

**Building the Plane as You Fly It:  
Community Development Systems in New Orleans**

**Tim Coates  
April 2007**

**Completed as a requirement for his Master in Public Policy  
at the John F. Kennedy School of Government,  
Harvard University**

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
Introduction:	
New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina and Community Development ...	2
Funding in an Emergent System .....	4
Methodology .....	6
Theoretical Background:	
Community Development as Networking.....	9
Framework for a Community Development System.....	12
Findings: The Community Development System in New Orleans ...	18
The System's Structure.....	24
Putting it all Together:	
Building an Adaptive System to reach the 'Ideal' .....	30
Appendix I	
Social Network Survey.....	41
Appendix II	
Expert and Community Leader interviews.....	69
Appendix III	
Participating Organizations.....	70

## **New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina and Community Development**

*“The best way I’ve heard to describe what we’re doing is this: We’re building the plane as we fly it.”*

Hal Roark, Executive Director, Broadmoor Development Corporation

To the extent it ever existed, the network of individuals and organizations concerned with community development in New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina was ineffective and inadequately supported. The complexity of economic and social challenges facing the city overwhelmed its capacity to respond. These challenges included a declining population, stagnant economy, highly concentrated poverty, and one of the country’s highest rates of violent crime. The difficulty in establishing an effective system of community development organizations was exacerbated by the city’s changing economic structure towards a dependence on low-wage service sector employment.

Then Hurricane Katrina hit. 80 percent of the city was flooded for more than two weeks. Following a long period of emergency relief, many established community based organizations had difficulty assessing the city’s new needs, adjusting to a changed political environment, and creating projects that addressed people’s needs. Others adapted quickly to the new situation with projects in areas such as housing, education and social services.

As more individuals returned to the city over the next several months, loose-knit neighborhood associations began to self-organize. Residents were taking on the burden of rebuilding their neighborhoods. They contacted returned and displaced neighbors, engaged in urban planning exercises, and collected information about the state of their community. A USA Today article on Katrina’s one-year anniversary articulated the rise of this newly empowered community voice this way:

“In some neighborhoods, the real planning is happening inside people's homes, around the kitchen table or in small neighborhood groups.”<sup>1</sup>

Residents involved in these neighborhood associations began to create communities of practice.<sup>2</sup> They crafted local strategies for local problems, found novel approaches to increase their capacity for action, and generated methods to pool and disseminate information. They developed identities and, almost as a side effect, became real communities. These ‘networks of necessity’ were emerging within neighborhood organizations, but they also became prominent between neighborhood organizations and non-profits. As a result, collaborative efforts gained momentum mainly as no other organization or institution in the city was undertaking the task of revitalizing these neighborhoods.

As of this writing, several neighborhood organizations have formed community development corporations (CDCs) with non-profit tax status. Many are credible neighborhood associations, while others are simply a loose collection of individuals trying to solve shared problems. Many of these groups have begun collaborating on a wide variety of projects with nonprofits, foundations, universities and private companies.

The city’s community development sector has undergone a similar transformation. In the years before Katrina, according to one community leader’s estimate, there were approximately 40 CDCs. Partly because of funding tied to the city’s political system, they accomplished very little. Many built just 5-6 houses per year. While many of those nonprofits have not returned, the more credible have reestablished themselves. New organizations have also risen with promising new leadership around political advocacy, education, planning coordination and neighborhood development.

---

<sup>1</sup> Konigsmark, Anne Rochell. “New Orleans’ Recovery Slow and Slippery Process.” *USA Today* 23 August 2006. [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-08-22-katrina-recovery-cover\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-08-22-katrina-recovery-cover_x.htm)

<sup>2</sup> ‘Communities of practice’ is a term to define an association of people that engage in issues of mutual concern, participate in a joint enterprise and coordinate behavior. These practices create a dynamic that sustains itself. See Fritjof Capra, *The Hidden Connections*. Anchor Books, 2004.

## Funding in an Emergent System

The post-Katrina system of grassroots and city-based organizations in New Orleans briefly described above is an example of an emergent system. Emergent systems cannot be adequately explained by looking at the system's pre-existing components and their interactions. Daniel Curran and Herman B. Leonard, in a study on recovery efforts in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, describe emergent systems as "a setting within which outcomes, good or bad, will be generated, and within which the outcomes that will be produced can and will be affected by the conditions and characteristics of the system."<sup>3</sup>

In New Orleans, where the public sector had consistently failed to provide a direction for the recovery through a centrally implemented strategy, community based organizations operating at neighborhood and city-wide level have shown a willingness and ability to adapt in order to "intelligently navigate" this new environment. In short, they have shown agency – "interests and resources and, therefore, choices that they can and will make."<sup>4</sup> Guiding their actions is a set of conditions and characteristics that include networks, associations, rule of law, available information, support systems such as infrastructure, schools, health systems, markets, and local cultural norms. As a result, a decentralized network of local organizations has 'emerged' from the system's conditions and is evolving through what Curran and Leonard term decentralized, intelligent adaptation.<sup>5</sup>

If there is a silver lining from Hurricane Katrina, it is this unprecedented rise of new local leadership seeking a heightened role in the city's community development, and the emergence of an educated and organized populace, now having gone through several

---

<sup>3</sup> Curran, Daniel and Herman B. Leonard, "Recovery in Aceh: Towards a Strategy of Emergence." Harvard Business School Working Paper, # 05-082. <http://www.hbs.edu/research/pdf/05-082.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

planning processes. This has created the opportunity to produce transformational change to the city's community building system -- the network of organizations and institutions working to improve the physical, economic and social assets of New Orleans' communities. Moreover, the hiring of Ed Blakely as Executive Director for Recovery Management for the City of New Orleans this past January has provided the direction and stability that many observers of the recovery process perceived to be missing.

The challenge for funders in emergent systems is that people and institutions do not behave as they would be expected to had there not been a Hurricane. The interconnectedness of social and economic issues in community development mean that focusing on any single issue without concern for how it effects and is affected by other issues will likely lead to sub-optimal outcomes. The pace of change, abysmal capacity across all systems – health, education, economic – relative to the need, and inability to predict or control conditions on the ground create challenges for donors seeking traditional forms of influence and certainty.

What is the best intervention strategy in this type of complexity? There is a real need to develop a framework to prioritize community development strategies. This policy analysis exercise (PAE) aims to develop that framework and propose strategies for the city's community development system using a synthesis of social network theory and community development approaches. It focuses on the community development system, and specifically on the organizations concerned with physical improvement, i.e. housing, and recommends funding strategies that build the system's effectiveness.

Part I builds a community development system framework for examining how well organizations at various levels and resource capacities are or are not engaging in the city's emerging – and emergent – system. Part II analyzes findings from a social network survey and qualitative interviews through this framework.

## Methodology

This study maps the organizational and network structure of community development actors in New Orleans. This research is specifically concerned with actor's perception of the system, how well organizations are building value-added connections with other organizations, the composition of organizations that make up this network and their capacity, and the conditions that help determine the pattern of network development. System characteristics were found using a social network survey (see appendix 1) and interviews with nonprofit leaders (see appendix 2). This research approach provides qualitative and quantitative measures on the city's community development system on which to guide future action.

A literature review of network theory and community development systems was conducted. It focused on the necessary institutional components in equitable, sustainable and dynamic community development systems. Interviews with experts were also conducted in order to help construct a community development framework appropriate for New Orleans (see appendix 2). The framework focuses on resource flow and the necessary functions that must be accomplished by 'building block' organizations. The social network survey is based on this framework.

This social network research uses a (group) bounded network approach. The population or system of actors this study is concerned with were identified a priori, rather than allow participants to freely identify their connections. The challenge was deciding who among grassroots neighborhood groups, city-wide and state or national philanthropic foundations belonged in the system.

Neighborhood organizations were included based on experts' opinions on viability and whether it was thought that they had the potential to have an impact in their neighborhood. If there was any uncertainty as to the state of the neighborhood group,

they were included. City-based, regional and national non-profits were included if at least part of their work *directly* increased the capacity (writ large) of organizations at a more local level. In other words, helping neighborhoods *through* their work, i.e. a non-profit whose work was solely in the education system, would not qualify.

Several community leaders knowledgeable in the city's post-Katrina political and social landscape helped identify the population given my criteria for membership (see appendix 2). They represented public, private and non-profit sectors. Several membership lists were used to find organizations and contact people, including that of Neighborhoods Partnership Network, Friends of New Orleans, and Providence Community Housing. An extensive list of the city's community based organizations compiled by CityWorks was also utilized. A trip to New Orleans in late January helped consolidate the final list: 163 neighborhood organizations, 40 city-based non-profits, and 23 national nonprofits.

