to prove that we’ve

been “damaged” by the illegality and the lawyers don’t want to take the case because “the landlords always win.” I’ve found that it’s apparently easier to talk to your Congressman about the war than to your City Councilman about enforcing existing law in his own city. I’ve thought about the experiences of tenants with less chutzpah, rhetorical bravado and fewer connections and resources, or those who don’t know the law is online and that with some effort, ordinary people can read it. I’ve thought about those who are too intimidated or busy to visit the imposing, high-security City Hall, or who can’t make their story simple, focused and demanding enough to get heard past the “I’ll take your number” point in the process.

With all of my scholarly training, class and race privilege and aggressive activist disregard for bureaucratic “handling,” I have not been able to solve this problem. I am learning on a deep, experiential level what every black person knows—that the police are not on your side. My psyche knows this already from being in the streets with riot cops. But the whole city government? I knew this about the World Bank, I didn’t know this about the city. Some readers are thinking, “Well, it’s not that that they have no intention of providing justice, they’re just hamstrung and overworked.” But I’ve been in abusive relationships, and I’ve learned that it doesn’t really matter if it’s because of the alcohol or because I was annoying or because his dad did it to him, or just because. It’s the same to the person on the receiving end. The advisors to abused women say that trying to understand why is an excuse for staying in the relationship. Does this apply to my relationship with the city? What about my fiery-rhetoric City Councilman. What compromises him? I’m not sure exactly. I’m not sure I care or should care.

So Faith wants me to organize. I think I’ll write the flier tonight. Because I’m an activist. That’s the only reason now.

Last stop: the Greater Venice Neighborhood Council Land Use and Planning Committee

(LUPC). “We don’t do affordability, that’s the Neighborhood Committee.” From observing a 3-hour meeting on a number of projects, Faith and I conclude that the LUPC seems to only “do” parking spaces. Once again, I am told that I am in the wrong place. The services are available, justice is at hand, if only I’ll just go over *there*. So I go home, back to the web, only to learn, chagrined, that I’ve been duped again. The Neighborhood Committee has no meeting scheduled. And the nice lady from the LUPC emails me the numbers of two more legal aid agencies, but it turns out they “aren’t taking any new cases at this time.” This is just like welfare reform: give people the runaround enough and the rolls will shrink through discouragement and attrition. Fewer complaints gets interpreted by government to mean fewer problems. Maybe *this* is why the marble halls of City Hall are empty of constituents. It ultimately serves the agencies to avoid a reputation of efficacy and accountability, that way the people will not even seek assistance. I glimpse a *Bladerunner* present, a city of sealed layers.

Biking home yesterday, talking about utopia and the necessity of imagination, we tumbled, horrified, over our handlebars. We knew the old Pioneer Bakery was being turned into a full-block residential development, but the west wall, the one with the beautiful New Orleans mosaic mural, was abruptly gone. It was the only mural on our street. We never imagined that the new development would not maintain the mural. We biked home, numb. Very, very consciously, I typed a large font all-caps email to the Neighborhood Council: “HOW MANY PARKING SPACES DID YOU GET FOR THE MURAL?” I realized that trying to be a citizen has turned me into a crackpot.

Amory Starr, MCP, PhD is author of Naming the Enemy: Anti-Corporate Movements Confront Globalization and Global Revolt: A Guide to Alterglobalization (2000, 2005 on Zed Books, London). Her work can be found at www.trabal.org.

Developing Sustainable Housing: Moving Beyond Green

by DAVID A. TURCOTTE

The United States has almost 90 million residential structures. While few have been built in a sustainable manner, we are nevertheless beginning to see more interest in green or environmentally sustainable housing. Most discussions of sustainable housing focus on the environmental and economic aspects, overlooking the social dimension. Achieving sustainable housing requires a holistic framework, incorporating the economic, environmental, *and* social dimensions of sustainability in equal parts. Planners must help ensure that social equity is given equal attention during discussions of sustainable housing.

Defining Sustainable Housing

One issue limiting the development of sustainable housing is the lack of consensus over its definition. Disagreement exists over whether the number one priority should be preserving the environment or meeting the needs of people. Most housing projects labeled as sustainable primarily focus on environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability. The social equity side of sustainability is often ignored because the term green housing is often used interchangeably with sustainable housing.

When considering the meaning of sustainable housing it would be prudent to consider the useful and widely accepted definition of sustainable development contained in the United Nations World Commission on the Environment and Development's *Brundtland Report*: "... development that meets the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The *Brundtland Report* also argues for a multidimensional approach, highlighting "three fundamental components to sustainable development: environmental protection, economic growth and social equity."

Housing as a Commodity, Not a Right

While a clear definition of sustainable housing would be helpful, the fact that housing in the U.S. is generally viewed as a commodity and not a right as affirmed by the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* is another reason why the social equity dimension is often ignored. The political ideology that underpins U.S. housing policy sees the market as the preferred avenue for determining how housing is produced and distributed and homeownership as the desired outcome. In addition, powerful private interests, such as the National Association of Realtors (NAR), National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA), have had substantial influence over federal housing policy.

