

St. Bernard Neighborhood



New Orleans Neighborhood Rebuilding Plan

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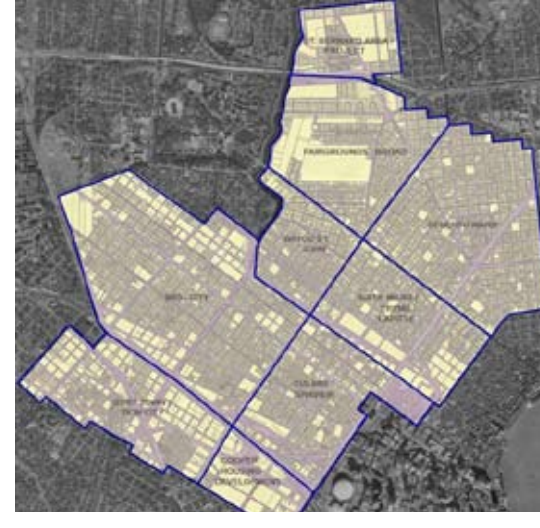
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A. St. Bernard Area Neighborhood Rebuilding Plan Overview

A1. Location and Brief Historic Summary

The St. Bernard neighborhood (not to be confused with St. Bernard Parish) as defined in this planning study is located between I-610 on the south, Bayou St. John on the west, Harrison Street on the north and Paris Avenue on the east. The City planning map shows a triangle south of Lafreniere Street as part of the St. Roch neighborhood (to which it is not practically connected) – this plan suggests the map be redrawn to include that tract in the St. Bernard neighborhood. This neighborhood is situated between the neighborhoods of Fairgrounds / Desaix across I-610 to the south, City Park to the west, Filmore toward the Lake (north), and Dillard to the east.

The Greater New Orleans Community Data Center (www.gnocdc.org) is an excellent source of information on the history and demographics of the neighborhood (prior to Hurricane Katrina). This neighborhood is one of the most devastated in Planning District 4 by the flooding. Developed later than other neighborhoods in the Planning District, the neighborhood does not possess historic housing stock or contain a historic district. Nearly one-third of the land area is taken up by the St. Bernard housing development, New Orleans largest, with over 1,300 units. Prior to Hurricane Katrina the St.

Bernard neighborhood was home to several schools and other institutional facilities. These include The Union Baptist Theological Seminary, the Youth Study Center (one of the alternative schools in Louisiana under the New Orleans Public School System) and Asia Baptist Church (which also operates a day care center), Fairview Baptist Church, The United Methodist Home for the Elderly, Edward Phillips Junior High, Vorce Walters Elementary, and St. Raymond School.

One of the great assets of the neighborhood is the Willie Hall Playground, an eleven-acre multi-neighborhood park, owned by New Orleans Public School Board and administered by the New Orleans Recreation Department (NORD). This park, behind the two public schools and adjacent to Bayou St. John, had both day and evening community recreational programs.

President Roosevelt’s commitment to provide adequate public housing for the urban poor was manifested in the U.S. Housing Act of 1937. During the 1940s, several public housing developments were built in the City, including the St. Bernard Project, as it was once called, which was the fifth such development in the city. In the first phase there were 744 units in 74 buildings. In 1946, a gas explosion on the Southside of the development killed seven people and injured 38. Fourteen buildings were demolished. In the 1950s, the development expanded to accommodate the relocation of families into 720 more units.



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- a. St. Bernard Housing Development
- b. Fairview Baptist Church
- c. St. Bernard Avenue



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The Imperial Scattered Site Housing Development is primarily vacant land in the corner of the neighborhood adjacent to I-610 and the Bayou. In 1968, the housing Authority of New Orleans purchased a large number of houses in the city as an alternative to higher concentrated family dwellings. The idea was to have families “scattered” throughout existing neighborhoods to reduce the impact of higher density developments.

Asia Baptist Church has been an important part of the social fabric of the community in recent years. With the assistance of former mayor Marc Morial, the church partnered with the city of New Orleans to provide new and refurbished homes for previous tenants of the St. Bernard Housing Development. The church’s Edward Madison Community Development Corporation had begun to renovate existing homes and build new ones, and plans were in place for future homes as well. This program was successful in allowing nearly 2 dozen families to “graduate” from the public housing development, and at the same time addressing blighted housing in the neighborhood.

A2. Recovery Vision and Goals

The St. Bernard neighborhood Neighborhood Rebuilding Plan provides a vision and framework for physical improvements to the neighborhood.

Vision

Residents envision the St. Bernard as an affordable and well-located neighborhood, with a viable social services network. The



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vision includes connecting the many positive features of the neighborhood into a network on which to build. The vision of a rebuilding plan is simple - provide a safe, distinctive, functional neighborhood framework, with institutions and services on par with those of other areas within the City. The vision starts with residents participating actively in the planning process, and then contributing to its success through their involvement in the physical improvements. The St. Bernard neighborhood will require a combination of hard work and the commitment of resources to achieve their vision. It is the resident’s hope to repay this commitment of resources by creating a sustainable, livable community that becomes one of the most significant turn-around stories of the City of New Orleans.

Neighborhood Recovery Goals

Rebuild the neighborhood to pre-Katrina levels in some respects, but higher levels in others.

- To elevate the character, scale and sense of community of the neighborhood
- Through the recovery process, to enhance the quality of life for St. Bernard neighborhood residents
- To improve the streets, sidewalks and infrastructure system serving St. Bernard

Provide affordable residential opportunities that will improve the neighborhood as a whole.

- Maintain and enhance the predominantly single family and duplex housing pattern,



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while redeveloping blighted and adjudicated housing.

- Provide housing for mixed income levels, specifically including housing for low income individuals and persons with special needs.
- Redesign the St. Bernard Housing Development for the best fit within the neighborhood, and minimize the negative visual appearance of the development as a typical public housing development.

Design an improved civic environment of parks, schools, churches, and other community resources.

- Provide input into the revival of the Willie Hall Playground, and provide connections from it to the Bayou Greenway.
- Address the civic importance of the St. Bernard Avenue corridor to the neighborhood so that all redevelopment there has a high level of aesthetic quality.
- Regenerate the community institutions in the neighborhood as the social network for people of all ages and income levels – starting with a temporary One-Stop Community Center in the Vorice Walters Elementary School.



