Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood, Planning District Eight

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Introduction

The Recovery Plan for the City of New Orleans was instituted by the City Council in response to specific needs in the 49 flooded neighborhoods Post-Katrina. These neighborhoods were organized into the 13 Planning Districts as identified by the City Planning Commission of the City of New Orleans. Overarching Goals and Objectives were established by the City Council: “Work with neighborhoods to assist them in developing revitalization plans that are thoughtful, can be implemented, and formed into a citywide recovery and improvement plan for submission to the State of Louisiana and the federal government.”

Planning District 8, the subject of the following report, includes 2 geographically specific neighborhoods: Lower Ninth and Holy Cross.

Basic assumptions also formed the basis for the Planning District 8 Recovery Plan:

1) That a flood protection system will be designed to withstand future catastrophic loss from a 1 in 100 year storm and that this is a commitment by the Federal Government;
2) That stringent building codes will be implemented to further limit wind damage;
3) That the basic urban structure of the city is sound and that rebuilding will respect this structure;
4) That there is an organized, coherent and operable Hurricane Evacuation Program.

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A. The Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood

Location and Geographic Boundaries

The Lower Ninth Ward (Planning District 8) is in the southeast quadrant of the City of New Orleans on the northern bank of the Mississippi River. It is bounded on the west by the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (the Industrial Canal), the north by the Vauvert/Venetian Islands, the east by the Louisiana National Guard’s Jackson Barracks and St. Bernard Parish, and the south by the Mississippi River.

For the purpose of this planning report, the Lower Ninth Ward will be divided into two neighborhoods, the northern portion of Planning District 8 (the area north of St. Claude Avenue) will be referred to as the Lower Ninth Ward. The balance of the area (south of St. Claude Avenue) will be referred to as the Holy Cross Neighborhood.

The Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood was originally known as the Cypress Swamp and was the lower (in elevation) back region of plantations that fronted on the Mississippi River. By the mid-nineteenth century, the cypress trees had been cleared creating an open marshland. The area was used for truck gardening and other farming activities providing a source of income for many of the residents.

In 1899, with the advent of the wood pump, the technology became available to drain the swamp area between the City and Lake Pontchartrain. The resultant order by the City of New Orleans Legislature to drain the swamp opened new land area in the city for development including the Lower Ninth. Areas adjacent to the CBD were developed first following the extension of streetcar services. Historically, development of the Lower Ninth Ward lagged behind other reclaimed areas due to the lack of services and the absence of political clout from the African American population in the surrounding area. Basic services did not reach this area until 1945.

The Industrial Canal was completed in 1920 to improve shipping access from the Mississippi River to Lake Pontchartrain and also fostered commercial and industrial development in the Lower Ninth Ward. Unfortunately, the Canal’s construction also created a physical barrier and further isolated the community from the rest of New Orleans.

Despite the lack of services and the isolation or because of it, the Lower Ninth Ward developed as a primarily African American community (70% according to the 1940 census). Growth continued eastward and northward through the middle of the twentieth century. By 1949, 50% of the area in the St. Claude/ North Claiborne corridor and north of Claiborne and west of Caffin Street was developed. By 1965, the area north of Claiborne and east of Caffin Street had also been developed.

The Lower Ninth Ward was developed with primarily single and two family homes. Early Shotgun style homes were followed by bungalows and brick-faced ranches (Figure 1). Commercial activity focused primarily on St. Claude Avenue with pockets on N. Claiborne Avenue. Streets interior to the neighborhood particularly Galvez also had local retail uses. Industrial activity was located primarily along the Industrial Canal.

The decline of industrial activity in the City during the mid to late twentieth century and the resulting job loss had a direct effect on the population levels in the Lower Ninth and on housing and retail uses. Vacant and abandoned properties became common and the quality of life declined. Prior to Katrina, the percentage of vacant properties was estimated to be as high as 17%, and residents had to travel to St. Bernard Parish for most of their shopping needs. Public infrastructure, from schools to roads, suffered from deferred maintenance.
Recovery Vision and Goals

**Vision**

The Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood is critical to the reconstruction of New Orleans. Located adjacent to the Industrial Canal and along two major arterials (N. Claiborne and St. Claude) that link to the CBD, the district has maritime access to support the industrial base of the City and is a gateway to the downtown.

The Lower Ninth was also home to some of the City’s most disadvantaged, many least able to rebound from the losses caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Reconstruction of the area is vital to providing homes for the displaced lower and middle income residents in a city known for its racial and economic diversity. The restoration of the existing housing stock and new approaches to infill and mass produced housing must also target residents of limited means as they rebuild their lives and as they help to rebuild the City.

**Common Goals for the Lower Ninth Ward**

Both the Lower Ninth Ward and Holy Cross Neighborhoods share common goals including:

- Plan for a Sustainable Recovery and establish a rational and equitable timetable for re-building
- Incorporate the best ideas agreed upon in previous studies, including the New Century New Orleans Master Plan, that remain relevant today.
- Acknowledge and build upon the Neighborhood’s history and sense of community.
- Develop a plan that not only addresses problems created by Katrina but also those identified before the storm. Specifically, improve, enhance and/or replace existing streets, sidewalks and infrastructure system serving the Lower Ninth
- Establish a planning process that involves as many neighborhood residents and stakeholders as possible including former residents that have been relocated.
- Implement infrastructure improvements that provide the maximum possible protection from future natural disasters.
- Create new economic and cultural activities for neighborhood residents and visitors that may be attracted to the Lower Ninth Ward.
- Strengthen the social, physical and economic connections between the Lower Ninth Ward and its neighboring communities.
- Improve transit connections and service reliability.
- Expand recreational opportunities for all age groups.
- Restore and preserve the Neighborhood’s historic assets.

**Planning Process and Neighborhood Participation**

Ensuring a participatory process for planning the reconstruction of the Lower Ninth Ward will be a continuing challenge. Most of the neighborhood of 17,000 people is gone, scattered all over the country. Many residents were renters whose belongings and livelihoods were destroyed. Some are settling in at new locations and may never return to the neighborhood.