Government policy has generally depended on the private, for-profit sector to address the various housing needs of low-to-moderate-income families. As a result, housing policy has often supported the interests of well-organized, private industry groups while trying to address the housing needs of low-to-moderate-income households. Consequently, government's role in providing quality housing is limited since housing is seen as a speculative commodity that should be distributed through the private marketplace.

Positive Trends toward Sustainable Housing?

Despite the aforementioned challenges, we are also witnessing positive changes that support the creation of more sustainable housing. Such changes include initiatives to encourage higher density transit-oriented development, healthy homes and green construction, as well as architectural designs promoting neighborhood walkability. The negative environmental impact of current housing patterns is certainly

attracting more public attention, particularly on the issue of global warming. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, building operations are responsible for almost 40 percent of carbon dioxide emissions in the U.S., while another 10 percent is attributable to construction. Among all buildings, it is housing that produces the most emissions. Additionally, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 43 percent, or 58 million tons per year, of construction and demolition waste is produced from residential activity.

When low-density sprawling residential development patterns are accounted for, the negative impacts of unsustainable housing on global warming and overall environmental quality is multiplied. Urban and suburban sprawl has created greater automobile dependency, worsening air pollution, more sedentary living and unhealthy communities. Many also contend that longer commutes undermine civic participation and vibrant communities.

Housing can also be unhealthy due to lead paint, poor indoor air quality and unsafe conditions, particularly for low-income families. The EPA has determined that indoor air quality of buildings is one of the top five environmental health risks in the U.S. According to the EPA, elevated levels of lead in children is still a serious problem today, particularly among urban and minority families, despite there being a lead paint ban in effect since 1978. In addition, asthma is now the number one chronic childhood disease in the U.S., with unhealthy housing conditions being an important factor in its proliferation. Furthermore, each year, millions of Americans are injured at home due to poor design and substandard conditions. The impact of unhealthy housing is evident by the association between poor-quality housing and various health conditions.

Besides health issues, housing is not affordable for many. According to Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies report *The State of the Nation's Housing 2007*, "Affordability problems remain the nation's fastest growing housing

challenge." The report concludes that in 2005 the number of severely cost-burdened households (paying more than 50 percent of income for housing) increased by 1.2 million to a total of 17 million. The vast majority of these households represent the lowest income earners in the U.S. Another indication of growing affordability problems is the number of households paying more than 30 percent of income on housing,



Trolley Square in Cambridge, MA

which increased to 37.3 million. The high cost of housing can also negatively affect regional economies, as individuals have less disposal income, putting communities at a competitive disadvantage when compared to areas having lower housing costs.

Alternative Movements

The combination of the aforementioned problems are helping to drive efforts to examine more sustainable ways to develop housing. Certainly initiatives by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), with its LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system, and others to promote green buildings are raising public awareness about the negative environmental impacts of traditional construction and housing development. Many within the housing industry are also jumping on the green building bandwagon, as the NAHB is promoting green housing and encouraging local chapters to

Photos courtesy of Mostue and Associates Architects, Inc

set up green building programs. In addition, the prevalence of unhealthy housing has reunited many groups within the public health and affordable housing communities, something that has not happened to this extent since the days of the tenement movement. Organizations such as the National Center for Healthy Housing and others have effectively called attention to myriad problems related to health and housing.

The smart growth movement emerged out of growing concerns about negative effects of urban and suburban sprawl by many environmentalists and policymakers. In 1996, the EPA, along with non-profit organizations and other governmental agencies, created the Smart Growth Network “to encourage development that serves the economy, community and the environment.” Critics, however, have lamented that smart growth may actually worsen inequities and be a catalyst for gentrification, as some studies have found inverse relationships between higher density and affordability. On the other hand, proponents argue that high-density development reduces land and housing costs. Furthermore, the first smart growth principle, creating a range of housing opportunities and choices, advocates for a diversity of housing types for all incomes, including affordable units. Smart growth is also embraced by realtors, as NAR publishes *On Common Ground* twice a year to encourage dialogue and a wide range of views on this issue.

Closely related to smart growth, new urbanism also attempts to encourage higher density design, but is more influenced by architects and physical planners. New urbanism postulates that modifications of forms will produce positive social, economic and environmental change, but critics complain that such changes are limited. The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) believes that “these strategies are the best way to reduce how long people spend in traffic, to increase the supply of affordable housing and to control urban sprawl.” Some detractors, however, note that new urbanism principles are often associated with gentrified communities and mixed-income HOPE VI developments,

which have displaced low-income families. To counter these perceptions, CNU recently launched the Affordable Housing Initiative to encourage more inclusion of affordable housing in new urbanism projects.

Individual organizations like CNU and the Smart Growth Network are beginning to join forces to develop better quality housing and communities. In 2003, the National Resource Defense Council and CNU opened discussions with the USGBC to develop a certification program to integrate green building, new urbanism and smart growth principles. As a result, these groups formed a partnership to create a new certification product, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND). The goal of the partnership was to develop a national standard for neighborhood design encompassing four areas: smart location and linkage; neighborhood patterns and design; green construction and technology; and innovation and design process. To test the new LEED-ND rating system, a pilot program has been started to certify 120 neighborhood developments from various regions and community types. Based on the evaluation of these projects, the rating system will be modified, with the anticipated release of the final standards in 2009. Within the pilot rating system, projects can accumulate up to a maximum of 106 points, with four certification levels requiring anywhere from 40-80 points to achieve certification. While encouraging green and environmental practices are priorities of LEED-ND, projects can also earn up to 4 points if at least 20 percent of the units are affordable.