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- a. Meeting Atlanta
- b. Meeting Houston
- c. Meeting Baton Rouge
- d. Final Neighborhood Meeting @ St. Leo's Church
- e. Neighborhood Opportunity Map

A3. Planning Process and Neighborhood Participation

The planning process consisted of significant research combined with multiple meetings in the St. Bernard neighborhood, with both small and large groups, over the period from May to September of 2006. In addition to the meetings in the neighborhood, outreach to the displaced residents of the flooded neighborhoods was conducted through joint meetings of the Neighborhood Rebuilding Plan Team. These were held in Baton Rouge, Atlanta, and Houston in August 2006. The planning meetings initially functioned as a gathering of information and comments from residents. Later meetings typically consisted of the presentation of ideas or concepts, followed by feedback from the residents. These meetings primarily revealed a spirit of cooperation, although there were frustrations, fears and doubts expressed as well. Resident survey forms were distributed and collected to identify needs and to prioritize projects. In the end, this is a resident-driven plan for the people of St. Bernard neighborhood. A list of participants in the planning process is being prepared and will be available upon request.

A4. Planning Efforts Pre-Hurricane Katrina

City of New Orleans Planning efforts pre-Hurricane Katrina generally addressed issues at the overall Planning District level more than at the neighborhood level. Planning efforts included the 1999 Land Use Plan, The New Century New Orleans Parks Master Plan

of 2002, and the Transportation Master Plan of 2004.

A5. Recovery Projects Priorities

A project priorities survey was filled out by neighborhood residents. These surveys were used to include or exclude potential projects from itemization in section E2 below. More directly, these surveys were used to separate projects which could be placed into the Early Action Plan and Mid-Term Action Plan items of the Neighborhood Rebuilding Cost Matrix (see Item F. below). The resident surveys were distributed at meetings and returned in person or forwarded back to the planners. A three part hierarchy for projects was listed as Top Priorities, Secondary Priorities, and Lesser Priorities. It was interesting to note that although most residents were able to divide potential projects into the first two categories, very few listed items were selected as Lesser Priority.



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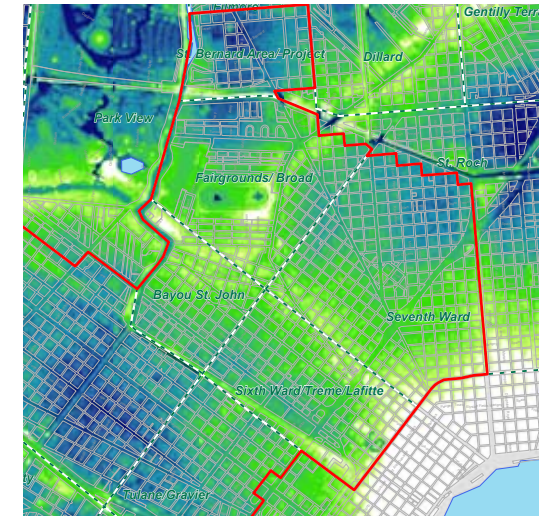
- a. Adjudicated House
- b. Damage Assessment Map
- c. Area Flood Map
- d. Street and Utilities Damage Map



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B. Summary of Pre-Katrina Neighborhood Conditions (2000 Data, www.gnocdc.org)

B1. Household Characteristics

Population 6,427
97.8% of the population African American or Black.
Housing Units, total: 2,249
Households, total: 2,020
10% of the housing units were vacant.
17% of the households were owner-occupied.
83% of the households were renter occupied
64% of the housing units were built prior to 1950.

B2. Age Distribution %

0-5 years old	15.2
6-11 years old	16.2
12-17 years old	12.9
18-34 years old	23.8
35-49 years old	15.2
50-64 years old	9.1
65-74 years old	3.4
75-84 years old	3.0
85 years old and older	1.2

B3. Income Distribution & Employment

Average household income: \$19,982 (Orleans Parish \$43,176)
Household income under \$10,000: 49%
Household income over \$50,000: 8.6%
Percentage of residents employed: 37%

B4. Mobility and Transportation

Households with no vehicle available: 65%
Workers using public transportation: 31%

B5. Land Use and Zoning

See Map

B6. Recreation and Open Space

See Map

B7. Architecture and Historic Preservation

The neighborhood has no historic district and is not protected by the Historic Preservation Ordinance. There has been some discussion as to listing a portion of the St. Bernard Housing Development as a historic site, but it is not known whether the site would be eligible.

C. Hurricane Katrina Neighborhood Impacts

C1. Extent of Flooding

Properties with only 3 to 4 feet of flooding were along Paris Avenue near I-610 – further north along Paris, the flooding was deeper. The lowest spot in the neighborhood was around St. Bernard Avenue and Caton Street, where the flood level was at least 7 to 8 feet. The residential area centered on St. Denis and Buchanan had approximately 5 to 6 feet of flooding. The St. Bernard Development was flooded by approximately 4 to 5 feet at the southeast corner to approximately 6 to 7 feet at the northwest corner (see map).

C2. Damage Assessment

The damage generally follows the flood levels above; however, there was other forms of damage from wind, fire and vandalism observed even in areas that were not flooded above the floor levels (see map).