This is also a neighborhood of multi-generational families and high levels of home ownership, many former residents would live nowhere else on earth and are determined to see New Orleans and their community rebuilt.

A series of highly publicized community meetings have been held with some residents traveling hundreds of miles to participate. Groups such as the Lower Ninth Ward and Holy Cross Homeowners Associations, Neighborhood Empowerment Network Association, Acorn and others have been active in the planning process. This plan was prepared with the input from these residents and organizations.

The consultant team carried out a three step planning approach that involved: 1) Analysis of Existing Conditions where base maps were prepared, data on the conditions of the neighborhood was gathered, informal interviews with community leaders and residents were carried out, previous planning reports and efforts were researched and other tasks were carried out in order to develop an understanding of the community, 2) Definition of Issues and Opportunities, Plan Options 3)Neighborhood Plan and proposed funding sources and matrix , the development of the plan and the identification of proposed projects and needs.

The neighborhood outreach program carried out by the consultant team consisted of the following neighborhood meetings:

- **Saturday, May 13, 2006** - An initial introduction/scoping meeting - Presentation of the consultant team, time line for the project, overview of conditions and general discussion of project goals and objectives.
- **Saturday, June 17, 2006** Lower Ninth Ward-Holy Cross - Second Neighborhood Meeting - Meeting with neighborhood leaders and residents to present the consultants understanding of the issues affecting both neighborhoods and opportunities for neighborhood recovery. Issues relating to both the Lower Ninth Ward and Holy Cross neighborhoods were presented. The meeting was held at the Holy Angels Church, 3500 St. Claude.
- **Saturday, July 22 2006** Lower Ninth Ward-Holy Cross, Third Neighborhood Meeting - A Third neighborhood meeting to review the plans and projects proposed for the Lower 9th Ward and Holy Cross - gather neighborhood comments, input and acceptance of the proposed projects.
- **Saturday, August 26, 2006** Lower Ninth Ward-Holy Cross - Fourth and final meeting to present the proposed plan for the Lower 9th Ward and get final neighborhood approval for the plan.
- **September 23, 2006** City Wide Neighborhood Meeting - City-wide all “Flooded Neighborhoods” presentation of all the projects that compose the City of New Orleans Neighborhoods Rebuilding Plan. At this meeting the final list of projects voted by the neighborhood for the Lower 9th Ward neighborhood was presented.
Commercial uses, both regional and local, would specifically with the Mississippi Riverfront areas in the Holy Cross Neighborhood and will be addressed in that component of the Rebuilding Plan report. The Plan called for the .. intensively along the River in particular would provide the stimulus to redevelop abandoned buildings and wharves.

The Riverfront Vision 2005 deals more summarized The 1999 Land Use Plan .. needs such as healthcare. Many of these recommendations are consistent with the University of New Orleans 1996 plan.

The City of New Orleans recognized that the Lower Ninth Ward was in decline prior to Hurricane Katrina. Several planning and revitalization efforts had already been initiated including the 1999 Land Use Plan, the New Century New Orleans 2002 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, the 2004 Transportation Plan, and the 2005 Lower 9th Ward Strategic Improvement Zone Plan. In addition, the City Planning Commission initiated the Riverfront Vision 2005 Planning process, a University of New Orleans citizen-based planning effort in 1996 that provided valuable insight of the residents’ specific concerns and goals.

The 1999 Land Use Plan summarized community concerns by producing a series of modifications to existing land use categories. The Plan called for the stabilization of existing residential areas and would allow for minor zoning variances with the introduction of a neighborhood mixed-use category. Urban mixed-use zones allowing for more intensive development along the River in particular would provide the stimulus to redevelop abandoned buildings and wharves.

Commercial uses, both regional and local, would be focused on the major arterials, St. Claude and N. Claiborne. The long term use of Jackson Barracks was the focus of the institutional uses category with its continuation as a National Guard station with a vocational training facility and light industry being possible uses. The proliferation of neighborhood churches suggested the need for restrictions on this use to ensure harmonious co-existence with the residential neighbors.

The Parks Master Plan of 2002 evaluated existing open space opportunities in the Lower Ninth Ward against the current population trends. It was determined that the neighborhood parks were overburdened and as a result, in need of upgrading and expansion, particularly in the eastern section of the neighborhood.

Plan recommendations include:

- Upgrade of existing neighborhood parks particularly the Sam Bonart Playground and Aquatic Facility.
- Create additional open space and recreational opportunities along the Industrial Canal and the Florida Avenue Rail Corridor.
- Identify open space opportunities adjacent to Jackson Barracks and along Florida Avenue to meet this underserved area of the Ward and to buffer the community from adjacent institutional and industrial uses.

The 2004 Transportation Plan reinforced the perception that the Lower Ninth Ward is somewhat isolated from the rest of the City. Poorly served by mass transit, this situation is exacerbated by operations of the St. Claude and N. Claiborne Bridges over the Industrial Canal that continues to frustrate drivers and lengthen commuting times. The neighborhood streets are deteriorated and many do not have sidewalks. As a result several critical recommendations were proposed:

- Extend the Desire trolley line along St. Claude to St. Bernard Parish expand and improve bus service to the neighborhood.
- Proceed with the high level bridge at Florida Avenue and develop a mitigation plan for the Industrial Canal lock and bridge reconstruction projects.
- Address parking waivers for institutional uses in the neighborhood served.
- Identify opportunities to expand mass transit services to the community and extend bike paths.

The Lower 9th Ward Strategic Improvement Zone Plan encompasses the area bounded by the Industrial Canal to the west, Dauphine Street to the south, Tupelo Street to the east and N. Claiborne Avenue to the north, and focuses on revitalization opportunities along the St. Claude Avenue corridor in both the Lower Ninth Ward and Holy Cross Neighborhoods. The objective is “employ strategies of land acquisition, rehabilitation, development, code enforcement, land banking, community engagement, transparent tracking technology and partnerships” to revitalize targeted 5 neighborhoods in transition or decline.

