CHAPTER

2

Order from Chaos

Planning at the State and Federal Levels

The extent of the devastation was clear very soon after the storms hit, as was the fact that the State of Louisiana would need an enormous amount of money to rebuild and restore New Orleans and the surrounding parishes. After Hurricane Rita struck three weeks later, the disaster area grew to encompass the entire southern third of the state. It added to the uncertainty surrounding even the most basic of questions: How much money would it take to rebuild the city? Where would it come from? And how would it be allocated for restoring infrastructure, businesses, and homes?

The first reliable estimate put the direct damages at $100 billion.[1] Later, on September 22, 2005, Senators Mary Landrieu (D-La.) and David Vitter (R-La.) introduced a bill asking for $250 billion in assistance, which included funding for levees and coastal restoration.[2] But no one knew what the actual costs would be, nor were there any mechanisms for allocating and spending recovery money. This would be left up to the state and federal governments to figure out.

MONEY, POLITICS, MISTRUST

The nation, however, was wary of sending money to Louisiana. It is important to appreciate the cloud of suspicion that hung over the state and its requests for federal assistance in the fall of 2005. From the days of Huey Long, Louisiana has had a colorful and systemic history of corruption, and its political, governmental, and economic environments have frequently been compared to those of a third world nation.[3] Some claim that 21st-century

Louisiana is no more corrupt than other states and its reputation rests more on its history than on present reality. But there are grounds for the suspicion: Edwin Edwards, who was popular enough to be elected governor four times, has been in prison since 2001 on a federal racketeering charge; and nine months before Hurricane Katrina, three Louisiana emergency preparedness officials were indicted for mishandling $30.4 million in FEMA funds designated for floodplain buyouts.[4] It was perhaps unsurprising when, in early September, then-Representative Tom Tancredo (R-Colo.) urged congressional leaders not to give money to Louisiana because of the "state's long history of corruption."[5] While none of Louisiana's political leaders at the time was surrounded by charges of corruption, three former governors of Louisiana proposed a commission of citizens, rather than politicians, to administer any recovery funds.[6]

Thus, when Louisiana's senators introduced their bill asking for $250 billion, there was already a strong sensitivity to the potential for misdirection and waste.[7] For example, a *Washington Post* editorial entitled "Louisiana's Looters" declared, "Louisiana legislators are out to grab more federal cash than they could possibly spend usefully."[8] The editorial argued legislators should teach a lesson to Louisiana and other states: political patronage leading to poor decisions regarding flood control and development would not be federally subsidized. Then-Senator Barack Obama (D-Ill.) and conservative Senator Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) reflected the concerns of many in a joint statement that declared the importance of "protect[ing] both taxpayers and citizens of the Gulf Coast with strict accountability and oversight about how the money is spent and whether it is most efficiently directed to help rebuild lives."[9]

It was telling that President Bush's choice for the post of Gulf Coast recovery coordinator was Donald Powell, a banker and former chair of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. Powell's appointment in November 2005 was a clear signal that, in the eyes of the White House, one function was preeminent: to ensure that federal funds were well spent. Many pundits and politicians had called for an independent recovery commission run by a recovery "czar," but Powell's role within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was more modest. He was charged instead "to help state and local leaders reach a consensus plan; bridge regional, racial and partisan divides; and persuade a debt-leery and gridlocked Washington to pay for it."[10]

Post-Katrina recovery also took shape within a much larger, high-stakes political context. While Hurricane Katrina was a catastrophic disaster for the residents of the Gulf Coast, the bungling of the immediate response to the flooding of New Orleans was a political disaster for the White House. Nothing could erase the administration's black eye from that first week in

September, not even a successful recovery brought about by cooperative effort. As such, the White House saw Hurricane Katrina as a political problem, and Senior Advisor Karl Rove became the point person to address it.[11] In author Paul Alexander's concise words, "Rove was going to blame [Governor] Blanco for the failure of the response in Louisiana, and to do that he was going to use [Mayor] Nagin."

In other words, the White House's strategy was to shift the blame for the bungled response rather than solve the recovery problem at hand. To succeed, this strategy required driving a wedge between Mayor Nagin and Governor Blanco; not only would they be less likely to accomplish anything, but the two Democrats would be seen as petty, bickering children.