- MODERATE DAMAGE
- SUBSTANTIAL DAMAGE
- SEVERE DAMAGE



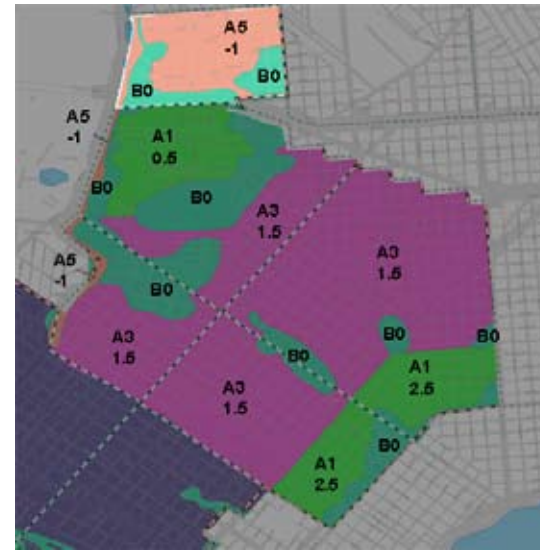
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NEW INFILL HOUSING FLOOR LEVEL REQUIREMENTS



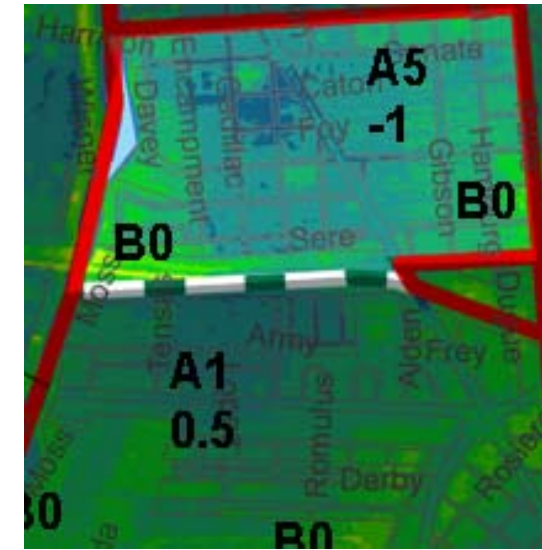
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INFILL HOUSING FLOOR ELEVATIONS



1984 BASE FLOOD ELEVATION MAP

- HOUSES MUST BE MIN. 0.5' ABOVE BASE FLOOD ELEVATION
- HOUSES MUST BE MIN. 0' ABOVE BASE FLOOD ELEVATION
- HOUSES MUST BE MIN. 1.5' ABOVE BASE FLOOD ELEVATION



GROUND ELEVATION MAP

- GROUND LEVEL BETWEEN 0 AND +6
- GROUND LEVEL HIGHER THAN -4 AND 0
- GROUND LEVEL BETWEEN -6' AND -4'

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C3. FEMA Minimum Finish Floor Elevations

The process for determining floor level requirements is outlined in the figure at right. The procedures to follow are outlined. Note: existing housing that is damaged less than 50% is exempted from a requirement to raise the floor level. Consultation with the City's FEMA interpretations may be required on a case by case basis, unless explicit determinations are issued in writing.

PROCESS

1. Obtain official base flood elevation map from city.
2. Have surveyor determine the elevation of your property.
3. Calculate required floor height for your proposed building.
 - ie. Elevation of property = -3'
 - Base flood elevation = +1.5
 - Required height = 3 + 1.5 = 4.5'

- a. Flooded Houses
- b. Phillips Jr. High
- c. St. Bernard Avenue (commercial is coming back)
- d. St. Bernard Avenue (commercial needs upgrading)



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D. St. Bernard Neighborhood Rebuilding Scenarios

The Neighborhood Rebuilding Plan will generally follow the existing neighborhood urban plan and organization, with suggestions for improvements where necessary. There is to be special emphasis on restoring the built fabric of the neighborhood, and enhancing the quality of daily life in the St. Bernard neighborhood. The plan is based on commentary from the residents and observations by the professional planners. The historic urban structure of the area is sound, except where modified in ways that were expeditious, particularly in roadway redesign. The residents could again enjoy the urban pattern of their community with the following neighborhood-wide strategies and site specific improvements. To accomplish this goal it is important to provide:

- Repairs of damage to streets, sidewalks, lighting and utilities infrastructure, caused by flooding and heavy vehicles removing debris from the neighborhood.
- Rehabilitation of the historic structures in the neighborhood, including those that are blighted and abandoned, so that the basic historic character of the St. Bernard neighborhood can remain intact, and that displaced residents from the neighborhood may return to assist in the revival of the neighborhood.
- Restoration of community, social and

educational services so critical to a neighborhood where the majority of residents lived in poverty. Providing employment opportunities for returning St. Bernard neighborhood residents is a critical goal in maintaining a rebuilding plan and achieving recovery.

- Continued monitoring of the reconstruction and improvements to the flood control system and structures in and around New Orleans, and to periodically and accurately report to the community on the status of the level of protection.

E. St. Bernard Neighborhood Recovery Plan

E1. Strategic Initiatives

The St. Bernard Neighborhood Recovery Plan proposes a series of strategic initiatives to address reconstruction of the damaged community assets:

Strategic Initiative No. 1: Fund and Manage Improvements to the Safety and Appearance of the Neighborhood

Promote requirements to gut and secure damaged homes, stabilize and begin to restore damaged historic houses, and the demolition of unsafe structures so long as they are not beyond repair. Avoid inappropriate demolition of potentially salvageable houses through consultation with construction professional within the community.

Assist and promote the past, current, and proposed neighborhood initiatives of community-based organizations. There are groups in various New Orleans neighborhoods that are raising funds in order to facilitate the clean-up and day-to-day maintenance of the neighborhoods. Organizations that address concerns facing residents, prospective residents and homeowners who have not yet decided to return, should be promoted and funded based on performance. Community based organizations have provided valuable information to residents and act as a communication link between city agencies in restoring services and utilities to such as mail delivery, electricity, water and



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sewer, cable, telephone, debris and trash removal and educational seminars on mold remediation, contractor contacts, etc.

Block Captains - Continued Monitoring - Early on in the recovery process, neighborhood and civic associations in the St. Bernard neighborhood started to organize blocks with corresponding block captains, though much work remains to be done. Each block captain is responsible for the survey and assessment of post-Katrina conditions within the designated block. The goal is to cover 100% of the neighborhood with block captains. The conditions to be surveyed by block captains include houses that are gutted or not gutted, the listing of houses with unrepaired damage, sidewalk conditions, water lines, road issues, street lights, street signs, flooded cars, fire hydrants, catch basins and dead trees. Periodically, a report is compiled with all of the information and is sent to various City agencies in order to facilitate improvements. The results of these surveys have proved to be an invaluable asset to this recovery plan. The information gathered by the block captains will continue to focus the needs and priorities of the community.



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Strategic Initiative No. 2: Maintain Communication, Dialogue and Monitoring with City/ State Agencies for Continued Improvements to Utilities and Streets.

