



LEADERSHIP TALKING POINTS

APA'S RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

Revised: September 2005

Key Messages:

- 1. The rebuilding effort presents a variety of challenging planning issues, at a scale never before seen.**

Reducing or eliminating potential risks for natural hazards must be factored into the rebuilding process to make communities safer.

The geographic dispersion of residents displaced by Hurricane Katrina makes community involvement a challenge, but one that cannot be ignored. Every resident has an equal and important voice in the rebuilding process.

The rebuilding process must give residents choices on where to live and work. This includes providing a variety of housing options for all income-levels.

APA has numerous resources available online to help guide the rebuilding process, including model plans, planning tools, sample ordinances and lessons learned from other natural disasters.

- 2. The key to rebuilding the devastated regions requires a multi-faceted approach—considering the environmental issues, assessing the potential for risk, implementing disaster mitigation plans, engaging in participatory planning practices and supporting good planning decisions.**

We cannot forgo good planning in the rush to rebuild. Rushing the rebuilding process will only place communities at greater risk. Rebuilding must be done carefully, expedited at a speed that will bring residents safely home. Above all, the rebuilding process must maintain the unique fabric and culture of the region.



APA is providing a five-person team to evaluate and make recommendations regarding the planning function in New Orleans at the request of local officials and FEMA. The team, headed by Fort Worth Planning Director Fernando Costa, AICP, will be in residence three weeks, working with local planners and officials.

The Planners Toolkit section of [Planning for Post-Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction_PAS Report 483/484](#), the first all-hazards guidance manual for local planners developing plans for post-disaster recovery and reconstruction is available for free online. This manual includes a model ordinance and case studies of five different hazard scenarios — flood, earthquake, tornado, wildfire and hurricane. The report also offers planning tools for managing long-term community recovery after a natural disaster.

3. Participatory planning is necessary to ensure the rebuilt communities address everyone's needs.

Every resident must have a voice in the rebuilding process. This will take coordination of community town halls and meetings to an unprecedented level given the geographic dispersion of residents. To truly rebuild communities of lasting value, residents, business interests and elected officials must make decisions about their community together.

Everyone has an equal and important voice in the rebuilding process. The rebuilt communities should reflect the needs and desires of all residents.

4. Rebuilding New Orleans and the Gulf Coast will involve the largest and most complex planning effort in our lifetime.

Pro-bono Planning Assistance Teams of APA's Professional Institute, AICP, will work with the impacted communities, on location, offering their assistance, expertise and knowledge. The volunteer experts will help community leaders address a variety of planning, rebuilding, hazard mitigation, and other needs.

We have created a resume posting section for members and others who wish to provide pro bono services. Many of our members have experienced floods, wildfires, earthquakes and other disasters and can offer valuable assistance to their colleagues and communities in these states.

<http://www.planning.org/katrina/volunteering.htm>

5. Planners must use the latest planning techniques and ideas in order to improve both the intelligence of this complex rebuilding process and the sustainability of the Gulf Coast.

Learn from the examples of other communities such as the Netherlands; Venice, Italy; and London, England; that have implemented safety measures to protect their communities from floods or other natural hazards.



- 6. Good planning must ensure that the multi-billion dollar rebuilding effort is accomplished as equitably, efficiently, democratically and humanely as possible. Real choices must be available for all.**

Every resident, business leader and elected official has an equal and important voice in the rebuilding process. Rebuilding decisions cannot be made by a few.

Rebuilding at this magnitude must be a collaborated effort among the community, state and the federal government. The goal is to rebuild communities that are safe and give residents choices on where to live and work.

- 7. Communities cannot forgo good planning. Disaster mitigation plans and implementation of these plans are necessary to protect communities of lasting value.**

We cannot afford to ignore the lessons Hurricane Katrina has taught. Ignoring the potential for risk increases the danger for our communities. Now is the time to assess community vulnerabilities to man-made and natural hazards and simultaneously implement disaster mitigation plans to reduce those risks while rebuilding. Let's put the planning tools available to good use to build solid foundations for these communities.



The Four Key Themes:

- 1. APA planners help envision new possibilities.**
- 2. APA planners create choices.**
- 3. Planning engages community members.**
- 4. APA helps create communities of lasting value.**

We are a nonprofit public education and research organization committed to urban, suburban, regional, and rural planning. APA brings together thousands of people — practicing planners, elected officials, business interests and citizens — who are committed to making great communities.

