

Section 1 - Introduction

This introductory section provides an overview of what is presented in this Citywide Strategic Recovery and Rebuilding Plan (The Citywide Plan). It defines: 1) what a recovery plan is; 2) the purpose for creating it; 3) who created it; 4) how it was created; 5) who should implement it; and 6) how it should be implemented. It also discusses how neighborhood and district plans were incorporated into the Citywide Plan. Lastly, this introduction discusses the assumptions that helped shape the plan, the limitations of the plan, and how this report is organized.

1.1 What is a Recovery Plan?

The recovery plan is a tool to help guide the repair and rebuilding of New Orleans in a rational way that creates stability and paves the way for future growth and prosperity. A year and a half after the storm, the effects of the disaster are still being felt. Many homes, businesses and entire neighborhoods remain uninhabited, the population is low and slowly returning, sectors of the economy are still down, utility services (electricity, phone, and cable services) are sometimes spotty and unreliable, major infrastructure (streets, water and sewerage systems, and drainage canals and pumping stations) are in need of a major overhaul, and the hurricane flood protection system remains suspect. Further, vital community services, including police, fire and EMS, healthcare (hospitals, clinics, psychiatric care, doctors and dentists offices), and schools are in short supply and unevenly distributed across the population. The Recovery Plan provides a systematic approach to repairing and rebuilding the damage caused by the disaster as quickly as possible so that current residents of the City receive the essential services they need while the City prepares the way for displaced citizens and newcomers to return to a safer, stronger, smarter City.

1.1.1 Why is a Recovery Plan Necessary?

A recovery and rebuilding plan is necessary for two main reasons:

- ◆ The City does not have the financial or manpower assets to fix everything at once; therefore, priorities must be set and choices must be made about the allocation of scarce resources over time, and
- ◆ It is unlikely that every former resident will return, which means that new settlement patterns that encourage the efficient use of resources, and that provide security and a sense of community, need to be employed to rebuild the City.

After a disaster such as Katrina, it cannot be assumed that everyone will want to, or be able to, return to the City, or to the place where they lived prior to the storm. Consequently, the Recovery Plan provides a framework for the investment of scarce public funds and manpower assets across the City geographically and across a specific planning timeframe, based on the demonstrated desire of residents to return and the status of ongoing flood protection

improvements. Public investments will largely be guided by the reduction of risk in formerly flood-prone areas.

1.1.2 How does a Recovery Plan differ from a Master Land Use Plan or a Comprehensive Plan?

A Recovery Plan differs from a Master Land Use Plan or a Comprehensive Plan mainly in its focus on capital projects and programs to correct or repair the effects of the disaster, and also on preventive measures to assure that a similar disaster does not occur again. Further, a Recovery Plan is characterized by the short time frame for its development, which is usually measured in months, not years, as is the case with many traditional planning efforts. Time is of the essence when lives have been disrupted, when businesses have been destroyed and communities torn apart.

1.1.3 What is the Recovery Timeframe?

The Citywide Plan estimates the timeframe for recovery at ten years, or more, based on our professional judgment and experience with other disasters. The extent of the damage to the citizenry, the physical environment and the image of the City was unprecedented. Just as the City was not built in a day, it cannot be repaired in a day.

Ten years is set as a goal to achieve Recovery, meaning that after that amount of time, the physical damage of the storm has been removed, repaired or rebuilt; the major physical infrastructure serving the residents of the City (water, sewerage, drainage, streets, and electricity) has been renovated to modern standards; the essential social infrastructure (schools, healthcare and public safety) is of high quality and commensurate with the population it serves; the economy is stable and growing; and the quality of life in New Orleans is back to - or better than - what it was before Katrina.

1.1.4 What is the Citywide Plan's General Approach to Recovery and Rebuilding?

The Citywide Plan states that the recovery and rebuilding of the City is contingent on two related factors: (1) the rate at which residents are returning to their homes in neighborhoods throughout the City; and (2) the continuing risk of future flooding from another hurricane.

1.1.4.1 *The Rate of Return*

The rate of residents returning to neighborhoods, as measured by a comparison of utility usage by city block between November 2004 and November 2006 (see Figure 3.1), varies widely across the City. In some areas, virtually everyone has returned, while in others it is estimated

that fewer than fifteen percent, or less, of residents have returned. This phenomenon has a high correlation with the natural topography of the ground, the depth of flooding, and the degree of damage to homes. In other words, the lower the elevation of the ground and the house, the greater the destruction to the home, resulting in higher costs to rebuild. Given the lack of historical precedent before Katrina, many people did not have sufficient flood insurance in place to cover the full costs to repair or replace their homes. Consequently, this would make them more likely to be waiting for outside financial help, such as that promised by the Louisiana Recovery Authority's (LRA) Road Home Program, before initiating repairs or reconstruction.