Momentum for sustainable housing has also been boosted by the Enterprise Foundation and National Resources Defense Council’s \$550 million Green Community Initiative to build 8,500 green affordable housing units nationally. This initiative is different from many green housing programs as it targets only affordable housing, but is also focuses on improving economic efficiencies. In 1996, Global Green (GG) USA launched a Green Affordable Housing Initiative to encourage developers to incorporate

green design into their projects. In addition, GG USA's publication *Greening the Tax Credits* prompted several states to include green criteria into their Qualified Allocation Plans (QAPs), which are used to determine which projects receive Federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. Traditional affordable housing advocacy groups, such as the National Low Income Housing Coalition, are supporting sustainable affordable housing as it reduces utility costs for low-income households.

We are also seeing more initiatives at the state and local level to ensure that the social dimension of sustainability is included in green housing. The Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations in partnership with the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC), New Ecology and the Tellus Institute started the Green CDC Initiative to provide training, technical assistance and financing for sustainable housing development projects. Many local non-profit affordable housing developers are beginning to incorporate more sustainable design features into their social justice work. Urban Edge, a 33-year-old CDC located in Boston committed to developing healthy and sustainable communities, built a 64-unit, affordable, mixed-use, transit-oriented project on an old brownfield site with green design features, including solar energy. On the west side of Buffalo, People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH) is conducting grassroots organizing to reclaim abandoned houses for low-income residents and clean up contaminated sites, including advocating for changes in housing policy and new urbanism from a social justice perspective.

Future of Sustainable Housing

The above examples are surely encouraging advances towards more sustainable housing development, however, can we create more sustainable housing without significant changes to the current housing system? It is certainly heartening that groups like NAHB and NAR are supporting principles of green housing and smart growth, as well as affordability and inclusion,

but will these and other private interests attempt to block a more activist government? *The State of the Nation's Housing 2007* reported that the federal government is failing to provide adequate assistance for housing, as the share of non-defense discretionary housing expenditures declined from 10.2 percent in 1998 to 7.7 percent in 2006. Last year, spending on housing actually dropped in real dollars by 2.4 percent when taking inflation into account.

Regardless of potential industry opposition, government must clearly play a more active role in promoting sustainable housing and ensuring issues of equity are given equal priority. A new Democratic-controlled Congress may provide more political support for these initiatives. In the past, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute's Public Policy Conference included "affordable and sustainable housing" as a top policy recommendation. In addition, inequities within the system, such as tax deductions providing housing subsidies for affluent homeowners and industry groups while reducing support to low-income families, must be addressed. Most sustainable housing development activity has happened despite inadequate federal assistance because state and local government made supporting these projects a high priority. Moreover, state and local government should change zoning and permitting laws that currently promote high-cost, low-density development and establish regulatory barriers to affordable housing.

Accordingly, planners must join with diverse stakeholders to support increasing resources for holistic approaches to sustainable housing development, recognizing the connections between the social, economic and environmental dimensions.

David A. Turcotte is senior program manager at the Center for Family, Work and Community at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. He also teaches in the university's Department of Regional Economic and Social Development. He can be reached at David_Turcotte@uml.edu.

Making Preservation Pay: State Historic Tax Credits Generate Big Investment, So Why Ruin a Good Thing?

by JOSEPH HEATHCOTT

The State of Missouri leads the nation in the use of historic tax credits for rehabilitation and economic development. Yet year after year state senators and representatives attempt to scuttle the program by introducing crippling amendments to bills working their way through committees of the General Assembly. Despite the tremendous economic and cultural achievements of the historic tax credit program, it remains subject to perennial attacks. The nature of these attacks illustrates the vulnerability of progressive state laws and is a reminder to planners of the central role played by state legislators in shaping the frameworks for municipal planning.

In 1997 the Missouri legislature approved a rehabilitation tax credit to promote the restoration and adaptive reuse of historic buildings. The program issues a credit of 25 cents on every dollar invested in the rehabilitation of a building listed on the National Register of Historic Places or a residence located in an officially designated historic district.

It was a gift that kept on giving. By 2004, over 300 projects had been certified to receive tax credits, generating \$1 billion in revenues from direct investment and tourist receipts. According to the state's own figures, the program has generated \$1.78 in tax revenue for every \$1.00 of credit. To date, over 900 renovation projects have been completed in thirty-seven counties across the state. What's more, the program does not merely generate personal and private wealth, but rather it ensures the wise development of a genuine public good—our heritage of great historic buildings. Citizens of Missouri are rightly proud of the historic tax credit program and the direct, measurable cash infusion that it has provided to local and state treasuries.

Nevertheless, a small group of powerful state legislators has launched yearly assaults on the program. In the fall of 2006, Senator Chuck Gross (R-District 23) introduced Senate Bill 927 to establish severe limits on a range of tax credits, including the historic preservation program. Specifically, the bill proposed to cap tax credits at 2.5 percent of the net general revenue of the state during its previous fiscal period. It further proposed to halt the use of tax credits in any given fiscal year until all tax credits from the previous year had been issued or redeemed. Finally, the bill proposed to remove residential property from eligibility, and to place strict limits on “carry back” and “carry forward” provisions. The bill died in committee, but legislators vowed to introduce similar legislation in subsequent sessions.

