Citizen Engagement in Post-Hurricane Katrina Planning in Harrison County, Mississippi

Jennifer S. Evans-Cowley
The Ohio State University

Meghan Zimmerman Gough
Virginia Commonwealth University

Abstract

This article describes an empowerment planning process that brought residents, public officials, and university students together in Harrison County, Mississippi, following the devastation that Hurricane Katrina brought to this community in August 2005. The participants in this process worked to develop solutions to several critical problems involved in rebuilding efforts. The article addresses methods of engaging community members in a participatory planning process, structures for supporting student learning for future efforts, and the challenges of overcoming local residents' perceptions of outsiders' participation in their process. The article concludes by proposing measures for evaluating the merit of a planning process.

Introduction

Hurricane Katrina devastated the Mississippi Gulf Coast in August 2005. Such devastation is evident from communities such as Pascagoula in Jackson County, which had 90 percent of its housing stock damaged (Thompson, 2005) and Henderson Point in Harrison County, which had 99 percent of its housing destroyed. The three coastal counties of Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson all were significantly impacted by the hurricane. The largest of these counties, Harrison, has a population of approximately 190,000 and is the tourism center of the coast, with numerous casinos, a man-made beach, and other forms of entertainment.

In response to the hurricane disaster, the Congress for the New Urbanism and the Mississippi Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding, and Renewal hosted a weeklong charrette—the Mississippi Renewal Forum—to help plan for the rebuilding of the Mississippi coast. Before Hurricane Katrina destroyed coastal communities in Mississippi, planning had been limited in these communities, with only the largest cities having professional planning staff. Planning and zoning generally had a negative connotation and, in the more rural areas, was believed to be associated with communism (Bonck, 2005).

The Mississippi Renewal Forum was focused on developing a common planning vision for the future of the coast. The Congress for the New Urbanism provided planning teams for each of the incorporated cities, but it did not provide planning teams to work with the counties, which are responsible for planning in the unincorporated areas. The planners for the counties were invited to attend the forum and participate in it, but the forum provided no planning for the county jurisdictions.

This article describes the experiences of Ohio State University's Knowlton School of Architecture in facilitating a citizen-engagement process for communitywide planning on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The article identifies the obstacles to planning and the measures taken to address them. The authors demonstrate the need to first establish trust with the community as an essential element in creating a credible planning process. The process shows that a limited planning history in the Mississippi Gulf Coast created a need for Ohio State's supportive program to serve a dual role—as planners and as educators about planning and its democratic functional process.

Initial Strategies

The university participants found personal connections to be of critical importance to planning on the Gulf Coast. Because it is difficult for "outsiders" to come into a community and be successful, team-building often begins through personal introductions by a third party known to both teams. For example, the partnership between Ohio State University and Harrison County was initiated by and built on a personal connection established with colleagues just before the storm. Following the hurricane's landfall, Evans-Cowley contacted her colleagues on the coast to find out if they needed help. Because of the Gulf Coast's widespread needs, her colleagues suggested contacting Harrison County's zoning administrator, Patrick Bonck. Bonck expressed an urgent need on behalf of the coastal communities for professional assistance in redevelopment. Ohio State University initiated a grant of $17,000 and, in October 2005, Bonck and Evans-Cowley developed the project goals and immediate scope of work.

A primary goal for the planning process was to create a citizen-engagement process that increased community capacity to implement the plans. Before Hurricane Katrina, citizens in Harrison County had limited experience with land-use planning functions. Another primary goal of the planning process was to create plans that would help promote safer communities in the rebuilding process. Those goals would be achieved through a citizen-based planning process integrated with planning tools, such as land suitability analyses, to identify the suitability of land for development based on factors such as soil type, access to infrastructure, and location in a flood plain.

The initial scope of work involved working with citizens in two communities to find out what they wanted and to address code-related issues. Bonck selected the community of DeLisle because

of its racial and economic diversity and because of the heavy damage that the storm wreaked on that town. He also chose the community of Saucier because it was likely to experience the effects of citizens moving northward to safer parts of the county. This work was then extended in March 2006 (until March 2008) through a major grant as part of the HUD Universities Rebuilding America Partnerships (URAP) program.

Over a 2-year period, the project, through a series of studio courses, has developed community plans for six communities: DeLisle, Eastern Harrison County, Henderson Point, Pineville, Saucier, and Western Harrison County. For two quarters, the planning studios involved 12 students working in teams of between four and six students, each assigned to a community. The students worked with two or three communities over a 7-month period starting in the summer and extending through January. They worked on an independent-study basis over the summer, starting their studio with fieldwork in Mississippi in advance of the fall quarter. They committed to returning to Mississippi the following quarter and agreed to stay on the project on an independent-study basis until it is completed in the winter quarter. The project is ongoing as university teams continue to work with Harrison County to complete zoning and subdivision regulation updates.

