

**ERRATA for the Peoples' Plan for Overcoming the Hurricane
Katrina Blues
Final Draft (March, 2007)**

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The following are known mistakes and omissions from the first draft of the Peoples' Plan for Overcoming the Hurricane Blues, released on January 6th, 2007 and available online at rebuildingtheninth.org.

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- A. Conditions Assessment Survey
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- D. Resident Survey Guide
- E. Leaders Survey Guide



Executive Summary

Introduction

The Peoples' Plan for Overcoming the Hurricane Katrina Blues is a joint product of a unique partnership involving ACORN, the nation's largest citizen action organization, ACORN Housing, its affordable housing affiliate, and three of the nation's leading research universities - Cornell University, Columbia University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The Peoples' Plan

Offers a comprehensive recovery strategy aimed at enabling the long-suffering residents, business owners, and institutional leaders of the 9th Ward to "return home". The plan addresses the major environmental, economic, and social problems that made life in the 9th Ward prior to Hurricane Katrina a struggle for many families. The plan also speaks to the challenges facing families working to restore their homes, congregations, and neighborhoods following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

This plan is presented on behalf of the more than two hundred residents of the 9th Ward who took the time to share their hopes for the future of their beloved community and city with our staff as well as the more than four hundred residents who contributed to the creation of this document by attended one or more community meetings at a time of great personal loss and sorrow.

Special Qualities of the Peoples' Plan

The Peoples' Plan, in the context of Post-Katrina recovery planning, is unique. First, the process that produced this plan was initiated at the request of Louisiana ACORN - the state's largest citizen action organization. Second, the plan's findings are based upon a detailed analysis of existing conditions in the 9th Ward that included the physical inspection of nearly 3,000 building parcels and structures. Third, the planning and design proposals contained in this plan reflect the input of more than 600 residents who contributed to our planning process. Fourth, organizations comprising the ACORN Housing/University Partnership are committed to continuing their work with local organizations to translate the proposals contained within this plan into reality.

A Few Undeniable Facts

Population

- While approximately 50% of the city's population has been able to return home, only 20% of 9th Ward residents have been able to do so.



Housing

- Despite the destruction of hundreds of homes in the Lower 9 along the Industrial Canal, more than 26,000 housing units remain in the 9th Ward.
- Prior to Hurricane Katrina, 17% of the units in the 7th District and 14% of the units in the 8th District were vacant. According to the Rand Corporation, more than 90% of the units in the 7th District were vacant in the fall of 2006.

Post-Katrina Housing Conditions

- The majority of the housing units within the 9th ward are bungalows, constructed of hardwoods, built upon piers, which experience varying amounts of damage but are repairable, in a cost-effective manner, despite their location on sites below FEMA base flood elevation guidelines.
- Throughout the 7th and 8th Districts, more than eight in ten houses, standing as of October 2006, suffered no terminal structural damage. Most neighborhoods have limited vacant lots and heavily damaged buildings. These are suitable for infill development and refurbishing of existing housing surveyed. Owners have gutted 30% of the houses in the 7th and 8th Planning Districts and have either repaired or are in the process of repairing another 30% of the housing in these areas.

Rehabilitation Costs

- The highest percentage of homes with heavy flooding are in the northern Lower 9th, Florida Avenue and the southern section of Desire Area. Homes in these areas will require gutting beyond 50% of the structure height which will cost between \$30,000 and \$50,000. Elevating these homes to new FEMA foundation height guidelines will add an additional \$15,000-\$25,000 to the costs of renovating these homes.

The Journey Home

- In October, 25% of the residents of the 7th District were either living in their homes or in nearby trailers, this was also true for 15% of Holy Cross residents and 12% of the residents living in the southern section of the Lower 9.

Resident Opinions

- The overwhelming majority of 9th Ward residents who were interviewed voiced a very strong commitment to their community; many view their neighborhoods as sacred ground that they will not, under any circumstance leave.
- A significant number of the residents displayed tremendous hope and optimism regarding their neighborhoods expecting them to recover.



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- Most residents were in the process of rehabilitating their homes for re-occupation. In the absence of insurance, FEMA, and Road Home checks many were self-financing the rehabilitation of their homes by liquidating their 401k plans, receiving assistance from family members and/or their religious congregations.
 - Many expressed a strong desire for technical assistance regarding optimal rehabilitation strategies, construction techniques, building materials and/or contractor selection and contracting.
 - Most of those involved within home repairs were finding it extremely difficult to locate experienced, reliable, and fair-dealing contractors. Likewise, they were finding it very challenging to work, supervise children and participate in local planning activities and act as their own general contractors. This was especially true for older homeowners.
 - Several homeowners engaged in the rehabilitation process expressed a fear that they would run out of money and/or energy before completing work on their homes and thus be forced to sell their family home to an outside speculator.
 - The three most important, non-rehab related problems confronting those who have returned home are crime, schools, and health care services. Residents feel strongly that recovery plans must address these non-brick and mortar issues.