Throughout the recovery process the Infrastructure Committee has kept in constant communication with City officials to identify locations of leaking water supply pipes, leaking fire hydrants, missing street lights and other community deficiencies that need to be addressed for reconstruction. It is imperative that this community initiative continue in order to keep a constant watch and pressure for action and improvements.

Strategic Initiative No. 3: Promote and Monitor the Reconstruction of Community Facilities

Schools and community facilities are crucial for the reconstruction of the St. Bernard neighborhood. It is of utmost importance that funding for the reconstruction of schools, fire station and potential police substation be made available.

Strategic Initiative No. 4: Continue Participation in District-Wide Recovery Efforts

Neighborhood improvements cannot survive if limited to the boundaries of the specific neighborhood. The recovery of the adjacent neighborhoods will have a direct and positive impact on the St. Bernard neighborhood, and will translate into a faster recovery and increased property values for residents. It is important for adjacent neighborhoods to



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communicate with each other, and that the St. Bernard neighborhood remain engaged in the overall District 4 recovery efforts.

Strategic Initiative No. 5: Implement Housing Recovery Initiatives

It is important to implement housing recovery initiatives that will encourage the local neighborhood to actively participate in the reconstruction process of the properties on the street where they live, on their blocks and in their neighborhoods. Private citizen activity will be the most important driving force in the recovery of each of the neighborhoods of the District. The City of New Orleans, in order to provide the required assistance and incentives to these private citizens, should implement the housing reconstruction programs described in Item E2e. – Housing and Historic Preservation.

Strategic Initiative No. 6: Identify and Promote Early Action Projects

Early action projects serve to generate community confidence through the commitment of the public sector to invest in the community, such as the street and infrastructure work, and reconstruction of various community facilities identified below. Beyond public sector funds, the community must continue the task of identifying adaptive reuse for major facilities that will not be reconstructed to house the functions that existed prior to Hurricane Katrina. Many of these are under private or institutional control, and alternatives are still being considered. Opportunities for early action on



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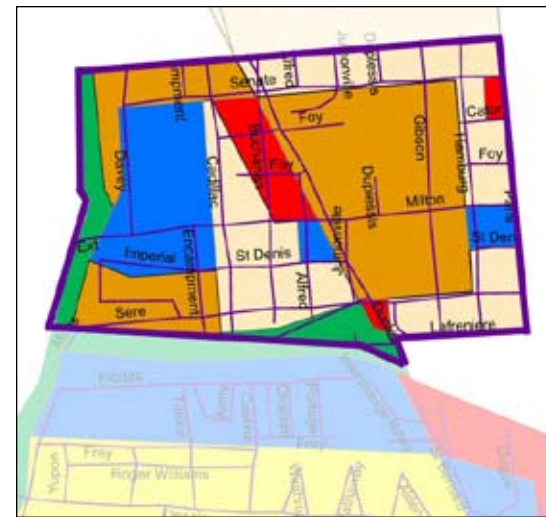
adaptive reuse of such facilities are critical to encourage and promote for their synergistic effects.

Strategic Initiative No. 7: Promote and Monitor the Implementation of Key Recovery - Redevelopment Parcels and Projects.

The long term recovery of the neighborhood and District 4 will require that the key recovery/ redevelopment projects be monitored and implemented early in the process. These projects include the St. Bernard Housing Development, the HANO Imperial Site, and others described below.

- a. St. Bernard Avenue, Commercial Area
- b. Slab on Grade Housing
- c. Unoccupied Apartments at HANO Imperial Site
- d. The Union Baptist College and Theological Seminary

- a. Existing Land Use Map
- b. Neighborhood Land Use Issues Map
 - b1. HANO Imperial Site
 - b2. Schools and Playground
 - b3. St. Bernard Avenue (commercial)
 - b4. St. Bernard Housing Development



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E2. Plan Elements

E2a. Key Development Parcels

The HANO Imperial Site: this key parcel is described in detail under the Housing Section below.

The St. Bernard Housing Development. This site is described under Housing below.

The Phillips and Walters Schools and Willie Hall playground site. This site is described below under Community Facilities.

The Youth Study Center Site. This site is described under Community Facilities below.

The Union Baptist College and Theological Seminary is a site for which the status was not determined. Since this is a full block site, information should be obtained on the plans and time frame for redevelopment. The property would be suited to residential redevelopment, or even as a One-stop Community center, depending on the eventual status of Vorce Waters Elementary (see Community Facilities below).



E2b. Land Use and Zoning

The St. Bernard neighborhood is an affordable, more recently developed neighborhood than most in Planning District 4. Land Use and Zoning are critical to control and monitor due to the high proportion of publicly-owned lands compared to the privately-owned residential land. Maintaining the residential as a viable use will require that the municipal and institutional services remain in balance with the neighborhood, and that a full compliment of neighborhood services are available. Inappropriate development, such as apartment buildings that wall-off visual and physical access to the Bayou, or overly dense and monotonous low-rise apartment buildings, must be avoided.

Land use changes anticipated would include a re-designation of several blocks at the St. Bernard housing development from multi-family to single family. Should the Youth Study Center be relocated, that site should be re-designated to single-family as well.

The New Orleans Zoning Code is an overly complicated document. A full rewrite of this code, as many other Cities have recently undertaken, is highly recommended. A strong citizen participation element needs to be incorporated into the regulations. Significant language simplification, and visualization diagrams communicating the impacts of the zoning should be incorporated.

Several areas within the St. Bernard neighborhood are suggested for specific focus urban design and feasibility studies. These



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specific studies should proceed immediately, with the impacts to land use and zoning made an element of the study. Prime examples include: (1) the Imperial Housing Site, including consideration of the Youth Study Center and the frontage on the Bayou greenway project; and (2) the Public Schools-owned parcel containing the two schools and the Willie Hall Playground, with an enhanced relationship to the Bayou. The integration of these two studies, the housing and the school / park sites, is highly recommended due to their adjacency and common frontage on the Bayou St. John greenway. Together, they represent an opportunity to strengthen the framework of the neighborhood for decades to come.