This 2005 Strategic Plan recognized a series of existing conditions that provide opportunities for revitalization including vacant and abandoned properties and underutilized commercial properties. Potential government interventions include increased police surveillance and code enforcement, and expanded service needs such as healthcare. Many of these recommendations are consistent with the University of New Orleans 1996 plan. The Riverfront Vision 2005 deals more specifically with the Mississippi Riverfront areas in the Holy Cross Neighborhood and will be addressed in that component of the Rebuilding Plan report.
B. Pre-Hurricane Katrina Neighborhood Existing Conditions

Population Characteristics

By all statistical measures, the Lower Ninth Ward was a neighborhood in decline and one of the poorest areas in the City. Information from the City of New Orleans Land Use Plan for the District 8 (Lower Ninth Ward / Holy Cross) showed a population decline of 18.3% from 1980 to 1990 and a further decline of 4.3% from 1997 to 2002 giving the District a 2002 population of 20,193. Average household income was far below the average for the City as a whole, $14,303 compared to $23,732 respectively (2002). According to 2000 US Census statistics, the rate of home ownership was above the City’s with 54% to 46.5% but the more significant issue plaguing the Lower Ninth is the number of abandoned properties. 1990 estimates reveal that 17% of the Lower Ninth’s dwellings were vacant.

While the Lower Ninth’s percentage of African American residents has always been high, at 97% minority population (compared to 64% city wide), the high percentage of families below the poverty level, and low median income levels show a neighborhood with limited means but with unusually high home ownership levels.

Land Use and Zoning

The Lower Ninth Ward is primarily a residential community with nearly 70% of its land area devoted to housing. Commercial activity is focused on St. Claude and N. Claiborne supplemented by corner retail dispersed on secondary corridors including Galvez, Caffin and Tupelo. Overall, the neighborhood is not well served by retail which is primarily limited to automobile service, convenience retail and fast food establishments mostly located on St. Claude Avenue.

Light industrial uses are located along the Industrial Canal (on the water side of the levees) and on the waterfront in the Holy Cross Neighborhood. Much of the light industry including the maritime based industry situated along the Industrial Canal has suffered from the same disinvestment as seen in other U.S. industrial cities. Industrial uses along the Canal will likely continue to diminish as a result of the lock replacement project and the need for additional navigational area.

Institutional uses are limited but some are quite substantial including the Jackson Barracks, and the Lawless Junior High School and Elementary School complex. Other schools include the recently constructed Martin Luther King Jr Magnet School and Library, the Hardin Elementary School and the Edison Elementary School. The Andrew Pete Sanchez (multi-service) Community Center is located on N. Claiborne. Neighborhood churches are numerous throughout the district and have caused some friction particularly with regard to parking management.

Existing zoning follows the low density residential land use pattern of the neighborhood with commercial zones along the crosstown corridors and industrial zones on the Industrial Canal. A summary of the zoning categories is as follows:

- RS - Residential Single Family zone allowing detached units
- RD - Residential Two Family zone that allows detached and attached two family units including townhouses
- RM - Residential Multi-Family zone that allows low rise and mid rise housing with a maximum height of 75 feet.

ROI - Residential Office Zones allowing non-residential retail and office use.

L-I - Light Industrial

Transportation

The Lower Ninth Ward has two major arterials that connect it to the rest of the City of New Orleans and to St. Bernard Parish. Until the

![Map of Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood, Planning District Eight](image-url)
1950’s, St. Claude Avenue (Route 46) had been the only connection back to the City and remains the major commercial corridor of the Lower Ninth. N. Claiborne Avenue also provides east- west route through the district. These roadways are subject to the operations of the Industrial Canal and result in delays and frustration for the Lower Ninth residents with some of the longest to-work travel times in the City. The drawbridge operations also cause disruption to bus service extending commuting times. Plans for a high span bridge at Florida Street, another east west corridor on the northern most end of the district have been developed that to provide access to Interstate 10. However, the current status of this plan is not clear.

The only other means of access to Interstate 10 is to the east through St. Bernard Parish to Route 47 North.

The local roadway system in the Lower Ninth suffers from substandard construction and deferred maintenance. Many of the streets do not have sidewalks and curbs with storm drainage channeled through open trenches. Capital improvements in the 2004 Transportation Plan called only for the reconstruction of St. Claude leaving the rest of the district with this substandard street system for the foreseeable future.

The 2004 Transportation Master Plan proposed the extension of bike routes through the District specifically along the River Levee. This phased plan would create bike lanes on Caffin linking to Dauphine in the near term with long term extensions to Tupelo and Florida.

Pre-Katrina, the Lower Ninth was served by an Inter-Parish bus and local bus routes. Streets with service included St. Claude, N. Claiborne, Galvez and Rochblane. Long term plans called for an extension of the Desire trolley line on St. Claude to St. Bernard Parish. Concept plans for a “Crescent City Express” that would provide regional service on the N. Claiborne Corridor were also being developed. However, the status of these plans are unclear.

**Recreation and Open Space**

As noted in the Pre-Katrina planning efforts by the City, the Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood is cited as having sufficient open space amenities. There are several neighborhood parks and playgrounds and the levee recreation area between N. Claiborne and St. Claude. However, these facilities were overburdened and remote to the eastern edge of the neighborhood. The buffer zone along Florida Avenue had been targeted for additional open space opportunities but was only in the preliminary planning stage.

The Mississippi River Levee system presents the most significant immediate open space resource for the Lower Ninth Ward but there is limited access to that area from the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood. The Levee system to the north is wetlands and serves primarily as a buffer zone with overgrown vegetation. It is also more inaccessible because of the presence of the Norfolk Southern railroad line.

Other open space resources include the St. Claude and N. Claiborne Avenue Neutral zones. But these spaces are poorly maintained and the St. Claude Neutral ground is encumbered by an undersized railroad spur.