The Road Home Program has set aside nearly \$6 billion for homeowners (and landlords) to fund repairs to single and multi-family homes and businesses. As it has been applied to date, the compensation from the Road Home Program falls far short of what is needed for residents to rebuild their homes. For example, compensation is based on pre-Katrina home values, but post-Katrina construction costs have added 30% to 40% to the cost to rebuild a home. Further, new Advisory Base Flood Elevations (ABFE's) published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) may require many to rebuild to higher elevations, further adding to costs. As a result, many people – including those who have received “award letters” from the Road Home – continue to wait and weigh their options before making a commitment to rebuild or relocate.

It may be coincidental, but the population of New Orleans peaked at 627,525 people in the 1960 U.S. Census. Hurricane Betsy occurred five years later. Since then, the population of the City has declined each decade, decreasing to 484,674 in the 2000 census, or only 77% of the population of four decades earlier. Furthermore, it is generally believed by disaster experts that trends that were happening in an area before a disaster, such as population decline, would only be exaggerated after the disaster.

This should give city planners and officials further cause for concern. The City of New Orleans is changing in ways that no one can accurately predict. Many proposed programs and projects in the Citywide Recovery Plan itself, which have yet to be fully delineated, may influence public and private reinvestment decisions (indeed, it is hoped that they do.) Therefore, care should be taken not to commit scarce resources too early to areas to which residents may eventually elect not to repopulate. It will require a delicate balancing act to monitor the pace of recovery across the City (i.e., to support recovery in some areas while holding back in others). (For more information, refer to the discussion on Population in Section 2 and the Strategic Planning Framework in Section 3.)

1.1.4.2 Flood Protection

The Citywide Recovery Plan provides an assessment of the risk of future flooding across the City of New Orleans (*see* Section 2 – Recovery Assessment, for detailed information). If residents were not fully aware of the potential for hurricane storm surge prior to Katrina, they are now. Katrina was not an isolated incident. Hurricane-generated storm surges of similar magnitude have entered Lake Borgne and Lake Pontchartrain and inundated the metropolitan area four times in the past one hundred years: 1915; 1947; 1965; and 2005. Fortunately, the 1915 and 1947 storms occurred before much of the low-lying areas had been settled, resulting in

relatively little damage to structures. Hurricane Betsy in 1965 and Katrina in 2005 are different stories. The Citywide Plan provides information to recovery planners and individuals about where the population is returning now and where flood protection improvements are being made now and in the future. This information is intended to help guide public and private investments.

1.1.5 How does the Citywide Recovery and Rebuilding Plan fit into the overall effort to rebuild the City?

For cities, catastrophic disasters take years from which to recover. The recovery and rebuilding effort will be enormous and will be led by elements of the local, state, and federal governments, as well as the private sector. The major governmental programs that support the rebuilding effort include:

- ◆ FEMA Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs
- ◆ U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Flood Protection Improvements
- ◆ Small Business Administration (SBA) Loans and Grants
- ◆ Louisiana’s Comprehensive Coastal Protection Master Plan
- ◆ The State of Louisiana’s Road Home and Other Grant Programs

These programs, many of which were in place prior to the storm, are indispensable, but often can be impediments that slow the pace of funding.

The second major source of support for the recovery comes from the private sector, fueled largely by insurance proceeds and investment dollars. These funds are less restricted in their application, but are also less focused, as they proceed from thousands of individual decisions about how, where, and when to rebuild.

The Citywide Plan provides a strategic recovery framework to guide both public and private investment decisions, and identifies programs and projects that may not necessarily be identified or eligible for the established programs listed above, but which are nonetheless important to the recovery of the City. The Citywide Plan identifies recovery programs and projects that have not yet been funded by other entities, thereby laying the groundwork for additional future funding requests from the State, the federal government or other entities.

1.1.6 Who will be responsible for implementing the Citywide Plan?

In December 2006, the Mayor created the Office of Recovery Management to spearhead the City’s recovery effort. The Office of Recovery Management, working with and through City Departments (such as the Department of Public Works [DPW], City Planning Commission [CPC] and the Office of Safety and Permits [S&P]) and semi-autonomous agencies (such as the Sewerage and Water Board [S&WB], the Regional Transit Authority [RTA] and the new East and West Bank Levee Districts) will implement elements of the Recovery Plan in concert. (For more information refer to Section 5 - Implementation.)