Using this list of organizations, a social network survey was created and distributed to neighborhood, city and national nonprofit leaders to be completed with their voluntary consent. The survey was conducted online at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). Hard copies were delivered where necessary and followed up with a phone call to ensure receipt. Network questions measured the size and shape of an organization's networks, perception of network size, partnerships with other neighborhoods and non-profits, and what organizations they wish to communicate more with. At the end of each question a text field was provided to write names of individuals or organizations not included in the population.

Respondents were initially approached through email and asked to participate in the survey. This elicited a minimal response. A higher response rate was then accomplished through a more personal, less formulaic email strategy. The creation of three \$100 appreciation prizes and personal phone calls to explain the project and ask for assistance increased the response rate to an appropriate level.



Following the release of the survey, many organizations were identified as defunct or not relevant to this project. This brought the final list of organizations down to 148 neighborhoods organizations, 36 city based nonprofits, and 21 national nonprofits. Total completed surveys by level of organization was 70 neighborhood based, 22 city based, and 18 national nonprofits. A 48% and 61% response rate from neighborhood and city-based organizations is less than ideal for robust social network research. This will lead to a bias in the results, especially where a highly connected organizations has not participated. Certain measures were taken to mitigate the bias. Targeted outreach was made to ensure participation from organizations known to be among the most active and in leadership roles. And halfway through the survey, outreach was limited to those organizations already identified in completed surveys. This consolidated the system further. These efforts should decrease the degree of bias but they will not eliminate it.

Throughout the creation and dissemination of the survey, interviews were undertaken with selected neighborhood and nonprofit leaders from the survey population. These interviews helped go beyond the data to explain how personal and organizational relationships and partnerships were being developed, why certain people were being sought out, and what barriers were impeding a more fluid system.

## Theoretical Background: Community Development as Networking

*“Historically in New Orleans there’s hasn’t been a lot of trust and collaboration between various institutions, like neighborhoods, community based organizations, and larger groups.”*

Nathan Shroyer, Interim Executive Director, Neighborhoods Partnership Network

Social capital can be defined as a quintessential “product of collective action.”<sup>6</sup> In general, social ties are categorized as being either strong or weak. Strong ties represent closeness with another individual or organization and a high frequency of interaction (friends); weak ties represent less frequent interactions (acquaintances). At their foundation, ties represent the operationalizing of trust between individuals or organizations. The literature identifies three other types of social capital related to group characteristics: bonding (strong ties between similar people), bridging (weak ties between people or organizations with overlapping interests) and linking (weak ties between people or organizations that cut across status and similarity).<sup>7</sup> The later two are most salient for community development as they enable people to create relationships outside their normal circles.

Social capital and social networks theories are closely related. “Social capital,” community building scholar Allison Gilchrist writes, “is the value added through networking processes, and resides within the web of ties and linkages that we call community.” Where social capital analysis focuses on the individual or organization and their relationships, social network analysis focuses on the *relationships* between individuals or organizations.

Networks consist of a web of connections or links between agents at a node. Social networks “enable participants to form clusters around specific activities focused on a

---

<sup>6</sup> Field, John. Social Capital. London: Routledge, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Gilchrist, Alison, The Well Connected Community: A Networking Approach to Community Development. Bristol: The Policy Press, 2004.

common goal or function and coordinated on an autonomous basis.”<sup>8</sup> Networks often reflect shared values and interests, proximity, or all three.

There is a vast literature on social networks showing their utility over a wide range of social functions.<sup>9</sup> They allow for risk sharing, an ability to pool efforts and share resources. They are conduits for information and deliberation. An active network will often generate identity and meaning around a common narrative. The various skills and talents of individuals and organizations in a network increase collective capacities. Research suggests that networks increase an individual’s well being. They are especially valuable in vulnerable communities for many of the reasons listed above.

Environments that emphasize networks are characterized by diversity, autonomy, risk and turbulence. In such situations, communication and collective action tend to be based on personal relationships rather than formal rules and regulations. In times of crisis, social networks are “a vital means of survival when access to resources is restricted or unpredictable.”<sup>10</sup> Not surprisingly then, organizations in New Orleans established before and after Katrina have had to rely on the strength of their networks and their ability to create new ones to get anything done.

Research by Jeanne S. Hulbert, John Beggs and Valerie Haines on social networks following Hurricane Andrew finds that “an individual’s networks matter in both the preparation and recovery phases of the storm, over and above the personal characteristics of victims and characteristics of the communities in which they live.”<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 7-8

<sup>10</sup> Gilchrist, Alison. “The Well Connected Community: Networking at the ‘Edge of Chaos.’” Community Development Journal. 35 (3): 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Hulbert, Jeanne S. John J. Beggs and Valerie A. Haines. “Bridges Over Troubled Waters: What are the optimal networks for Katrina’s Victims?” From Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences: [http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Hurlbert\\_Beggs\\_Haines/](http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Hurlbert_Beggs_Haines/).

Hulbert, Beggs and Haines find that an individual's networks before the Hurricane "affected the degree to which they activated network ties for help in the... recovery phase."<sup>12</sup> What type of network is activated affects the type of assistance received. Strong ties and dense networks provide individuals and communities with emotional succor. Weak ties and wider ranging networks provide access to instrumental resources that help people find employment, housing and a new school for the children. Both are vital for community development. "We predict," the authors write, "that 'optimal network' structures, which combine stronger ties/dense networks with weaker ties/wider-ranging networks, will prove key in recovering from Katrina."<sup>13</sup>

Another interpretation of this research as it relates to community development is that the city's unprecedented level of self-organizing can be seen as the spontaneous creation of bonding social capital. Links among and between community based organizations and other nonprofits represents critical bridging and linking social capital, the weak ties and wide ranging networks necessary for developing and sustaining an effective community development system. A community development strategy based on supporting wide-ranging networks through supporting infrastructure - organizations that provide the financial, and technical expertise and forums for networking - could increase the adaptive capacity of the entire system. As will be discussed in more detail later on, an example of a targeted network approach is building the capacity of an organization that assists nonprofit housing developers find collaborative opportunities, share best practices and support them as they learn to fill capacity gaps. This follows Gilchrist's definition of community development: "enhancing people's capacity to network both individually, collectively and through social institutions."<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Gilchrist, 2004.

## Framework for a Community Development System

Before outlining the framework, it's important to note that while emergent systems emphasize placing trust in local organizations, not all organizations are equal. Some can access resources more readily than others. This is particularly apt in New Orleans, where large economic inequalities persist and national non-profits have traditionally played only a minor role. Moreover, desired outcomes require certain network structures. When the initial conditions of actors have a significant influence on their success, any systems analysis must be sensitive to how groups with different capacities interact in order to promote desired outcomes.

The most applicable framework of how an 'ideal' community development system might be structured is from Ronald F. Ferguson and Sara E. Stoutland, in an article entitled *Reconceiving the Community Development Field*.<sup>15</sup> The authors design a framework for how organizations at various levels (neighborhood, city, regional and national) and capacities position themselves in order to 'produce' community development.

The authors write that people striving to improve American neighborhoods work without a conception of how their work fits within the larger system they inhabit.

"It is as though each of us is building a small piece of a skyscraper, hoping that if we do our part, others will do theirs and the building will rise. However, our collective project has no head architect, no construction foreman, and no one to monitor the adequacy of labor and supplies. Moreover, it will never have a unified blueprint."<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Ferguson, Ronald F. and Sara E. Stoutland. "Reconceiving the Community Development Field." In *Urban Problems and Community Development*. Ronald F. Ferguson and William T. Dickens eds. Washington D.C: Brookings Institute Press, 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 33-34.

This is certainly true of New Orleans. Local efforts to revitalize neighborhoods have struggled to coordinate activities and find ways to share resources and practices. Most neighborhood organizations are run on a volunteer basis by engaged citizens and are overwhelmed with the work required for their neighborhoods to become places they want to live. In interviews conducted for this work, it has been difficult for community leaders to see how their organization is positioned within a larger system.

While there are efforts to think about how to better coordinate work being done by the city's community based organizations, these burgeoning efforts have not undertaken a systematic analysis of the emergent system. Accordingly, any analysis must pay specific attention to how resources, including financial and technical, enter and are distributed in the system. Ferguson and Stoutland's framework defines how a system of interconnected grassroots, city, state and national organizations *ought* to be structured by focusing on resource distribution.

The authors divide organizations in this community development system into four levels (see figure 1).

#### Level zero

Level zero, or the grassroots, comprises residents as individuals and households, their networks of informal social ties in neighborhood and employment settings, clubs, churches and schools. Level zero also includes voluntary community groups.