Although a much less dense neighborhood when compared to the rest of New Orleans, small sites here with a high percentage of building coverage and a high percentage of the population under 18 placed a heavy burden on the neighborhood park system. As a result the New Orleans Parks and Recreation Department had determined in the 2002 Master Plan that the existing parks needed improvements and additional neighborhood parks were needed.

**Housing**

The Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood is a diverse community of predominantly single family homes but also two family and some multi family dwellings. As the area was originally part of plantations, later developing into vegetable farms, it did not develop to the density of many of the neighborhoods of Central New Orleans. The lower density suburban street grid was extended from the Holy Cross neighborhood north creating narrow lots developed first with single family and duplex homes in the shotgun style. Single story, single family housing continued as the neighborhood continued to expand east and north. Street corner commercial was integrated within the residential neighborhood. As the industrial activity declined, so did the residential neighborhood and many of the small commercial buildings were adapted for nonprofit uses such as houses of worship.
Although there were pockets of stable, owner occupied housing pre-Katrina, the neighborhood was suffering from numerous abandoned and adjudicated properties. The damage created by flooding from Hurricane Betsey (left many residential structures in poor condition); the decline of urban living and closing of local industry all contributed to the neighborhood’s decline. This trend had slowed as a recent effort to restore and rehabilitate older homes was creating some stabilization of the neighborhood.

**Architecture/ Historic Preservation**

The majority of the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood was developed post World War II when basic city services were extended into the neighborhood. Although the architecture of the neighborhood reflects post WWI styles including bungalows and ranches, shotgun and expanded shotgun homes from the turn of the century and revival and adaptive styles from development in the 1930s and 40s also grace the neighborhood. There was a great deal of variety in the design of the shotgun homes with varied facade treatments and porch designs. The shotguns were also designed as duplexes or double shotguns and Camel Backs further adding to the variety and richness of the style. Other homes of Spanish and Tudor style clad with stucco and Cape styles can also be found.

The Holy Cross Neighborhood of the Lower Ninth Ward has been established as National Historic District based on the earlier development of this high ground along the banks of the Mississippi. This district does not extend beyond St. Claude, designated as the edge between the two Lower Ninth Ward neighborhoods. But the area between St. Claude and North Claiborne Avenues does have many structures (particularly of the shotgun style) that date to the 1930’s and 40’s making this area potentially eligible for historic designation for both the individual buildings as well as the district.

Of particular note is the predominance of the shotgun style homes that can be found not only in the area between St. Claude and N. Claiborne but also to a limited degree north of Claiborne. Unfortunately many of these homes were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina but a sufficient number survive and create a building block typology that could be extended to the heavily damaged areas of the neighborhood as a pattern for redevelopment.
C. Hurricane Katrina Neighborhood Impacts

Extent of Flooding

Hurricane Katrina created a 15 foot storm surge that shot up the industrial canal and began overflowing the levee walls by as much as 5 feet. The overflow led to a failure of the levee in two locations sending a torrent of water into the Lower Ninth and destroying a majority of the homes north of N. Claiborne and west of Tupelo. (See Pre and Post-Katrina building footprints on page 10).

The winds from Katrina also caused extensive damage to nearly all of the overhead telephone and power lines, street lighting and street signs. Many trees were uprooted, particularly along the St. Claude and N. Claiborne neutral grounds. Many streets already in poor condition were further undermined with buckling pavement and sidewalks.

Residential Properties Damage Assessment

The impacts from Hurricane Katrina and Rita on the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood were unparalleled relative to the damage sustained in other New Orleans neighborhoods, and even when compared to the Holy Cross section of the neighborhood. The damage was so extensive and underlying economic conditions so unstable that a year after the storm most of the neighborhood north of Claiborne Avenue remains without basic services including electricity, potable water and sewers.

Based on a windshield survey conducted by the Stull and Lee design team in June of 2006, of the approximately 4,750 residential buildings in the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood prior to Katrina, we estimate that as many as 3,000 were damaged beyond repair (it was a conservative estimate and some of the structures we determined to be salvageable may not be able to pass the 50% FEMA rule). The brick faced, slab-on-grade homes built in the 1950s withstood the raging flood water but sustained considerable interior damage (these units were under eight feet+ of water for weeks). As these units do not comply with the FEMA ABFE requirement, the owners may not be able to get building permits to undertake necessary repairs, if the units are assessed at over 50% damage. In the final analysis, the number of residences that are not repairable may be much higher.

Commercial Properties Damage Assessment

Only a few of the commercial businesses along St. Claude and N. Claiborne have reopened and many major institutions including St. David’s Catholic Church remain unoccupied. Many of the commercial structures were already marginal operations and are not expected to survive. Businesses that have been able to reopen include convenience stores, fast food chains and some automobile repair and servicing operations.

Institutional Properties Damage Assessment

The Sanchez Center located on N. Claiborne is the only institution serving the community that has reopened. Repairs are ongoing to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Magnet School and Library with an anticipated reopening in September 2007. The Edison Elementary School sustained significant damage but could be rehabilitated and reopened, possibly by the fall of 2008. The remaining public facilities including the Hardin Elementary School and the Lawless Junior High and Elementary Schools complex appear to be damaged beyond repair.

St. David’s Catholic Church and School remain closed but the structures appear to be sound and could potentially be rehabilitated. The majority of the corner churches have been damaged beyond repair.
Parks and Open Spaces Damage Assessment

The Parks Improvement Plan undertaken by the New Orleans Parks and Recreation Department and improvements by the Army Corp of Engineers Mitigation Plan had led to the restoration of several area parks and recreational facilities. Unfortunately these improvements did not survive the storm and flooding. The Richard Lee playground is being used as a staging area for ongoing site clearance activities. The Oliver Bush playground was under flood waters for months and appears to be abandoned.