Planners are vital resources to devastated communities to help assess risk, rebuild safely and reduce vulnerability to man-made or natural hazards. Communities cannot afford to forgo good planning in the rush to rebuild. Now is the time to consider all of the planning questions to ensure communities of lasting value are rebuilt. The rebuilding process requires ongoing participatory planning that involves all community members, regardless of their current location.



Support for Key Theme 1:

APA planners help envision new possibilities.

APA planners can help address the challenges of rebuilding communities by engaging residents (regardless of their current location), business interests and elected officials in the planning process. Throughout the affected region, communities are facing many challenges, ranging from infrastructure problems, housing shortages, traffic congestion, pollution, and threats to historical and cultural resources. APA planners are working to find solutions to these complex problems that result in positive change, without altering the area’s unique culture and character.

~~~ POTENTIAL TALKING POINTS ~~~

*(To be used in any combination or order and customized for your audience)*

- **The Federal Role** The rebuilding effort in the Gulf will require support for data collection and analysis, including mechanisms for sharing of data resources among agencies, as well as adequate staffing of municipal, regional, state, and federal planning institutions. We must also develop technical materials and training programs that build local and regional capacity to engage in informed deliberations, and the development of a range of communication media, in order to ensure participation by all stakeholders, including displaced residents. The federal government must continue to work and collaborate with experienced planners in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi.
- **Learning From Others** The federal government and the states must learn from the examples of other communities’ who have implemented disaster mitigation plans to reduce the threats of floods and other natural hazards, such as the Netherlands; Venice, Italy; and London, England. Federal funding to support disaster mitigation must be sufficient and must not be taken from programs that aid disadvantaged people throughout the U.S.
- **Planners' Comprehensive Perspective** Planners are trained to examine a situation and provide a comprehensive perspective. This viewpoint enables planners to identify both intended and unintended consequences of growth and change. Engaging everyone in the community in the planning process is essential to managing change to create communities that enrich people’s lives.
- **APA Publications** APA has books, research reports and other publications that focus on disaster mitigation, rebuilding processes and engaging communities members in a participatory planning process. These resources discuss the tools and information necessary to guide and promote positive rebuilding.
- **Face-to-Face** Pro-bono Planning Assistance Teams are preparing to work within the impacted communities and offer their assistance, expertise and knowledge. These volunteer experts will help community leaders identify solutions for specific problems. Teams will be used to address a variety of planning, rebuilding, hazard mitigation, and other needs. (For instance, the sponsorship or adoption of a particular community’s planning needs.)

## Support for Key Theme 2:

### APA planners create choice.

APA planners help civic leaders, business interests and citizens work together and play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives.

Good planning helps create communities that offer better choices for where and how people work and live.

Great communities are rebuilt through collaboration. Planners help elected officials and their constituents understand the consequences of alternative actions. Planners are able to provide a comprehensive viewpoint that integrates and unifies all of the pieces and varied elements that make up a community.

Planners, better than anyone else, help elected officials and their constituents understand not just the intended consequences of development and growth, but also their unintended consequences. Planners help communities see the big picture and take a long-term approach to guiding growth and change.

#### ~~~ POTENTIAL TALKING POINTS ~~~

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- **Planning -- democracy in action** Planning provides a way for engaged citizens to exercise their voice about how they want their community rebuilt. No other public process enables citizens to become so directly involved in helping shape the future of the places where they live. Planning is truly democracy in action. Part of this democratic process involves residents, development interests and other stakeholders coming together to create a shared vision of their community's future.
- **Tough Decisions** Issues involved in recovery from this disaster include those of environmental justice, racial equity, restoration of natural systems, infrastructure repair, property acquisition, environmental clean-up, cultural heritage preservation, hazard mitigation, economic development, and urban redevelopment. Planners are uniquely prepared to help communities make decisions. These decisions should not be rushed or ignored just to rebuild communities quickly.
- **Finding common ground** Planning and the special skills of planners are used to help diverse groups find common ground and mutually agreeable solutions to community issues. Planning is the way communities bring elected officials, constituents and other interests together to define and implement a plan based on common goals and values. As such, planning is just as valuable to a healthy democracy as voting privileges.
- **Special projects** Temporary housing must be built as part of the long-term redevelopment of communities, so that people who do return can, as much as possible, begin to live and recover with their neighbors. Consideration must be given to temporary solutions so they do not become permanent bad decisions.