Louisiana and New Orleans had other detractors as well. In the days after the storm, while residents were still being rescued, Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) said it didn't make sense to rebuild a low-lying, hurricane prone city.[12] "There are some real tough questions to ask about how you go about rebuilding this city," Hastert said. "It looks like a lot of that place could be bulldozed." This sentiment was echoed in a *60 Minutes* feature in late November, which suggested the homes, businesses, and industry that made up the city should gradually and permanently retreat from the area because of steady coastal erosion.[13] Senator Larry Craig (R-Idaho), then a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, bluntly declared in mid-October that flooded parts of New Orleans should be abandoned and that "Louisiana and New Orleans are the most corrupt governments in our country and they always have been."[14] He claimed growing Senate support for abandoning entire sections of New Orleans such as the Lower Ninth Ward. "I'm not humorous when I suggest we should turn it back to what it was, a wetland."[15] With these kinds of signals from Washington, it was clear that New Orleans's access to long-term reconstruction funding would not be easy.

Mutual Mistrust

Beyond the federal government's mistrust of Louisiana, New Orleans itself is a veritable petri dish of mistrust and enmity. The biggest gulf is between the races. Long-resident white families have had the most power and money in New Orleans historically, and they have a deep-rooted reputation for using this power over African-Americans and new arrivals. Whites are also more likely to afford the gracious homes on the higher ground of the Mississippi River's natural levees and were usually untroubled by the flooding that plagued other residents.[16] The white elites tend to be suspicious of the ethics and governing ability of many of the city's African-American politicians, who assumed greater political power with the 1977 election of Ernest Morial as the city's first black mayor. In 2007, for example, Representative William

Jefferson, whose district encompassed greater New Orleans, was indicted for money laundering and racketeering. That same year, city council member-at-large Oliver Thomas, who was widely expected to be the city's next mayor, also pleaded guilty to accepting illegal payments. Certainly, these incidents did nothing to improve the city's reputation for corruption.

On the other hand, the city's African-Americans have some very good reasons to be suspicious of their fellow white citizens. Many African-Americans know that during a flood in 1927 members of the white elite ordered the destruction of a levee protecting a poor area downstream in order to save New Orleans.[17] Consequently, in 2005, it was not difficult for people to believe that the levee on the Industrial Canal was destroyed on purpose to drive African-Americans from their homes. African-American New Orleanians also tend to be suspicious of promises that neighborhoods will be improved through redevelopment—suspicions that are based on their recent experiences of broken agreements. For example, when the St. Thomas public housing project was redeveloped earlier in this decade under HOPE VI, the project became largely a market-rate development with insufficient units for previous residents.[18] This was despite promises of new housing for all the low-income residents displaced by the project. Amity between the races was not improved when, just days after the storm, Jimmy Reiss, the head of the New Orleans Business Council, was quoted in *Newsweek* and the *Wall Street Journal* as saying the diaspora after Katrina created an opportunity to build a city with fewer poor people.[19]

There is also a history of mutual mistrust between New Orleans and the rest of the state, especially its capital, Baton Rouge. New Orleans is sometimes described as an island in Louisiana; its urban, Catholic culture has long been at odds with the upstate, Protestant culture that dominates the bulk of the state. New Orleanians have also been at odds with rural, Catholic Cajuns. The economic growth of Baton Rouge in recent decades, coupled with the steady population decline of New Orleans, has further fueled New Orleans's resentment of Baton Rouge.