Despite the news coverage, most residents who were interviewed felt they had received very little information regarding the UNOP process. Quoting one 9th Ward resident, *“Hey, we have all kinds of people touring our neighborhood, taking pictures of our community. Hell, for a while we even had buses with tourists coming through here. You and your students are the first people who gotten out of their vehicles to talk to us, to hear our story. We hope you can get somebody to listen”*.

Resident Proposals

- Encourage the State to move more quickly on the Road Home payments.
- Help residents access high-quality technical assistance for housing rehabilitation.
- Preserve the neighborhood’s public housing units.
- Re-open neighborhood schools.
- Increase police patrols and explore community policing.
- Focus on economic development for job generation.
- Encourage local medical schools to open a primary care facility.
- Subsidize quality day care to enable parents to return to work and to complete needed housing improvements.



- Enact rent control to address rising rental costs.
- Take action to limit housing speculation and predatory lending.

Overall Development Goal and Objectives

Every comprehensive plan has a primary outcome that it seeks to achieve. The overall goal of the Peoples’ Plan for Overcoming the Hurricane Katrina Blues is to:

Create a more vibrant, sustainable and equitable 9th Ward that offers former and current residents, business owners, and institutional leaders a higher quality of life and attracts new residents and investors eager to participate in an unprecedented revitalization of one of America’s most historically, culturally, and socially significant urban communities.

The effective pursuit of this goal will require 9th Ward residents and leaders to cooperate with local lenders, intermediaries (NeighborWorks®, Enterprise Community Partners, Local Initiatives Support Corporation and Seedco), family and corporate foundations, trade unions, and municipal, state, and federal disaster relief and urban development agencies to achieve the following recovery objectives:

- Restore and improve the quality of the urban environment through the adoption of sustainable land use planning and management practices;

- Expand employment and entrepreneurial opportunities providing 9th Ward residents meaningful work at living wages;
- Provide available, affordable, and quality housing to former, current, and future 9th Ward residents through a comprehensive strategy extending homeownership, increasing rental housing for working families, and restoring public housing for individuals and families with limited resources;
- Offer exceptional lifelong learning opportunities through public education that prepares 9th Ward children and adults for participation in an increasingly competitive global economy that demands superior organizational, analytical, communications, and interpersonal skills;
- Strengthen municipal services that promote the health, wellness, safety, and happiness of local residents, business owners, and civic leaders; and
- Preserve the rich history, art, music, and culture of the African American people

Improving the Environment

- A comprehensive clean-up of the Ward
- Streetscape improvements and beautification
- Plan and implement a “phased” program of infrastructure repair and replacement



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- Network of neighborhood “tot-lots” as part of a safe-streets initiative
 - Devise a new, flood-sensitive, land use plan

Economic Development

- Adaptive re-use of the St. Roch’s Market as a fresh food venue
- Create economic opportunities by encouraging investment along the Ward’s major arteries
- Pursue a YouthBuild grant to stimulate economic and workforce development
- Establish a Flea Market as an outlet for small-scale entrepreneurship
- Construction of a modular housing factory to meet local housing and employment needs

Housing Improvement

- Establish a community planning, design, and law center to assist homeowners through the rehabilitation process
- Develop a housing trust fund to stimulate the production of new units
- Create a community land trust to minimize the threat of speculation while maximizing community control over land for future residential housing

- Preserve and improve local public housing assets to address the persistent shelter needs of low-income families, seniors, and the disabled
- Initiate a rent stabilization program to moderate skyrocketing housing costs
- Work with existing non-profit housing organizations to acquire and rehabilitate vacant structures

Municipal Services

- Initiate a community policing program on a pilot basis
- Establish a network of high quality day care facilities
- Expand drug treatment services for local residents
- Establish an effective emergency evacuation plan

Education

- Undertake steps to open neighborhood elementary schools to reduce children’s transportation times and enable parents to become more involved in their children’s education
- Launch an effort to open a vocational-technical school to train youth and adults for jobs in sectors of the regional economy that are predicted to expand (hospitality, landscaping, oil/gas)



Culture

- Organize a Philadelphia-like community mural project to celebrate local history and engage youth in creative place-making and community-building
- Transform the former Navy facility, near the Industrial Canal, into a visual and performing arts exhibition, performance, production, and training space celebrating New Orleans' African American culture

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Implementation

The Peoples' Plan recommends the establishment of a high-capacity community development corporation to oversee the ongoing planning, pre-development, and development activities contained in this plan. The CDC board would reflect the major stakeholder groups within the neighborhood. Ongoing planning and design assistance would be provided through the ACORN Housing/University Partnership.

For More Information

The Peoples' Plan may be found and downloaded at:

www.rebuildingtheninth.org

or, by contacting:

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