#### Level one

Level one comprises frontline organizations – nonprofit, for-profit and public sector – that use paid staff to serve or represent residents. Many level-one organizations such as CDCs and other CBOs actively scour the city, region, and the nation for resources and opportunities that might help neighborhood residents (level 0). They often transform

these resources to fit community needs. 'Frontline' is defined as providing goods and services to residents.

#### Level two

Level two includes local policy-makers, funders and providers of technical assistance who together make up the authorizing and support environment for level one. These could be banks, consultants, training institutes, public housing authorities, and local offices or affiliates of national intermediary organizations.

#### Level three

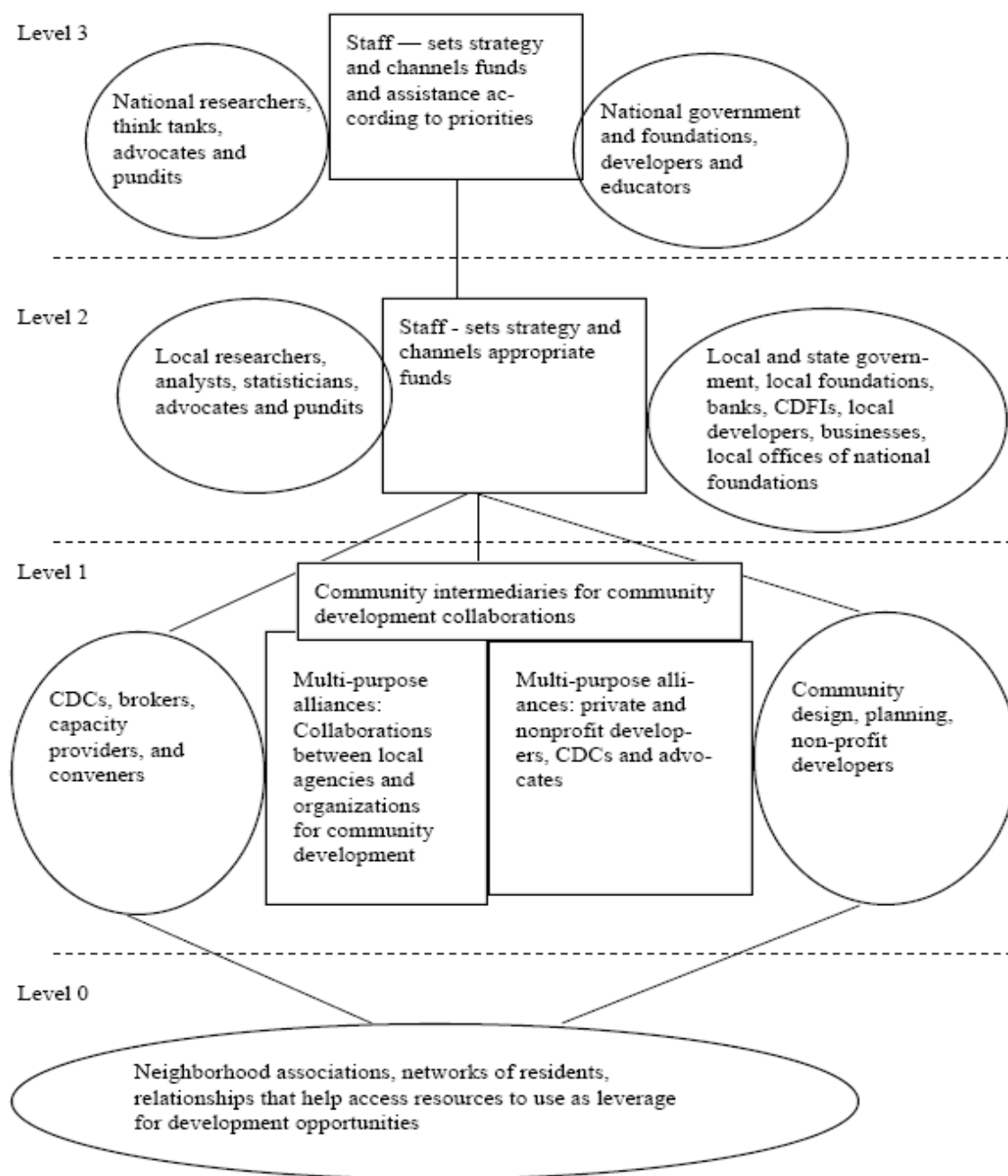
Level three is the state, regional and national counterpart to level two. Its function is to support levels one and two. While levels two and three do not directly serve or represent residents, both are important because they create the laws and regulations within which the system operates. They assemble and control resources that fund projects and pay salaries.

Figure one shows how these levels interact in an ideal community development system as it relates to the physical improvement of neighborhoods. The figure is an adaptation of a similar diagram from Ferguson and Stoutland about a work force development system rather than community development.

At the top of the figure in level three, are high level funders and policy makers such as the federal government and national foundations. They make policy, set strategies and send financial and technical resources down the chain. Level two is connected to level three by local and state government and local foundations. Staff in these institutions and other higher level community actors take information from level three and disperse it among the complex level one landscape. At level one, CDC's, community design firms, and nonprofit developers, among others, are coordinated by intermediaries. The intermediary also might comprise alliances that connect upper levels to level zero. Level

zero is the “voluntary community organizations of residents and residents’ informal networks.”

**Figure 1: A Community Development System Structure**



Based on Ferguson and Stoutland, 1999.



This system of support, from level three (national and regional organizations) to level zero (grassroots, neighborhood associations), provides the framework through which this project measures the level of vertical connectivity. How well are neighborhood organizations at level 0 connecting to level 1? How well is level 1 connecting to 2, and 2 to 3?

The horizontal aspect of this framework is where organizations reside and perform their functions. The system will operate sub-optimally if certain functions within a system are not able to be carried out because of low organizational capacity or some other impediment. A recent report comparing community development systems in four U.S. cities identified the following functions as common across each system:<sup>17</sup>

- Specific goals and strategies for improving neighborhoods;
- Organizational relationships among community development stakeholders;
- Local and state governments that carry out and support community development;
- Leadership from different sectors, and;
- Community development investments and outputs.

Cross city analysis are difficult as system structure and inter-organizational interactions vary in each city depending on its specific history and contemporary community development context. Nevertheless, an ‘ideal’ community development system is one where organizations or partnerships at capacity are coordinated across different levels to serve the above functions. The matrix in table 1 allows for an inventory of organizations concerned with the physical improvement of neighborhoods to see if organizations or partnerships exist to fulfill these functions. This schema provides an opportunity to think systematically about how emerging community development system in New Orleans compares to what the system should be.

---

<sup>17</sup> Brophy, Paul C. Making Neighborhood Investment Count in Baltimore: A Comparison with Other Cities. June 2003, Baltimore Community Development Alliance.

**Table 1: Community Development Building Blocks**

<b>Organizations that help neighborhoods answer the WHAT/WHERE and WHY to guide development.</b>	<b>Organizations that Drive the developments efforts – vision, policies and practices. WHO.</b>	<b>Organizations/Tools to DO the work – provide funding, provide tools or policies, provide capacity – HOW</b>
Statistics/Research/Analysis/GIS Community Planning Services Community Design Services	Neighborhood Resident Engagement Policy Advocacy Local Brokers/Conveners Local Foundations and Intermediaries CDCs	Financing Vehicles Land Use Tools Nonprofit housing developers National Organizations in the City

**Source: Surdna Foundation**

There is a caveat to the preceding discussion: relationships and organizational capacity alone do not determine an ideal community. As Ferguson and Stoutland note, “cultural factors, politics, ethics and beliefs about causation affect the [community development] field’s current practices as well as its evolution.”<sup>18</sup> However, because of time and resource constraints, this study focuses solely on the connections between neighborhood organizations and non-profits at the city and national level currently active in the city. This does not lessen the importance of collaborating and networking with government, the private sector and other institutional actors not included in this study. In fact, some of the more successful neighborhood organizations show some of the same behaviors in their reaching out non non-profit actors with varying degrees of success.

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 34.

## Findings: The Community Development System in New Orleans

*“Here we are, 18 months later, and I believe it’s going to be the non-profit and faith based groups that make things happen.”*

Jim Kelly, President and CEO Providence Community Housing

### Accessibility

How open are organizations in various levels and sectors – public, private, non-profit and neighborhood – to creating collaborations or providing resources? Organizations were asked two questions relating to their experience creating partnerships. Table 2 shows respondents answers, on a 1-4 scale, to the statement: “My organization has been able to create partnerships to effectively work towards our goals.”