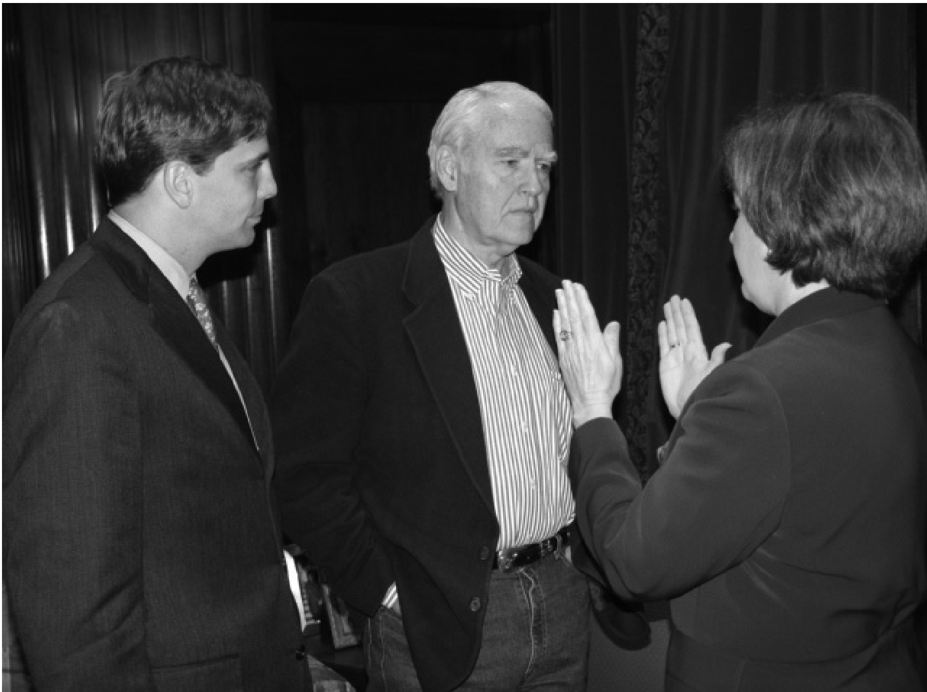
Needless to say, all of these levels of mistrust made it exceedingly difficult to mount a cooperative rebuilding effort on the scale required by Hurricane Katrina. Still, a strong federal response could have overcome some of these differences; instead, Rove's political strategy fanned the flames.

STATE AND FEDERAL PLANNING INITIATIVES

Despite the intrigue, some federal, state, and private-sector professionals came together in various venues to attempt to create a coherent planning strategy for rebuilding the state. At the center of it all was the Louisiana Recovery Authority, which grew to be the most powerful player in the rebuilding of southern Louisiana.

The Birth of the Louisiana Recovery Authority

In September 2005, Andy Kopplin, Governor Blanco's chief of staff, was faced with the task of figuring out how to rebuild his devastated state.[20] He was highly experienced in state government, having also served as chief of staff for Blanco's Republican predecessor. The day after the flood, he began to receive phone calls from all over the country offering advice, assistance, and condolences. Initial offers of assistance focused on the response effort, but many callers, such as Bill Leighty, the Virginia governor's chief of staff, also came to help with long-term recovery. One of the most helpful initial offers came from Jay Altman, a friend who had run a charter school in New Orleans and had just moved to London in July. Altman showed up in Baton Rouge within days of the storm. One of his first tasks for Kopplin was to set up a mechanism for receiving donations, an effort that eventually led to the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Fund, and he helped Kopplin to think about best practices for rebuilding communities. Like everyone else's, Kopplin's life was complicated by Katrina at many levels, as home and work merged. His children's rooms were given over to guests: Altman, Leighty,



LRA

Fig. 2.1. Andy Kopplin, Donald Powell, and Louisiana governor Kathleen Blanco, November 29, 2005

and two Ford Foundation representatives. He was also housing a cousin's family, who had evacuated from Slidell, a suburb north of New Orleans, as well as a Plaquemines Parish family of five that his wife brought home from a shelter.

Kopplin called on Louisiana leaders whom he knew to be "good thinkers." He set up an informal think tank to begin identifying long-term recovery issues while his office was still involved in day-to-day response and recovery activities. A key member of this group was Sean Reilly, a former state legislator, civic leader, and president of Lamar Advertising. Soon, this group was holding brainstorming sessions in Reilly's spacious home, away from the chaos at the governor's office. The group's members sought out advice from people with disaster recovery experience, such as former White House chief of staff Leon Panetta. One particularly helpful call came from New York governor George Pataki's chief of staff, who offered advice on how set up something like the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC), which was created after September 11, 2001. Stefan Pryor, the director of the LMDC, was invited to Baton Rouge and stayed at Reilly's home. Another key addition was a small team from international management consultants McKinsey & Company, who provided pro bono management consulting services for more than six months after the storm.