During the recent legislative session, Senator Brad Lager (R-District 12) introduced another round of amendments to cripple the program, including an amendment to Senate Bill 86 to establish “sunset provisions” for a range of tax credits, including the historic preservation program. Specifically, the amended bill proposes to retire all tax credit programs unless there is specific action by the General Assembly to reauthorize them. The amendments succumbed to the haste of a rapidly approaching recess deadline, however, Lager promised to reintroduce sunset provisions during the next session.

Missouri legislators have repeatedly cited “fiscal prudence” as the basis for their opposition to historic tax credits, arguing that in lean budget times citizens cannot afford to pay for such “costly” programs. But this justification is deeply flawed. First, the state's own reports demonstrate that historic tax credits generate added value, providing an infusion of money into the state budget. Moreover, unlike most development incentives, the historic tax credit program is performance-

based in that it requires the front-end investment of \$4.00 for the issuance of every \$1.00 of tax credit. The program does not give away state money in advance; rather, it stimulates investment by awarding tax credits at the completion of a project.

To date there have been no successful legislative curtailments of historic tax credits, however, legislators realize that their ongoing attempts need not become law to be “successful.” The clockwork assaults could very well dampen development by introducing unpredictability into the rehabilitation of historic buildings. Threatening to cap the amount of tax credits issued, to backlog the issuance of tax credits or to introduce sunset provisions throw rehabilitation pro formas into disarray. As a result, investors will be far less likely to pay carrying costs, taxes, insurance and engineering and design fees without knowing if tax credits will be available when their project is completed. If the availability of tax credits is contingent, rather than guaranteed, financial institutions will lose confidence in investing in historic properties. If developer and banker confidence wanes, redevelopment activity will grind to a standstill and the revenues currently enjoyed by our state will disappear.

Support for the historic tax credit program remains widespread in Missouri, and includes Governor Blunt, U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill and mayors, council members, planning staff and cultural resource offices in communities across Missouri. Anyone who thinks that this is a big city program should examine the list of grassroots organizations that support historic tax credits—such as the Jefferson County Historical Society, the Historical Society of Maries County, Friends of La Plata Preservation, Friends of Historic Boonville, the Adair County Historical Society in Kirksville, the Atchison County Historical Society and Downtown Washington, Inc.

So why are legislators such as Gross and Lager trying to undermine the historic tax credit program when it enjoys widespread support and is the leading economic development incentive tool in Missouri?

One possible explanation is that they are ideologically driven and that their devotion to the principle of free market economics outstrips pragmatic considerations of policy performance and measured economic benefit to the state. From a rational economic perspective, it makes no sense to curtail a program that puts money into the public treasury, particularly if the justification is fiscal austerity. In other words, curtailment of the program would directly contradict the “fiscal prudence” rationale.

Another possibility is that Gross and Lager acted in the narrow interests of legislative districts where new home construction on peripheral farmland is the predominant mode of economic development. Until the end of the current term, Senator Gross represented St. Charles County, a rapidly growing exurban region of tract housing, highways and office parks. Perhaps Senator Gross resented the fact that St. Charles County receives little direct benefit from historic tax credits, but regardless of which communities benefit directly, all communities benefit in broad terms. An economic development program that generates revenue, increases tourism and restores our heritage in the process bolsters the economy of the entire state.

Nevertheless, the efforts to roll back historic tax credits in Missouri will continue with every subsequent legislative session. The narrow lesson here is that planners and preservationists across the state should remain constantly attentive to the bills and amendments that circulate through the committees of the Missouri General Assembly. Perhaps more importantly, however, planners throughout the U.S. should beware of efforts within their state legislatures to tinker with crucial development programs, however subtle or seemingly inconsequential the changes. Small shifts in state law with regard to historic tax credits, such as the addition of a sunset provision or a cap based on general revenue, can have far-reaching consequences for cities and can dramatically impact the quality of urban life.

Joseph Heathcott is an associate professor of urban studies at The New School. He is the co-editor of Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization, as well as numerous articles on preservation, planning, civic culture and the urban built environment.

Community Organizing and Rebellion: Neighborhood Councils in El Alto, Bolivia

by EMILY ACHTENBERG

Visitors to La Paz in August 2004 experienced a rare event: a day without car horns, gasoline fumes and traffic congestion. A strike by transportation workers protesting an increase in gasoline prices sparked a series of road blockades, converting major downtown arteries into impromptu soccer fields and pedestrian-friendly boulevards. The streets soon filled with thousands of indigenous demonstrators demanding the nationalization of gas. Women in traditional skirts and bowler hats discoursed eloquently on the link between the lack of basic neighborhood services (including cooking gas) and the role of transnational corporations in exploiting Bolivia's natural resources.