Neighborhood Commercial Improvement: In the cases of the important St. Bernard corridor, minor changes may be required to create the most organized and successful neighborhood commercial area possible, without adversely affecting the adjoining residential lots. One specific new commercial development opportunity has been identified – at the

northwest corner of the existing St. Bernard development. This additional commercial tract is proposed to augment the existing neighborhood commercial on the west side of the Avenue. In addition, the block between St. Denis and Milton on the west side of St. Bernard should be studied for conversion to commercial or office use. These single family houses are fronted by a busy arterial street opposite the St. Bernard development, and surrounded by commercial, the Theological Seminary to the west and churches and shops to the south.

Opportunities on both St. Bernard and Paris for pedestrians and bicycles should be amplified with distinctive crosswalks and dedicated bike lanes. On-street parking solutions are needed adjacent to the commercial sites as the existing sites are too small. Zoning to promote residential above business would be one excellent solution for many busy road corridors in the neighborhood, for either existing or compatible new buildings.



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- a. Willie Hall Playground Facilities
- b. Bayou Greenway (looking south)
- c. Bayou Greenway Connection to Davey Street
- d. Green Triangle, St. Bernard (open space in front of United Methodist Church on St. Bernard)

E2c. Parks, Open Space and Landscapes

The Bayou St. John Greenway Plan: As in the two other neighborhoods in Planning District 4 that share Bayou frontage, Bayou St. John represents a recreational and aesthetic resource for the neighborhood that should be maximized. It appears that it will not be feasible to connect the greenway under I-610, to the Fairgrounds / Desaix neighborhood. It may at least be feasible to add a pedestrian bridge across the Bayou at I-610 so the end of the greenway is not a dead end, but a loop across to the City park side. This would allow residents a circuit walk or bike ride, assuming a path on the City Park side can be developed, and bike / pedestrian lanes added to the Harrison Street Bridge. The character of this greenway is somewhat different than those in the other two neighborhoods because (1) the Bayou edge is wider and bermed, not allowing a view from vehicles to the water, and (2) the roadway is lower volume and less of a throughway. The suggestion is that the raised greenway become more of a linear park for active and passive recreation.

Street corridor landscaping at St. Bernard Avenue, Paris Avenue, and Harrison Street: These corridors should be considered for substantial landscape with street trees. The neutral grounds at St. Bernard and Paris are substantial, and also represent opportunities for pedestrian pathways and passive recreation space. The addition of Harrison Street to this list

is important because it is a boundary to the St. Bernard neighborhood, and because it is a connector from Paris Avenue across to City Park via a bridge across the Bayou. A double row of trees, as they mature, can add value to a residential street that also serves as a busy connector street. Harrison Street would be well-served with a small traffic circle at Duplessis Street, which is mid-way between St. Bernard and Paris Avenue, to slow traffic.



- a. Bus Routes
- b. Bicycle Paths
- c. Major Roadway Map



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E2d. Transportation and Public Transit
Existing road corridors are generally discussed in the Land Use and Zoning section above.

I-610 Acoustic Barrier
This Barrier Wall is desperately needed to make the residential blocks adjacent to I-610 livable – the current acoustic and visual impact is extremely detrimental to potential investment in or rental occupation of the housing within a block or two of the Interstate. The Barrier is needed on both sides of St. Bernard Avenue along the entire southern border of the neighborhood. These walls are standard and can easily be designed and installed.

Bicycle Transportation Plan
Our own observations indicate a variety of opportunities to add dedicated, marked bicycle lanes on through roads in the St. Bernard neighborhood. Proposed lanes are shown on the map. On Paris Avenue, the width is acceptable for one traffic lane, a bike lane, and one parking lane. Where parking is impractical, two traffic lanes and a bicycle lane could be developed. One important detail in the creation of bicycle lanes is sufficient width – 6 feet is minimum and an extra foot can add safety to situations where active on-street parking (at retail, schools, etc.) causes frequent opening of car doors.

Install bus stop shelters & benches appropriate to neighborhood. Bus stop shelters can pay for themselves if contracted with an advertising company. Generally these are not attractive and generic, which is not appropriate for the neighborhood. A bus shelter architectural competition, sponsored by local businesses, could provide custom designed, neighborhood appropriate shelters and allow some discreet advertising.

Tie neighborhood to city-wide Urban Transportation Plan
The potential impact of the items described above points out the importance of updating City-wide transportation plans in a comprehensive manner. Now that the Neighborhood Rebuilding Plans are complete, a review of their recommendations will suggest some opportunities that may not have been considered to date, and coordination across all districts will be required.



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- a. Need Acoustic Barrier
- b. Single Family Scale (residential is typical)
- c. Methodist Church and Elderly Housing Site
- d. Devastated Apartmetns on Davey Street

E2e. Housing and Historic Preservation

**Neighborhoods Rebuilding Plan
Proposed Housing Initiatives**

A number of housing initiatives are proposed as part of the Neighborhoods Rebuilding Plan and are presented in the overall policy element of the plan and issued under separate cover. Below is a summary of these policies.

LOT NEXT DOOR PROGRAM SUMMARY

The principal thrust of redevelopment programs and policies that encourage the speedy redevelopment of neighborhoods must match various government powers and financing tools to the local housing and real estate market conditions.

A key question will be how to most effectively encourage the redevelopment of homes and residential lots that fall into public ownership.

The "Lot Next Door" program is one of a series of proposed housing policies that have been developed as part of the Neighborhoods Rebuilding Plan and takes direct aim at some particular market hurdles that slow the redevelopment of many of these properties.

In its simplest form the Lot Next Door program will offer homeowners who are committed to redeveloping their homes, the ability to purchase publicly owned adjoining properties prior to these properties being offered to any other buyers. This option would be provided should the property end

up in public ownership either through the adjudication process or through the sale of the property to a public entity through the Road Home or other public acquisition program.

USE OF SECOND GENERATION FUNDS AND EXPANSION OF HOME PURCHASER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

One of the principal issues that has come up repeatedly in neighborhood meetings is how properties that end up in public ownership either through the adjudication or buy back process are going to be resold in the marketplace.

While the Lot Next Door program provides one method for recycling lots in the market, there are going to be numerous lots that are not acquired by next door neighbors that are going to have to be sold to third party purchasers.