During the first week after Katrina, Kopplin's group of "good thinkers" considered some fundamental questions: How should the governor's cabinet be organized to respond to the challenge of rebuilding? Is an extra agency needed? If so, what would be its responsibilities and how would it be constructed? Would it be advisory or administrative? How long should it last? It became clear that the LMDC provided a model for a citizen-led, bipartisan organization that bridged local, state, and federal governments in order to receive and direct recovery funds. At the request of Kopplin, Pryor stayed in Baton Rouge for two weeks and worked with Reilly and others to draft an executive order creating this new organization.

Looking at the LMDC's experience, Reilly's group concluded that in order to facilitate a smooth flow of federal aid, it was important to design an entity that could identify, secure, and receive federal recovery dollars, especially HUD community development block grant (CDBG) funds and FEMA Public Assistance funds, which would be based on project-by-project applications. They also decided the organization should have powers to establish priorities for spending those funds, as well as monitor and audit their use. The makeup of such an agency would be critical. It needed to represent everyone in the affected areas and, in Kopplin's words, "unite the face of recovery." Its membership needed to be bipartisan and include people who were influential in their communities as well as nationally prominent leaders with Louisiana roots. Most important, the members needed to be people

who would fight for the interests of Louisiana as a whole. The first thing on their agenda would be making a rational, persuasive, and influential argument to Congress and the American people for providing the money. Kopplin hoped that a diverse and influential LRA board "could reach everyone in the country, regardless of party."

One Sunday in late September, shortly after Hurricane Rita delivered a second blow to the state, Kopplin, Reilly, Altman, Pryor, and Bryan Begley of McKinsey & Company presented their ideas to the governor. On October 17, 2005, Governor Blanco created the Louisiana Recovery Authority by executive order.[21] Until it was made a permanent entity by the Louisiana legislature on February 23, 2006, it operated out of the governor's office.[22]

At the very beginning, the LRA had no budget—indeed, it had no money at all. The state was broke. Its main economic engines had come to a halt, and the citizens of its largest city were scattered across the country, homeless and jobless. Nor was there yet a single penny of federal money for permanent reconstruction and economic recovery. Thus, the LRA began with a single staff employee, Andy Kopplin. But the LRA could use staff and resources from other agencies. Kopplin compared it to "draft day in the major leagues," as he sought the best talent from across state government.

The LRA board members were selected to be bipartisan, socioeconomically and racially diverse, and influential. For example, Mary Matalin, a nationally prominent Republican political advisor, was balanced by Donna Brazile, who had been Al Gore's campaign manager. Members also represented each part of the state, regardless of whether it was affected by the hurricane or not. Governor Blanco was so convinced that Norman Francis, the venerable president of New Orleans's Xavier University since 1968, needed to be chairman that she called him for three straight days until he agreed. New Orleans native Walter Isaacson, president of the Aspen Institute and former president of CNN, was appointed vice chairman. Sean Reilly was also appointed to the board, and he continued to be influential in charting the agency's course.

In late October, very soon after their appointment to the board, Francis, Isaacson, Reilly, Kopplin, and other Louisiana leaders flew to Washington, D.C., in Reilly's jet to meet with Senators Landrieu and Vitter. They also met with White House chief of staff Andy Card, staff from the Office of Management and Budget, and Al Hubbard, who led the Domestic Policy Council staff.[23] They also had a luncheon meeting with DHS secretary Michael Chertoff and held a press briefing. The Louisianans asked for stronger levees to protect against Category 5 hurricanes and money for housing and economic development. They promised to develop a detailed, defensible request for funding. They also promised to provide damage estimates, which were still unknown. This was the first significant step in what would become a long