## Support for Key Theme 3:

### Planning engages community members.

APA helps planners better serve their communities by providing them with resources, tools and objective, cutting-edge information. APA is the defining source for forward-thinking solutions to the challenges facing communities in the rebuilding process.

In response to this challenge APA has immediately launched a series of initiatives, including providing news media with contact names of members knowledgeable about disaster recovery, organizing a special Katrina recovery workshop at the Louisiana state chapter annual meeting, issuing an edition of our electronic publication *interact* focused on what planners can do within their own reach to help speed recovery, arranging a nationwide audio/web recovery conference for our members, and creating a special Katrina section of the website with many available educational resources.

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- **National Planning Conference** Each year APA holds the largest planning-focused meeting of its kind in the world. The conference brings thousands of planners, elected officials and engaged citizens together to hear from national experts on a wide range of planning issues and topics, including disaster mitigation, recovery, and rebuilding.
- **Federal Policy Initiatives** APA exercises planning leadership and helps communities have more choices through our federal policy initiatives and public outreach efforts. These activities address a wide range of issues, including transportation spending, energy conservation, environmental protections, housing and economic development.
- **Social Equity** The rebuilding must be fair, with solid attention to the creation of communities of mixed income, races and ethnic groups, built upon an economy of small and medium sized businesses, vibrant tourist areas, commercial downtowns, and petrochemical and shipping industries rebuilt with a greater concern for the fragile environment.
- **Neighborhood Solutions** Public funding must be provided for neighborhood and community planners to assist residents in planning and financing their reconstruction, to provide an opportunity to develop creative strategies for neighborhood improvement and evacuee community building, and to provide a communication link between local government and residents.
- **APA Website** APA's website is a rich and valuable resource, not just for the planning profession but also for all who seek information to improve neighborhoods and communities where they live. The website, [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org), is the most-visited website of its kind, and at FEMA's request, we've created a comprehensive list of resources on disaster recovery at [www.planning.org/katrina](http://www.planning.org/katrina).
- **Planning Foundation** We are soliciting gifts to the Planning Foundation of APA that will be used exclusively to support the planning efforts that will be undertaken by APA and our Chapters in Louisiana and Mississippi. While we will be coordinating pro bono efforts of members, those efforts, and others, will require financial support. Tax-deductible donations to the Planning Foundation should be noted as "Katrina relief." <http://www.planning.org/foundation/default.htm>

## Support for Key Theme 4:

### APA helps create communities of lasting value.

APA helps create communities of lasting value that enrich people's lives. Great communities are a result of good planning.

Urgency in the response and rebuilding after the hurricanes must be balanced with informed decisions. The best examples of past studies, good planning, and the lessons of history must be utilized, so that the same environmental and rebuilding errors will not take place. Regulatory and environmental processes must not be bypassed in the name of expediency; the building and infrastructure review process, however, must expedite priority projects that will help everyone.

APA will continue to dedicate resources to assist in an effort that must be commensurate with the challenges and opportunities presented by this unprecedented disaster.

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- **Regional Strategy** A regional approach to planning must be employed, in which city, suburbs, rural areas and regions are part of an overall redevelopment and environmental strategy, with funding priority being given for long-term far-sighted improvements that address the region's geographic, environmental and economic needs.
- **Disaster Prevention** Effective disaster prevention, response and mitigation measures can occur only with adequate and effective investment in infrastructure for all our communities and for this specific region.
- **Planning gets people involved** Great communities don't occur overnight or by accident. They are planned and thought out. They involve commitment, collaboration, and civic participation. They encourage inclusiveness and opportunity for all, not just a few. APA celebrates and advocates engagement because good ideas come about when many people participate. No great community is ever the result of one person or a small group of people.
- **National Planning Conference** At APA's National Planning Conference in San Antonio in April 2006, we will host a conference session track on disaster recovery to educate attendees about the issues involved. Since Texas has absorbed so many evacuees, we also will host an all-day workshop on Saturday addressing the issues of disaster recovery and rebuilding.
- **Organization-wide Effort** APA National as well as our professional institute, AICP, and our Chapters, Divisions, and Student organizations will work to establish and convey the planning principles that need to be embodied within disaster preparedness, mitigation and recovery planning. We will focus our efforts on channeling volunteers, financial and other resources to assist in the recovery.
- **Focus on Capacity** We are focused on building planning capacity to address immediate rebuilding needs, and assist other communities with disaster preparedness planning. We will use all existing APA opportunities, conferences and venues to focus on these issues, and to articulate how our members can be involved on a personal basis and help build the capacity for planning.