**Table 2**

<b>“My organization has been able to create partnerships to effectively work towards our goals.”</b> 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree				
	Neighborhood-based	City-based	National/Regional nonprofits	Total
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>3.62</b>	<b>3.61</b>	<b>3.42</b>

These results show how organizations across the board agree that they have been able to create partnerships. Neighborhood organizations have a slightly lower result at 3.29, but still well above 3. These results were found from Jan – Feb. 2007, almost immediately following the completion of the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP) planning process. Many of the neighborhood responses may refer to collaborations occurring throughout that work.

Table 3.0 breaks down the experiences respondents have had coordinating activities further by asking about particular sectors. Using the same 1-4 scale, the statement said: “I have been able to coordinate activities with the following sectors to the benefit of my organization’s goals.” There was much greater variation in these responses.

Neighborhoods, perhaps because of their low capacity and related inexperience taking on such responsibilities, have had the most difficulty coordinating efforts with other sectors. This follows from the findings in table 2. Their low capacity may also explain their being the most open of organizations, with a score of 3.34.

City-based non-profits have had the easiest time coordinating efforts with other sectors. This may have to do with extensive networks developed pre-Katrina that they were able to leverage after the storm. Many city based non-profits experienced staffing and other challenges (such as lost office space) following Hurricane Katrina and needed to form partnerships to operate effectively in the post-Katrina environment.

City and State Government, and the Business sector, according to these results, have been the least responsive to coordinating efforts, with respective averages of 2.69, 2.41 and 2.67. Unfortunately, given the expertise they can offer, universities also scored lowly with an average of 2.90.

**Table 3**

<b>“I have been able to coordinate activities with the following sectors to the benefit of my organization’s goals.”</b> 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree				
	Neighborhood-based	City-based nonprofits	National/Regional nonprofits	<b>Total</b>
City Government	2.79	2.57	2.53	<b>2.69</b>
State Government	2.12	2.79	3.00	<b>2.41</b>
Business	2.57	3.08	2.31	<b>2.67</b>
Universities	2.76	3.32	2.75	<b>2.90</b>
City-based nonprofits	2.91	3.46	3.53	<b>3.14</b>
National/Regional nonprofits	2.64	3.16	3.61	<b>2.95</b>
Neighborhood Associations	3.47	3.27	3.00	<b>3.34</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>3.09</b>	<b>2.96</b>	

How do we make sense of these sometimes contradictory figures? Can organizations form partnerships but then rate certain sectors at less than favorable? In part, these findings confirm the quote used to start off this section, it's the nonprofits and faith based groups leading the recovery. Each of these groups received favorable ratings. These tables also confirm conventional wisdom in New Orleans, where it's common to hear the complaint of "meeting fatigue." Organizations, especially grassroots and nonprofit organizations, have generally been open to and seeking collaborations. Efforts to generate 'free style' networking opportunities have mostly focused on neighborhoods and nonprofits, and this is represented through their high openness scores. As recovery efforts become increasingly sophisticated, targeted collaborations, rather than open networking events become increasingly important. These partnerships will undoubtedly require government and business sector involvement that have not been as accessible as they will need to be.

#### Inter-level Connectivity

A vibrant community development system connects organizations with technical and financial resources, and process expertise, to front line (level 1) organizations. This is the Ferguson and Stoutland model where resources are brought to community's through a hierarchy of social institutions. How well is a network structure emerging in New Orleans that provides these resources and expertise to communities?

Figure 3 represents the confirmed partnerships between level 0 grassroots organizations (red) and level one and two city-based nonprofits (blue). That is, both sides said a partnership exists between the two organizations (see appendix 3 for a record of participating organizations).

The most salient finding of this network structure is the centrality of Neighborhood Partnership Network (NPN) in its position between nonprofits and community or neighborhood level groups. While many nonprofits have partnerships with community organizations, they are either for specific purposes (such as the Ashé Cultural Arts

Center, which focuses on arts and culture) or without the range of groups that NPN is able to connect to. As will be discussed below, NPN is in a strategically critical position as many neighborhood organizations are seeking ways to be helpful to their members throughout the recovery.

Fig. 4 represents the confirmed partnerships between city-based nonprofits and national foundations. It appears that a welcome degree of partnerships between city-based and regional or national groups are forming. The network is denser than in figure 3, confirmed partnerships between neighborhood and city-based organizations. But similar to it, there is a greater degree of relationships between organizations from the same levels: national with national, and city with city.

The map does show that while there are city-based groups like NPN, the New Orleans Neighborhood Development Collaborative (NONDC) and the Greater New Orleans Foundation that have partnerships with both city and national-level groups, there is not a central local intermediary through which national groups are able to go to for a real-time understanding of the situation on the ground. Almost as a response to the difficulty of gathering information about the state of recovery efforts in the city and seeking a deeper partnership with local organizations, several national groups have opened local offices, including Mercy Corps, PolicyLink and NeighborWorks America. Enterprise Community Partners has staff in the city on an almost full-time basis and are working with various groups.

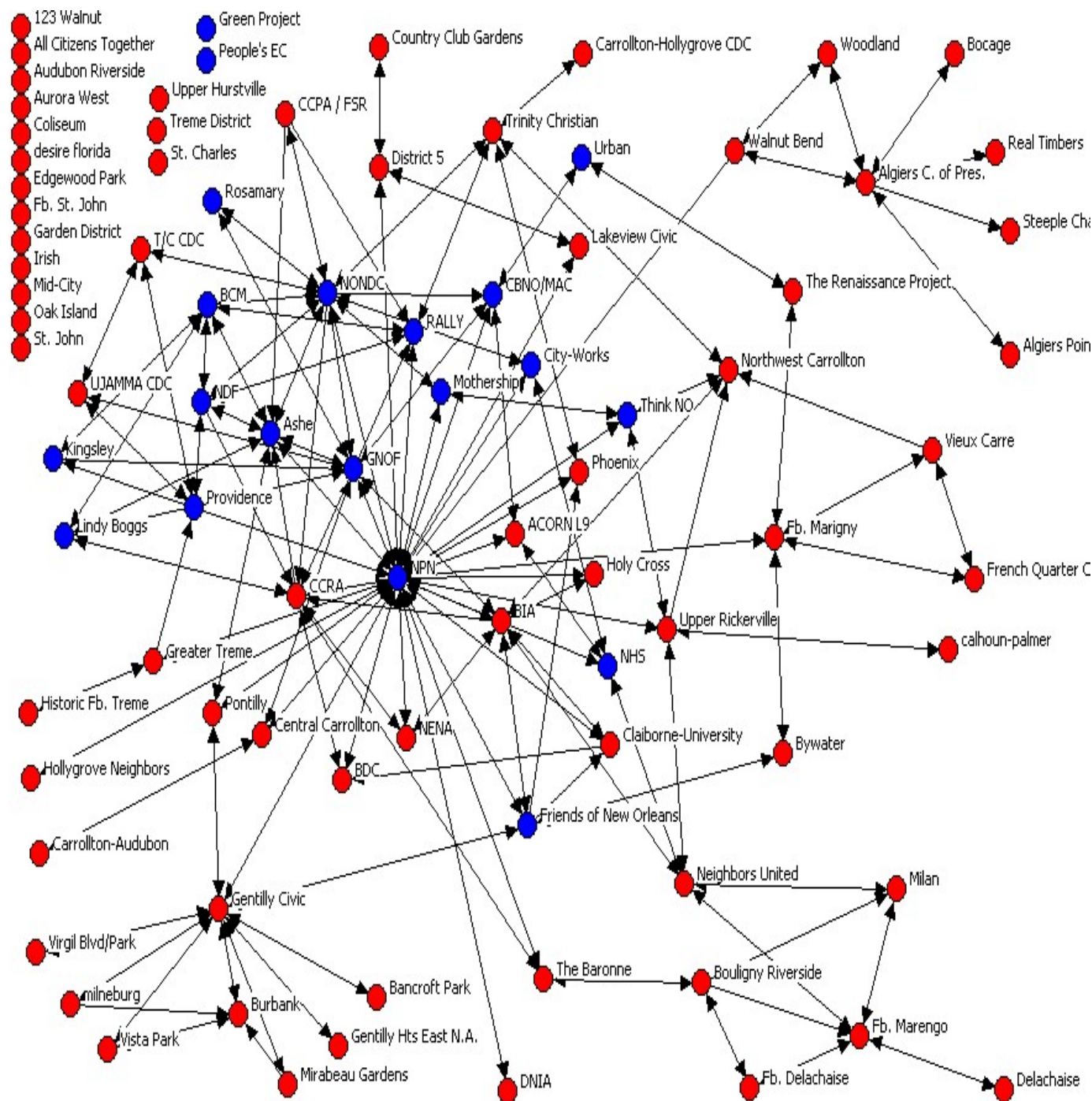
The network structure developing in New Orleans becomes easier to conceptualize when the focus is on one specific element of community development. The next section will burrow down on the necessary functions in an ideal 'system' for the physical improvement of neighborhoods. Particular attention will be paid to organizations concerned with carrying these functions out.