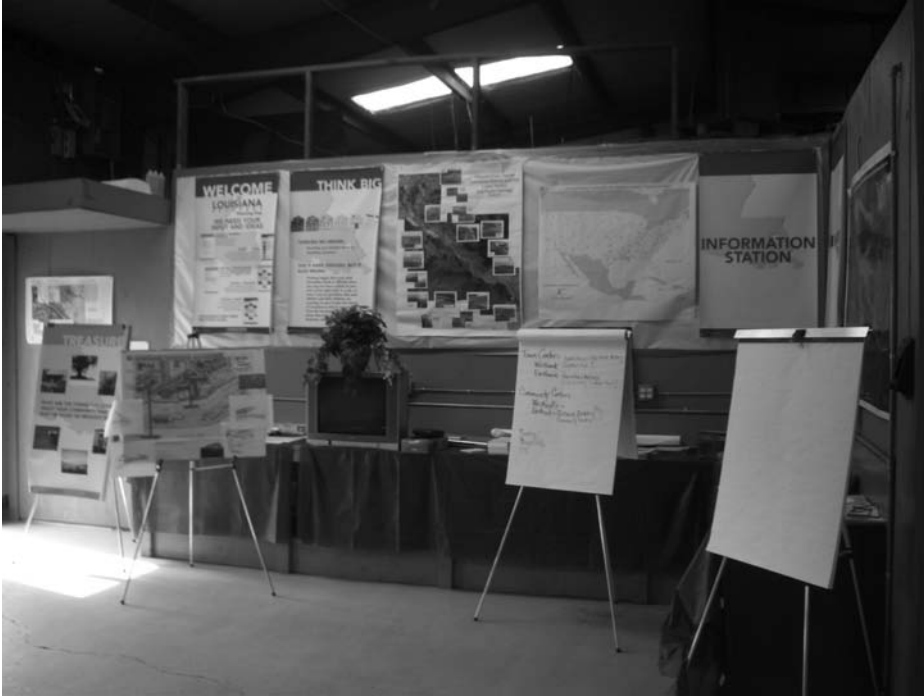
dance with the White House to obtain an appropriate level of funding for long-term rebuilding.

Federal Planning Assistance: ESF #14

FEMA was also concerned about helping to plan the long-term recovery of Louisiana communities affected by the storm. Even amid its many response-related activities in mid-September and early October, FEMA staffers, contractors, and reservists began to arrive in Baton Rouge to begin the Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) Emergency Support Function (ESF #14) of the National Response Plan. ESF #14 was added to the National Response Plan in 2004 as a way to coordinate the resources of federal agencies to assist the long-term recovery of states and communities following disasters.[24] FEMA describes LTCR planning as "the process of establishing a community-based, [postdisaster] vision and identifying projects and project funding strategies best suited to achieve that vision, and employing a mechanism to implement those projects."[25] In FEMA's view, ESF #14 was a temporary, short-term technical assistance program offered to help the State of Louisiana better access federal services, which is why it was headquartered in Baton Rouge.

In 2005, ESF #14 was still an experiment. It had been used on a trial basis two times in 2004—in Florida after Hurricane Charley and in Utica, Illinois, after a tornado. But neither of those areas had experienced devastation on the scale caused by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The catastrophe in Louisiana provided the conditions for ESF #14's rapid evolution. By late 2005, it had grown into a means of proactively trying to help communities develop a postdisaster vision, prioritize projects to achieve that vision, and identify funding sources. This was mostly unfamiliar territory for FEMA, both in terms of the local community planning process and the involvement in long-term recovery. Over time it became clear that these new roles made parts of the agency very uncomfortable.

At its peak, ESF #14 employed approximately 325 temporary staff across Louisiana's 19 hurricane-affected parishes. To create the LTCR plans, ESF #14 staff solicited input directly from communities to create a community-specific list of projects that its residents thought important for recovery. In November and December, ESF #14 staff held meetings and workshops with officials in the 20 most heavily affected parishes. In many parishes, a few daylong meetings (with food and entertainment provided) were all that was needed to bring the community together to develop an ESF #14 project list.[26] Although the postdisaster chaos, parade of temporary workers, and lack of information made coordination difficult,[27] the process was helpful in many rural parishes, especially those with little planning capacity.[28]



Robert B. Olshansky

Fig. 2.2. The ESF #14 office in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana

However, one ESF #14 plan in particular—Orleans Parish—was especially difficult to accomplish because of the severity of damage, the absence of municipal employees, and the lack of established postdisaster planning processes or information on postdisaster priorities. The best information available to the Orleans Parish FEMA office was the Bring New Orleans Back plan (see Chapter 3). Work on the Orleans Parish plan continued in the New Orleans FEMA office through the summer, and the final version was released in mid-August 2006, approximately four months later than the plans of the other hurricane-damaged parishes.[29]

But after the planning processes were completed, little happened in most parishes. ESF #14 wound down as quickly as it had ramped up; it ended suddenly in March 2006 when FEMA stopped funding the program. At this time, the state's planning process was not yet fully operational. The termination of ESF #14 placed the entire parish planning function back into the state's hands, but there was nobody yet to receive it.

