

ATTACHMENT A

Volume 2
chapter 14
 THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

GOAL	POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS	For More Information, See page:
<p>1 <i>All parties affected by public decisions about planning and development have sufficient opportunity to build capacity to understand, apply, and act upon information pertaining to these decisions.</i></p>	<p>1.A. Provide training and capacity-building resources (in part through a system of District Planners) for neighborhood and other community-based organizations, city employees, and public agencies to provide essential information for reasoned decision-making and to help them better understand their role in shaping planning and development decisions.</p>	<p>15.12</p>
<p>2 <i>Establish a formal neighborhood participation program (NPP) that provides a structured and accessible process by which the City receives and responds to input from every part of the community on planning and development decisions in a timely fashion.</i></p>	<p>2.A. Establish a system of broadly representative district wide councils to serve as a platform for organized discussion of, public input into, and formal advisory comment on proposed land use actions.</p>	<p>15.14</p>
	<p>2.B. Provide for Issue Advisory Committee, at the CPC's discretion in the CPC's rules, regulations and procedures.</p>	<p>15.14</p>
	<p>2.C. The City of New Orleans will work with community groups, neighborhood groups and the citizens in general to prepare a NPP ordinance for adoption by the City Council, which implements the letter and spirit of the charter amendment's requirement for a NPP.</p>	<p>15.15</p>
	<p>2.D. On an annual basis, the CPC system will be reviewed by citizens and city government in order to ascertain any revisions or amendments to the policy statement.</p>	<p>15.15</p>
	<p>2.E. Ensure adequate notification and information sharing for land use actions.</p>	<p>15.15</p>
	<p>2.F. Establish a formal process through which neighborhoods and planning districts can request neighborhood or areaplan.</p>	<p>15.16</p>
	<p>2.G. Establish a formal system for presenting district wide council and other stake holder advisory recommendations to the CPC as a matter of record.</p>	<p>15.16</p>
	<p>2.H. Provide adequate administrative and logistical support for the NPP.</p>	<p>15.16</p>
	<p>2.I. While the CPC should work closely with the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Engagement, initially locate the NPP as part of the CPC.</p>	<p>15.16</p>

GOAL	POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS	For More Information, See page:
3 <i>Broad public access to timely information about proposed plans and projects and other City information is available.</i>	3.A. Use planners and other staff to serve as liaisons between the CPC and residents.	15.17
	3.B. Consider implementing NOLAStat or a similar program that makes City information easily accessible to the public.	15.18
4 <i>Predictable and timely processes for community review of project proposals.</i>	4.A. Provide a regularly updated list of land use actions that are subject to review through the NPP.	15.19
	4.B. Work with other agencies and CPC staff to organize community review of publicly funded projects.	15.19
5 <i>A transparent and open process of City decision-making on land use, development approvals and capital budget expenditures.</i>	5.A. Hold City Planning Commission and other public agency meetings for projects that attract widespread public interest at times that are convenient and accessible to the public.	15.20
	5.B. Develop, publish and follow clear policies and procedures for decision making on land use actions.	15.20
	5.C. Establish procedures for community input into the Capital Improvement Program.	15.20
	5.D. Establish a Neighborhood Improvement Fund for small neighborhood generated projects.	15.21

FINDINGS

- There has been a significant increase in the number of active neighborhood organizations since Hurricane Katrina and they have played a leadership role in initiating the city's recovery.
- There is a wide divergence among different neighborhoods in the structure, breadth of membership, and other qualities that characterize community-serving organizations. As a result, some neighborhoods are more able than others to insure that all elements of the community (home-owners, renters, retailers, and others) participate in decisions that affect the neighborhood, initiate neighborhood plans, work with developers to revise proposals, and help shape land use decisions and other policies that affect quality of life. A system of district wide councils that serve as an organization of community organizations in each district can "raise the bar" for all neighborhoods by assisting in capacity building; providing a forum for organizations to discuss common issues; initiating citywide conversations among multiple neighborhoods; providing a structure for working with developers and others to shape development projects, plans, and other land use decisions that enhance the quality and character of neighborhoods and meet essential tests of feasibility; and similar tasks.
- A more formal and effective neighborhood participation system that addresses the needs of all neighborhoods has been under discussion for over a decade.

CHALLENGES

- Providing publicly-accessible information on city agencies, processes, and project proposals
- Enhancing capacity, where needed, among residents and among community-based organizations
- Providing technical support to neighborhoods and other communities to address issues of particular interest to individual neighborhoods upon adequate funding
- Creating a forum that brings together residents (owners and renters) and other members of the community in each district (business owners, property owners, institutions) to work together to resolve neighborhood issues and jointly advocate for neighborhood interests
- Providing a regular, meaningful, and accessible structure for community input into public decisions
- Increasing the transparency and predictability of public decision-making processes
- Creating a system that works for neighborhoods as well as businesses and project proponents
- Providing a streamlined, objective and predictable permitting process for proposed projects
- Finding a mechanism to facilitate participation by communities of interest

Acronyms

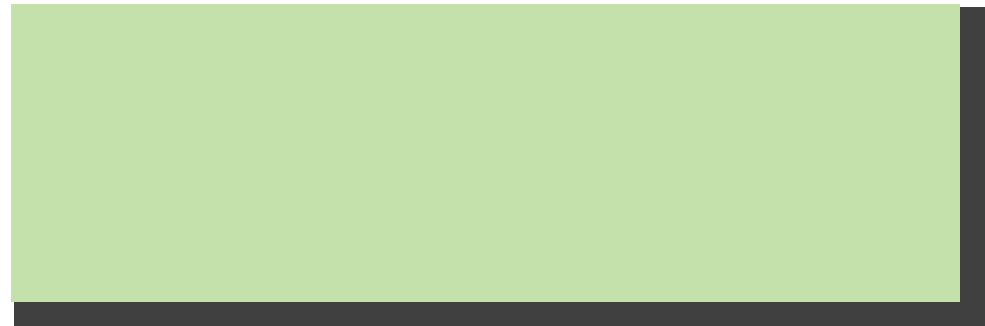
Acronyms used within this chapter:

BGR	Bureau of Government Research	DDD	Downtown Development District
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer	DHH	Department of Health and Hospitals
CBNO	Committee for a Better New Orleans	E-COW	Electronic Community Orientation Workshop
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant	LISC	Local Initiatives Support Corporation
CIP	Capital Improvement Program	NEPA	National Environmental Protection Act
CPC	City Planning Commission	NPN	Neighborhoods Partnership Network
NPP	Neighborhood Participation Program	RTA	New Orleans Regional Transit Authority
D-CDBG	Disaster Community Development Block Grant	UNOP	Unified New Orleans Plan

A Introduction

Civic leaders in New Orleans have long acknowledged the need for greater community involvement in the City's planning and development decisions. Many cities in the U.S. began adopting neighborhood participation programs (NPPs) as early as the 1970s to provide a structure for community stakeholders to help shape and influence municipal decisions. Today, several decades of historical evidence suggests that where NPPs are in place, planning and development decisions result in higher-quality projects that are more beneficial to cities and to residents, and that provide project proponents a simpler, more predictable path to project approval. In other words, it appears that a well-executed NPP is a "win-win" situation for all parties involved. New Orleans can benefit from the lessons learned in other cities, chief among them: that a formal neighborhood participation process succeeds if it supports neighborhood and other community organizations rather than competes with them; if it provides a more effective platform for negotiating with the sponsors of planning initiatives, development projects, and other land use proposals to insure that the results are both positive for neighborhoods and feasible; and if it functions as a useful partner for elected and appointed government—offering valuable advice but not seeking to supplant planning commissions and city councils in their responsibility to render decisions.

New Orleans has never had a formalized structure for neighborhood participation in public planning and development decisions. In the absence of such a structure, the City's decision-making on these matters is often perceived as unpredictable, opaque, and subject to influence by political power and financial resources. This perception is shared by members of grass roots community organizations, residents, and other community members, who want a say in the planning and development of their neighborhoods, and by potential investors—businesses, developers, and institutions—who seek a fair and predictable environment in which to make investments. As a result, during the planning process several neighborhood organizations reported that they could not effectively represent their community's varied interests; others reported the strain of being "forced" to remain hypervigilant in order to protect their neighborhoods from unwanted planning proposals or development; and project proponents assume that development may involve costly processes and delays and that the approval process may become highly politicized and unpredictable.



New Orleans can build on the lessons learned from other cities as well as the community's own work in crafting an appropriate NPP. The CPC staff members who worked on the *New Century New Orleans* plan, a citywide master plan that was not completed before the storm, identified the need for a formal NPP. A decade later, in 2002, the Committee for a Better New Orleans/Metropolitan Area Committee (CBNO/MAC) began research into a NPP model for New Orleans. By 2004, CBNO/MAC had conducted research into other cities' participation programs, held a number of public meetings on the topic, and prepared a draft NPP. In 2003, the Bureau of Governmental Research (BGR) also issued a report calling for increased neighborhood participation in land use decision making in New Orleans.¹

Post-Hurricane Katrina plans, including the *Bring New Orleans Back* plan, completed in 2005; the *Neighborhood Rebuilding* (Lambert) plans completed in 2006; and the *Unified New Orleans Plan*, completed in 2007, reiterated residents' strong desire for a structure for neighborhood participation. BGR issued a second report in 2006 detailing its recommendations for reform in land use decision making processes; it included an organized system of meaningful input by officially recognized neighborhood organizations.² CBNO/MAC revived its initiative to create a NPP in 2007. This initiative, which drew input from community members across the city, calls for a formal structure of district wide councils composed of representatives from officially sanctioned community organizations—organized both by geography and by interest. Both CBNO/MAC and BGR suggested creation of a City office and dedication of resources to support greater community involvement.³

In addition to strengthening the legal role of the Master Plan, the November 2008 charter amendment approved by voters requires the city to establish a neighborhood participation system:

Charter amendment section 5-411. Neighborhood Participation.

The City shall establish by ordinance a system for organized and effective neighborhood participation in land use decisions and other issues that affect quality of life. It shall provide for timely notification to a neighborhood of any proposed Land Use Action affecting the neighborhood; it shall also provide the opportunity for meaningful neighborhood review of and comment on such proposals. In addition, it shall provide the opportunity for meaningful neighborhood participation in the formulation of the Master Plan or any amendment thereto.

CORE PRINCIPLES

In an informal survey conducted as part of this Master Plan, planners polled developers from New Orleans

1 "Runaway Discretion: Land Use Decision Making in New Orleans." Bureau of Governmental Research, 2003.

2 "Planning for a New Era: Proposed Charter Changes for Land Use Decision Making in New Orleans." Bureau of Governmental Research, 2006.

3 <http://www.cbno.org/index.html>.

and elsewhere in the U.S. with reputations for high-quality projects and a commitment to investing in comparably sized downtowns and urban neighborhoods. Asked if they intended to invest in New Orleans, these developers consistently said “Yes...but not yet.” They felt that while New Orleans represents the kind of historic, walkable, and compact city that attracts their interest today, it is “too complicated” an environment in which to develop. In elaborating, they explained that New Orleans lacks a structured way for them (or any developer) to work pro-actively with nearby residents and the City to resolve the inevitable challenges that development poses. Without a process that enabled them to work with communities and city planners as partners before a project begins, they feared that proposals would end up caught in a political tug-of-war that was time-consuming, expensive—and worst of all, not predictable. The risks of developing in New Orleans, they argued, are not yet worth the rewards.