**Fig. 3**  
**Neighborhood and City-Based Confirmed Partnerships**

### Legend

**Neighborhood/community org**

### City-based nonprofit



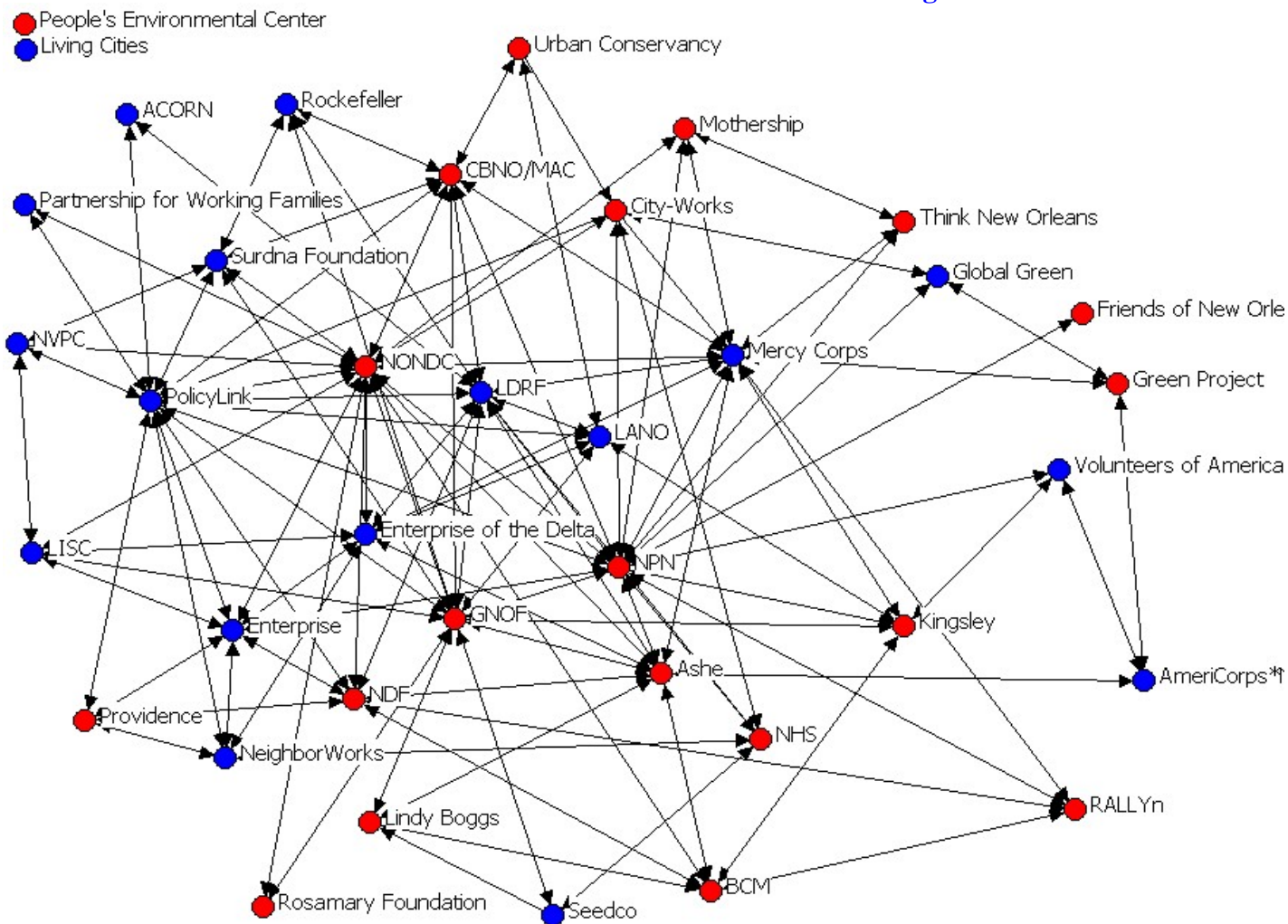
**Fig. 4**

**City-based and Regional/National Confirmed Partnerships**

**Legend**

**City-based**

**Regional/National**





## The System's Structure

*“Linear, logical and best practices...that’s all great. Now how do we take that and apply it to a broken community. That’s the challenge.”*

Ben Johnson, President and CEO, Greater New Orleans Foundation

As stated in a recent report, U.S. community development systems share the following functions:

- Specific goals and strategies for improving neighborhoods;
- Organizational relationships among community development stakeholders;
- Local and state governments that carry out and support community development;
- Leadership from different sectors, and;
- Community development investments and outputs.

Different cities implement these functions differently. The most successful systems, those that effectively produce neighborhoods of choice, find ways to accomplish each. The aim of this section is to begin a discussion about how well the community development system in New Orleans is evolving towards producing these functions. It proceeds with an inventory of organizations concerned with community development in the city, and an analysis of their network structure.

### Inventory

There are a few caveats when using an inventory for analysis. First, several groups operate in more than one category, Providence Community Housing and NONDC being two examples. Second, many organizations are either not at full capacity or, because they have only been operating since Katrina, are on a steep learning curve even as they show potential, the Broadmoor Development Corporation is one example. Third, organizations might be left out. Yet, this inventory allows for a clear conceptual approach to think through how organizations are adapting in the post-Katrina environment, and where capacity is missing, in order create a dynamic community development system.

**Table 4: Organizational Inventory**

Organizations that help neighborhoods answer the WHAT/WHERE and WHY to guide development.	Organizations that Drive the developments efforts – vision, policies and practices. WHO.	Organizations/Tools to DO the work – provide funding, provide tools or policies, provide capacity – HOW
<p><b>Statistics/Research/Analysis/GIS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Greater New Orleans Knowledge Works/Community Data Center</li> <li>- GCR &amp; Associates</li> <li>- Bureau of Government Research</li> <li>- Tulane City Center</li> <li>- PolicyLink</li> <li>- Rally Foundation</li> </ul> <p><b>Community Planning/Design Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- City Works</li> <li>- Concordia</li> <li>- Future Proof</li> </ul>	<p><b>Neighborhood/Resident Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Neighborhood Partnerships Network</li> <li>- Committee for a Better New Orleans</li> <li>- Beacon of Hope Resource Center</li> <li>- Housing Resource Center</li> </ul> <p><b>Policy Advocacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New Orleans Neighborhood Development Collaborative (NONDC)</li> <li>- Urban Conservancy</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Brokers/Conveners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TBD</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Foundations and Intermediaries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Greater New Orleans Foundation</li> <li>- Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations</li> <li>- Preservation Resource Council</li> <li>- Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation</li> <li>- NONDC</li> <li>- Baptist Community Ministries</li> </ul> <p><b>CDCs (focused on physical improvement)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Broadmoor Development Corp.</li> <li>- Tulane/Canal CDC</li> <li>- UJAMMA CDC</li> <li>- Mary Queen of Vietnam CDC</li> <li>- others</li> </ul>	<p><b>Financing Vehicles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tax credits</li> <li>- Foundation funding</li> </ul> <p><b>Land Use Tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TBD</li> </ul> <p><b>Nonprofit housing developers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providence</li> <li>- Neighborhood Housing Services</li> <li>- Humanitas</li> <li>- Neighborhood Development Foundation</li> <li>- First Evangelist</li> <li>- Jericho Road</li> <li>- Acorn Housing</li> <li>- Habitat for Humanity</li> </ul> <p><b>National Organizations in the City</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NeighborWorks America</li> <li>- Enterprise</li> <li>- LISC</li> <li>- Fanne Mae and Freddie Mac</li> <li>- Surdna</li> <li>-</li> </ul>

Several items are worth mentioning from table 4. Missing are local brokers/conveners able to spot trends or opportunities in the field and capitalize on them. Providence Community Housing and the Tulane City Center have both begun to develop these capacities but on a limited level. Both are also heavily involved in other development related activities.

Most community development corporations (CDCs) have limited capacity for the large amount of work in the areas they represent. Moreover, many were formed in the post-Katrina milieu, as neighborhood groups tried to understand what tools were available to effect change in their area. While some have shown great potential, they admit to needing education on community development issues.