GETTING PROFESSIONAL HELP: THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

For three days, starting on November 10, around 650 people came together in devastated and still mostly vacant New Orleans to talk about planning.[30] The event—the Louisiana Recovery and Rebuilding Conference—was hosted by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in collaboration with the American Planning Association (APA) and was cosponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the American Society of Civil Engineers.[31] Participation was by invitation only, but organizers intended to include "a broad range of local and state organizations, Louisiana citizens, religious and civic groups, community leaders, and public officials."[32] This event had 650 attendees and featured presentations by local and national planners about how to approach long-term recovery. The postconference summary presented a set of core policy goals and planning principles formulated during the event:[33]

> Create infrastructure that supports recovery by restoring confidence, enhancing quality of life, and withstanding future disasters by:
>
> - Constructing Category-Five-strength levees, restoring wetlands, and creating an independent authority to ensure ongoing maintenance and funding
> - Improving services including communications, energy, and other key elements
> - Supporting sustainable, equitable, and transparent approaches to rebuilding and future development
>
> Promote economic growth that benefits everyone through:
>
> - An economy encompassing traditional and emerging industries supported by respect for the region's historic character and innovative funding strategies
> - Quality education and job training, housing, transportation, and other key services accessible to all income levels
> - Equity that includes living wages and career tracks, and long-term economic opportunity
>
> Provide public services that enhance quality of life for everyone through:
>
> - High-quality education at every level and in every community
> - Regional transit, coordinated with opportunities for community development
> - Great parks and other public spaces that serve communities and support flood control

Pursue policies that promote a healthy environment and healthy people by:

- Deciding where to rebuild, investing in protecting these areas, and dedicating remaining areas to open space and parks
- Using sustainable approaches in every facet of rebuilding—energy, transit, land use, and building design
- Creating walkable communities that through their planning and design promote healthy lifestyles

Plan and design communities that advance livability by:

- Preserving the best of the past as the core for rebuilding while anticipating future needs
- Creating mixed income, mixed use neighborhoods that foster diversity and social equity
- Smart growth at urban, suburban, and rural scales that balances recovery and sustainability

For professional planners, this conference turned out to be an important event, with many later tracing the genesis of key post-Katrina planning ideas and professional collaborations to it. It also turned out to be significant for subsequent state planning efforts. The Louisiana Recovery Authority held its second board meeting at the conference and the following month adopted the AIA/APA planning principles.[34] Later, it began citing those principles as its criteria for its decisions regarding postdisaster plans and planning processes, the allocation of CBDG funds from HUD, and its approach to rebuilding and planning in New Orleans.

Furthermore, at the board meeting, LRA board members Donna Fraiche, a New Orleans attorney and head of the LRA's Long-Range Planning Task Force, and David Voelker, a New Orleans businessman, introduced the idea of creating a privately funded organization, the LRA Support Foundation, to help the LRA find and hire experienced community planning and design firms. Fraiche and Voelker told the LRA board the state already had a promising partner in the Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAF), which had been advocating smart growth for nearly a decade. In 1998, BRAF cofunded (along with the city and state) preparation of a downtown plan for Baton Rouge by the firm of Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ). By the summer of 2005, BRAF had extended its planning activities beyond Baton Rouge by holding smart growth workshops throughout the state. BRAF's point person for planning, Elizabeth "Boo" Thomas, was seeking more money to expand the initiative across the state. She even had a business plan for a new statewide program by the time that Katrina struck. Shortly after the storms, BRAF began identifying planners to assist in rebuilding southern Louisiana in order to use the postdisaster reconstruction as an opportunity to promote smart growth

planning principles.[35] In late October, at BRAF's recommendation, Fraiche's Long-Range Planning Task Force met with Peter Calthorpe, the principal of one of the nation's most prominent urban design firms, Calthorpe Associates, as well as a founding member of the Congress of the New Urbanism. After that meeting, Fraiche became supportive of the regional planning effort Calthorpe proposed, which would guide posthurricane investments toward smarter and more sustainable development patterns.