To a progressive planner, even more remarkable was the realization that these groups were marching for nationalization under the banners of their local neighborhood councils—chapters of FEJUVE (the Federation of Neighborhood Councils), a grassroots community organization in the neighboring indigenous city of El Alto. In fact, during the tumultuous “Gas Wars” of 2003-2005, while many groups (including *campesinos*, coca growers, workers and students) participated in the broad-based social movements that brought down two neoliberal governments and ultimately elected Evo Morales as Bolivia's first indigenous president, the role played by FEJUVE-El Alto was decisive. It was FEJUVE that forged a national consensus and mobilization around the demand for nationalization of gas. By barricading El Alto's gas storage plant, blockading road access into La Paz and carrying out massive civic strikes, FEJUVE and its allies created a prolonged state of scarcity that paralyzed the national economy and government. And El Alto paid the price, providing most of the Gas Wars' sixty-seven victims.

How did a grassroots urban community organization focused on the delivery of basic neighborhood services become the major

protagonist in a civil insurrection against the neoliberal order? How did FEJUVE move from organizing the community to organizing rebellion? What challenges does FEJUVE now confront in relation to the new MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) government? These issues are of interest to progressive planners and others seeking to understand the relationship between urban neighborhood organizations, popular movements and government in Latin America and elsewhere.

El Alto and the Neoliberal City

As Bolivia experts Linda Farthing, Juan Manuel Arbona and Benjamin Kohl have noted, the La Paz/El Alto metropolis is a dramatic expression of the neoliberal globalized city. El Alto, an impoverished township of rural migrants steeped in traditional indigenous customs, sits on the rim of the Altiplano overlooking and nearly surrounding La Paz, the colonial capital driven by market forces and the perpetuation of elite privilege.

El Alto itself is largely a product of Bolivia's neoliberal structural adjustment policies, which expelled massive numbers of miners and *campesinos* from the Altiplano over the past twenty years as unprofitable government mines were shut down and cheap food imports (along with drought) undermined traditional peasant agriculture. From a village of 11,000 in the 1950s, El Alto became an independent municipality in 1985 and now has a population exceeding 800,000. It is the fastest growing city in Latin America, soon to surpass La Paz in population.

El Alto is dominated by the informal economy, which has increased by 162 percent since 1985. Seventy percent of the employed population works in family-run businesses or microenterprises. Many Alteños commute daily into La Paz, where they

build the infrastructure and provide the services that enable the reproduction of global elite lifestyles. A high percentage of Alteños are street vendors. Sixty percent of the population is under age 25.

This explosive population growth has vastly outstripped El Alto's capacity to provide basic services to its residents and neighborhoods. Land use and urban settlement patterns are basically unregulated, allowing for the creation of subdivisions without public services or community facilities (schools, churches, parks). Most neighborhoods have no paved streets, trash pick up or telephone service, while most homes lack indoor plumbing, potable water and electricity. Seventy-five percent of the population lacks basic health care, and 40 percent are illiterate.

FEJUVE: Community Organizing

The earliest neighborhood *juntas* in El Alto were established in 1957 to provide basic services for the recently urbanized migrant population, later becoming affiliated through FEJUVE in 1979. Historically, the *juntas* have played multiple roles, including:

Self-help. Through the *juntas*, ex-miners and *campesinos* have pooled their resources (including miners' pension funds) and technical skills to buy land, build schools and parks and install basic utility services. This has enabled residents to basically self-construct their communities and neighborhoods.

Regulation. The *juntas* regulate neighborhood transactions, such as the buying and selling of homes. They may mediate neighborhood disputes and administer community justice (with sanctions ranging from community service to the occasional lynching). In many respects, the *juntas* function as neighborhood micro-governments, substituting for the mostly absent state.

Protest. The *juntas* also have a long tradition of mobilizing residents to demand from municipal authorities what they cannot build or deliver themselves. In 2001, FEJUVE was a major protagonist in the struggle to found the Public University of

El Alto. In 2003, FEJUVE successfully resisted a municipal tax on building and house construction. In 2005, FEJUVE spearheaded a campaign to throw out the privatized water company. In this role, FEJUVE mediates between residents and the state outside the traditional political party structure to make government more accountable.

The neighborhood *juntas* were greatly strengthened in 1994 by the Law of Popular Participation, a neoliberal democratic reform that devolved 20 percent of the national budget to municipalities and gave local councils an enhanced role in participatory planning and budgeting. The ability to demand and deliver funds for neighborhood projects significantly increased FEJUVE's power and influence.

Today there are close to 600 neighborhood councils in El Alto, organized by geographic zone in each of the city's nine districts and affiliated at the citywide level through FEJUVE. According to Uruguayan analyst Raúl Zibechi, the basic unit at the neighborhood level must have at least 200 members. The elected leadership committee meets regularly and calls a general neighborhood assembly monthly or semi-monthly. An elected leader must have at least two years of residency in the zone; may not be a merchant, transportation worker, real estate speculator or political party leader; and cannot be a traitor or have colluded with dictators. Farthing and Kohl state that women represent 20 to 30 percent of the neighborhood *junta* leadership, a higher percentage than is found in most popular organizations in Bolivia.

A parallel set of territorially-based organizational structures exists for small proprietors and workers in El Alto's informal economy, who are highly organized. As anthropologist Sian Lazar explains, the street vendor association represents vendors (mostly women) who sell in the same street or market. It regulates access to stalls, monitors upkeep and cleanliness, mediates disputes and negotiates relations with the municipality. Taxi and bus drivers are organized by route, and the union (*sindicato*) regulates departures, allocates itineraries and performs other functions similar to the street

vendor association. These types of organizations dominate El Alto's citywide trade union federation and ally with FEJUVE on critical issues.