Ironically, in a similar informal survey, neighborhood leaders voiced a complementary message. While they strongly supported the *general idea* of investment in their communities, they worried that residents would not have an effective voice in shaping *specific projects* so that they respected a neighborhood’s character and enhanced its quality. In effect, they didn’t trust that “the system will work for our neighborhoods.”

Trust and predictability are essential qualities for a process that brings the community and project proponents together to create plans, developments, and other land uses that promote the citywide goals of this Master Plan: enhanced livability, opportunity, and sustainability. The following five principles are essential to establishing a planning process marked by trust and predictability:

- **Inclusiveness.** *All stakeholders are “brought to the table” at the same time to share information, attempt to resolve differences, and chart a future course.*
- **Public access to information.** *An active commitment on the part of the City to ensuring that the larger community is informed on a timely basis about planning and development projects, zoning issues, and other land use matters.*

Getting reliable, up-to-date information on planning and land use issues can be difficult in New Orleans. Severe budget cuts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina exacerbated problems in providing public communication.

Many cities have moved well beyond so-called “sunshine” or “open records” laws and make extensive information available online in easily accessible formats, including information about municipal agencies and departments, city agency budgets, and in-process neighborhood or sub-area plans and project proposals (from both private and public sectors).

- **Capacity:** *Civic education and capacity building enables residents and organizations to participate more effectively in decision-making processes that produce projects that meet essential twin tests of enhancing community character and quality and of being feasible.*

In the years immediately following Hurricane Katrina, significant philanthropic and public investment supported a surge of new community-based organizations, including both neighborhood associations and citywide nonprofit platforms that focused on capacity building, such as the Neighborhoods Partnership Network. National community-development efforts such as the Local Initiatives Service Corporation (LISC) have also invested significantly in bolstering the capacity of local nonprofit development organizations.

Capacity building and civic education are also needed in public agencies that operate in neighborhood environments. The City Planning Commission continues to be understaffed and underfunded for its current tasks, though CDBG funds have helped support some initial new staff positions on an interim basis. Likewise, other municipal agencies do not always have the resources to do their job adequately.

To be effective, sufficient resources need to be provided not only to the city agencies, but also to the district councils.

- **Structure.** *Structured, formal, and accessible processes by which the City receives and responds to community input.*

Since Hurricane Katrina, structured community review of and input into development issues, including planning and development approvals and the city’s capital budget, has generally been limited to participation in public hearings, which are often held during the daytime, when many stakeholders who work are unable to attend. Often, individuals and organizations rely on informal, unstructured channels to a City Council member, or other personal connections, to influence public processes. Those who do not have these relationships, or find them difficult to establish, feel shut out of the system.



Under the citizen participation process (CPP), districtwide councils will serve as effective forums for neighborhood organizations to formalize their involvement, begun in the Master Plan process, in shaping land use proposals.

- **Transparency.** *City leadership committed to open, transparent government that is responsive to its constituents.*

Related to the need for better public information is a City commitment to transparency. The difficulty of obtaining information and a lack of clear and open principles and criteria guiding public decision making result in cynicism about public servants.

A timely process that all stakeholders can count on for community review and city approval of planning and development proposals, changes in zoning, and other land use actions is critical. A perception that a city’s planning and development decisions rest on established principles, plans, and policies opens the door for proactive dialog between community members and project proponents. This dialog enables a wide variety of stakeholders to bring issues to the table and resolve differences, which in turn can yield plans, development projects, and other land use actions that both enhance community character and quality and meet essential standards of feasibility.

B Recommendations

New Orleans is embarking on an important journey in creating a formal process for community participation. In the long term, a commitment to constructive community participation will benefit everyone, reducing neighborhoods’ distrust of development by early notification and participation in the decision making process. At the same time, the business community’s fears will be allayed because, with a collaboration process, there will be fewer surprises to derail development, making projects more predictable and profitable. The process outlined here is intended to provide a clear and effective forum for community engagement in planning, land use and quality of life, and an equally clear path through the development-approval process that is fair to all parties, predictable, and timely. Training and capacity-building, patience during the adoption of new processes, and a willingness to seek common ground will be needed to advance greater spirit of collaboration around development, and to bring about opportunities for neighborhoods to partner with the City for mutual benefit.

Moving to a formal process from a culture of unstructured community participation and opaque processes for land use and development decisions—required by the city charter amendment—and ultimately to

establishing new expectations and norms will take dedicated government leadership, the consistent support of the development and business communities, and a commitment from neighborhood leaders from all racial and economic strata. A new process for reaching land-use decisions must be seen as fair, transparent, and free of racial, class, or other considerations that would undermine its credibility. All participants will need to work together to take incremental steps over several years. Greater public trust will arise from practice and from a growing confidence that City government works with residents and other stakeholders to make land-use decisions that enhance the character and quality of the city and all its neighborhoods while respecting the need for project feasibility. This outcome will represent a substantial cultural shift.

The community participation process outlined below focuses on structured participation in planning and land use decision making, as described in the 2008 charter amendment. CBNO/MAC has called for a NPP that, in addition, would provide for community input into City budgeting and review of City services. Although the Master Plan endorses a longer-term focus on a broad spectrum of issues that shape quality of life, the Master Plan initially recommends that the NPP focus on land use actions for three reasons: it will keep the City on track to meet the charter amendment's schedule of having a basic system approved by ordinance by April 2010; start-up funding is likely to be limited; and, once in place, the NPP can then help shape an expanded vision and identify funding for additional tasks.

