

VOLUME 2
chapter

1

A VISION AND A PLAN FOR ACTION

A *Plan for the 21st Century: New Orleans 2030*, the official citywide master plan, has emerged from the cauldron of a recent history unique among major American cities. Leading the way as the sponsors and stewards of the plan, the citizen members of the City Planning Commission called for a plan centered on New Orleanians’ hard-won experience and their aspirations for the future. This citywide master plan builds on the foundation of the intensive, neighborhood-based planning that followed Hurricane Katrina. Every aspect of the master plan was also rooted in a new round of vigorous public participation: more than 5,000 people from every neighborhood and walk of life participated in shaping this plan. The Commissioners also called for a plan that could be put into action—aspirational yet practical, focused on the long-term 20-year horizon yet recognizing that New Orleanians were hungry for short-term, visible progress in recovery. The planning process and this document were designed to meet those goals.

It is important to remember that the Master Plan is neither a prediction nor a projection of the future. It is a **plan**. All the New Orleanians who participated in the planning process shared their hopes and goals for the city’s future. They talked about what they want to happen in the city they love. Sometimes they also voiced understandable cynicism, resignation, pessimism, distrust or bitterness. Built on aspirations for the future, the citywide plan recognizes the existence of obstacles and unresolved practical questions. It provides strategies for overcoming the obstacles and answering the questions. But no plan is self-implementing. Ultimately it will be New Orleanians who must work together to achieve the goals of the plan.

While New Orleans is famed worldwide as a crucible of jazz, and for its historic architecture, delectable cuisine and genial people, it is also a city that encompasses a fishing village, a wildlife refuge, suburban family lifestyles, lakefront beaches—and life science researchers, space ship builders, and digital media entrepreneurs. This plan recognizes New Orleans’ many identities and its future potential. The plan is completed at a time of great transition and promise.

Four years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, New Orleans’ population is estimated at more than three-quarters of its pre-storm total¹. Structural improvements to ensure levee protection to the 1 in 100 year storm level will be completed in a few years, bringing greater protection to the city. Investment of federal disaster funds in public facilities and infrastructure is accelerating. New mixed-income housing and neighborhoods are being completed. The city’s unique culture is alive and vibrant. Because of mayoral term limits, elections will bring a change in political leadership. Much still remains to be done and many improvements are needed. New Orleans’ recovery from the nation’s greatest urban disaster may still continue for another five or six years, but this recovery period is the opportunity to lay the foundation for new opportunities and enhanced livability, making New Orleans a leading world city and a sustainable community building an exciting future for all its residents—all the while continuing to preserve and nurture the physical and cultural legacy of the past.

Today, the stories the people of New Orleans tell are deeply bound in family, religion, music, race, art, and the city’s river delta setting. People share a cultural memory that blends legacies from Europe, West Africa, and other parts of the world. Every aspect of the city’s life is shaped today by the strength and richness of this heritage, unique among American cities. The purpose of this master plan is to carry New Orleans’ stories into the future.

¹ Brookings Institution/Greater New Orleans Community Data Center. “New Orleans Index.” August, 2009. Available at: www.gnocdc.org. Retrieved August, 2009.

Moving forward begins with the recognition that the years of economic stagnation that followed the oil and gas bust created pessimistic stories, as some New Orleanians lost confidence. Many residents saw the city as a place with a golden past it could never hope to recapture. Competition over a shrinking economic pie eroded New Orleanians' sense of shared destiny.

Yet with effective government, a new era of partnerships, and the shared political will to make tough decisions, New Orleans is poised over the next twenty years for a transformation that brings new economic growth, opportunity, and innovation into a city that continues to honor its roots. By 2030, the city can achieve the promise of this vision, adding to its story in tangible, visible and subtle ways.

How will this happen? Hurricane Katrina could have broken the city's spirit, but it did just the reverse. In houses of worship, at dinner tables, and in the aisles of grocery stores in Houston, Memphis and Atlanta, New Orleanians told their Hurricane Katrina stories to each other—often complete strangers—who in turn shared, listened, and were moved. As people found common threads in their stories, they returned and wove them together, finding the collective will to write a remarkable new chapter together. This master plan contains their voices, hopes and determination. It sets the stage for the stories to come.

VISION:

New Orleans in 2030...

LIVABILITY | ENHANCED QUALITY OF LIFE FOR EVERYONE THAT PRESERVES THE CITY'S CHARACTER



By 2030, New Orleans will be one of the most livable cities in America as neighborhoods are knitted together by convenient and walkable mixed-use neighborhood hubs that replace faded shopping centers and long-vacant industrial sites and by transforming barriers like the I-10 Claiborne expressway into tree-lined boulevards.