Both the neighborhood councils and their counterparts in the informal economy are patterned after the traditional communitarian organization of rural indigenous communities (*ayllu*) in terms of territoriality, structure and organizational principles. They also reflect the traditions of radical miners' unions, which for decades led Bolivia's militant labor movement. Fusing these experiences, El Alto's migrants have reproduced, transplanted and adapted their communities of origin to facilitate survival in a hostile urban environment.

FEJUVE: Organizing Rebellion

FEJUVE's success broadening its role from organizing the community to organizing a rebellion against neoliberalism during a period of national crisis can be attributed to several factors:

Strategic location. Due to its unique location on the rim of the Altiplano, El Alto controls access to most of the roads that connect La Paz with the rest of Bolivia. In a tradition dating back to the indigenous siege of La Paz in 1781 and continuing with the militant miners' entry into La Paz from above during the 1952 revolution, El Alto residents have regularly exploited their strategic geographic location. The global economy has only enhanced this advantage, since El Alto is also the site of La Paz's international airport. Road blockades during the Gas Wars, for example, effectively cut off La Paz from the rest of the world.

Autonomous organization. Through the neighborhood *juntas*, El Alto has developed as a self-constructed city run by a network of micro-governments independent of the state. In Raúl Zibechi's view, the autonomous organization of labor in the informal sector, based on productivity and family ties instead of the hierarchical boss-worker relationship, reinforces this sense of empowerment: that citizens can self-manage and control their own environment.

Collective traditions and experiences. El Alto's traditional culture, reinforced by the practices of the neighborhood *juntas*, provided the infrastructure for social resistance in a number of critical ways.

Collective identity. El Alto's residents identify strongly with their neighborhoods, making territorially-based organizations the logical vehicle for collective action. But the settlement patterns of these neighborhoods also reflect their rural communities of origin, with which Alteños maintain strong ties (often owning land in the *campo* and returning to grow crops, according to Lazar). This has been an important factor in promoting national indigenous solidarity. When peasant-led blockades caused food shortages and rising prices in El Alto, most Alteños identified with the *campo*, despite their immediate economic hardship as consumers.

Participation. A high degree of member participation in collective organizational activities is expected and achieved in El Alto. During the civil strikes that characterized the Gas Wars, all shops, markets and businesses closed; transportation stopped; and thousands mobilized for daily marches and demonstrations. This solidarity is produced by a unique blend of social coercion and incentives that dates back to the *ayllu*, where non-participation was commonly sanctioned (or understood to result in a loss of benefits). Similarly, failure to participate in a "voluntary" neighborhood campaign or *sindicato* activity might result in a fine, a denial of neighborhood services won by others or assignment to a less favored market stall or taxi route. While these "consensual obligations" (in Zibechi's words) depart from the liberal democratic tradition, they are generally accepted in El Alto as part of the way the community works.

Direct democracy. During the Gas Wars, grassroots mobilizations were strengthened by the traditional practice of community assembly, where residents meet to deliberate, exchange information and reach decisions by public consensus. Community radio facilitated direct communication and the growth of "horizontal" networks at the base, acting without traditional leadership. Neighborhoods

took responsibility for maintaining individual road blockades, utilizing the traditional tactic of shift rotation to allow the protest to continue indefinitely. The tradition of leadership as a form of community service (not a privilege) served to further empower the grassroots networks which formed the core of the social resistance.

New Challenges

With the election of Evo Morales, FEJUVE faces new and substantial challenges that demand further changes in its ever-evolving role. While broadly supporting Evo Morales' agenda to regain popular sovereignty over natural resources and re-found the Bolivian state, FEJUVE has maintained a critical posture towards the MAS government. This includes denouncing the Minister of Water, FEJUVE's former president, for failing to move decisively to return El Alto's privatized water company to public ownership. FEJUVE continues to press for accelerating the pace of the government's nationalization programs to generate revenues for economic development, housing and social services in response to neighborhood demands.

At the same time, FEJUVE has recognized the need for more pragmatic tactics in the current political environment. In its recent campaign to oust the governor of La Paz for promoting regional autonomy (which would deprive the federal government of necessary resources), FEJUVE withdrew its threat of civic strikes and road blockades to facilitate a potential legislative solution.

Whether FEJUVE can retain its strong, independent neighborhood base and organizational capacity under current political circumstances—despite the potential challenge this poses to the MAS government—remains to be seen. To the extent that FEJUVE can remain a potent national force while delivering concrete benefits to its neighborhood-based constituency, progressive planners and community advocates will continue to draw inspiration from this creative grassroots organization.

Emily Achtenberg is an affordable housing consultant specializing in the preservation of subsidized housing. She visited Bolivia in 2004 and 2006.

www.designerbuildermagazine.com



DESIGNER

A JOURNAL of
THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

builder

Tell your friends and
colleagues to check
out our new website!