Assuming that there are few new regulations associated with developing housing (i.e., some requirement that certain units must be homeownership vs. rental) it is likely that the value placed on many properties for sale will determine how quickly that property will be rebuilt for housing.

Additionally, and realistically, there are a variety of neighborhoods throughout the City where reducing the cost of a lot or unit to essentially zero will not be enough to ensure the redevelopment of the property. These are generally those neighborhoods

prior to Hurricane Katrina where land values were quite low and homes were not built unless there was significant targeted public assistance related to construction.

Given the different market factors influencing the redevelopment of housing in different neighborhoods, there are a variety of strategies that will have to be employed with regard to the sale of lots acquired through the acquisition program on the open market. These strategies include the following.

- Recycle second generation proceeds from higher income neighborhood property sales to properties in neighborhoods where values are lower. This will ensure that more housing redevelopment dollars will follow to low-income areas than could otherwise have be imagined prior to Katrina.
- Sell adjacent lots and blocks of lots in public ownership to experienced for-profit and not-for-profit developers when not purchased through the Lot Next Door program.
- Re-sell properties at fair market value and reduce price of lots only when very specific policy objectives are being met, such as providing for mixed-income housing in a neighborhood.

**ELDERLY MODERATE INCOME
CONDOMINIUM ROAD HOME TIE-IN**

It has become quite apparent through the neighborhood planning process that

senior households, which have some of the strongest ties to the community and have expressed some of the strongest voices for rebuilding and returning to the City, also face some of the most significant challenges in redeveloping or rebuilding their homes.

First, there are many areas of the City that had a high concentration of elderly homeowners (Lower Ninth, Pontchartrain Park, and Lakeview) that sustained substantial damage and which will require the demolition and reconstruction of many homes.

Historically, the challenges of dealing with contractors, permit inspectors, lenders, etc. have proven particularly difficult for elderly households after they have experienced similar trauma.

Additionally, there are a substantial number of areas of the City where rebuilding homes with damage in excess of 50 percent will require the total reconstruction at three feet above grade or the Base Flood Elevations, whichever is greater.

Many of these homes will have to be raised close to one story making them a difficult housing product type for people with physical frailties.

Elderly homeowners are clearly a special group with specific needs, and currently there are no programs targeted to this subgroup of homeowners.

- a. St. Bernard Phase I
- b. St. Bernard Phase I
- c. St. Bernard New Phase 2
(suggested for replacement w/ single family homes)
- d. St. Bernard Housing Development Suggested Alternative Plan



a.



b.



c.



d.

A targeted elderly homeowner program, which will allow elderly households to tie their Road Home grant to senior specific elevator multi-story condominium projects to be developed throughout the City, is needed.

There has been wide support for dedicated multi-family senior housing product in many parts of the City, but particularly in areas where younger homeowners have aging parents living nearby. In some cases, there may be a need to increase the grant amount or provide a low interest loan to the household if there is a gap between the value of the buyout (and insurance proceeds) and the market value price of the condominium unit.

One caution in the multi-story condominium option is that the scale of any such projects must respond to and integrate with the scale of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Historic Neighborhood Housing Development Considerations:

The St. Bernard neighborhood does not have a stock of historic housing as other neighborhoods in Planning District 4.

Other Considerations – Affordable Housing in the St. Bernard Neighborhood.

Minimize demolition of structures that are in need of repairs to determine whether the damage is substantial. Homes damaged less than 50% can be exempted from raising the floor to the FEMA flood level, should that be

unfeasible.

St. Bernard Housing Development Project – First Step: a Re-development Plan

The St. Bernard Housing Development was originally built in the 1940's, with a second phase in the 1950's. It consists of approximately 1,300 units. A gas explosion in 1946 that killed 7 people and injured 38 caused 14 of the buildings to be demolished. The development was expanded by 720 units in the 1950's – these are the more regimented buildings between Hamburg and Gibson, also wrapping around the south side of the first phase between Sere and St. Denis.

According to GNOCDC, in 2003, 1,200 units of the St. Bernard development were occupied, and in June 2004, that number was down to 950 units occupied. The concept plan attached is based on suggestions from the neighborhood to reduce the density and number of buildings, and make a "softer" transition to the single family blocks, where now there is a hard edge. While there were a significant number of voices advocating that no significant changes be made to the development, on balance a greater majority suggested that changes were needed to benefit the St. Bernard neighborhood as a whole. During the planning process, we were not provided access to the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), who was considering what direction to take. The direction of this plan was to make the St. Bernard Development have a mix of income



a.



b.

levels, retaining a significant portion for lower income individuals, and also for persons with special needs and disabilities. One of the major issues that the site plan diagram addresses is density reduction – reducing the total number of units on the blocks to approximately 750 from 1,300. This would be accomplished with the replacement of the second phase buildings with single family houses, and also some modifications to the Phase 1 section, with the provision of attached townhouse type units with entrances directly to the street.

Some of the original Phase 1 buildings are proposed for retention because (1) although they need significant work, they are structurally salvageable and can be reconfigured internally; (2) the buildings do have some historic connotation within the evolving St. Bernard neighborhood story – to lose all of that recollection would be unfortunate; (3) selected buildings to remain create desirable spaces in relationship with open spaces and existing oak trees; and (4) these buildings have design appeal in the variation of roof line from 2 to 3 stories.

The buildings do have problems, such as the moveable fire escape stairs added on the rear of buildings – these could be eliminated through other code-compliant upgrades to be performed on the units. The Phase 1 (original) layout of the St. Bernard Development, if some modifications can be made, can retain the commendable layout of central square and promenades. This plan suggests

increased open space for passive and active recreation, and other community facilities needed within the neighborhood. The St. Bernard Redevelopment Project envisioned in the Plan is not a compromise plan between the extremes of either total removal or total return to before-Katrina conditions. It is a plan that departs from outdated 1940's public housing theories, and synergizes the post-Katrina realities of St. Bernard. HANO is now planning the redevelopment of the Lafitte development in Tremé, and others may follow soon. This plan suggests that the full involvement of the St. Bernard residents and Community Groups in advocating for a specific plan along the lines of this concept. Neighborhood involvement with HANO and other community partners will be critical in achieving a successful plan.