Fraiche and Voelker suggested to the LRA board that the agency work with BRAF to help the state find "firms that are recognized in regional planning strength, [have] experience with post-disaster planning, and [are experienced in] working with local, state, and federal agencies."[36] To this end, BRAF created the LRA Support Foundation (LRASF) as a separate legal entity supporting the work of the LRA.[37] Until May 2006, the planning staff assistance for LRA was provided by the LRASF through BRAF. LRA board members Sean Reilly and David Voelker assumed positions on the LRASF board.

In December, it was Boo Thomas's turn to address the LRA board. She revealed which firms LRASF had selected to be a part of the regional planning effort. Thomas said LRASF solicited proposals from 39 firms, received proposals from 14, and selected three: Calthorpe, DPZ, and Urban Design Associates (UDA).[38] These were firms they already knew from their work on smart growth and new urbanism. The team was also to include research and technical support from several research institutions, such as the Brookings Institution (a Washington, D.C., think tank), PolicyLink (a research institute in Oakland, California, which would assist in outreach to displaced populations), and Louisiana State University. Although the LRASF didn't yet have the money to execute this project, the LRA board voted unanimously to accept its recommendation of planners and designers.

On January 19, 2006, the governor and the LRA announced a regional planning effort led by a "team of world-renowned planners, designers and architects" who would "develop a long-term regional vision for rebuilding" all of southern Louisiana.[39] DPZ would conduct charrettes to help localities develop planning ideas; UDA would produce a set of "pattern books" with designs for affordable housing suitable for southern Louisiana;[40] and Calthorpe Associates would tie it all together with a regional plan, the content and timeframe of which were not yet clear. Nor was it clear how this effort would relate to the ongoing planning process in New Orleans, which was, at this time, confident it could rebuild without the help of Baton Rouge (see Chapter 3).

"LOUISIANA SPEAKS": MERGING STATE, FEDERAL, AND PRIVATE-SECTOR PLANNING

The way in which the state-level planning effort evolved over December and January was confusing to most outside observers. It was not even clear to those involved. What happened was that, without any official, public notification, the LRASF's regional planning effort and the ESF #14 parish plans were incorporated into one statewide recovery planning process called "Louisiana Speaks," which was paid for by FEMA and LRASF and coordinated by the LRA.

The Louisiana Speaks branding happened in early January. FEMA had proposed holding a "Recovery Planning Day" later that month to involve Louisiana residents in the planning process. The LRASF supported this idea. At this point, the LRASF had not yet articulated the type of planning work it was going to do except to say it would involve a regional plan by Calthorpe, some local planning charrettes by DPZ, and design resource guides by UDA. While the LRASF was still trying to raise sufficient funds for these endeavors, FEMA was already providing planning guidance to communities through ESF #14, so it made some sense to try to merge these planning efforts. At a joint meeting between FEMA's Louisiana ESF #14 leader, Boo Thomas, and the LRA communications director, everyone agreed on the partnership, the Louisiana Speaks name, and a logo consisting of four interlocking puzzle pieces.

Not surprisingly, this marriage of convenience had its problems, primarily because all the parties had different goals, approaches, and time frames.

LRA

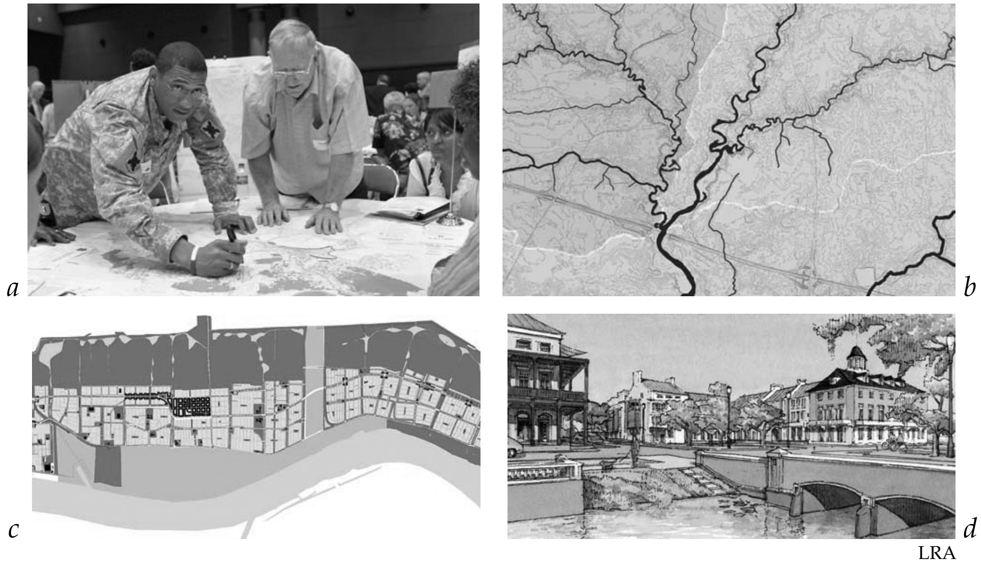
Fig. 2.3. Attendees at the Louisiana Recovery and Rebuilding Conference