Resources

Chapter Updates

On Saturday, May 5th, the **Planners Network UIC** chapter hosted a successful forum on urban agriculture & planning. With thirty people in attendance, the forum focused on what fundamental change in the way Chicagoans consume and produce food would look like. The forum brought together students from multiple universities and disciplines, community activists, planners, and local urban farmers interested in discussing ways in which to ameliorate food deserts, encourage more equity in food accessibility, and to share information on innovations in local food production. The forum started with a panel discussion by Pam Broom of Growing Power, Ken Rubin, a food activist and chef, Chris Anderson of City Farm, and Lynn Peemoeller of Sustain. Following the panel discussions, participants and panelists joined breakout sessions which included discussions on topics such as rooftop gardening, a year-round public market in Chicago, youth involvement in gardening and nutrition, and cultural identity and the globalization of food production. The forum concluded with a keynote speech from Lynn Peemoeller of Sustain, on sustainable food systems in Cuba. As a result of this successful forum, Planners Network UIC will be working to organize volunteer days with City Farm at a sustainable organic farm bordering two very diverse Chicago neighborhoods, Cabrini Green and The Gold Coast. PNUIC would like to make special thanks to the UIC Urban Planning and Policy program for their financial support and Red Hen bakery for their food donation.

Member Updates

Gary Fields has received tenure in the Department of Communication at the University of California, San Diego where he is currently working on the

territorial politics and geography of enclosure in England, the American West, and Palestine.

This year, PNER **Clara Irazábal**, Assistant Professor in the School of Policy, Planning and Development at the University of Southern California, was the keynote speaker at the VIII International Seminar “The Future of Cities and Tourism” (Red Mexicana de Ciudades Hacia la Sustentabilidad. Cancún, Quintana Roo, Mexico, January) and was also invited to deliver talks at MIT and Cornell University. She is currently working on several articles that relate to urban planning and design theory, Latino communities and places in Los Angeles, and the Venezuelan transition to a socialist participatory democracy. She has two forthcoming articles: “Kitsch is Dead, Long Live Kitsch: The Production of Hyperkitsch in Las Vegas” (Journal of Architectural and Planning Research Vol. 24, n. 3, Autumn 2007); and “Neighborhoods in the Lead: Grassroots Planning for Social Transformation in Post-Katrina New Orleans?” (Planning Practice & Research, with Jason Neville). A shorter version of the latter article will be published in Progressive Planning.

Dick Platkin, former member of the national Planners Network Steering Committee and co-editor of the Progressive Planning special issue on the Urban Growth Machine, will retire from the Los Angeles City Planning Department in June 2007. After some summer traveling, he can be reached at rhplatkin@yahoo.com or (213)308-6354. Plans include a series of articles for Planetizen, work with the local PN Chapter in Los Angeles, collaboration on a film about homelessness in LA's Skid Row, teaching, and paid (if possible!) and pro bono advocacy planning projects.

Norma Rantisi of the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, Concordia University in

Montreal, Canada was recently awarded tenure and was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor.

Barbara Rahder (former co-chair of PN) will be Interim Dean in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University in Toronto for one year beginning July 1, 2007. She spent her sabbatical last winter in Asia. She taught Planning Theory at the University of Moratuwa in Sri Lanka where she had a lively class of 24 graduate students who enjoyed debating the relevance and applicability of various Western theories to planning issues and situations in the war-torn island country. She also traveled in India and China. In India she gave a paper at an international conference on sustainability at the University of Madras in Chennai. In Hong Kong, she explored a range of low-income housing situations—from rooftop squatter settlements to indigenous villages—with researchers at the Baptist University of Hong Kong. She also visited urban planning museums in Shanghai and Beijing. She plans to return to Sri Lanka to teach again in the not too distant future and hopes that peace will break out soon.

Philip Silva recently joined the staff of Sustainable South Bronx, where he will serve as the South Bronx Greenway Coordinator and the Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance Coordinator. Philip previously served as the land use and environmental policy analyst in the Office of the NYC Public Advocate. Sustainable South Bronx works to promote environmental justice through innovative, economically sustainable projects that are informed by the needs of the South Bronx Community. Founded in 2001 by life-long Hunts Point resident, Majora Carter, SSB also addresses land-use, energy, transportation, water and waste policy, and education in order to advance the environmental and economic rebirth of the South Bronx to inspire solutions in areas like it across the nation and the globe. Philip can be contacted at psilva@ssbx.org

Publications

"An Atlas of Poverty in America," by Amy Glasmeier, can be accessed at www.emsei.psu.edu/~kolb/amy/Atlas/

"Multicultural Strategies for Education and Social Change," by Arnetha F. Ball (208 pp., \$27.95), is available from Teachers College Press, 800-575-6566.

"Perspectives on Health Care Disparities," by Vanessa Northington Gamble, Deborah Stone, Kala Ladenheim and Brian K. Gibbs, comparing US and UK measurement of health disparities and impact of various interventions in reducing disparities, is available from The Commonwealth Fund, 1 E. 75 St., NYC, NY 10021, (212)606-3800, cmwf@cmwf.org

"To Remain an Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native America Education", by K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, is available from Teachers College Press, (800)575-6566.

