



Gentilly Resilience District Creative Engagement and Communications Plan

September 2017

Purpose

The Gentilly Resilience District is a combination of efforts across Gentilly to reduce flood risk, slow land subsidence, improve energy reliability, and encourage neighborhood revitalization. The city's first Resilience District uses various approaches to water and land management that have been successfully piloted throughout New Orleans and, when implemented together, are intended to create even greater neighborhood benefits—such as improved health, economic opportunity, environmental education, and recreation.

Clearly outlined in the City of New Orleans application to the National Disaster Resilience Competition was the intention and goal of robust and creative community engagement to accompany this set of unprecedented and transformative infrastructure projects and programs. As part of process of developing the application, the City hosted tours and exchanges with neighborhood leaders and community development and design experts to begin identifying approaches and tactics to foster widespread public engagement that facilitates community education, empowerment, and adaptation.

This strategy is intended to serve as a playbook for City departments to ensure that our engagement and communications efforts are coordinated and achieving the ultimate goals of building interest, knowledge, goodwill, and ownership of Gentilly Resilience District projects among stakeholders, residents, and other interested parties. Additionally, the messages that are elaborated in this document will be distributed among city departments and partners.

Background & Program

The City of New Orleans participated in HUD's National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC) and proposed in its application the creation of the city's first comprehensive resilience district in Gentilly with projects that invest in innovative and creative solutions so that people, culture, and infrastructure can thrive. A focus on Gentilly presents opportunities to leverage existing projects and investments, to reduce flood risk, and to support the area's recovery and revitalization. New Orleans was awarded more than \$141 million through NDRC to implement elements of the Gentilly Resilience District proposal, building on existing investments in urban water management funded through the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).

The City is working with partners such as the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) and Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans (SWBNO) to leverage existing investments in Gentilly and build on the experience of relevant pilot projects—from rain gardens to education programs—throughout the city. The Gentilly Resilience District will be a model for how other neighborhoods in New Orleans, across the region, and across the country, can adapt to thrive in a changing environment.

The following twelve projects and programs currently comprise the Gentilly Resilience District:

1. **Mirabeau Water Garden:** 25-acre site of a former convent of the Sisters of Saint Joseph designed to store up to 10 million gallons of stormwater while also serving as a space for recreation and environmental learning
2. **Pontilly Neighborhood Stormwater Network:** enhancements to the Dwyer Canal combined with vacant lots, streets, and alleyways designed to capture stormwater and beautify the Pontchartrain Park and Gentilly Woods neighborhoods
3. **Blue & Green Corridors:** neutral grounds of major boulevards improved to slow and store stormwater while facilitating safe and comfortable spaces to travel and recreate
4. **St. Bernard Neighborhood Campus:** integrated green infrastructure and recreational improvements at McDonogh 35 High School and Willie Hall Playground

5. **Milne Campus:** integrated recreational enhancements and water management features combined with water-focused education, economic, and workforce development activities
6. **St. Anthony Green Streets:** establishes a new standard for neighborhood streets and playgrounds that incorporates stormwater management as a key component of neighborhood revitalization
7. **Dillard Wetlands:** retrofit existing woodlands to capture water from neighboring areas and serve as a nature preserve
8. **Dillard Campus:** green infrastructure and drainage improvements on the campus of Dillard University
9. **Oak Park Green Infrastructure:** green infrastructure on vacant lots near Lake Area High School in Oak Park
10. **Community Adaptation Program:** investments in stormwater management and other resilience features for Gentilly homeowners
11. **Reliable Energy & Smart Systems:** increase energy and water utility resilience through investments in micro-grids, energy redundancy at critical water infrastructure sites, and a water monitoring network
12. **Workforce Development:** train and prepare local residents to build water management projects and develop increasingly vital skills in water infrastructure development and maintenance

Strategy Goals

- Develop common processes and goals across departments
- Reinforce consistent messages across all communications and outreach activities
- Hold ourselves accountable to goals for creative engagement with clear frameworks and timelines
- Clarify how different departments/consultants/external organizations can participate most effectively
- Set clear expectations

Broad Outreach & Communication Goals

In order to achieve robust engagement and outreach that works to build interest, knowledge, goodwill, and ownership of innovative projects, a range of goals for engagement and communications are necessary.

Informing

At the most basic, we have to be able to inform residents and other interested stakeholders of project progress. Explaining what is happening as part of the planning, design, and construction phases and what types of change might occur is crucial. This includes project timelines, impacts to residents and businesses, and how the work is being funded and managed.

Educating

Because the projects of the Gentilly Resilience District will be among the largest of their type in New Orleans, there is a lot to learn about how they work and why! The infrastructure projects will likely look different than anything built here before, so it is imperative to explain why the projects, from green infrastructure to energy resilience, are needed, what goals they have, and what types of benefits will accrue to the community.