Neighborhood organizations and neighborhood umbrella groups are wondering how they can play a positive role in this next phase of the city's recovery. In interviews many community leaders express uncertainty about how to position their organization for this role. At a recent panel of developers in late March, community leaders asked the panel how their organizations could exert some control over what happens in their area.<sup>19</sup> Groups in the Neighborhood/Resident Engagement piece, such as NPN, Beacon of Hope, Committee for a Better New Orleans and the Housing Resource Center are not yet able to offer technical advice of this sort.

### **Network Structure**

To understand how well the system is evolving to achieve community development functions, network maps were created using only those groups specified in the inventory.

### **Partnerships**

Figure 5 represents confirmed partnerships between organizations concerned with physical improvement of neighborhoods that completed the survey. Many local nonprofit developers have partnered with a regional or national nonprofit. The Neighborhood Development Collaborative, Neighborhood Development Foundation and Providence Community Housing are working with Enterprise; NeighborWorks is with Neighborhood Housing Services and the Broadmoor Development Corporation. However, these national organizations are able to provide the expertise or financing the local nonprofits require. The most salient realization from this map is that there is no one or two organizations

---

<sup>19</sup> The panel was the Deal of the Deal Forum, which took place at the New Orleans Home and Garden show, Saturday March 31.

working to coordinate community development projects, identify necessary capacity building needs, or spread best practices.

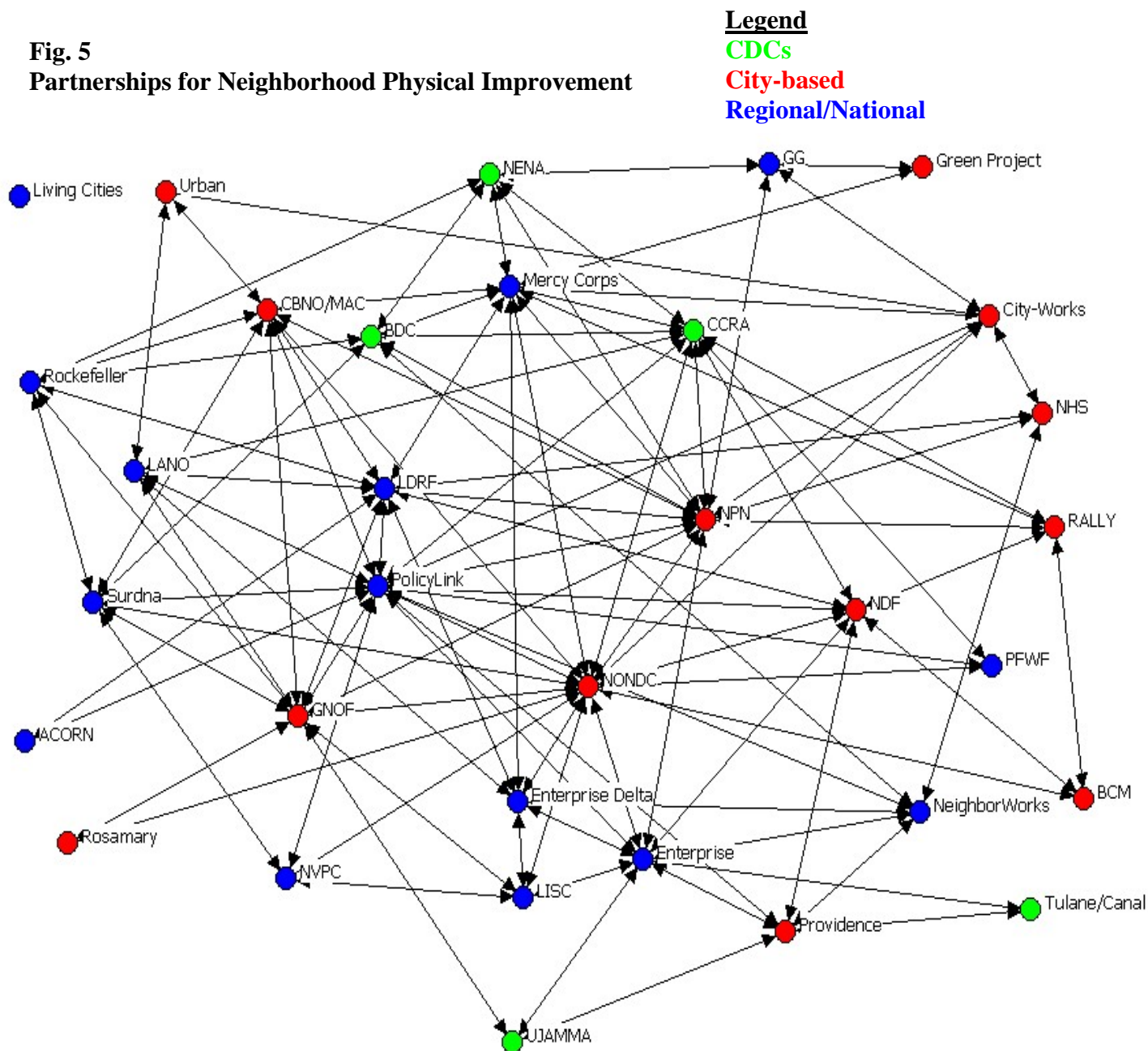
### Communication

The survey also asked organizations to identify five organizations with whom they would be more effective in their work if they could communicate more with them. The result is mapped out in figure 6. Note that unlike the other network diagrams, organizations who did not complete the survey are still included in the network map as it provides a more accurate perspective of who organizations wish to work closer with.

Figure 6 finds that not one organization from the city or national level sees working with community based CDCs as necessary to increase their effectiveness. Another finding is that the majority of organizations identified by national nonprofits were other national nonprofits. In only two circumstances did organizations independently identify each other: Surdna and Providence Community Housing; Global Green and Acorn.

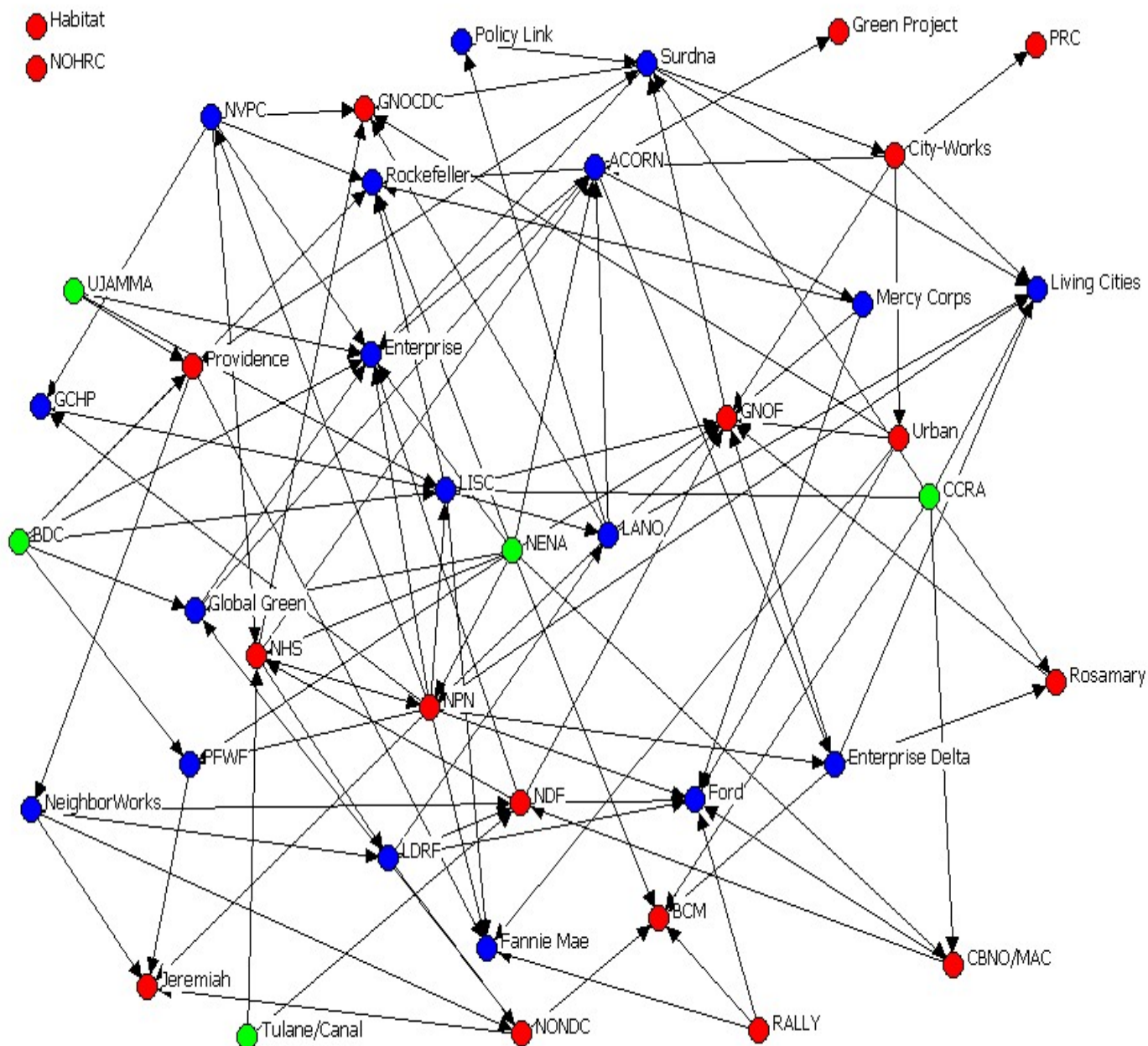
Interestingly, community and city level organizations did not simply choose sources of financing, as might be expected. Tulane/Canal CDC, for example, chose NHS and NDF, two local nonprofit developers. Three national and one local organization were the most sought after organizations, Enterprise Community Partners, Living Cities, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Greater New Orleans Foundation, respectively.