In 2030, New

Orleans is a city of unique historic character and ethnic and cultural diversity. The hard work of recovery and resettlement has restored the city's neighborhoods. Rehabilitated and new homes fill once-empty lots in "dry" and "wet" neighborhoods alike. Known as one of America's most walkable cities, New Orleans is a place where everyone can walk to transit, shopping and parks. Bikeways and excellent transit service offer appealing alternatives to the car. A new generation of mixed-use neighborhoods has replaced faded shopping centers and long-vacant industrial sites. These new neighborhoods incorporate stores, small businesses and restaurants, and offer expanded housing choices for people of all economic circumstances and at all stages of life. Many people choose to live downtown, now a thriving center of intensified urban living, business and a "common ground" that draws people together from across the city. Visitors from around the world mix with residents in downtown's restaurants and shops.

OPPORTUNITY | EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY AND ENSURING THAT EVERYONE HAS AN EQUITABLE CHANCE TO SHARE THE BENEFITS

In 2030, New Orleans has built on its rich legacy of place and culture and its established industries to strengthen its role as the creative core of its region. It has become an incubator of innovation among river delta cities worldwide.



By 2030, New Orleans' role as the economic engine of its region will be strengthened by comprehensive workforce development opportunities and a diversified economy based on traditional and new economic sectors that will include a new generation of creative and knowledge-based entrepreneurs.

Recognizing that modern economies depend first and foremost on people and their skills, New Orleans has invested in lifelong workforce training, effective and cost-efficient government, and enhanced quality of life. Better education, expanded job training, workforce readiness, and similar programs have extended new opportunities to native New Orleanians. From culture, tourism, and maritime trade, to life sciences and media, to alternative energy and coastal protection and restoration technology, New Orleans has diversified and created a new era of jobs, built in part on the skills brought by new residents attracted to the city's creativity and quality of life.

SUSTAINABILITY | A MORE RESILIENT CITY WITH SHARED



By 2030, New Orleans can become a city that celebrates its relationship to water and uses water-management strategies to provide amenities to neighborhoods wherever possible.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AT EVERY LEVEL

In 2030, New Orleans has become one of America's greenest cities: resource-efficient, environmentally healthy, and resilient. The city's building and zoning codes are national models for preservation and sustainability. The city's success has drawn new regional growth, contributing to enhanced neighborhoods from Audubon to a thriving New Orleans East, and reversing regional sprawl. A global center of knowledge about managing natural and man-made systems to prevent flooding in low-lying cities, the city now boasts landscaped canals, parks with water features, and shady, tree-lined streets that contribute to its unique beauty while reducing subsidence and managing water from storms.

Livability, opportunity and sustainability—the overall themes of this master plan—are at the foundation of all communities in the 21st century. As New Orleans turns the corner from post-storm recovery planning to long-range planning for the next several decades, this plan seeks to provide guidance in addressing several fundamental questions:

- How do we keep the city safe from flooding and natural hazards?
- How do we fund and rebuild our infrastructure?
- How do we grow the city’s economy to provide opportunity for all residents and a prosperous future for our children?
- How do we ensure that all residents can fulfill basic needs for decent and affordable housing, quality education, reliable health care, a robust transportation system, diverse parks and open spaces, varied recreation and useful community facilities?
- How do we preserve and nurture New Orleans’ cultural, artistic and architectural heritage and sustain its cultural traditions (among them the traditions of ingenuity, inventiveness, cultural diversity, and the ability to adapt to change) for future generations?
- How do we meet the needs of current residents while making a place for residents displaced by Hurricane Katrina who still have not been able to return home and attracting new residents from around the country and the world?
- How do we provide predictable land use and zoning guidelines that both preserve the city’s historic character and encourage new development and economic growth—meeting the needs of developers and neighborhoods alike?
- How do we ensure fair and meaningful public participation in implementing this plan and in future investment decisions—both public and private—that affect local quality of life?

In answer to these questions, the plan provides:

- A summary of the context that shapes the master plan.
- A practical set of citywide goals and policies to guide civic leaders and public agencies in making decisions about public investments and priorities, including capital budgets.
- Clear, step by step strategies and actions that public and private actors can take to achieve the goals.
- A future land use map that describes the kinds of places we want to preserve and create, and guides the zoning regulations that will help to achieve them.
- A framework for meaningful public participation in decision making about land use and development.
- Benchmarks for the public to use in monitoring progress of the plan’s implementation.
- A basis for advocacy for state and federal resources to support projects that the city cannot carry out on its own.