In addition to the City, the state and federal governments have important roles to play, both in repairing and rebuilding state and federal facilities as well as in managing state and federal funding for programs and local projects. Further, the federal government, mainly represented by the USACE, has the major responsibility to rebuild and improve the regional hurricane protection system (HPS). This includes work in Orleans Parish as well as in adjacent parishes. While the USACE has the responsibility for protecting the City from hurricanes, it must coordinate and cooperate with the State of Louisiana, the City of New Orleans, and other local governments in the design and construction of this integrated, regional system.

The State of Louisiana, likewise, has a major responsibility to rebuild the coast and restore wetlands that protect the metropolitan area. The State must also coordinate and cooperate with the USACE, the City of New Orleans, and other local governments in the design and construction of the Comprehensive Coastal Protection Master Plan.

And, finally, the citizens and residents of the City of New Orleans are the most important ingredient of the recovery process. A safer, smarter, stronger, and speedier recovery requires a commitment from citizens to continue their personal investment in the City and to stay engaged in the processes of planning and rebuilding.

1.2 Who Created the Recovery Plan and How?

The Citywide Plan was put together by a team of mostly local urban planning practitioners and university professors, called the Citywide Team. The Citywide Team worked with a number of nationally recognized architectural firms (referred to as the “District Planners”) who were responsible for the development of neighborhood and planning district plans as part of the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP) process.

In the end however, it is the citizens of New Orleans who deserve the credit for developing the Citywide Strategic Recovery and Rebuilding Plan, for it was largely through their tireless attendance at neighborhood, planning district, and citywide community congresses that their voices were heard and their desires made known. The effort to plan New Orleans’ recovery began shortly after Katrina with the work of the **Bring New Orleans Back Commission (BNOB)**, which identified citywide needs and issues that should be addressed on a short-term and long-term basis in order for the City to achieve a “sustainable, environmentally safe, socially equitable community with a vibrant economy.”¹

Later, over the course of 2006, thousands of citizens and business owners worked together to define the vision, goals, and objectives for the repair, recovery, and rebuilding of their devastated neighborhoods. These efforts were supported in large part by the City Council’s Neighborhoods Rebuilding Plan (referred to as the **Lambert Plans**). The Lambert Plans focused on flooded neighborhoods and resulted in a list of recovery projects for the most devastated areas of the City and was submitted to the City Council in October 2006.

¹ “Rebuilding New Orleans” report by Mayor C. Ray Nagin and the Bring New Orleans Back Committee.

1.2.1 The UNOP Process

In late 2006, in order to satisfy the Louisiana Recovery Authority’s requirement that parish recovery plans demonstrate broad public support and provide a plan for the entire parish (not just the damaged areas), the final planning process was initiated to bring together the prior planning efforts through a highly public process. Funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, the Clinton-Bush Katrina Fund and the Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF), the UNOP was a five-month planning process established by the Mayor, City Council, and City Planning Commission. It was tasked to produce a unified recovery and rebuilding plan for New Orleans by the start of 2007, based, in part, on the needs, vision, and goals of the previous planning efforts.

1.2.1.1 UNOP Citywide and District Planning Efforts

To bring about this unified recovery plan for Orleans Parish, a two-tiered planning process was created. At one level, teams of nationally recognized architects and urban planners worked with neighborhood residents to create thirteen Planning District Recovery Plans – New Orleans has thirteen official planning districts containing seventy-three officially-recognized neighborhoods. The District Planners were responsible for the review and integration of elements of the forty-nine Lambert Neighborhood Plans into the District Plans.

At another level, a Citywide Team of local urban planners and engineers analyzed citywide systems and issues, and also informed and guided the District Planners in their efforts. The two teams structured their work to run parallel to each other in three sequential phases: Recovery Assessment; Scenario Development; and Plan Development (*see* Figure 1.2). The Citywide Team and the District Planners held weekly meetings to coordinate activities and exchange information.