Pre-Katrina Building Footprints

Building assessment from windshield survey conducted by design team June, 2006

Post-Katrina Building Footprints
D. Planning Approach

Many issues related to both pre-storm and current conditions will directly impact not only the reconstruction of the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood but also its sustainability into the future including but not limited to:

- Although Katrina and Rita caused a great deal of damage to the community and its infrastructure, there were many problems prior to the storm resulting in the Lower Ninth Ward experiencing a significant decline in population.
- Many housing units in the area were below contemporary standards and often experienced flooding due to an inadequate public infrastructure drainage system.
- The street system, already in poor condition, is now in substantially worse condition.
- Transportation connections are unreliable due to the Industrial Canal operations.
- Truck traffic on residential streets in the neighborhood is a source of friction.
- Many of the existing neighborhood schools were in poor condition prior to the storm and were under-performing academically.
- The neighborhood lacks adequate options for quality shopping and has limited public services.
- Opportunities for jobs and economic development within the Lower Ninth Ward are limited.
- Recreational opportunities are not evenly distributed nor do they meet the needs of every age group.

Neighborhood Re-Population

The Neighborhood has many assets that support reconstruction including proximity to downtown, some infrastructure that for the most part remains intact, existing housing that can be rebuilt and many residents determined to come back.

- The rebuilding of the Lower Ninth Ward presents new opportunities to improve the quality of life in the district and to introduce new housing typologies that reach a variety of income levels and family types.
- In addition, re-arranging some of the street patterns will allow for larger lots, accommodating new building types and the creation of new parks and playgrounds and other open space amenities.
- Existing and future school buildings can be programmed to serve many functions (the nexus concept) including after school activity centers, spaces for community meetings and events, public libraries, computer access and serve as emergency shelters.
- Strategic public sector investments including strengthened levees, improved public transportation, new schools and parks and open spaces can enhance current property values and encourage new private investment in housing and much needed commercial facilities.
- The resolution of the Industrial Canal locks and crossings is crucial to providing better access for Lower Ninth Ward residents, improved port activities and expanded job opportunities.
- Investment in the waterfront areas can open new opportunities for housing, commercial activities and recreation, create jobs and bring more tourism to the area.
- The recently released $200 million rebuilding plan for Jackson Barracks provides an opportunity to bring new services to the Lower Ninth Ward.

Basic Planning Assumptions

The planning and rebuilding of the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood will be challenging and can not be accomplished without significant public investment and assistance. Planning assumptions include:

- A flood protection system will be reconstructed to withstand future catastrophic loss from a 1 in 100 year storm;
- Recognition that accomplishing all of the recommendations proposed on the Sketch Plans assume a time frame of 10 years or more.
- Rebuilding will require several phases.
- Significant Federal and State funding will be required for infrastructure improvements.
State and Federal subsidies will be required to help residents re-build and to attract private investments in the area. Incentives will be provided to property owners to rehab their homes consistent with the revised FEMA standards and the City of New Orleans Building Code.

New housing and most existing rehabilitated housing will have to meet Federal and State flood elevation standards.

Stringent Building codes will be implemented to limit wind damage and flooding below the Base Flood Elevation.

The rebuilding process should also include the introduction of commercial and light industrial uses to increase employment and economic development.

Institutional uses will include new and rehabilitated schools, social services and other community facilities including healthcare facilities and additional recreation/open space.

Transit service to the Lower Ninth Ward will be improved to relieve reliance on automobiles including the possibility of streetcar service.

Florida Avenue can be redesigned as a landscaped arterial to divert truck traffic from residential streets.

The Mississippi River and New Orleans Canal system represent potential economic and recreational assets.

The Plan assumes that it is possible to achieve better visual and physical access to the Jackson Barracks.

The proposed plan is capable of a build-out of enough housing to attain (if desired) a population approaching the nearly 27,000 persons that lived in the area in 1980.

That the City of New Orleans will take steps necessary to improve public safety on the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood including the creation of a police substation.

That the City will accelerate its vacant and adjudicated property program and site clearance program to create an environment that will entice residents to return to the Lower Ninth.

That the City, State and Federal Government will formulate policies and actions for the clean-up and maintenance of the community that creates an adequate healthy environment that hastens the orderly repopulation of the neighborhood and projects an image of cleanliness and order.
E. Plan Components

The Community Participation Process and a review of pre-Katrina planning documents highlighted the deficiencies in the neighborhood and offered some solutions. On June 17, 2006, initial Sketch Plans were presented that incorporated many of these ideas with current conditions into sketch plan alternatives for the redevelopment of an improved, sustainable Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood. The Plan(s) addressed a broad range of issues including:

- Strategies for the rebuilding of low density housing.
- Opportunities to redevelop areas available for alternate uses such as light industry.
- Opportunities for retail uses to address the poor services available to the neighborhood pre-Katrina.
- Opportunities to convert the neighborhood’s major arteries to boulevards serving both the community and commuters.
- Strategies utilizing existing resources to improve and expand open space and recreational opportunities.
- Recommendations to utilize abandoned and underutilized buildings to create special use areas.
- Urban design strategies to mitigate nuisance factors between different land uses such as light industry or institutions and residences.
- The introduction of a Mixed-Use Town Center that would create a mixed-use place with retail, institutional and residential uses of a scale sufficient to symbolize and jumpstart reinvestment in the neighborhood.

Principal Rebuilding Strategies

This planning process assimilated existing planning activities, post-Hurricane Katrina conditions, and feedback received from the Community Participation Process to develop rebuilding strategies for the neighborhood. These strategies establish distribution, density and phasing for land-uses including housing, commercial retail, institutions and light industry that will create a sustainable community.

Surveys were distributed at the community meetings to discern the residents priorities for the rebuilding effort. The results of the survey indicated housing and supporting infrastructure was the most important concern. Consequently strategies to address those issues have received the most attention.

A review of the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood’s current conditions as shown on Figure Ground Diagrams (page 10) shows that damage from Hurricane Katrina was not uniform. As a result the levels of assistance necessary to rebuild vary from block to block.