Representatives from CBNO/MAC, BGR, the Downtown Development District (DDD), the Neighborhood Partnership Network (NPN), neighborhood and grass roots community organizations, the business community, developers, and City staff have all actively contributed to the organization of the Master Plan's proposed NPP. While some participants initially appeared to hold widely divergent views, a broad consensus emerged around a process, described below, that would enable New Orleans to move forward quickly to establish a formal NPP. One of the first tasks of district wide councils and the City should be to review additional aspects of CBNO/MAC's proposals and ideas floated by other members of the community to determine how the process should evolve.

The structure outlined below is intended to implement the letter and spirit of the principles laid out above. These recommendations draw on extensive work undertaken by the CBNO/MAC NPP and have also been informed by discussions in working groups and with members of neighborhood and grass roots community organizations, the BGR, the business community, developers, and City staff.

A recommendations **summary** linking goals, strategies and actions appears below and is followed by one or more early-action items under the heading **getting started**. The **narrative** follows, providing a detailed description of how the strategies and actions further the goals. Background and existing conditions to inform understanding of the goals, policies, strategies and actions are included in Volume 3, Chapter 15.

FIRST FIVE YEARS: 2010–2014

MEDIUM TERM: 2015–2019

LONG TERM: 2020–2030

GOAL	RECOMMENDED STRATEGY	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				
		HOW	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES	FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE PAGE
2. Establish a formal neighborhood participation program (NPP) that provides a structured process by which the city receives and responds to community input on planning and development decisions in a timely fashion.	2.A. Establish a system of district wide councils to serve as a platform for organized discussion of public input into decision making on land use actions.	1. Set up interim rules and procedures.	CPC; Neighborhood consultant	First year	Staff time	15.14
		2. Draft and pass an ordinance.	City Attorney; CPC; Neighborhood Engagement Office; City Council working in conjunction	First year	Staff time	15.14
		3. Implement the organization of the district wide council system.	CPC; Neighborhood Engagement Office; with assistance working in conjunction with the community	First five years	General fund; grants; possible developer fees	15.14
	2.B. Provide for Issue Advisory Committees at CPC's discretion, in the CPC rules, regulations and procedures.	1. Amend the CPC's Rules, Regulations and Procedures.	CPC	First five years	Staff time	15.14
	2.C. The City of New Orleans will work with community groups, neighborhood groups and the citizens in general to prepare a NPP ordinance for adoption by the city. The ordinance implements the letter and spirit of the charter amendment's requirement for a NPP	1. Create a system of pre-application staff and community review for land use actions that require CPC approval.	CPC	First five years	Staff time	15.15
		2. Create a system for public notification that builds on current efforts and includes interested parties and site notice on proposed land-use actions.	CPC	First five years	Staff time	15.15
	2.D. On an annual basis, the NPP system will be reviewed by citizens and city government in order to ascertain any revisions or amendments to the policy statement.	1. Use the NPP process in conjunction with other city agencies to disseminate and collect information.	NPP: ONE: CPC	First five years	Staff time	15.15
	2.E. Ensure adequate notification and information sharing for land use actions.	1. Provide for procedures in NPP ordinance and amend CPC Rules, Regulations and Procedures.	NPP: CPC	First five years	Staff time	15.15

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FIRST FIVE YEARS: 2010–2014

MEDIUM TERM: 2015–2019

LONG TERM: 2020–2030

GOAL	RECOMMENDED STRATEGY	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				
		HOW	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES	FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE PAGE:
2. Establish a formal neighborhood participation program (NPP) that provides a structured and accessible process by which the city receives and responds to community input on planning and development decisions in a timely fashion.	2.F. Establish a formal process through which neighborhoods and planning districts can request neighborhood or area plans.	1. Create provisions in NPP development coordinated with District Planners.	CPC/NNP	First five years	Staff time	15.16
	2.G. Establish a formal system for presenting district wide council, issue advisory committee, neighborhood organization, and other stakeholder advisory recommendations.	1. Create a system for recording neighborhood district wide council and other advisory recommendations that augments current public comment procedures and makes them available to the CPC and on the City website with appropriate staff response to advisory recommendations.	CPC	First five years	Staff time	15.16
	2.H. Provide adequate administrative and logistical support for the NPP.	1. Organize the District Planners and other district staff as a group to create an annual budget for the district wide council system and assist the Councils in obtaining funds.	CPC	First five years	Staff time; in-kind donations	15.16
	2.I. Locate the initial NPP system within the CPC (consider transition over time, possibly to the Neighborhood Engagement Office)	1. Establish administrative and logistical support for district-wide councils.	NPP	First year	Staff time	15.16
	2.J. Update the City's official neighborhood boundary maps	Work with neighborhood groups and non-profits using successful models to draw neighborhood boundaries according to public perceptions	CPC, NEO, neighborhood groups, non-profits like CBNO	Medium term	Staff time	
3. Broad public access to timely information about proposed plans and projects.	3.A. Use District Planners and other staff as liaisons between the CPC and residents.	1. Strategically assign District Planners and other staff to each Planning District with responsibility for maintaining a network of contacts and relationships and facilitating community review of proposed land use actions in the District.	CPC	First five years	Staff time	15.17
	3.B. Consider Implementing NOLAstat or a similar program to make city information easily available.	1. Reorganize the Office of Technology and hire sufficient programmers to set up a NOLAstat system.	Mayor's Office, CAO's office	First five years	General fund	15.18

