



Alembic Community Development  
Alliance for Affordable Energy  
A Shared Initiative, Inc.  
Associated Neighborhood Development  
Broadmoor Improvement Association  
Capital One  
Center for Planning Excellence  
Committee for a Better New Orleans  
Crescent Care  
Crescent City Community Land Trust  
The Data Center  
Enterprise Community Partners  
Finance Authority of New Orleans  
First NBC Bank  
Foundation for Louisiana  
GCR Inc.  
Global Green USA  
Greater New Orleans Foundation  
Green Coast Enterprises  
Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center  
Greater New Orleans, Inc.  
Gulf Coast Housing Partnership  
Harmony Neighborhood Development  
Healthy Start New Orleans  
Housing Authority of New Orleans  
Iberia Bank  
Jericho Road Episcopal Housing Initiative  
Jerusalem Economic Development Corp.  
JPMorgan Chase Bank  
LA Association of Affordable Housing Providers  
Louisiana Appleseed  
Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations  
Louisiana Homebuyer Education Collaborative  
Louisiana Housing Alliance  
Louisiana Housing Corporation  
Lowemine.org  
Lower 9th Ward Homeownership Association  
Lower 9th Ward NENA  
Make It Right  
Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of  
America  
Neighborhood Development Foundation  
Neighborhood Housing Services  
NEWCITY  
New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity  
New Orleans Redevelopment Authority  
NO/AIDS Task Force  
Northshore Housing Initiative  
Office of Housing Policy & Community  
Development  
Operation Comeback  
Perez, APC  
Pontchartrain Park CDC  
Practitioners Leveraging Assets for Community  
Engagement  
Preservation Resource Center  
Project Home Again  
Project Homecoming  
Providence Community Housing  
Puentes New Orleans  
Rebuilding Together New Orleans  
Redmellon  
Renaissance Neighborhood Development Corp.  
Renaissance Property Group  
Service Providers and Professionals Association  
Southern United Neighborhoods  
St. Bernard Project  
Tulane/Canal Neighborhood Development Corp.  
UNITY of Greater New Orleans  
Urban Focus  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban  
Development  
Volunteers of America  
Wells Fargo  
Whitney Bank  
Whodata.org

15 February 2015

City of New Orleans  
City Planning Commission  
1300 Perdido Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New Orleans, LA 70112

To Whom It May Concern,

The Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance (GNOHA), is a collaborative of housing builders and community development corporations advocating for the preservation and production of affordable housing within the New Orleans area.

GNOHA is proud that its developer organizations are leaders in ensuring high levels of engagement within the communities they work. Similarly, GNOHA is responsible for overseeing *HousingNOLA*, a community-led initiative that has set into motion a 10 year housing plan for the City of New Orleans. *HousingNOLA*'s Community Engagement model has been recognized throughout the country as an exemplary mechanism for ensuring that community voices are involved at each step of the planning processes.

*In this spirit of effective community engagement, GNOHA writes today to encourage a few structural changes to the city's Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP). We have thoroughly reviewed the comprehensive survey results and recommendations already provided to you by the Committee for a Better New Orleans (CBNO) and fully endorse their comments. We have copied their recommendations below.*

GNOHA supports the spirit and intent with which the NPP is purposed, and we stress that CBNO's recommendations will tighten the Program to make it more accessible and functional.

Sincerely,

Andreanecia M. Morris

Chair, GNOHA Board of Governors

## **Committee for a Better New Orleans'**

### **Recommendations for the Neighborhood Participation Program**

The first set of recommendations are suggested for immediate implementation, as they are based on comments heard repeatedly. The second set are also highly recommended, but could perhaps merit further conversation and consideration. The third set are every bit as important, but are broader in scope than just the NPP process.

#### **A. Recommended for Immediate Implementation**

I. Increase the minimum notification time for NPP meetings from five business days to at least ten business days, if not two calendar weeks.