Four potential redevelopment strategies were generated to begin to determine what areas required restoration as opposed to areas in need
of reconstruction. The strategies assume that the areas primarily requiring restoration can be repopulated more quickly with fewer resources. Conversely, the areas where the damage was more extensive, will require more resources and a longer period of time to rebuild at a greater cost. These four strategies are detailed as follows:

- **High Restoration** - these areas have the greatest number of existing structures that survived that can be restored under the new FEMA guidelines. The few vacant parcels could be developed with infill housing of a compatible style or distributed to adjacent property owners under one of the City’s housing reconstruction programs, Lot Next Door Program.

- **Limited Restoration** - These areas retained a critical mass of housing that can be restored retaining the existing parcel and building pattern. Infill housing on the vacant parcels could be either single or possibly multi-family typologies. Alternate uses such as corner convenience stores might also be possible on streets carrying higher traffic volumes.

- **Primarily New Construction** - These areas retain few restorable properties but enough to justify retaining the existing street and block patterns. Parcel sizes could be adjusted to create larger lots for either larger single family or some duplex housing. New parcels and buildings would still follow the neighborhood pattern with orientation perpendicular to the street.

- **Intensive New Construction** - These areas have many blocks where no dwellings survived. Here alternative street layouts and parcelization can be considered to allow for lower densities, more public open space, and alternative land uses including commercial or light industrial uses to support job creation and provide more services.

### Key Recovery and Development Projects

#### Town Center

The Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood has a long history of neglect by the City, State and the Federal government. From the minimal construction of basic infrastructure to the limited assistance offered in the wake of Hurricane Betsy, this neighborhood has frequently not received its fair share. A bold move is required to reverse that trend and to bring basic services to this community. The new Town Center would meet a multitude of needs. A Lower Ninth Ward (and Holy Cross) Little City Hall, police and fire stations and job training facilities would bring a real governmental presence in the neighborhood. Retail activity including a supermarket, pharmacy, hardware store and other services would serve both neighborhoods needs and capture some of the many commuters who pass through daily. To address educational deficiencies and address the state of the schools, a new Junior/Senior high school would be built. To meet the needs of the elderly population and bring a 24 hour presence, elderly housing would be included at mid rise density.

The Town Center would infuse sufficient public capital through the development of public uses to entice private investment in the retail and some of the housing. The housing would provide opportunities for former and new residents to return to the area. The Center could be undertaken in an early phase of the rebuilding to emphasize the point that the City, State and Federal governments are strongly committed to rebuilding the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood.

A conceptual visualization of the Town Center has been developed as a part of the plan. The precise siting would have to be studied further to reflect the intentions of current property owners in the general area proposed for the Town Center. However the importance of a location on N. Claiborne Avenue is underscored by the fact that it was in the North Claiborne Avenue Neutral Grounds that the Lower Ninth
Ward Homeowners Association chose to site the monument to the victims of the storm. Housing
The first priority of the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood residents is rebuilding their homes. Many innovative and useful ideas have surfaced nationally and can be accommodated within the framework of the plan subject to more detailed studies. Any new housing must address some basic issues including FEMA new Base Flood Elevation guidelines and the considerations of the existing neighborhood fabric and issues of cost and sustainability. While many homes can be restored, construction of new housing will be required on a large scale. A matrix of largely existing housing typologies was prepared to show some initial options and precedents. Many additional options should be explored going forward.

North Claiborne Avenue Commercial Corridor
St. Claude and N. Claiborne are the main arteries of the Lower Ninth Ward north of N. Claiborne Avenue and the Canal to provide 360,000 square feet of light industrial space with the potential of providing 1,000 jobs. Examples of how these facilities might be designed are shown in the images above. By variations in building massing, window sizing, use of color, landscaping and facade designs, these building types can be designed to complement nearby residential uses.

Light Industry
The Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood's decline can be traced to the closing of industries located along the Industrial Canal. However, the neighborhood's decline is also due to the effects of traditional industries - this use is now seen as being far more compatible with residential uses.

The northwest corner of the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood presents an opportunity for development of light industrial uses. It is an area that was leveled by Hurricane Katrina and would allow land assembly without need for relocation. New light industrial development could be designed to buffer the residential areas of the Lower Ninth from the impacts of heavier industrial activity on the other side of the Canal. This area is also on the Florida Street corridor with direct access to truck routes - and would thereby allow redirecting of truck traffic away from the neighborhood. It would provide replacement facilities for the industrial uses currently along the Canal that would be lost due to the construction of the new locks. And most importantly it would provide jobs for the Lower Ninth residents.

The community is rightly concerned about how much light industry is located in this Jourdan Street area to prevent the perception that the Lower Ninth north of N. Claiborne Avenue should be redeveloped as an industrial park. The proposed plan would dedicate approximately six blocks of the neighborhood’s 325 blocks nearest Florida Avenue and the Canal to provide 360,000 square feet of light industrial space with the potential of providing 1,000 jobs.

Examples of how these facilities might be designed are shown in the images above. By variations in building massing, window sizing, use of color, landscaping and facade designs, these building types can be designed to complement nearby residential uses.

Building Typologies

Sustainable Rehab
Typical of the “designer” style house prevalent in the Lower Ninth Ward. Can be readily adaptable to meet current “Code” and by rising to stand above the Base Flood Elevation (BFE).

Modular
Modular and manufactured units can be easily sited in Lower Ninth Ward sites. They can be placed on site to meet BFE elevation constraints. They are available in a variety of configurations and can be sited on the 30’ wide lots typical to the district. The new production of these units could allow large areas of the district already owned by utilities to be re-populated quickly.

Ramah House
Built in the 50’s and 60’s these are predominantly slab on grade and are therefore not readily adaptable to meet new Federal and City of New Orleans building standards that require houses be built three feet above BFE. Owners can obtain a permit to repopulation homes that have not sustained damage more than 50% of the house’s pre-flood replacement value.