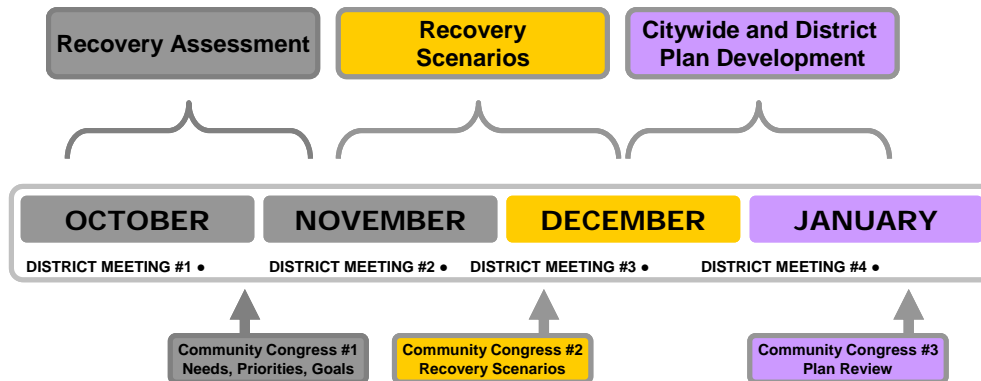
1.2.1.2 Community Participation

Public input and involvement was an integral part of the entire UNOP process. Several mechanisms were used to engage as wide a group of residents as possible, including those who have been able to return to the City, as well as the thousands who remain displaced but have a vested interest in the recovery of New Orleans. These efforts included:

- ◆ Grass-roots outreach in New Orleans and other key cities where displaced residents are living
- ◆ Three newsletters
- ◆ Call-centers and surveys
- ◆ An extensive website
- ◆ Four rounds of District Meetings held in each of the thirteen planning districts
- ◆ Three “Community Congresses”

Figure 1-2 UNOP Process Timeline

Major Phases



Major Meetings

In the second and third “Community Congresses,” displaced residents living around the country were able to participate through web and satellite technology.

The public participation process was critical to the development of the Recovery Plan, as evidenced by the following priorities expressed in the Community Congresses:

- ◆ Flood protection is the most important issue. The City should advocate for Category 5 flood protection and make sure that it gets it. This includes coastal and wetlands restoration to protect the City from future storms.
- ◆ Residents strongly support voluntary standards for rebuilding to reduce future flood risk.
- ◆ Residents want to rebuild in stable and safe neighborhoods with their former neighbors, but prefer being given financial incentives to do so, rather than having where people can live mandated.
- ◆ Residents recognize the need for a range of affordable housing and support the development of low- and moderate-income public housing – but they also like linking such housing to job training and support services.
- ◆ Residents support the reopening and/or rebuilding of public facilities (like schools, healthcare centers, libraries and parks) based on repopulation and recovery rates, but also support the use of temporary and mobile facilities in less populated areas. They want to know that a plan is in place to develop permanent facilities as neighborhoods repopulate and that the quality of public services, especially schools, will be improved over what existed prior to Katrina.
- ◆ Residents support the idea that, where possible and within reason, public facilities should be combined under one roof to increase efficiency and lower costs. Schools, in particular, should serve as multi-use community centers.

At the third community congress, participants were asked about their concerns for the Citywide Plan and the City in general. Their responses indicated concern that:

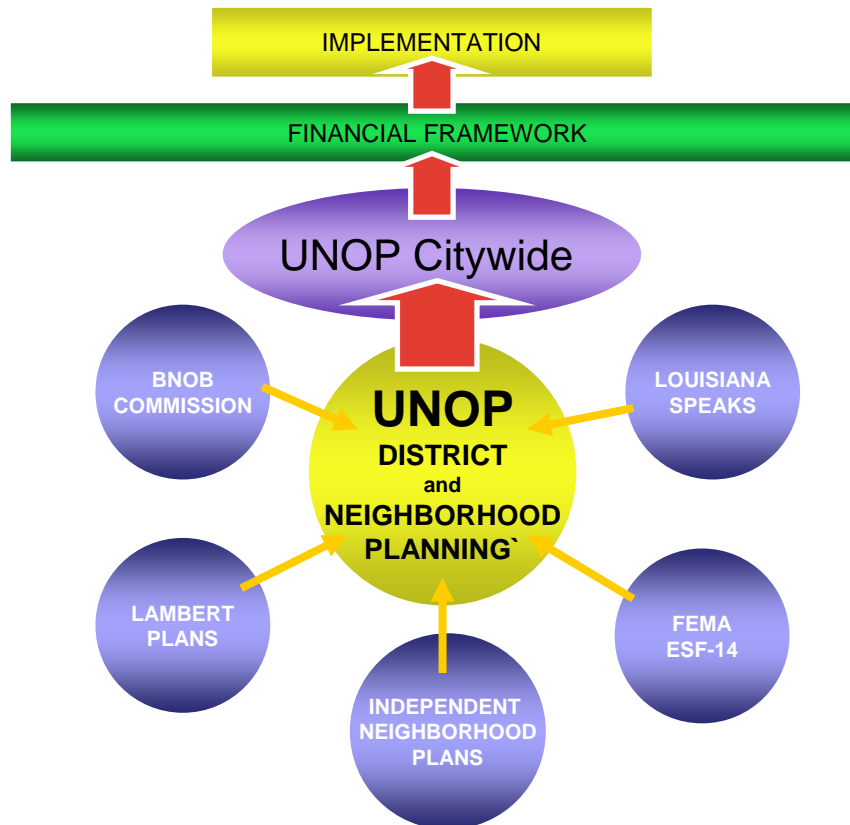
- ◆ poor governance and lack of accountability would harm the recovery
- ◆ there wouldn't be enough money to fund the Citywide Plan
- ◆ issues of equity would arise from the increased cost of living in the City (due to high insurance and utility rates, high housing costs, and increased construction costs and labor rates)
- ◆ the Road Home Program, in order to be effective, would have to be overhauled
- ◆ meaningful citizen input should continue into future planning and recovery
- ◆ There was concern that once the Citywide Plan was completed and delivered to the City that there would not be a meaningful citizen input into plan implementation.