II. Establish a requirement that the NPP meeting location be not more than one mile from the project location, unless the NPP meeting is conducted as part of the regular meeting of the impacted neighborhood association and the location of that meeting is greater than one mile from the project location.

III. Similarly, establish a requirement that the NPP meeting time not be during the normal workday, as workday meetings are simply too difficult for many residents to participate.

IV. Require the use of sign-in sheets at NPP meetings, and require applicants to provide copies of those sign-in sheets to CPC staff as part of their NPP packets; make that very clear during pre-process meetings with applicants.

V. Amend the section defining which neighborhood associations must be notified to include neighborhood associations whose boundaries fall within the established notification distance from the project location.

VI. Expand the meeting notification methodologies to include emailing the neighborhood associations.

VII. Remove the exemption from the NPP process for zoning amendments related to specific properties and projects that are initiated by the City Council. While this did not come up in the survey, it is an unnecessary and unfair loophole that is rife for abuse in the future by an unscrupulous Councilmember. There is simply no justification for this exemption; all projects and applicants should be treated equally.

#### **B. Recommendations (for discussion)**

I. Include a requirement that the meeting location be handicapped-accessible, possibly excepting regular neighborhood association meeting locations.

II. Establish a procedure through which NPP meeting participants will be automatically notified as the project/application in question proceeds through the city approval processes (i.e., hearing is scheduled at CPC, etc.).

III. Specify materials that will be made available to participants at NPP meetings (site plans, etc.) and the minimum number of copies that must be brought to the meeting by the applicant.

IV. Include in these materials instructions for participants to submit comments directly to the Planning Commission subsequent to the meeting.

V. Provide more specificity on how the meeting is to be conducted (i.e., minimum time that must be allotted for public comments, information that applicants must present).

VI. Expand the geographic area – the radius from the project location – for which notification of residents is required. Also, perhaps some sort of stickers could be produced to go on NPP notification envelopes identifying them as such.

VII. Refine the City Planning website to make it as easy as possible for residents to track the progress of an application as it continues through the process.

VIII. Review the pre-meeting materials provided to applicants, and the parameters of the pre-meeting conversation with CPC staff, to make sure they are as clear as possible.

IX. Create a centralized database of NPP meetings, including those that have occurred and those that have been scheduled, and make it accessible to the public. This would greatly facilitate the community's ability to follow the overall NPP process.

### C. Broader-scale Recommendations

I. Many of the comments from both applicants and residents indicate that a stronger support structure is needed in order for the NPP to reach its full potential. CBNO submitted a comprehensive Citizen Participation Program (CPP) model to City Planning in 2011 (the NPP is based closely on the Early Notification System component of this model). Many cities all over the United States have a CPP, and it provides most if not all of the support structure requests found in the survey responses. These would range from having a city staff member present at all NPP meetings to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of notification procedures, from providing more information related to specific applications to informing residents about zoning laws in general. Until residents have access to the information and capacity-building they need, the NPP will be less than fully productive. Until such a structure exists that can ensure that notification of NPP meetings is comprehensive, applicants will still be vulnerable to complaints and objections later in the process. The NPP is an excellent first step, but it will remain only a first step until more progress is made on establishing a full-scale CPP.

II. In the interim, provide clear, accessible trainings for residents and neighborhoods on zoning laws. Offer these to neighborhood associations, community groups, churches, etc.

III. Also in the interim, expand a very similar NPP process to other departments and agencies whose decisions have direct impact on residents and neighborhoods, and could thus benefit from community input. Obvious examples would include the Historic District Landmarks Commission, the Department of Public Works and the Sewerage and Water Board.

IV. Update the city's official neighborhood boundary map. The present official map dates from the early 1970s, and has very little connection to perception and reality on the ground. Confusion over neighborhood boundaries as they pertain to the NPP is only one of many reasons this is essential. CBNO has developed a methodology for doing this, and piloted it successfully in two city planning districts.