Just having a plan can help make it a reality. A good plan supported by a community consensus and a government committed to implement the plan attracts funding and private investment:

- **A plan shows that the community knows what it wants.** Funders and investors like to know what to expect and what is expected of them, because it means that their investments can go to work more quickly
- **A plan shows that the community is willing to invest some of its own resources to achieve its goals.** For example, when a community makes public improvements or works hard to improve its effectiveness, it demonstrates its seriousness about making the plan a reality.



In 2008, the City Planning Commission launched a master planning process to create a vision for New Orleans in 2030.



A process of extensive community input identified recommendations, goals and strategies for...



livability...

- **A plan shows that a community knows what to do with new resources.** Federal funds increasingly come with requirements for coordinated planning. Without a plan, funds can go unspent, even though needs are evident in the community. A citywide plan provides a framework of policies and strategies for using resources to accomplish goals.

The plan has three parts:

- **Vol. 1—Executive Summary** is a condensed version of the longer, technical plan. It presents the essential points of analysis and recommendations to tell the story of the plan.
- **Vol. 2—Strategies and Actions** contains more detailed analysis, recommendations, maps and graphics in 16 chapters. This is the volume you are reading now.
- **Vol. 3—Context and Appendix** includes additional background analysis, other materials prepared for this plan, and information resources.

This document, the Technical Plan, is organized in five parts:

- **Part One, “Setting the Stage”**—provides the context for the plan, background information, a review of existing conditions, and a description of the Master Plan participation process.
- **Part Two, “How We Live”**—focuses on four elements critical to the daily quality of life of everyone who lives in New Orleans now and who may come to live here in the future: Neighborhoods and Housing; Historic Preservation; Green Infrastructure—Parks, Open Space and Recreation; and Health and Human Services.
- **Part Three, “How We Prosper”**—concerns economic development. The chapter focuses on important existing, emerging and potential industries and sectors, and analyzes the environment for economic development, including workforce development, research capacity and technology commercialization, entrepreneurial culture and resources, and business-friendly government.
- **Part Four, “Sustainable Systems”**—embraces the citywide systems that support residents and business: city facilities and services; water, sewer and drainage infrastructure; and transportation infrastructure and services. This section also incorporates a focus on managing storm and flooding risks and creating a resilient community that can bounce back quickly from stressful events thanks to a

*opportunity...**sustainability...**and action.*

clear understanding of risks and how households, businesses and governments share responsibility for managing risk. The Environmental Quality element concerns enhancement of New Orleans' energy-efficiency, understanding and adapting to diverse aspects of climate change, and promoting "green" practices of all kinds, including support for locally-based food systems.

- **Part Five, "From Plan to Action"**—provides specific recommendations on how city government and other agencies can organize to implement the plan. It includes the Future Land Use Map (which must be reflected in zoning and land use decisions following the 2008 charter amendment), including conceptual plans for opportunity sites; a framework for the Citizen Participation Program (also mandated by the charter amendment); and a set of recommendations for improving organization, coordination and communication, information-sharing, accountability, and for making city decision-making and actions consistent with the Master Plan. This includes a newly strengthened requirement that the capital improvement plan and capital budget reflect the recommendations contained in the Master Plan.

At the end of each of the chapters in parts Two through Five, there is an implementation matrix headed by a brief section, "Getting Started," which lists a few quick actions that can be taken to get going on the recommendations of that chapter. Many of them are organizational and do not require new funding. The implementation matrix is a more detailed list of short-, medium-, and long term actions that will lead to achieving the goals.

This Master Plan is prepared for use by residents, businesses and developers, nonprofit organizations, elected and appointed officials, the City's administration and staff, and others with a stake in the future of New Orleans. Implementation will depend not only on government but on partnerships across the city. New Orleans residents can use this plan to further their understanding about how their neighborhoods fit into the broader patterns of community throughout the city. The plan's vision and recommendations for the future combine respect for the city's past and its established way of life with exciting new opportunities for New Orleans in the 21st century. As a citywide framework, the Master Plan outlines a picture of the future, but the details have to be filled in by New Orleanians working together.

Frequently asked questions about the Master Plan

How can I be sure that the Master Plan includes improvements for every neighborhood in the city?

As a citywide plan, this Master Plan is committed to the principle of “every place and every person,” and shows future improvements for every part of the city. Every planning district will have a planner assigned to work with the residents and businesses of that district, identify the improvements needed, and coordinate with public and private agencies to get the work done. Community centers, parks and recreation areas, schools and libraries will be the civic heart of every district and accessible from every neighborhood.