The HANO Imperial Site

One of the reasons for suggesting the reduction in density of the St. Bernard Housing Development is the fact that the HANO Imperial Site exists a few short blocks away. As vacant land (with the exception of a handful of small damaged apartments), and unimproved streets, the site is a negative influence on the neighborhood. A substantial number of new housing sites can be created on the blocks. The exact number will depend upon whether the Youth Study Center decides whether to relocate, as that site could be considered for incorporation into the single family layout.

The issue of whether to fill the lots or build up



c.

- a. HANO Imperial Site (view north to Youth Study center)
- b. Youth Study Center
- c. Hano Imperial Site showing:
 - c2. Walters School Site Community Center
 - c6. Youth Study Center
 - c7. Bayou Greenway

the houses to the required height will require the addition of a civil engineering firm to the study team. The I-610 Acoustic Buffer Wall described in Transportation above is critical to the success of this development. The master plan study for this part of the neighborhood must incorporate a public connection to the Bayou St. John Greenway from Sere Street so that the entire neighborhood can conveniently access the Bayou greenway after it is developed.

Housing Assistance Center

Actively support and assist in the inception of a “one-stop” housing assistance center for the benefit of neighborhood residents. The Housing Assistance Centers will provide expedited services for permits, fees, inspections and general management assistance. This agency could be included within plans for the One-Stop Community Center described in the next section.

- a. Phillips Jr. High I (still closed)
- b. Vorce Walters Elementary (still closed)
- c. Neighborhood Schools Map
 - c1. Phillips Junior High
 - c2. Walters Elementary
 - c3. St. Raymond School
 - c4. Youth Study CenterS



a.



b.



c.

E2f. Utilities and Municipal Services Streets / sidewalks / street lighting / water-sewer / storm drainage system / fire hydrants & lines - repair and reconstruct: Issues to consider in the execution of this work begin with a detailed civil engineering plan, and coordination with all infrastructure disciplines will be required. Sidewalks need to be integrated with drainage and accessibility. Drainage patterns and inlet designs are a key consideration, as are the need to provide for wheelchair-accessible curb cuts on new sidewalk construction.

Landscape rehabilitation / replacement – ROW & neutral grounds: There is some concern in the City of New Orleans government over the continued use of Live Oak trees (*Quercus Virginiana*), due to the problem of the root systems damaging streets, sidewalks and utility lines. There may be ways to minimize this concern, through best design and maintenance practices. First, professional landscape architects and arborists should be involved in all public sector landscape projects on City land. Live Oaks are an iconic part of the City's image, and it would be unfortunate to erase all use of oaks as a general policy. The design of curbing and planting containment areas, along with scheduled maintenance of these valuable trees, should minimize most of the problems. A wide variety of plant materials indigenous to the general area should be used, as opposed to exotic plant materials.

Intersection signalization & crosswalks

– repair / reconstruct. To encourage pedestrian and bicycle safety, major street intersections in the neighborhood must be upgraded to current public works and traffic design standards.

Electric, communications and cable utilities – reorganize lines underground where possible: This issue has been raised not so much by the neighbors, who may have acclimated over the years to seeing these, but primarily from the planners and visitors to the neighborhood. An amazing tangle of overhead lines proliferates throughout, and in particular locations can degrade the visual and photographic appreciation of the neighborhood.

Tie neighborhood to City-wide Fire & Emergency Response Plan: A goal of the Neighborhood Rebuilding Plan is to identify the distribution and linkage of first responders across the City. Part of an emergency response is also an evacuation plan. Each neighborhood should also implement a Neighborhood Evacuation Plan complete with strategies for those who are not mobile and need to be identified for assistance. The small existing St. Bernard neighborhood fire station on Paris Avenue should be expanded and/or replaced.

E2g. Community Facilities and Human Services Schools: Faith-based and/or Public – reopen or transitional use – do not leave vacant. Generally, this theme was repeated

in several neighborhoods.

One-stop community center in Vorce Walters Elementary School: An existing community center – The St. Bernard Area Community Development Center, existed at Lafreniere Street against I-610, but has not reopened as of this writing. The program was doing good work for the community before Katrina in education, social services and recreation. There may be an opportunity to relocate and expand this program. A central location for the One-Stop Community Centers in various New Orleans neighborhoods has been a successful approach, if such a site exists.

The Vorce Walters Elementary School, which

is not slated to reopen at this point, is central to the neighborhood. Most of the school is in very poor condition and it is our feeling that if a school returns to this site, it will be rebuilt. In the short term, a portion of the school such as the south end on Milton Street where there is parking, could be used as the One-stop Community Center. Another benefit is that the school is located next to the Willie Hall Playground, a large open space for recreation. The building could be prepared for temporary, basic use with a moderate budget for repairs. The services needed by the neighborhood would include a Health and Counseling Center; Multi-Generational Youth & Elderly Center; Vocational Training suite; Child Care Center; Police substation; Code Enforcement office; etc. None of these



services is currently available at sufficient levels. Several aspects of the Center would reestablish in more appropriate facilities as funding for programs, and appropriate sites are identified.

cultural organizations recover to pre-Katrina levels or better, including repairs to facilities. This could be accomplished on a matching funds basis.

- a. Commercial Revitalization Opportunity on St. Bernard Avenue
- b. Undeafeted Spirit

18

An alternative would be to rebuild both a new school and a full community center, on the existing site. All of these alternatives should involve the experience of the leadership and staff of the former Community Development Center. That building could serve as a specific element of the overall program, but again is not ideally central, and not connected to large outdoor recreation space, compared to other opportunities that now exist.

Commercial revitalization program – façade improvements: This feature is one that is typically used in neighborhoods where a jump-start is needed for a struggling commercial corridor. Matching grant monies are made available for well-designed improvements to storefronts. With respect to the limited St. Bernard Avenue fronting commercial, a unified architectural theme or language can be used to convey a level of quality and consistency.