BFE 5 Foot Rule
FEMA requires 6 feet of construction in flood planes as adapted by the City of New Orleans, dictates that all new homes be built a minimum of 5 feet above Base Flood Elevation. For the Lower Ninth Ward, many existing homes on site will have to be altered to meet this standard and all new construction will have to meet this standard.

5 Foot High Foundation - One Story Zone
An alternative to the 5 foot foundation would be the 3 foot foundation. The foundation would be made of materials that can withstand the flood event and be easily repaired. Standard construction (stick built or modular) can be placed on the foundation above the required BFE elevation.
G. Project Priorities

Project Priority Phasing

Many factors will affect the timing of the rebuilding and repopulation process including dedication of the necessary resources to repair the public infrastructure as well as the ability of former residents to rebuild and find jobs. The phasing plan reflects a combination of public and private actions necessary to begin the rebuilding process.

As noted under the Principal Rebuilding Strategies, the extent of damage is anticipated to have a direct relationship on the rebuilding process – the more severe the damage the longer it will take to rebuild. Other factors will also impact the rebuilding process such as stakeholder commitments to rebuild. Property owners and especially resident homeowners whose properties are salvageable are the most likely to return sooner if corresponding infrastructure investments are made.

The condition of streets and utilities were analyzed and overlaid with ownership patterns to understand where rebuilding is most likely to take place initially. This analysis was then factored in with assumptions about how quickly the phases of the rebuilding process could proceed, what services were needed and when special projects could realistically be implemented.

The result was a series of phasing diagrams and tables reflecting a rational rebuilding sequence and the level of public funding required to realize each project or task. The action plan was divided into three phases:

A Community Vision for the Future of the Holy Cross / Lower Ninth Ward

Project Priorities

Early Action Plan - 1 to 3 Years

- Areas requiring multiple interventions including repair of streets and infrastructure, rebuilding of facilities, rehabilitation of existing housing, and construction of new infill housing and new housing initiatives
- Restoration of existing streets
- Reconstruction of failed pavement

Early Action Plan Components

- Street Reconstruction
- Caffin Street
- Arby Street
- Reyno Street
- Gordon Street
- Sarion Street
- Seawall Reconstruction on Targeted Streets
- Street Light Replacement (All Streets)
- Street Sign Replacement (All Streets)
- St. Claude Ave Neutral Zone
- N. Claiborne Ave Neutral Zone
- Mississippi River Levee Improvements
- Industrial Canal Bridge Improvements
- MUK Jr. School
- Edelen Elementary School
- St. Martin School (Elementary)
- I Town Center
- Elderly Housing
- High School (Vesica School w/ Library)
- Retail (including Supermarket)
- Neighborhood Park
- Police and Fire Stations
- Waterfront / New Housing

New Orleans Neighborhoods Rebuilding Plan
September 23rd, 2006
Early Action Plan elements to be realized in a 1 to 3 year period; Mid-Term Action Plan to be realized in a 1 to 5 year period and long term action plan to be realized over 1 to 10 years. Again many factors will determine the actual timing and what projects get implemented.

Project Priorities Assumptions

Street Reconstruction – Almost all of the neighborhood streets require some level of work. However there are some streets, Caffin for example, that are in relatively good condition and any substantial work can be deferred to the beyond the ten year rebuilding cycle (shown in blue on the street assessment diagram). Streets that do not have curbs are targeted for full reconstruction. Many of these streets were not been repaired after Hurricane Betsy and were in very poor condition prior to Hurricane Katrina. Targeted streets that had curbs and catchbasins are assumed to require resurfacing only.

Street Lights – Streets targeted for early action are to also receive new street lighting – spaced every 100 feet. All intersections of streets in the Mid and Long Term Plans would also receive lighting to insure public safety. Regular street lighting would be done at the same time as targeted street improvements until the entire neighborhood is relit.

Street Trees – Street trees would be planted as part of the phased improvements to the targeted streets. Street trees are not proposed on the east-west streets since these are short blocks and many do not have sufficient easement and/or lawn area to be accommodated in the public r.o.w. Neutral grounds plantings are carried under the respective lines in the funding matrix.

Street Signs - Most of the street signs were blown away by Hurricane Katrina. As a result, all of the neighborhood streets would get new street signs as part of the early action plan for public safety and because street signs are not big ticket items.

Project Priorities Funding Matrix

What ties the Neighborhoods Rebuilding Plan to funding are the identification of specific projects and an estimate of initial costs (by project) for each neighborhood. The cost analyses are provided on an order-of-magnitude basis as to the scope and priority of the project proposed and the investment required. As such, variations as to the scope of the project could result in variations on the final cost of construction.

In the process of the 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; additionally other sources of cost identification included the Means Cost Data and our team’s professional experience inside and outside of New Orleans.

No single source of funding or financial plan will be capable of dealing with the level of capital improvements needed for total redevelopment and reconstruction of all the projects. 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 multiple sources of funding will be required in most cases. The ability to obtain these funds will rest with the City of New Orleans, the State and the Federal Government and neighborhood groups and advisory committees.

Each matrix matches proposed projects with potential funding sources identified in the planning process. While not exhaustive in its scope, it serves as a guide to where funds could originate. A substantial financial commitment by federal and state entities are a vital ingredient in the recovery effort and is needed to provide the necessary economic infrastructure to attract private investment necessary 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 community residents believe are the highest 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 cannot be determined without further study.
but are important components. These include:

- Specific studies to determine the actual cost to governmental entities for certain public/private initiatives. We have noted the cost for executing these studies (only).
- 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 are 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.

The following is description of the early and mid term projects proposed for the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood Rebuilding Plan.
H. Strategic Interventions

Strategic Intervention No. 1 - Street Repair
The Street Repair initiative would be part of a multi-pronged approach to support rehabilitation of the sections of the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood that sustained the least damage. These areas also had the highest percentages of owner-occupied dwelling units indicating that these combined factors will create the environment that will facilitate sustained redevelopment.