How will the master plan be approved and how can we change it after it is approved?

Approvals: The master plan has to go through two rounds of public hearings and approvals before it becomes official. First, the City Planning Commission (CPC) will hold public hearings on the plan, make any needed revisions, and then approve the plan. The CPC then sends the plan to the City Council. The Council will hold public hearings and then decide if it wants to send the Plan back to the CPC for further revision or approve it. If it is sent back, the CPC will resolve any questions that came up and send the revised version to the Council. On approval by the Council, the plan is officially adopted.

Changes: The law allows and requires opportunities to change the Master Plan to make sure it stays relevant to New Orleans. The Master Plan may be amended once a year through a process that requires public hearings. The Master Plan must be reviewed and, if needed, updated every five years, with even more public participation required.

What role do the Mayor and City Council have in the implementation and management of the Master Plan?

Elected officials will lead the implementation of the Master Plan. The Mayor and the administration will use the goals and strategies of the Master Plan as a guide in setting priorities and allocating resources to make improvements in the city. The authority to make zoning changes and any other laws will continue to reside with the City Council. As the Council exercises its powers to approve the city budget and the capital plan, the Council will also be making decisions about how the Master Plan is implemented.

How can implementation of this plan make a difference to me and my neighborhood?

The Master Plan calls for a park within walking distance of every resident; strategies to make sure that new development fits in

with existing neighborhoods; more transportation alternatives –bike routes and expanded transit—as well as better roads and sidewalks; planting enough trees along sidewalks, in neutral grounds, and elsewhere to bring half the city under shade; and more retail and services to support neighborhoods. The plan contains a framework for implementing a system of neighborhood and community participation in decisions about private and public development, so residents can make their voices heard through a mandated and structured process.

How does the plan give everybody the chance to share in economic opportunity?

The Master Plan focuses on strengthening the “building blocks” of a successful economy, linking education and workforce development, support for small businesses and the cultural economy, cultivation of an entrepreneurial culture, promotion of potential new industries with health science and green jobs, and support for the existing successful sectors of the economy.

How will the plan help our city bounce back quickly from hurricanes, floods and other disasters?

First, the Master Plan recommends that the City take the lead, through a strong Office of Coastal and Environmental Affairs, in understanding, communicating, and coordinating everything to do with protecting the city from natural disasters, adapting to climate change, and becoming more resilient. The Plan calls for making evacuations a thing of the past with public facilities that can withstand a 1 in 500 year storm at a minimum and a community discussion on the role that every level of government and every household can do. The new agency will explore the feasibility of following Dutch models of living with water through a system of beautiful open canals. Finally, the Plan calls for New Orleans to lead American cities in securing a new minimum 1 in 1,000-year storm standard of protection and resilience comparable to the minimum standard in Europe and Japan.

Is every idea in the Master Plan subject to “Force of Law?”

“Force of law” for the Master Plan means that land use actions must be consistent with, or not interfere with, the Land Use Plan included in this Master Plan (Chapter 14). That said, some of the ideas in Chapters 5 through 13 of the Master Plan (covering topics like Transportation, Neighborhoods and Housing and Green Infrastructure) may require actions that must be consistent with the Land Use Plan. Others would call for strategies and actions that go well beyond land use actions. Such ideas - the ones that go beyond land use actions -- are in the Master Plan as recommendations, not certainties or directives.

How does the Master Plan have the “force of law” and how does it get approved?

In November 2008, voters approved a city charter amendment that provides specific language that links the Master Plan with the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, the capital improvement program and the annual capital budget, and land use actions such as approvals of subdivision plans, site plans, and so on. The amendment states that zoning, the capital improvement program and capital budget, and land use actions must be consistent with the goals and policies of the

plan. The Master Plan itself does not contain any zoning regulations. Detailed zoning is separate from the plan and simply has to be generally consistent with the plan. The City Council still has final authority over and right of approval of the capital improvement program, the capital budget, and all zoning changes.

Approval and amendment process

The 2008 city charter amendment did not approve this Master Plan or any other specific plan. To be approved, a master plan has to be based on a process of community participation; it has to go through public hearings at the City Planning Commission and be approved by the CPC; and it has to go through public hearings at the City Council and be approved by the City Council. An approved master plan can be amended once a year, again going through a process of public meetings, public hearings before the CPC and approval by the CPC; and public hearings before the City Council and approval by the City Council.