FIRST FIVE YEARS: 2010–2014
 MEDIUM TERM: 2015–2019
 LONG TERM: 2020–2030

GOAL	RECOMMENDED STRATEGY	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				
		HOW	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES	FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE PAGE:
4. Predictable and timely processes for community review of project proposals.	4.A. Provide a regularly updated list of land use actions that are subject to review through the NPP.	1. Establish a process for internal CPC staff review of projects that do not require planning commission actions (e.g., significant state and federal projects) but should trigger review through the NPP.	CPC	First five years	Staff time	15.19
	4.B. Insure that significant publicly funded projects are included in the NPP and stakeholder input is sought from the effected neighborhood or district.	1. Work with other agencies and NPP staff to organize community review of publicly funded projects.	CPC; CAO's office; Project Delivery Unit	First five years	Staff time	15.20
5. A transparent and open process of City decision making on land use, development approvals and capital budget expenditures.	5.A. Hold City Planning Commission and other public agency meetings for projects that attract widespread public interest at times that are convenient and accessible to the public.	1. Make CPC hearings more accessible.	CPC	First five years	Staff time	15.20
	5.B. Develop, publish and follow clear policies and procedures for decision making on land use actions.	1. Make CPC staff reports available to district wide councils and put them on the website before relevant public hearings.	CPC	First five years	Staff time	15.20
	5.C. Establish procedures for community input into the CIP program.	1. Seek comment from the district wide councils on the CIP.	CPC	First five years	Staff time	15.21
	5.D. Establish a Neighborhood Improvement Fund for small, neighborhood-generated projects	1. Work with Community Development to organize the Neighborhood Improvement Fund application, criteria and award process.	CPC; Office of Community Development	First five years	CDBG	15.21

Summary

Getting Started

These items are short-term actions that can be undertaken with relatively little expenditure and will help lay the groundwork for the longer-term actions that follow.

- With input from a broad cross section of the community, the City prepares a NPP (neighborhood participation program process) ordinance for adoption by City Council.
- The Office of the Chief Administrative Officer should direct the capital projects office to work in collaboration with the CPC to organize a coordinated process of public review for current and near term public recovery projects that are in progress under the leadership of various public agencies (e.g., Public Works, OFICD, NORA, etc.). The CAO's office should require that public recovery project administrators contact the CPC at no later than 25% design to initiate the community review process. The CPC will then involve relevant stakeholders and organize an efficient public review process. (When District Planners are in place, they will help to coordinate public review of recovery projects within their respective districts.)
- Work with appropriate City agencies to organize and identify financial resources for the Neighborhood Improvement Fund awards, as well as developing the award process and criteria.
- Secure permanent funding for Planner positions within the City Planning Commission and seek to hire staff with strong public-participation experience.
- Conduct neighborhood participation training for CPC Commissioners and staff of any department that conducts public meetings.



CPC ~~district~~ planners will provide technical support that strengthens the ability of community members to take part in shaping planning and development proposals that both enhance community character and meet essential tests of feasibility.

Narrative

Below is a more detailed narrative of the various goals, strategies and actions highlighted in the "Summary" chart.

GOAL 1

All parties affected by public decisions about planning and development have an opportunity to build the capacity to understand, apply and act upon information pertaining to these decisions.

1.A provide training and capacity-building resources for residents, community-based organizations, city employees, and public agencies to help them better understand their role in shaping planning and development decisions.

Training and capacity building will help neighborhood leaders, City Planning Commission commissioners and staff, and City department and agency staff to implement a more open process of public review of and input into proposed plans and projects. The training for Planning Commissioners required by the charter amendment should include material on public participation.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Develop a training program for CPC staff and commissioners and work with other agencies and non*

profits to support capacity building on the neighborhood level.

Who: CPC;

When: First five years

Resources: CPC funds

- > Potential resources include models of capacity building used in other cities. For example:
 - In the late 1980s, the City of Richmond (VA) shifted from a top-down model of capital budgeting to a more participatory approach. The City's Department of Housing and Community Development hired consultants to work with municipal planning, housing, and community development staff to devise new ways of working with residents, and to coach neighborhood organizations and civic leaders in working effectively with City agencies. Regular monthly meetings in each of the City's planning districts were established, involving neighborhood leaders and City staff, to discuss City priorities and receive community input. This system has successfully endured for more than two decades.⁴
 - The City of San Diego (CA) provides an online training program for everyone involved in community engagement (Electronic Community Orientation Workshop, or E-COW). The training is part of a comprehensive series of community-engagement initiatives guided by a set of policies adopted by the City Council. Information on E-COW is available at <http://www.sandiego.gov/planning/community/ecow/index.shtml>.
- > National organizations such as the American Planning Association offer excellent training courses on such topics as the roles and responsibilities of planning commissioners, building constructive working relationships with community organizations, ethics for planners and commissioners, dispute resolution, zoning in practice, and much more. A number of these courses are available on CD-ROM.⁵ NeighborWorks America, a national organization that fosters community-based redevelopment, produces scores of well-regarded training programs, including such offerings as *Building Powerful Community Partnerships, Collaborations and Coalitions*. All of these organizations are able to design and conduct trainings on site or via webinars.⁶
- > Local non profit organizations have obtained foundation funding for neighborhood capacity building and organization.

2. *Support neighborhood level capacity building and understanding of the land use decision making process. Develop partnerships with non profit organizations.*

Who: Non profit organizations

When: First five years

Resources: Foundation funding

Invite neighborhood and other community organizations to work with district planners and other CPC staff, where appropriate, to obtain information on best practices for community outreach, and similar matters that would enhance organizational effectiveness. The CPC may refer these organizations to local nonprofits that can provide support.