From FEMA's point of view, ESF #14 was designed to provide immediate, short-term assistance to help localities identify projects and potential funding sources. The LRA, in contrast, was interested in long-term, regional planning but lacked the capacity to accomplish this. When FEMA wrapped up ESF #14 in March, the entire planning function was back in the state's hands. The LRA lacked planning staff, so it contracted with LRASF-recommended planners.[41] But the design-oriented planners lacked the breadth needed for this situation, such as experience in housing, economic development, hazard mitigation, and postdisaster recovery planning. Eventually, the state's recovery planning function was taken over by professional planners—Hal Cohen at the LRASF in March and Jeff Hebert, hired by the LRA in May—and the two of them worked together to turn Louisiana Speaks into a more coherent planning program.

DPZ's work came first. They conducted a series of three seven-to-10 day charrettes in March 2006 in various parts of the state: Lake Charles, a western Louisiana city affected primarily by Hurricane Rita; Vermilion Parish, a rural coastal county; and St. Bernard parish, immediately to the east of New Orleans.

UDA's *Pattern Books* were released in early July 2006.[42] The LRASF printed 100,000 copies and distributed them for free in home improvement stores throughout southern Louisiana. In February 2007, UDA released its second product, the *Planning Toolkit*, designed to be a guide to preparing community plans.[43]

The regional planning effort ("Louisiana Speaks Regional Vision") was more systematic and data-rich than the other components of Louisiana Speaks, so it took much longer to launch and to complete.[44] In the end, it became the most visible manifestation of Louisiana Speaks, and to most people the term "Louisiana Speaks" signifies this regional planning process. From January to June 2006, the regional planning work was technical and out of the public eye as the consultants prepared maps and data to describe the base conditions. Consultants also polled 2,500 Louisianans (some of whom were displaced and out of state) and held a series of six stakeholder workshops that solicited more than 1,000 participant opinions on coastal protection, transportation, land-use alternatives, economic development, and infrastructure.[45] To ensure representation from New Orleans, they also surveyed 100 neighborhood leaders in the city. The consultants used this information to develop a questionnaire, which asked the following multiple-choice questions: (1) "What are your top priorities for economic development in Louisiana?" (2) "Which values in the state's proposed plan are most important to you?" (3) "How important do you think funding and implementation of the state's proposed plan is to the recovery?" (4) "How



LRA

Figs. 2.4a–d. Four images from the UDA's Planning Toolkit.

should we grow?" and (5) "What is the right mix of property rights and community risk?"

The questionnaire was announced in Baton Rouge on January 22, 2007, at a kickoff event of a three-week, million-dollar public outreach campaign funded by the LRASF. The questionnaires were distributed as newspaper inserts and via the Internet; Louisiana Speaks programs aired on public television stations throughout the state, as well as in Atlanta, Dallas, and Houston. Citizens were asked to mail in their completed questionnaires, drop them off at their nearest public library, or take the poll online or by phone.[46] By the February 10, 2007, deadline, about 23,000 citizens participated in the poll, including 1,200 people out of state.

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan was released to the public on May 2, 2007, and endorsed by the LRA one week later.[47] The plan emphasizes smart growth and investment in coastal restoration. It also advocates thinking regionally about economic development to create a more stable and robust economy. New Orleans's recovery plan came out at virtually the same time (see Chapter 7). To planners, the Louisiana Speaks process seems like a textbook example of good planning, incorporating regional planning, smart growth, environmental protection, hazard mitigation, transportation improvement, economic development, and broad public involvement. But in the political environment of southern Louisiana, it added to suspicions that conservative Baton Rouge was meddling in New Orleans's recovery.