Strategic Intervention No. 2 - Implement Housing Recovery Initiatives
The number one priority of the residents of the neighborhood is housing - the facilitation of the rebuilding process to allow them to return to their neighborhood. There are a series of City, State and Federal initiatives available to the residents that would assist them in that process but the tools to access those initiatives are not readily available. The City of New Orleans should take active measures to assist the residents and insure that they are actively involved in the rebuilding process.

A first step could be the establishment of a Housing Assistance Center that would be neighborhood-based and would provide information regarding funding and other services that are available to residents committed to rebuilding. This center could address such issues as the FEMA grant program, the new Base Flood Elevation requirements, the building permit process and the City’s housing initiatives including the Lot Next Door Program, Road Home Program and others.

Strategic Intervention No. 3 - New Mid-Rise Housing
An immediate infusion of public capital is needed to create a critical mass of housing to allow former and new residents to come back to the neighborhood along with the commercial and institutional infrastructure to support those new residents. This could be accomplished by the development of an elderly housing complex with mid-rise housing in the Town Center and on the Claiborne Avenue Corridor. It would also bring a 24 hour presence and greater security to the complex with a lot of “eyes-on-the-street.” The proposed plan shows multiple mid-rise buildings (3 to 6 stories) with potentially 260,000 square feet of programmable space and up to 300 housing units.

Strategic Intervention No. 4 - Improve Retail Options
The community has had limited and poor quality retail stores. The plan proposes the creation of a shopping center with a supermarket, pharmacy and other retail services to support the returning residents and new residents. The stores could also be utilized by commuters using N. Claiborne to access the CBD. The proposed plan shows single story structures potentially supplemented with second story space providing 145,000 square feet of retail space.

Strategic Intervention No. 5 - Junior/Senior High School
The Lawless Junior High School is un-repairable and isolated. As the neighborhood rebuilds there will be a need for a new secondary school. This new Junior/Senior High would provide real educational opportunities to the Neighborhood, particularly with the future of the Holy Cross High School in question. The school would also be a point of pride for the neighborhood. Although the City had an oversupply of classroom space pre-Katrina, the new Town Center complex could accommodate the demand for new schools created by the existing aging and storm damaged facilities and limited availability of land. The Plan shows a new facility of 150,000 square feet that could house 950 students.

The inclusion of an athletic field could meet the high school’s needs as well as those of the neighborhood. The community expressed some concerns regarding locating the fields directly on N. Claiborne - alternate locations should be examined. Additional facilities including an aquatic center would replace the undersized and over burdened Sam Bonart Playground and Pool.

Strategic Intervention No. 6 - Police and Fire Sub Stations
Improving public safety will be critical for redevelopment of the neighborhood. The establishment of police and fire sub stations in

Strategic Intervention No. 7 - Jourdan Street Corridor
This initiative would continue to build upon the area improvements created by the Army Corp of Engineers levee reconstruction program by creating a new landscaped boulevard with buffered open space and a light industrial/office use zone to provide new employment opportunities to the neighborhood.

Strategic Intervention No. 8 - Jackson Barracks
The approval of a $200 Million Master Plan to restore Jackson Barracks ensuring its long term presence in the Lower Ninth Ward is a significant commitment by the State of Louisiana. The Community should have a role in the master planning process to assure the Barracks continues to be a good neighbor to the
neighborhood. Items to address include design of security fencing, interface with the guard's residential area, reconstruction of Dubreuil Street, and buffering of certain internal functions such as surface parking areas.

**Strategic Intervention No. 9 - Elementary School Renovation and Reconstruction**
The near term renovations of the MLK Jr Magnet School and Library and Edison Elementary School will be critical to the repopulation process. Commitments have been made to the MLK Jr renovations with pledges that the facility will reopen for September 2007. Renovations to the Edison Elementary should proceed as well to insure that the facility is not lost to neglect and that it is ready to provide classroom space for the phased repopulation of the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood.

As the repopulation continues in the coming years additional schools will be needed. These new facilities cannot be created overnight so long term planning for the new Hardin and Lawless Elementary Schools should be initiated as soon as possible.

**Strategic Intervention No. 10 - Health Center**
Adequate healthcare facilities are needed in this rebuilding effort not only to meet long-term needs but to address current impacts on the community from the flooding. The Lower Ninth Ward Health Center that was located in the Sanchez Center has not been reopened and was not adequate to meet the neighborhood's needs pre-Katrina. A new facility could be provided on the upper floors of the Town Center's Shopping Center and should be budgeted for a new 50,000 square foot facility.

**Strategic Intervention No. 11 – Florida Avenue Reconstruction**
The Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood has been impacted by truck traffic using Florida Avenue as the primary route from industrial areas in Holy Cross and St. Bernard Parish to the Desire/Florida Avenue Industrial Area. Florida Avenue also separates the Neighborhood from the Norfolk Southern rail line to the north. This roadway had been in poor condition prior to Katrina and sustained additional damage due to the flooding. A reconstruction of the artery to create an industrial parkway with a parallel residential street would provide an alternative truck route mitigating traffic impact on the neighborhood. This landscaped parkway and buffer zone would also provide visual and acoustical relief.
H. A Community Vision for the future of the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood

The Vision:
A Lower Ninth Ward that welcomes back its former residents and invites new residents into a vastly improved neighborhood with good streets, better services and transportation connections.

The Vision:
A neighborhood that celebrates its many historic assets and natural and man-made resources.

The Vision:
A Lower Ninth Ward where the rehabilitation of existing buildings and construction of new buildings employs sustainable design principles to the extent possible and affordable.
The Vision:  
A neighborhood that also encourages innovation in the design of new building types, parks and open spaces.

The Vision:  
A neighborhood that provides amenities and a mix of activities accessible to all age groups...a neighborhood of choice.
In grateful recognition to the legacy of courage and love, this monument is dedicated to the victims and survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Hurricane Katrina - August 29, 2005
Hurricane Rita - September 24, 2005