This process in Atlanta brought residents of several neighborhoods together with planners, employers, developers, and environmentalists. All groups worked together to shape proposals that met neighborhood, citywide, and regional goals; won widespread support; and were ultimately adopted. CPC-appointed issue Committees, with a citywide perspective, would work with districtwide councils to achieve a similar outcome in New Orleans.

4 <http://www.nw.org/network/training/training.asp>. Retrieved June, 2009.

5 For more information, see the American Planning Association website: <http://planning.org/educationcenter/>.

6 For more information, see the NeighborWorks America website: <http://www.cpn.org/topics/community/commbuild3.html>.

GOAL 2

Establish a formal neighborhood participation program that provides a structured and accessible process by which the city receives and responds to community input on planning and development decisions in a timely fashion.

2.A Establish a system of district wide councils to serve as a platform for organized discussion of and public input into decision making on land use actions.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Setup interim rules and procedures.*
Who: CPC; Neighborhood Engagement Office; consultant
When: First five years
Resources: CPC funds
2. *Draft and pass an ordinance.*
Who: City Attorney; CPC; Neighborhood Engagement Office; City Council
When: First five years
Resources: Stafftime
3. *Implement the organization of the district wide council system.*
Who: CPC; Neighborhood Engagement Office; with consultant assistance
When: First five years
Resources: General fund; grant; possible developer fees

Phase-in formation of the district wide councils concept in conjunction with appointment of district planners. Initially, until all of the district planner positions are funded, it may be necessary to assign more than one planning district to an individual district planner. Participation would occur within the geographical framework of Planning Districts.

2.B Provide for issue Advisory Committees, at the CPC's discretion, in the CPC's rules, regulations and procedures.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Amend the CPC's Rules, Regulations and Procedures.*
Who: CPC
When: First five years
Resources: Stafftime

Because the CPC periodically addresses land use actions that affect the welfare of the larger city as well as a particular Planning District and will need a formal process for inviting community review, the CPC may establish Issue Advisory Committees based on the model provided by the Riverfront Advisory Committee. The committees would advise the planning commission on planning for unique areas such as the riverfront, on citywide issues, or on plans or development projects of citywide significance:

- > The committees would not be permanent



the CPC would work closely with districtwide councils to organize community meetings for reviewing planning, development, and other land use proposals.

but would exist for a period of time established by the CPC.

- > The CPC may establish criteria for membership and invite appropriate organizations to nominate members; because the purpose of these committees is to advise the CPC, the Commission would have final approval for all members. Committees focused on geographic areas or citywide issues would meet regularly, but not less than three times a year, to advise the CPC. Committees focused on projects of citywide significance would be urged to meet jointly with the district wide council(s) representing the area in which a project is located; these committees would also be urged to reach joint recommendations with the district wide council.
- > The committees' recommendations and comments would be advisory.

2.C The City of New Orleans will work with community groups, neighborhood groups and the citizens in general to prepare a NPP ordinance for adoption by the City Council, which implements the letter and spirit of the charter amendment's requirement for a NPP.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Create a system of pre application staff and community review for land use actions that require CPC approval.*
Who: CPC
When: First five years
Resources: Stafftime
2. *Create a system for public notification that builds on current efforts and includes interested parties and site notice on proposed land use actions.*
Who: CPC
When: First five years
Resources: Stafftime

The ordinance will be based on a policy statement that will address basic issues such as overall structure of the NPP; bylaws and other operating rules for district wide councils, Issue Committees, and any other NPP components. It may include requirements and selection procedures for chairs and any other leadership positions, criteria for membership, quorum requirements for district wide councils, guidelines for training and capacity building, and similar elements. After the first year, the CPC staff, or the staff of the city agency responsible for the NPP, should work with NPP component groups on subsequent revisions and amendments. The NPP ordinance should recognize the organizational disparity between organizations and allow for organizations to build their capacity and understanding of land-use issues. A comprehensive list of these organizations should be developed and maintained by the CPC.

2.d On an annual basis, the CPC system will be reviewed by citizens and city government in order to ascertain any revisions or amendments to the policy statement (referred to in 2C, above). These modifications should improve the implementation of the NPP ad of the principles of inclusiveness, public access to information, capacity, structure, and transparency.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Use NPP process in conjunction with other city agencies to disseminate and collect information.*
Who: NPP; CPC
When: First five years
Resources: Stafftime

2.E Ensure adequate notification and information sharing for land use actions.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Provide for procedures in NPP ordinance and amend CPC Rules, Regulations and Procedures.*
Who: NPP; CPC
When: First five years
Resources: Stafftime

The NPP should be a conduit for dispersing information to the community via multiple methods,

including signage, electronic and posted notifications. Criteria should be established to determine thresholds for community meetings.

2.F Establish a formal process through which neighborhoods and planning districts can request neighborhood or area plans.

Neighborhood organizations, other community organizations, and district wide councils may request that the CPC prepare a plan for a specific neighborhood, commercial district, or planning district.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Create a provision in NPP for development of neighborhood or area plans, coordinated with District Planners.*

Who: CPC; NPP
When: First five years
Resources: Staff time

2.G Establish a formal system for presenting district wide council and other stakeholder advisory recommendations to the CPC as a matter of record.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Create a system for recording neighborhood district wide council and other advisory recommendation that augment current public comment procedures and makes them available to the CPC and on City website with appropriate staff response to advisory recommendations.*

Who: CPC
When: First five years
Resources: Staff time

Through a formalized process, CPC staff will present to the planning commission the official recommendations on planning and development matters submitted by district wide council(s) as well as comments from Issue Committees and, where appropriate, from other significant stakeholders. This report will be formalized as a matter of public record in the record of the CPC hearing at which it is presented. All CPC hearing records will be made publicly available on the CPC website in a timely manner following the hearing.