Many of the projects will require new applications of technology and are connected to large and complicated systems. As we work at a systems scale, clearly explaining our drainage system, detrimental processes like land subsidence, and how climate change will stress infrastructure will be needed. Also, the clear connections need to be made to classic planning considerations like urban design, zoning, and economic development, along with how investments will create and sustain jobs and development.

Building a relationship of mutual learning between the City and the public is important. There is a lot that the City and its partners can learn from residents about hyperlocal environmental concerns and community priorities to inform how projects are designed. Centering the expertise residents have about their neighborhoods and streets creates a participatory process and can improve the effectiveness of project design.

Building excitement

If we hope to continue this innovative and complex work in the future, and especially considering the long time frames for design and construction, the process of learning and engaging with Gentilly Resilience District projects should be intriguing and

fun. With creative activities connected to themes like water management and community health, along with creative placemaking and art installation opportunities, we can help residents and visitors think about communities in new and exciting ways, while building goodwill and interest in the projects.

Inviting participation/sense of co-ownership

Community involvement is often limited to simple information about what has already happened. The infrastructure of the Gentilly Resilience District will inherently become community assets, so a sense of co-ownership and stewardship is preferable. Through collaborative efforts with residents and stakeholders early in the pre-design and design phases of projects and ensuring that community input is reflected in design and programming, we can invite that sense of collective ownership. Additionally, volunteer efforts and citizen science programs could be gateways into learning skills and seeking jobs to work on the projects transforming our neighborhoods for the future.

Demonstrating global leadership

The concept of the Gentilly Resilience District is appealing beyond New Orleans, so tailoring some outreach and communications to a national and international audience will be key. Through city networks and media, New Orleans will be able to share with the world the best practices being developed and applied here, while also exchanging ideas and demonstrating the effectiveness of putting resilience thinking into action.

Target Audiences

The Gentilly Resilience District is a forward-thinking and innovative project for New Orleans and will serve as a national model. Because of its wide impact and appeal as a project, sensitivity to the needs, points of entry, and interests of different audiences, including those outside of Gentilly and New Orleans, is imperative.

- **Local - Residents most impacted by projects**
 - Informing
 - Educating
 - Building excitement
 - Inviting participation/sense of co-ownership
- **Citywide – all New Orleanians**
 - Educating
 - Building excitement
 - Demonstrating global leadership
- **National/International**
 - Educating
 - Demonstrating global leadership

Actors & Partners

Achieving the ambitious community outreach and engagement goals of the Gentilly Resilience District will require a coordinated effort among internal and external stakeholders and a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities across actors.

- **City Hall**
 - **Core Departments**
 - Office of Resilience + Sustainability
 - Manage and leverage partnerships
 - Facilitate and coordinate stakeholders
 - Develop and communicate goals of the program
 - Ensure integration of resilience goals into project and program designs
 - Guide overall community engagement efforts
 - Department of Public Works
 - Project management
 - Capital Projects Administration

- Project management
- New Orleans Redevelopment Authority
 - Community Adaptation Program design and administration
 - Leveraging Community Adaptation Program as outreach
 - Creative community engagement design
- Office of Neighborhood Engagement
 - Neighborhood partner identification
 - Community convening
- **Additional Partner Departments**
 - Mayor's Office
 - Sewerage + Water Board of New Orleans
 - NOHSEP
 - Health Department
 - Parks & Parkways
 - NORDC
 - The Network for Economic Opportunity
- **External**
 - NDR Partners/Contractors
 - Design Teams
 - NGOs
 - Neighborhood Organizations

Key Messages & Talking Points

- Resilient New Orleans
 - Adapt to Thrive
 - We embrace our changing environment
 - Connect to Opportunity
 - We're pursuing equitable outcomes
 - Transform City Systems
 - We are dynamic and prepared
- National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC)
 - Competitive funding from US HUD
 - New Orleans received second-biggest funding award
 - \$141mn
 - More flexible funding with respect to engagement and design
 - Compared to FEMA, EPA, etc.
 - All funds have to be spent by 2022
- Gentilly Resilience District
 - Why Gentilly?
 - Low-lying neighborhood with increased flood risk
 - Leveraging other major public investments like FEMA projects
 - Opportunity to serve as a model for other local and national neighborhoods
 - Why resilience?
 - Resilience projects are designed to combine things like water management, community beautification, public health improvements, and economic development together
 - Our risks are changing and we have to be prepared for and adapt to the future
 - How can I get involved?
 - As part of the GRD and all of its projects, we'll be having a wide range of activities (some might be fun!) to learn more about how we can adapt as a city and how we all can contribute
 - Part of the Gentilly Resilience District will be a program where you can apply to adapt your own home to manage stormwater while also beautifying your property
 - We would love to hear new ideas about how to spread the word and get your neighbors involved

Tactics Overview

Public meetings

Hold regular public meetings to present project and program updates. Should consider convenience of times and location, other appropriate tactics to get the word out about the meeting, and creative meeting formats that may best engage community members in project feedback.

Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Next Door, Wordpress, etc)

Leverage social media platforms to post regular program updates, respond to inquiries, share photos and videos, and link to resources and relevant educational materials. Post to Office of Resilience & Sustainability accounts and consider hosting accounts specific for the Gentilly Resilience District.

City website

Regularly update nola.gov/resilience with up-to-date project and program fact sheets, FAQ, contact info, and project and program news.

Earned Media

Generate consistent local, national, and international media coverage including newspaper, radio, TV, and online media sources. Cultivate personal stories of people who participate in or will benefit from GRD projects. Draft press releases for project milestones and major events.

Signage + Branding

Develop a consistent visual design language for the Gentilly Resilience District through branding and educational signage before, during, and after project construction. Branding and signage should speak to the broad resilience goals of Adapt to Thrive, Connect to Opportunity, and Transform City Systems.

Targeted Mailings

Create targeted mailing campaigns to inform residents in specific project areas of upcoming meetings and events, project timelines, goals, and locations.

Collateral Materials (Flyers, brochures, newsletters)

Maintain up-to-date project and program fact sheets, brochures, and other print collateral. Consider creative print and digital materials such as broadside newsletters, graphic novels, animated videos, and coloring books that can engage residents in key resilience and water management concepts. Send regular ORS newsletters to key partners and stakeholders with updates on GRD and other key resilience initiatives. Maintain consistent messaging and design across all project and program collateral materials.

Internal Communication

Provide regular internal communications to staff in relevant City agencies (ORS, DPW, CPA, NORA, NOHSEP, Health, ONE, NEO, etc), including key messaging on goals and project timelines to ensure message consistency. Engage and inform all city staff through newsletters and other outreach.

Canvassing (door-to-door)

Consider targeted canvassing and door-to-door conversations to get the word out about upcoming ways to get involved (events, citizen science, public meetings) and to reach and engage residents who may not be able to attend meetings. Consider engaging residents in surveys or interviews to incorporate their perspective into project planning.

Neighborhood Association / Civic Association Visits

Partner with neighborhood association presidents / leaders to ensure an open line of communication throughout the program. Attend regular, established neighborhood association meeting to provide information about the Gentilly Resilience District and projects within it.

Targeted Listening Sessions

Hold listening sessions with key advocacy groups, partners, and stakeholders that are already doing related work in order to align on messaging and programming.

Engage the Ambassadors

Foster relationships with highly engaged residents who can serve as key neighborhood ambassadors. Provide ambassadors with information and knowledge to share and the capacity to organize their neighbors.

Public Art / Temporary or tactical installations / Placemaking

Design installations in public spaces that capture people's attention, inspire imaginations, and help residents consider what is possible for the future of these spaces. These interventions may include public art installations, temporary or tactical urbanism activities that show future design alternatives, or other kinds of signage. Temporary or semi-permanent installations in project spaces can serve to draw attention to these spaces in advance of project construction and get people excited about future changes.

Events & Festivals

Explore opportunities to participate in existing neighborhood and citywide events and festivals to share resources, educational materials, and project updates. Plan events and festivals – from neighborhood barbeques to music festivals – at Gentilly Resilience District sites in collaboration with partner organizations.

Volunteer activities

Host volunteer activities, such as catch basin clean outs, tree plantings, and mural paintings, in collaboration with partner organizations and neighborhood groups. Encourage ways that residents can actively get involved in GRD efforts.

Citizen Science Outreach

Partner with local organizations to engage residents in citizen science activities and to connect those to Gentilly Resilience District concepts and projects. Citizen science is the collection and analysis of data relating to the natural world by members of the general public, typically as part of a collaborative project with professional scientists. Efforts may include rain gauge monitoring, reporting about unusual weather events, or participating in vegetation surveys.

Pop-up Education (bus stops, project sites)

Engage residents in fun and creative ways at pop-up locations in Gentilly. These could be places where people are already gathered (bus stops, commercial nodes) or project sites. Consider ways, such as free popsicles or interactive activities, to draw people in. This may be a good way to engage residents in an open-ended dialogue about the program and about their general goals and concerns for the future of their neighborhood.

Classroom Education / School Engagement

Partner with school administrators and science teachers at schools in Gentilly to inform them about the work and potentially find ways to incorporate resilience concepts and projects into their curriculum.