"The State of Opportunity in America: Executive Summary", a report on the nation's progress toward protecting and expanding opportunity for all, is available (possibly free) from The Opportunity Agenda, 568 Broadway, #302, NYC, NY 10012, (212)334-5977, www.opportunityagenda.org

"Welfare Reform in Los Angeles: Implementation, Effects & Experiences of Poor Families & Neighborhoods" is available at <http://www.mdrc.org/>

Events

October 23-26, 2007. "Community Matters Conference". Burlington, VT. www.communitymatters.org

November 5-7, 2007. "Safe Routes to School National Conference". Dearborn, MI. www.saferoutesmichigan.org/nationalconference.htm

April 22-26, 2008. "Ecocity World Summit. San Francisco, CA. www.ecocityworldsummit.org

Join Planners Network

*an important voice for
progressive planning, social
equity, and environmental
justice*

Back Issues

Back issues of Progressive Planning are available (in print).

Visit our web site for a full description of the issues and details of how to order.

\$10 - Single issue

\$8 - Each for more than one

Order at
www.plannersnetwork.org

Or send a check to:
**Planners Network,
106 West Sibley Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853, USA**

Join the Conversation, Join the PN LISTSERV

You'll find new ideas, debates, and news of jobs and events on our lively Listserv. *Be part of it.*

Free to members and non-members.

To join send an email to **majordomo@list.pratt.edu** with "**subscribe pn-net**" (without the quotes) in the body of the message (not the subject line).

You'll be sent instructions on how to use the list.

How to Advertise

Reach progressive planners around the world by placing an ad in the magazine.

Reasonable rates, big impact.

Check the website for rates, closing dates, sizes and other details. **www.plannersnetwork.org**

The Progressive Planning Reader

The indispensable selection of 47 articles from Progressive Planning about:

Politics and Planning • Urban Design • Planning Education

Race, Gender and Diversity • Community Planning • Sustainability, Environment and Health

Globalization and International Issues • Transportation and Information • Regional Planning

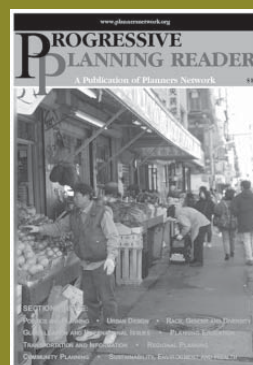
Articles by: Tom Angotti, Gail Dubrow, Ann Forsyth, Ted Jojola, Marie Kennedy, Norman Krumholz, Peter Marcuse, Michael Pyatok, Barbara Rahder, Ken Reardon, Janet Smith, Leonardo Vazquez...and many more.

Number of Copies	Price (in US dollars)
Fewer than 5 copies	\$12 per copy, postage paid
5 - 15 copies	\$8 per copy, postage paid
15+ copies	\$4 per copy, postage paid
Box of 30 copies	\$100 per box
(Price includes postage and handling)	

Table of Contents and order information at www.plannersnetwork.org.

Or send a check to:

Planners Network, 106 West Sibley Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853, USA



Join the Progressive Planners Network and Recieve all these Valuable Benefits!

- 4 Quarterly Issues of Progressive Planning Magazine
- The monthly "Members Only" e-newsletter – filled with job openings, events and conference calendar, member updates, online resources, and more
- Full and Free Access to over 10 years of online PN archives
- News about PN events
- Discount for the annual PN Conference

USA

\$25	Students and income under \$25,000
\$35	Income between \$25,000 and \$50,000
\$50	Income over \$50,000
\$100	Sustaining Members
\$1,000	Lifetime Members
\$50/yr	For organizations and libraries

International Members

Please send US funds only.

Canada

\$30	Students and income under \$30,000
\$40	Income between \$30,000 and \$60,000
\$60	Income over \$60,000
\$120	Sustaining Members
\$1,200	Lifetime Members
\$50/yr	For organizations and libraries

For Canadian orders mail form to:

Amy Siciliano, Dept. of Geography, Room 5047,
100 St. George St., University of Toronto, M5S 3G3

Your Information

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____
Country _____ Email (for queries) _____
Current member _____ Renewing member _____

Mail completed form to: Planners Network, 106 West Sibley Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853, USA;
Fax order to: (612) 626-0600

Payment

- ☐ **PayPal at www.plannersnetwork.org**
This is simple, saves us money, and you don't have to send in this form!
Note what you are buying in the "payment for" box.

- ☐ **Or check enclosed** (payable to Planners Network)

- ☐ **Or credit card:** Visa _____ Mastercard _____

Card number _____
Name on card _____ Expiration date _____
Signature _____
Phone (for queries) _____

In This Issue:

Post Katrina Planning and Organizing

Jason Neville and Clara Irazábal • Peter Marcuse • Jennifer Evans-Cowley and Meghan Z. Gough • Thad Williamson with Steve Horvath, Corrie Mixon and Erica Coleman • Breann Marsh-Narigon, Clare Cardinal-Pett, Lynn Paxson and Tara Lynne Clapp • Eric Jensen • Alison Kopyt

Highs and Lows of Urban Redevelopment

Amory Starr • David A. Turcotte • Joseph Heathcott • Emily Achtenberg

Time to Renew?

Please check the date on your mailing label and if it is past, this will be your last issue unless we receive your annual dues **RIGHT AWAY!** See inside back cover for minimum dues amounts. And while you're at it send us an **UPDATE** on what you're doing.

MOVING? Please send us your new address.