2.H Provide adequate administrative and logistical support for the NPP.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Organize the District Planners and other district staff as a group to create an annual budget for the district wide council system and assist the Councils in obtaining funds.*

Who: CPC
When: First five years
Resources: Staff time

Potential funding sources for district wide councils and training and capacity building include CDBG funds and increased application fees that can be dedicated to support the NPP system. District planners would constitute the primary technical support for the district wide councils initially. In addition it may be necessary to support the district wide councils with logistical support, copying, and similar tasks. The return on investment should be significant. Developers should see savings from the new review process, which, in tandem with the new zoning ordinance, should greatly reduce the uncertainty and risk that heretofore characterized the development process.

2.i While the CPC should work closely with the Mayor's Neighborhood Engagement Office, initially locate the NPP as part of the City planning Commission. As the NPP expands to encompass public participation in issues other than land use

actions, consider alternatives.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Establish administrative and logistical support for district wide councils.

Who: NPP

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

While the Neighborhood Participation Process structure outlined here is intended to provide a structure for neighborhood participation in land use, planning, and development-related decisions—and should naturally be located in the CPC where district planners are also housed—in the long run the NPP may expand to cover non-land-use-related matters such as review of public agencies’ plans for delivering services. If the NPP does in fact expand its role beyond planning and development issues, it may eventually make sense to relocate the NPP to the Neighborhood Engagement Office or elsewhere in recognition of the important role that district wide councils will play as advocates for city services and related activities. If this change occurs, great care should be taken to maintain the close working relationship between district wide councils, their respective district planners, and the City Planning Commission on planning and development projects, both public and private.

GOAL 3

Broad public access to timely information about proposed plans and projects and other city information is available.

3.A Use district planners and other staff to serve as liaisons between the CPC and residents.

There should be one district planner for each planning district in the city (with the possibility of assigning a single planner to work with two smaller districts). District planners will serve as active liaisons between (1) Neighborhood and community organizations, institutions, and residents in their respective district(s); (2) the City Planning Commission; (3) district wide councils; and (4) other city agencies with decision-making power.

The job of a district planner will be to work preemptively with residents and neighborhood organizations and to become the expert on their Planning District and the “go-to person” in City government for stakeholder groups in that district. District planners will inform residents of projects and proposals that might affect them, and inform City agencies of residents’ objectives and concerns. In addition to getting to know residents and



developers and community members collaborated for six months to shape plans for new development in the Braddock Road neighborhood of Alexandria, VA. the resulting guidelines and zoning allowed significant new development while strengthening the quality and character of the neighborhood of single-family houses and row houses. Under the citizen participation process, in New Orleans, districtwide Councils will provide a forum for undertaking similar collaborative work.

their neighborhood associations, district planners must also get to know business owners, landlords, and non-residential property owners.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Strategically assign Planners and other staff to each Planning District with responsibility for maintaining a network of contacts and relationships and facilitating community review of proposed land use actions in the district.*

Who: CPC

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

The NPP roles and responsibilities for district planners could include:

- > Develop and maintain a network of contacts and relationships with the district wide council members, neighborhood organizations, businesses, institutions, and nonprofit organizations in the district.
- > Regularly attend meetings of the district wide council and neighborhood organizations.
- > Work with district wide councils, neighborhood organizations, and stakeholder groups to develop neighborhood plans and improvement initiatives.
- > Keep CPC managers and commissioners apprised of emerging issues and initiatives within the district.
- > Work with district wide councils and neighborhood organizations to develop funding proposals for undertaking neighborhood and district plans and planning updates and for implementing neighborhood plan.
- > Coordinate production of district wide council reports on applications for conditional use permits or rezoning.
- > Serve as liaison with City agencies and related organizations on initiatives or activities that affect stakeholders in the district.
- > Facilitate meetings between developers (or municipal agencies) and district wide councils or neighborhood organizations, seeking to broker practical, mutually acceptable responses to community concerns in a timely manner.

District planners can set monthly district meetings to bring information on development issues to the district; listen to concerns and questions; relay information to appropriate City agencies about issues needing attention, and get an answer from a department. Planners could arrange for departments to come out and speak to neighborhoods. District planners would work with districts and neighborhoods in districts to scope and prepare Area Plans (*see Chapter 5*) for eventual adoption as part of the citywide Master Plan.

3.B Consider implementing NOLAstat or a similar program that makes city information easily accessible to the public.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. *Reorganize the Office of Technology and hire sufficient programmers to set up a NOLAstat system.*

Who: Mayor's Office; CAO's office

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

- > NOLAstat, a comprehensive public information warehouse on the City website described in *Chapter 16* should be the ultimate goal for improving the accessibility of public information.

However, the City should not wait for the full-fledged system to be up and running to enhance the availability of information. Information on proposed projects should be made available on the CPC web page along with the agenda information that is currently made available.

- > Use multiple forms of notification to communicate between the CPC and citizens. Other forms of communication should be employed, including on-site notification, electronic notification (including the ability to easily receive comments or feedback) with interested stakeholders and organizations, along with mailed notification. The notification policy should ensure that a broad cross-section of the community receives information.

GOAL 4

Predictable and timely processes for community review of project proposals.