**Fig. 5**  
**Partnerships for Neighborhood Physical Improvement**



**Fig. 6**  
**“I would be more effective in my work if I communicated more with...”**

**Legend**  
 Community CDCs  
 City-based  
 Regional/National



## **Putting it all Together: Building an Adaptive System to reach the 'Ideal'**

*"Over time I have become more concerned with what is already moving, with momentum."*

Dan Ethridge, Tulane City Center

In emergent systems, interdependence, uncertainty and complexity give credibility to an approach that advocates strengthening coordination capacity, on-the-ground adaptability, and leadership. The objective should be to create a learning system.

The concept of a learning organization has become popular in management circles. Learning organizations continually adapt in order to respond to changes in their environment. Through this process they learn and grow. Community development challenges in New Orleans are forcing organizations to continually adapt to societal trends, government initiatives, and new information and organizations entering the city. Increasing the adaptive capacity of the community development system should be a primary focus for donors.

This can be accomplished by supporting the creation, cycling and uptake of information, and building the capacity of organizations at points where the different levels intersect. As a result, donors can have a disproportionate impact with their funds on the city's nonprofit development community. Supporting one organization will positively influence the capacity of others in the system. These strategies are critical in emergent systems since today's decision significantly affects tomorrow's choices. As one local nonprofit leader said, "what's happened over the last six months is all of a sudden you're realizing the ramifications of each choice."

Using the previous discussion, each desired function in a community development system will be examined and recommendations made for next steps.

### **Specific Goals and Strategies for Improving Neighborhoods**

Specific goals and strategies allow stakeholders to understand what is trying to be accomplished.<sup>20</sup> Should there be more affordable housing? Strengthen neighborhoods in areas targeted by the city for redevelopment? Recruit and retain home owners? While a consensus position is not a goal or even desired, a clearer articulation of some generally agreed upon goals would be valuable for organizations to be able to define themselves in relation to them.

There are two basic requirements for a system to articulate goals: 1. Information, and 2. Vehicles for dialogue.

#### 1. Information

To say information is critical is stating the obvious. Yet, except for large nonprofit developers, interviewees frequently mentioned the difficulty of finding actionable information on property titles or home owner/landlord intentions, for example. Importantly, when the capacity of every sector of society is low, interdependency requires an understanding of the system's strengths and weaknesses.

Cities have different ways they gather useable information. The Baltimore Neighborhood Indicator Alliance uses a community driven process to collect 40 outcome indicators. Indicators are utilized by activists, civic leaders and professionals to set neighborhood and city policy goals, develop effective neighborhood plans, and enhance local community organizing strategies.<sup>21</sup> Releasing this information publicly improves governance and management of Baltimore's community development system.

---

<sup>20</sup> Brophy paper.

<sup>21</sup> See BNIA's website for more information: <http://www.ubalt.edu/bnia/about/index.html>. The point of mentioning BNIA is not because it can or should be imitated in New Orleans. It is only to provide an example of how comprehensive information is essential to guiding community development is. In a post-disaster environment, the importance of 'real-time' communication is heightened.



The closest New Orleans has to a BNIA-type function is Greater New Orleans Nonprofit Knowledge Works (NKW).<sup>22</sup> Their mission is well positioned to fulfill the perceived information gap: “to enhance the management capacity of the local nonprofit sector to provide information-driven, systemic and effective solutions to community problems.” Three months ago NKW took over the publishing of the Katrina Index, a monthly publication of statistics related to the recovery which had been done previously by the Brookings Institute. In interviews with NKW, they identified a lack of competent staff as their largest organizational problem. The Rally Foundation has also done interesting micro-level work with Baptist Community Ministries in the Central City neighborhood and their model deserves to be analyzed further.

**Recommendation #1: Develop a “one-stop shop” for information relevant to organizations in the community development system. This should include information important to organizations concerned with economic and social development.**

## 2. Strategies

Until recently there had been little guidance from government about public investment in the city. With a plan now released from the city, nonprofit developers can analyze their efforts with more predictability. However, there is no institutionalized method for high-level coordination of projects that build off one another. The network maps reveal significant needs for a facilitative body that can position itself between national (level 3) and city-based (level 1 and 2) organizations in order to generate discussions around a nonprofit strategy for community development in the city. Such a strategy could start with seeking ways to consolidate system functions such as the procurement of construction supplies, develop coalitions around advocacy campaigns, or help predict and respond to future needs.

---

<sup>22</sup> See website for Greater New Orleans Nonprofit Knowledge Workers:  
<http://www.gnonkw.org/index.html>

A strategy of this sort does not need to be an official document, although some cities with powerful intermediaries, such as Neighborhood Progress, Inc. in Cleveland, do publish one. Both Providence Community Housing and Tulane's City Center have begun hosting 'brown bag' lunch events that bring nonprofit development organizations together. According to interviews, participants feel these initiatives are very important to continue. Through these informal discussions a general consensus can be found that frames problems facing the nonprofit development community in ways everyone can use when developing short and long-term organizational strategies.

**Recommendation #2: Provide support to gradually institutionalize these meetings. Add value to sessions by inviting speakers or hosting panel discussions around topics of shared interest. In the near time it's appropriate to focus discussions on specific issues, such as housing. Over time participation should be extended to organizations with associated interests to increase perspective and innovative partnerships opportunities.**

### **Organizational Relationships Among Community Development Stakeholders**

Figure 5, indicating partnerships for the physical improvement of neighborhoods, and table 4, the organizational inventory, help identify capacity gaps in the system.

Figure 5 clearly shows the system lacks a strong center, which in other systems often takes the form of an intermediary. While several organizations have generated many partnerships with organizations at all levels, such as NPN, NONDC, the Greater New Orleans Foundation and the Central City Renaissance Alliance, these organizations do not represent the resource clearing house capacity of an intermediary.<sup>23</sup> The emergence of many new organizations and the movement of established ones to relatively new areas of operation present the opportunity for an intermediary to play a strategic role in the evolution of the city's community development system.

---

<sup>23</sup> Even though organizations such as the Preservation Resource Council, Housing Resource Center and Habitat for Humanity did not complete the survey, from interviews and the authors experience, it's unlikely any is able to fulfill the functions of an intermediary.

The question arising throughout interviews is this: can one or two existing local groups perform the role of an intermediary, or should national intermediaries such as Enterprise Community Partners and LISC open a local office?

No interviewee doubted the importance of the expertise and resources Enterprise and LISC offer. Figure 6, showing desired communication, indicates the clear desire of organizations to increase communication with them. Enterprise and LISC are both active in the city. Their activity would expand with a full-service New Orleans office. The trade-off with an office, as one interviewee expressed it, was that “the millions of dollars it takes to open an office will come at the expense of that money going to local organizations.”

**What is a community development intermediary?**

Many cities have one. Enterprise and LISC are simply national versions that also partner with government agencies and local community development nonprofits to increase their effectiveness.

Intermediaries are warehouses of community development products and services. They offer financial and technical expertise, partner on a consulting basis with nonprofits and government on specific projects, provide loans and grants, and, as many advertise, innovate community development solutions where they are needed.