Other community and cultural facilities: The St. Bernard neighborhood may need financial support and technical assistance to restore neighborhood social services to pre-Katrina levels. Established local churches with track records of success in providing programs should be considered again for such a role. A Cultural Contingency Fund should be developed to help pre-existing

F. Implementation and Funding Strategies

The connection between the Neighborhoods Rebuilding Plan and potential funding sources is graphically represented by the Implementation Priority Matrix. The costs estimates are provided on an order-of-magnitude basis. As such, variations as to the scope of the project could result in variations in the final cost of construction.

In the process of cost analyses, consultations were carried out with the City of New Orleans Public Works Department to identify general cost guidelines typically used for the calculation of street improvements and reconstruction. Other sources of cost identification included the Means Cost Data and our team's professional experience inside and outside New Orleans.

No single source of funding or financial plan will be capable of dealing with the capital improvement needs for total redevelopment and reconstruction of all the neighborhood projects and needs. However, the funding matrix included in this report shows different funding sources that could be made available for specific projects and it should be expected that layering of multiple sources of funding will be required in most cases. The ability to obtain these funds will rest with the City of New Orleans and neighborhood groups and advisory committees.

Each matrix matches proposed projects with potential funding sources identified through the planning process and while not exhaustive in its scope, it serves as a guide to where funds could originate. Substantial financial commitments by federal and state entities are a vital ingredient in the recovery effort and will provide the necessary economic infrastructure to attract the private investment required to create stable and vibrant communities.

Each funding matrix, based upon consultation with neighborhood residents through the community meeting process, also ranked projects based upon priority of need with regard to recovery: "Early Action/Critical"; "Mid-Term/Needed"; and "Long Term/Desired". This ranking provides a general guide as to what communities believe are the most important priorities with regard to revitalization and redevelopment.

Finally, there are a variety of items or initiatives listed on the funding matrix where a capital cost can not be attached or determined without further study, but the community believed needed to be a central part of the plan. These include:

- Undertaking specific further studies to determine the actual cost to governmental entities for certain public/private initiatives (for which we have noted the cost of the study);

- Housing initiatives for which there may be dollars already allocated through the Road Home, LIHTC, private funding sources, or other sources but where the additional gap in funding is impossible to determine at this point;
- Other policies, including land use and zoning regulations, which the community believed to be in the short and long term interest of the community; and
- Recurring operations (i.e., expanded police patrols, library operations, park operations, etc.) that either tie to certain capital improvements or are important to the health of the community through the expansion of existing services.

NEIGHBORHOODS REBUILDING PLAN ST BERNARD AREA IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITY MATRIX																				
PROJECTS & PHASE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE(S)																			
	CRITICAL (1) NEEDED (2) DESIRED (3)	FEMA	CDBG/ILRA	OTHER HUD	USACE	CITY CIP	SWB	LHFA	HANO	HOME	EDA	TIF/GO BONDS/NMTC	BID	SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICT	FWA/FTA	LDOT	PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS	ORLEANS LEVEE BOARD	OTHER GOVERNMENT & NGOs	CAPITAL FUNDING NEED/GAP
Early Action Plan																				
Capital Projects																				
Streets / sidewalks / street lighting / storm drainage - repair / reconstruct	1	•	•																	\$15,600,000
Landscape rehab / replacement - ROW & neutral grounds	1		•																	\$600,000
Intersection signalization & crosswalks - repair / reconstruct	1	•	•																	\$150,000
Fire hydrants & lines – repair / expand distribution	1	•	•																	\$140,000
Electric, communications and cable utilities – reorganize lines underground where possible	1		•																	TBD
Rehabilitate Existing Fire Station		•	•																	\$400,000
Develop bus stop shelters & benches – appropriate to neighborhood	1		•																	\$60,000
Commercial revitalization program – façade improvements	1		•																	TBD
Replacement of Vorce Walters Elementary School or new comparable use for site	1		•																	\$8,500,000
One-stop community center at Waters Elementary (temporary)	1		•																	\$350,000
Tie neighborhood to city-wide Urban Transportation Plan (study cost)	1																			TBD
Re-open Methodist Elderly Care facility – improve open plaza on St. Bernard Ave.	1		•																	TBD
Subtotal: Capital Projects																				\$25,800,000
Recurring Operations																				
Enhance police protection	1																			
Tie neighborhood to city-wide Fire & Emergency Response Plan	1																			
Parks and Greenway maintenance	1																			
Housing Initiatives & Other Policies	1																			
Imperial Drive HANO fronting parcel redevelopment plan	1																			
Fund structural stabilization of endangered historic housing	1																			
Infill housing in abandoned / blighted properties	1																			
Schools: Do not leave faith-based and/or Public schools vacant. Reopen or use for transitional use	1																			
Reuse materials from demolished buildings	1																			
Lot Next Door program (right of first refusal)	1																			
Fund affordable home ownership programs	1																			
Fund advanced design guidelines for infill construction	1																			
St. Bernard Development – add mixed income housing, retain supportive housing	1																			
St. Bernard Development - add community facilities, recreation, social services	1																			
St. Bernard Development – reduce overall unit density, add single family houses	1																			
Paris Ave. & Harrison Street landscaping	1																			
Parks and Recreational space – connect school recreational field to Bayou Greenway	1																			
Determine status of Union Baptist Theological Seminary	1																			
Subtotal: Capital Projects																				
Mid Term Plan																				
Capital Projects																				
Add marked bicycle lanes on key roadways where space permits	2		•																	
Neighborhood-specific street signage / way-finding / historic markers	2		•																	
Develop Plan for Residential development – Sere & St. Denis Streets on Bayou St. John (study cost only)	2		•																	
Youth Detention Center – move to alternate location, expand residential	2	•	•																	
Moss Street – Bayou St. John Greenway project	2	•	•																	
Install I-610 Acoustical buffering	2		•																	
Rehabilitate Union Baptist Theological Seminary or new use for property	2		•																	
Subtotal: Capital Projects																				\$2,795,000
Housing Initiatives and Other Policies																				
Reinforce small scale commercial across from St. Bernard housing development	2																			
Study feasibility of connecting Bayou Greenway under I-610	2																			
Long Term Plan																				
Capital Projects																				
Subtotal: Capital Projects																				
CAPITAL PROJECTS TOTAL																				\$28,595,000

9- Rehabilitate Union Baptist Theological Seminary
use for property