1.2.2 How were the District Plans Integrated into the Citywide Plan?

The District Plans helped to build the Citywide Plan and as a result they are acknowledged and referenced in the Citywide Plan. The District Plans are stand-alone documents, intended to be used throughout the recovery period (and beyond) as a guide to City officials and citizens in the rebuilding of subsets of the City (i.e., neighborhoods and planning districts). They are an important component of the Unified New Orleans Plan.

The Citywide Plan, on the other hand, is focused on projects and programs that have significance beyond a single neighborhood or planning district. The Citywide Plan incorporated District Plan projects into the Citywide Plan in two ways. First, it identified individual projects within District Plans that had citywide significance (the LSU Medical School Teaching Hospital, for example) and brought them into the Citywide Plan as individual projects. Second, it grouped similar types of projects mentioned frequently in the planning district plans and created a citywide project for that category of projects. For example, most planning districts listed projects to repair neighborhood schools, parks, libraries, and local streets, etc., projects that individually don't rise to the level of projects of citywide significance. However, when grouped together as a citywide project (Repair, Renovate or Construct New District/Neighborhood Parks, for example), they do. District Plans, all district projects are listed (and cross-referenced to citywide projects) in Appendix B of this document.

Figure 1.3 Integration of other planning efforts into the Citywide Plan



1.3 What are the Underlying Assumptions behind the Recovery Plan?

The Unified New Orleans Plan process began in August of 2006, nearly one year after Hurricane Katrina. Much had transpired during that year and UNOP planners naturally had to recognize conditions as they existed when the planning process began. (It has already been discussed how UNOP utilized the plans that were developed prior to UNOP.) The following are some of the assumptions that UNOP planners assumed at the beginning of the UNOP planning process.

- ◆ Every resident has the right to return to New Orleans. All neighborhoods of the City will be rebuilt.

- ◆ Property owners want financial assistance for protecting their homes and investments from future flooding.
- ◆ The City has the opportunity to re-invent itself in a smarter, stronger and safer manner.

The Mayor and other City leaders have consistently called for resettlement as soon as the necessary utilities (water, sewerage, drainage and electricity) were available. Public and private utility companies worked to restore basic infrastructure systems as quickly as possible. *UNOP had to recognize that people were already living in every neighborhood in the City* (albeit in trailers in many cases). The UNOP and Citywide Team thought that this policy allowed people with the means and the will a quick way to return to the City and participate in the recovery planning process.

There are other ways to deliver infrastructure and social services efficiently without having to shrink the City’s footprint, but in some hard hit neighborhoods, the so called “jack-‘o-lantern effect” may be very real and long-lasting, and this needs to be mitigated. The Citywide Plan recommends the “Neighborhood Stabilization Program,” to help people (in the areas hardest hit – with the fewest people returning) to relocate to planned “cluster developments” where there would be upgraded infrastructure, social and commercial services, and especially, neighbors. (For more information, see “Neighborhood Stabilization” in Section 3.)

The Citywide Plan would create two programs to assist homeowners in raising their houses, the “Elevate New Orleans” and the “Slab-on-Grade Remediation” programs. These programs would raise our houses at least to the level of FEMA’s Advisory Base Flood Elevations (ABFE’s). (See Section 3 for more details.)