Given the importance of real-time, on-the-ground knowledge, some organizations are currently playing an intermediary role in part. Given the cost of opening and sustaining an office and that both Enterprise and LISC are already active in the city, it makes sense to utilize their manpower but in ways that further increase the capacity of one or two organizations to take on specific intermediary roles. These roles might include brokering development agreements/partnerships, identifying system needs, provide funding mechanisms and associated technical expertise, and becoming a point of information for external agents in New Orleans.

According to figure 5, GNOF, NONDC and NPN are all well connected organizations that currently offer intermediary type services. Interestingly, Providence Community

Housing is likely the most capable of offering these services – Enterprise has offices in their building – but perhaps because of their high capacity they have not needed to develop the partnerships others have. This could lead to misperceptions on their part of how well the system is adapting to current challenges.

In interviews Providence stated that they are willing to offer intermediary services to other nonprofit developers. They don't have that capacity yet and it would not be wise if the majority of funding went to build Providence's intermediary capacity while negating the needs of other organizations. Many of the city's nascent community development organizations show potential and funds directed their way could have a higher return to the system than if marginally more support was given to Providence.

**Recommendation #3: A working group of community development leaders from all levels should be supported to decide how intermediary services are to be delivered. All available research should be utilized in making this decision as informed as possible.**

Glaring capacity gaps according to table 4 are in community design services, expertise on land use tools and financing vehicles, and local brokers/conveners. CityWorks has the potential for a community design role and, according to interviews with those involved, are still searching for their niche. FutureProof is a new sustainable design consultancy that works with community based organizations. Both CityWorks and FutureProof are staking community design ground within the system, but none as of yet has capacity to be a central actor.

NONDC is an established, central and well connected organization that could offer experience to nascent CDCs and others as a local broker/convener on development projects. NONDC has branched into development but is willing to play other roles as the needs identify themselves.

Land use and financing vehicles require experienced expertise. When asked about these financing mechanisms, nonprofit leaders would simply state, “we’re learning about them.” The complicated nature of GO Zone bonds advances the need for an able organization to partner with nonprofit developers on financing issues. Among those organizations spoken with for this project, Providence Community Housing is alone among the city’s nonprofit developers with this capacity.

**Recommendation #4: CityWorks and FutureProof should be supported to focus on their community and sustainable design capacity to cover this gap in the system.**

**Recommendation #5: NONDC should be supported to provide advice to CDCs on development tools and brokering partnerships.**

One of the storm’s silver linings is the increased capacity of neighborhood organizations to have a greater say in building the neighborhoods they desire. Figure 3, shows how well NPN has become a focal point for neighborhood organizations on a whole range of issues, including community betterment agreements, education/charter school policy, planning and others. As was said by a neighborhood leader, the most telling sign of NPN’s value is that “people still go to their meetings.”

How can NPN be most effective within the community development system? In terms of neighborhood physical improvement, of which there is much interest from neighborhood leaders, NPN is strategically positioned to facilitate knowledge and assist the cultivation of partnerships between city-based and even national nonprofits given their centrality in both networks. That this is part of NPN’s mission speaks to how they see their role. However, they can be a more active player by ‘networking the network’ throughout the city’s recovery. Other well connected organizations, such as Ashé and NONDC, can play similar roles through the sharing of their respective cultural and housing expertise to bear. The New Orleans Housing Resource Center aims to play a role building capacity of CDCs.

**Recommendation #6: Push well connected organizations such as NPN, Ashe and NONDC, NOHRC to consider how they should position themselves individually or collectively within the community development system.**

### **Local and State Governments that Carry Out and Support Community Development**

Table 3 indicated how open various sectors have been to creating partnerships with organizations at the local, city and national levels. State government, city government and the business community were seen as being among the most difficult with which to develop working relationships. The relevant section of table 3 is repeated below.

**Table 3**

<b>“I have been able to coordinate activities with the following sectors to the benefit of my organization’s goals.”</b> 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree				
	Neighborhood-based	City-based nonprofits	National/Regional nonprofits	<b>Total</b>
City Government	2.79	2.57	2.53	<b>2.69</b>
State Government	2.12	2.79	3.00	<b>2.41</b>
Business	2.57	3.08	2.31	<b>2.67</b>

Nonprofit leaders were unanimous in their welcoming the arrival of Ed Blakely, as the so-called ‘recovery Czar.’ In his short time in this position he has reached out to all levels of the city’s community development community. This survey was conducted during his first few months and it is likely that city government scores would increase as he gathered experience and formed relationships. Nevertheless, with an average score of 2.57 among city-based nonprofits, there is a chasm to bridge until the city is perceived to be an open partner.

A thorough analysis of partnerships with the government and business sectors was beyond the scope of this work. As the system of community development begins to consolidate and organizations more clearly conceptualize their role, partnerships with these sectors will be essential to cultivated.

**Recommendation #7: Examine why government and business scores were low and seek to rectify. These sectors are essential partners in ‘ideal’ community development systems.**

### **Leadership from Different Sectors**

Leadership in community development systems can occur in two ways: 1, by becoming the best in their field; and 2, by facilitating relationships and knowing when to lead and when to follow.

As stated, many nonprofits are only emerging or having to rapidly develop expertise in an area different from their pre-Katrina expertise. This leads to a slower pace of projects as organizations must learn on the fly. Developing a program for the city such as the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for Urban Redevelopment Excellence (CUREx) Fellowship program, would be significant for growing local expertise.<sup>24</sup>

CUREx places promising young community development professionals in Fellowships with top redevelopment organizations nationwide. The Fellowships are two-year project management jobs at a host redevelopment organization, with mentorship from senior staff. This type of program has many positive spin-offs if implemented in New Orleans. It would introduce young, highly skilled professionals to the city, a labor market and demographic group that have been leaving. It could also increase the talent pool of development professionals in the city as many become employed in the city following their fellowship years.

**Recommendation #8: A cohort of five promising young community development professionals should be supported to work in key ‘juncture’ organizations (see below) in the city. Their expertise should focus on land use and financing tools for development. Part of their work should be hosting workshops and panels with other organizations, thereby building the system’s capacity. This program should be annual and continue at least the next 10 years.**

---

<sup>24</sup> Center for Urban Redevelopment Excellence: <http://www.upenn.edu/curexpenn/home.htm>.

Increasing the participation in the community development system of organizations and leaders from other sectors is a challenge. Current nonprofit leaders will have to perform outreach and develop vehicles through which they can create a network of cross-sectional leaders concerned with community development in New Orleans. Ideally, all participants would share a belief that the health of the city's neighborhoods reflects the health of the city.

**Recommendation #9: Utilize opportunities from Providence's and City Center's brown bag events to invite leaders from other sectors to begin to build a coalition around community development in the city.**

Facilitative leadership in a community development system is the system's grease. Organizations in this role are media savvy and understand local politics in order to 'network the network.' They look for partnership opportunities for other organizations and help broker them. The facilitative leader consolidates the network, animating value-added linkages between disparate organizations.

This role is related to the discussion about the future role of NPN, Providence, GNOF, NONDC, Enterprise and LISC. Looking at Figures 5 and 6, these organizations sit at the juncture between grassroots and city nonprofits, (NPN and NONDC to a certain extent), and city and national nonprofits (Providence, GNOF and NONDC). Without having planned it, these organizations apply grease to the system by disseminating information and best practices through informal conversations and partnerships. These organizations bring a knowledge and perspective that is deeper than others given their multilayered organizational relationships.

**Recommendation #10: To support and institutionalize the work of organizations at the system's juncture's – where different levels of the system meet.**



### **Community Development Investments and Outputs**

A community development system that is able to inspire confidence will attract investment. The pal that covered New Orleans after Katrina from the poor government response still lingers. The city has made attempts to reach out to financial interests in New York and other areas to counter this reputation. Interviews with leaders from local foundations discussed the difficulty in communicating the on-the-ground situation to national nonprofits. Many national organizations not regularly watching New Orleans are unsure how to proceed. Explaining the recovery's complexity because of the collapse of multiple interdependent systems takes time.

As this paper indicates, there are many efforts on the right track in New Orleans. This includes but is not limited to the brown bag events, innovative partnerships and organizations that understand the necessity of looking at community development challenges from a systems perspective. The New Orleans nonprofit development community, and the nonprofit community more generally, need better communication mechanisms with national donors so they understand the state of the recovery in all its complexity -- that the city is doing what it can, but is learning to build the plane as they fly it. This level of understanding would generate confidence in the efforts of the New Orleans nonprofit development community, framing their response positively and potentially leading to more funding through deeper relationships with national donors and even government.

**Recommendation #11: As part of the collaborative efforts described above, support the development of a communication strategy through which the city's nonprofit development community explain their evolving response to the crisis.**

## **Appendix I**

### **Social Network Survey**