4.A Provide a regularly updated list of land use actions that are subject to review through the NPP.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. *Establish a process for internal CPC staff review of projects that do not require Planning Commission actions but should trigger review through the NPP.*

Who: CPC

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

The following types of projects and proposals would require involvement by the appropriate district planner and community input through the district wide council:

- > Plans initiated by CPC or another entity (including state, federal, or other plans that do not require formal planning commission approval—as noted above, the Master Plan recommends that the planning commission hold public hearings for such projects and issue advisory opinions on whether they respect the welfare of the city and its neighborhoods), including but not limited to:
 - > Neighborhood and sub-area plans
 - > Redevelopment plans
 - > Citywide plans (*e.g.*, housing, transportation, historic preservation)
 - > Public infrastructure plans
 - > Development or redevelopment proposals that will trigger planning commission actions or—based on findings by the CPC staff and approved by the planning commission—proposals that would have significant impacts on the welfare of the city or its neighborhoods (*e.g.*, development proposals by state, federal, or other agencies not subject to planning commission actions).
 - > Rezoning and conditional-use submissions.
 - > Public housing development or redevelopment.
 - > Transportation, public works and street projects and plans, including RTA bus lines and creation or disposition of streets.
 - > Proposals that would change the width or carrying capacity of arterials or major streets.
 - > Proposed changes in parking capacities, locations, or requirements.
 - > Proposals that involve federal funds and thus trigger NEPA requirements for public input. Although CPC involvement in the NEPA process is not required, such projects can have substantial impact on quality of life and land values, both of which are important to the city's

future.

- > Periodic updates, revisions or amendments of the Master Plan and/or Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.
- > Capital improvement program recommendations

For large projects, there should be public meetings on the design of identified public projects: one held in the early design stages to gather input, and one held late in the design stage. Another meeting should be held just before a public project enters the construction phase in order to inform neighbors and business/property owners about construction issues and schedules, allow them to voice any concerns, and work on resolving problems.

4.B Insure that significant publicly funded projects are included in the NPP and stakeholder input is sought from effected neighborhoods or districts.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. *Work with other agencies and NPP staff to organize community review of publicly funded projects.*

Who: CPC; CAO's office; Project Delivery Unit

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

City Council, as the City's legislative body, will continue to have authority over changes in the CZO and the zoning map, including zoning changes required for major projects. Amendments and updates of the Master Plan will also require City Council approval. The CPC should submit to City Council its findings that recognize comments from the district wide councils and other key stakeholders, and its own staff's findings.

The CPC should make its professional assessment of land use issues that come before the City Council, including an assessment of how proposed changes are compatible (or not) with the goals, policies and strategies of the rest of the Master Plan.

GOAL 5

A transparent and open process of city decision-making on land use, development approvals and capital budget expenditures.

5.A Hold City planning Commission and other public agency meetings for projects that attract widespread public interest at times that are convenient and accessible to the public, including working persons, and make the results of meetings available via the City's website in a timely manner.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. *Make CPC hearings more accessible.*

Who: CPC

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

Other City agencies should also adhere to these guidelines for meetings open to the public and public hearings whenever possible.

5.B Develop, publish, and follow clear policies and procedures for decision-making processes around land use actions.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. *Make CPC staff reports available to district wide councils and put them on the web site before relevant public hearings.*

Who: CPC

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

For projects requiring input through the NPP, the CPC staff report will summarize insights from professional review of a submission, specifically noting its consistency with the Master Plan and Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, including the advice of the district wide council, Issue Committee (if involved), and comments from other parties that have expressed an opinion on the proposed project. This report is essentially a recommendation for the proposed project to go forward or not, or to incorporate specific responses to public and professional concerns before it can be deemed acceptable. The report will be sent to the relevant district wide council(s) and made publicly available prior to the scheduled CPC meeting at which the application is to be heard.

5.C Establish procedures for community input into the City's capital improvement program.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. *Seek comments from the district wide councils on the CIP.*

Who: CPC

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

The charter amendment requires the City to tie its capital improvement program (CIP) to the Master Plan. In current practice, departments are required to indicate if a desired project is referred to in any adopted City plan, and the CPC has a role in collecting departmental budget requests, preparing a 5-year capital improvement program in light of CPC priorities, holding public hearings, and sending its recommended CIP to the City Council. Through a CIP prepared by the chief administrative officer (CAO)'s office, the mayor also sends a CIP to the City Council. **Chapter 16** describes procedures for aligning the Master Plan and CIP more closely and for deepening the relationship between the CPC and the CAO's office so that they submit a single document to the City Council. The City's website provides presentations of the main points of the CIP but not the full CIP document.

The CPC should provide capital proposals and documentation to the district wide councils and/or neighborhood organizations in a format that is easily understood at least 30 days before the commission holds public hearings on the CIP. District planners should be briefed by key departments and prepared to facilitate district wide council discussion during that period. Knowledgeable agency staff should be available to meet with district wide councils to discuss major proposed initiatives. The CPC should develop a consistent format for soliciting and documenting district wide council input. When the budget is sent to the City Council for adoption, it should include documentation of compliance with the Master Plan and the perspective of district wide councils.

5.D Establish a neighborhood improvement Fund for neighborhood-generated small projects.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. *Work with Community Development to organize the Neighborhood Improvement Fund application, criteria and award process.*

Who: CPC; Office of Community Development

When: First five years

Resources: CDBG

There is growing public interest in seeing greater neighborhood involvement in developing budget priorities, a desirable development over the long term. To begin, the City should set aside annually a small fund for competitive awards to neighborhood groups that propose small improvement projects for their areas. CDBG funds could be an initial source of this funding. Projects would have to enhance quality of life and would be implemented in partnership with the City. Clear criteria for proposals, based on best practices nationally, need to be developed. Tying award amounts to the adoption (and initial project implementation) of an Area Plan would serve as an incentive to create those plans. The “Neighborhood Association Assistance Program” developed by the City, could serve as the pilot version for this competitive grant program. The CPC, with its district planners well-informed about neighborhood issues, would be the appropriate department to administer the awarding of these grants. A number of U.S. cities have such neighborhood-based funding programs.