Open Houses

Consider ways to showcase work that neighbors have done in their own homes that highlight resilience, including homeowners participating in the Community Adaptation Program. This may include home tours or open houses. Also consider opportunities to co-host casual meetings in residents' homes to talk about projects and community priorities.

Design Workshops / Charrettes

Host design workshops, utilizing existing data and planning tools like the Adaptation Support Tool and Climate Smart Cities mapping portal, to engage internal and external stakeholders in the design of projects and programming.

Storytelling

Find opportunities for residents and other stakeholders to share personal stories in various formats (online, videos, live performances) on the topics of climate change, resilience, and the history and culture of Gentilly.

Tours

Host walking, biking, and bus tours of Gentilly Resilience District project sites and other key landmarks that contextualize the geography, infrastructure systems, and resilience concepts for residents, key stakeholders, visiting delegations, and public sector partners.

District Scale – Measurable Objectives

Outreach and communication at the overall district scale for the Gentilly Resilience District should focus on informing about the program and projects within it, educating about the multiple-benefit resilience goals and technical and environmental concepts underlying the approach to projects, and building excitement for the program. Outreach efforts should also look to the future – to how residents can participate in working towards a more resilient future for Gentilly today, 10 years from now, and 50 years from now.

We have developed the following measureable objectives to serve as a playbook for the City and its partners in order to keep ourselves accountable to reaching our outreach and communication goals.

Category	Tactic(s)	Measurable Goal(s)	Approach	Lead/Partners
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitter • Facebook • Instagram • Nextdoor • Wordpress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of original posts/month: 10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Highlight: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engagement activities ○ Project milestones ○ Specific educational resources ○ Gentilly-specific resources ✓ Encourage partners to post/tag using #resilientgentilly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ORS Outreach Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NDR Partners ○ Core City Departments ○ Partner City Departments
Media/Press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional print and digital media outlets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of local stories covering GRD/year: 10 • # of national/international stories covering GRD/year: 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pitch stories to include overall GRD program in advance of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project milestones ○ Engagement activities ○ Gentilly events ✓ Work with media partners on long-term series ✓ Secure press at key events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mayor's Office Comms Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 100RC ○ Core City Departments
District-wide informational meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public meetings • Targeted Listening Sessions • Neighborhood association meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of public events/year: 2 • # of people attending public events/year: 200 • # of targeted stakeholder events/year: 8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use traditional and creative tactics to promote attendance ✓ Identify key stakeholder groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ORS Outreach Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ORS Planning Team ○ Planning Partners
Creative tactics for building knowledge and excitement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Science Outreach • Storytelling • Tours • Pop-up education • Events and Festivals • Volunteer Activities • Etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of large-scale events (>50 people)/year: 2 • # of small-scale activities/year: 12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Leverage partnerships ✓ Get out of the office ✓ Be creative ✓ Show up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ORS Outreach/Planning Teams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planning Partners ○ Core City Departments
Placemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Art • Temporary or Tactical Installations • Etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of initiatives/year: 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Leverage partnerships ✓ Get out of the office ✓ Be creative ✓ Show up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ORS Planning Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ORS Outreach Team ○ Planning Partners ○ 100RC ○ Core City Departments

Project Scale Objectives

The City seeks to develop and design projects in the Gentilly Resilience District in collaboration with residents and other key stakeholders, such as partner agencies, local businesses, schools, and organizations.

For each Gentilly Resilience District project, the goals of outreach and communications are to **inform** residents and stakeholders about project scopes and timelines, **educate** residents and stakeholders about the multiple benefit resilience goals of the project and about the technical approaches and findings in a clear and accessible manner, invite residents and stakeholders to **participate** in a meaningful way in some elements of the design and programming of the site, and to **build excitement** and a sense of **co-ownership** among stakeholders of the project.

Engagement is design. Community and stakeholder engagement should be integral to the design process, and the City will work closely with its design and engineering consultants to incorporate creative and impactful engagement activities throughout the design timeline. The design process should engage residents early and should be iterative in order to meaningfully incorporate stakeholder and community feedback.

Community Adaptation Program Outreach

The Community Adaptation Program, to be designed and administered by NORA, will provide resources and funding for low- and moderate-income homeowners in Gentilly to make stormwater management improvements to their properties. One of the primary goals of this program is to serve as an opportunity for residents to directly participate in the broader effort of the Gentilly Resilience District. The City should work closely with NORA to coordinate and co-host outreach efforts and to leverage the Community Adaptation Program as an entry point for residents to engage in the Gentilly Resilience District effort.

NORA developed the working process map for outreach activities below. This diagram serves as a starting point for a strategic outreach plan for this program, and a model for how the City and its design consultants can develop similar plans for each of the projects within the Gentilly Resilience District.