The Citywide Plan recommends that while we are rebuilding our City and raising our houses (making us safer and stronger), we also need to employ architectural styles that echo our rich traditions and reinforce the notion of the uniqueness of New Orleans among American cities. The Citywide Plan recommends the development of a New Orleans Pattern Book to guide architects and home builders as they rebuild the City. (Refer to “Historic Preservation and Urban Design” in Section 3.) The Plan also calls for citywide architectural review and the creation of a Master Plan with the force of law along with a new Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Maps.

1.4 What are the Limitations of the Plan?

The scale of New Orleans’ disaster was unprecedented and the scope of the issues that had to be dealt with in the Citywide Plan was also unprecedented. UNOP’s mission was to have a draft plan ready to be delivered to the City Planning Commission by January 29, 2007. That mission was accomplished. While UNOP was not charged with creating a Comprehensive Plan, it did create a comprehensive Recovery Plan. The following are some limitations of the Recovery Plan.

- ◆ Many proposed programs are concepts and need further development by others in the implementation phase, once funding is secured.

- ◆ The Plan is dependent on outside funding sources and future levels of funding are uncertain.
- ◆ Several key elements of the Plan are outside the control of the City.
- ◆ The Plan does not specifically identify areas of town - by name or by map - where it recommends that public investment be minimized until certain criteria are met.

First, the Citywide Plan recommends the creation of some programs to be managed by departments of city government, such as the Office of Recovery Management or the City Planning Commission. Some of the Programs, such as the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, will require the development of detailed rules and procedures to define eligibility, program requirements, funding limits, etc. This will take time, so, in cases like this, the Recovery Plan is not so much a blue print for action as a road map to take the City to the next step.

Second, the Recovery Plan does not bring any money with it; it is completely dependent on outside sources of funding for everything from repairing the levees to the Road Home Program. to the Citywide Plan accounts for this within the Plan by identifying projects and programs that are needed for the recovery, but which have not yet been either identified or funded. (In this regard, the Plan serves as the basis for requests for additional funding from the State, the federal government or other sources.) Also, the strategic planning framework allows decision-makers the flexibility to make investment decisions based on funds available.

Third, several key programs and projects are not under the direct control of the City. For example, the Road Home Program – a key component of getting people to move back into the City - is being administered by the State. The way this program is set up, giving money to individual homeowners in random order, is not helping the City. The Citywide Plan wants to bring neighborhoods back, not merely individuals. Local control of some of the Road Home Program funds would help speed up the City's recovery.

Another important program, the upgrading of the Hurricane Protection System to Category 3 protection, is under the control of the USACE and the U.S. Congress. The City must be vigilant that funding is secured and construction completed in a timely manner. (This is another reason that taking individual responsibility for protecting one's own home from flooding is an important component of this plan.)

Other components of the Plan that are largely out of the City's hands include the health care system and the public schools, which are primarily managed by the State. Upgrading these two systems are crucial to the recovery of New Orleans, but their fate is being discussed in Baton Rouge. So it is also with the LSU Teaching Hospital (the State) and the Veterans Administration Hospital (the federal government). It has already been mentioned that the State and federal government are responsible for repairing facilities that they own (including state and federal highways).

Last, the Citywide Plan does not provide maps of recovery planning policy areas because this must be done as part of the implementation phase, when funding is secure. Also, all maps will

change, as the rate of population return within neighborhoods and the risk of future flooding in those neighborhoods are constantly changing. A map drawn six months ago would be very different from one drawn today or one drawn six months from now.

1.5 How is the Report Organized?

The UNOP Citywide Strategic Recovery and Rebuilding Plan, consists of six sections, including this Introduction, plus two appendices. The following are thumbnail sketches of the contents of each section of this document:

1. Introduction – Introduces UNOP and the Citywide Strategic Recovery and Rebuilding Plan.
2. Recovery Assessment - A summary of conditions existing within the City across a broad spectrum of sectors in the fall of 2006.
3. Citywide Recovery Framework – discusses the Vision and Goals for Recovery, Recovery Scenarios, the Strategic Recovery Framework and Recovery Strategies Through Time.
4. Summary of Recovery Projects – provides a summary of programs and projects recommended by the Citywide Team, by priority and over a 10-year planning timeframe.
5. Implementation – identifies the structure for managing the Recovery.
6. Financial Plan – identifies costs and potential funding sources.

Appendix A – Citywide Recovery Project Summary Sheets.

Appendix B – List of Planning District Projects