Creating Plans That Matter

The plans created in the planning process needed to be the result of a community-driven process with considerable stakeholder input. Credible plans would (1) represent the concerns of the community and (2) be readily adopted and implemented.

A *community-driven process* is defined as one that gives individual citizens the power to influence policy (Julian et al., 1997). In this case, although the county initiated the planning process, the citizens drove the agenda, development alternatives, and plan recommendations. Planners can stimulate more citizen involvement by providing opportunities for dialogue that include informing the community about planning issues, listening to citizens' concerns, and synthesizing these concerns into the community plans.

Establishing trust is especially important in Mississippi, where citizens frequently perceive planning as being a communist concept and where researchers sensed a distrust for "northerner" consultants among the citizens. In addition to creating an appropriate plan, engaging stakeholders in a planning process can result in enhanced social capital (Burby, 2003; Gruber, 1994; Innes, 1996). A citizen-participation process allows for planners to educate citizens on planning issues and concerns, whereby increased knowledge leads to greater understanding about what may be possible (Innes and Booher, 1999).

To effectively gain the interest of citizens, planners must provide citizens with significant roles in the planning process and provide them with power in decisionmaking (Arnstein, 1969; Forester, 1999; Innes, 1996; Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2000). Citizens need to be engaged in deciding the goals of the plan and in creating the plan alternatives (Godschalk, Brody, and Burby, 2003).

Having extensive citizen participation can result in greater knowledge and innovative ideas that can improve plan quality (Forester, 1999; Moore, 1995). Innes et al. (1994) and Innes (1996) also found that citizen involvement in planning processes resulted in increased political capital

that helped in implementing planning actions. The citizen-based process was important in the Mississippi context because it generated political capital that translated into interest and ownership in the plan, motivating citizens to push their local leaders to adopt the planning documents. Researchers have found that effectively creating a sense of ownership in the plan can reduce potential conflict in the long term, because citizens feel responsible for the plan's policies (Creighton, 1992; Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2000).

Although citizen participation increases the cost and time needed to produce a plan, this upfront investment can pay off with buy-in for the long-term solutions. The end result includes equitable solutions that protect the interests of the citizens (Godschalk et al., 1994). In Mississippi, the preferred outcome of the planning process would be a shared sense of ownership of the plan and its implementation.

Engagement Process

At the time, the HUD Secretary wanted the URAP program to empower students and faculty to get involved in this important rebuilding effort (HUD, 2006). The planning process in Harrison County was not only designed to empower students, but also to empower communities. The planning process engaged local voices to ensure that the community plans represent the interests of the communities by using an approach based on community empowerment (Evans-Cowley and Gough, 2007b; Reardon, 2000). The planning teams started by collecting basic information about the communities before the storm occurred and by conducting phone and personal interviews to begin to understand citizens' visions for the future of the communities.

Evans-Cowley thought it critical to integrate direct-action organizing techniques—described below—to ensure as much citizen participation as possible in the community-planning process (Alinsky, 1971). The intent was both to ensure that the plan represented the intentions of the people and to help build support for the plan and its implementation.

Citizen Outreach Approaches

The team designed a multipronged outreach approach to try to maximize the likelihood of reaching citizens in this hurricane-ravaged county. To identify who the citizens of each community were and how to reach them most effectively post-Hurricane Katrina, the team started by engaging the County Board of Supervisors. These elected county officials appointed citizen steering committees that ranged in size from five to nine members and represented the different areas and interests within each community. The steering committees were charged with talking to neighbors, promoting the town hall meetings, sharing their and their neighbors' thoughts on what the future of their communities should be, and reviewing drafts of the plans.

The team planned an initial town hall meeting for each community. The students prepared a separate newsletter and mailed it to every property owner in each planning area. They sent out the newsletter before the planning process began in each community, again following the first community meeting, and then throughout the remainder of the planning process. They sent postcards to notify property owners when town hall meetings were being held and sent flyers with the same information home with elementary school students. Before the town hall meetings, students went

door to door to announce meetings and posted flyers in local businesses. For rental communities and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailer parks, the students posted flyers and knocked on doors. All these outreach methods resulted in highly attended town hall meetings. For example, in Henderson Point, where only 24 houses were left standing and fewer than 20 people still lived in the community, more than 400 people attended the first town hall meeting. In the Lizana community, approximately 500 citizens from the town and surrounding communities attended the first town hall meeting, gathering in a non-air conditioned school gym for 2 hours to share their thoughts on the future of their community. (To see a photo of the Lizana citizens crowded into the school gym, visit the online photo appendix at www.huduser.org/periodicals/cityscpe/vol10num3/cs_images.html.)

The team established an 800 number to enable citizens to call in and leave messages with their questions and comments about the planning process. Property owners living outside Harrison County primarily used this resource; they called to find out whether their properties had been impacted by the storm, to find out what the county was doing, and to request copies of planning materials. This tool proved to be an effective method for engaging citizens living outside the county, which was essential in a disaster situation in which much of the community had relocated.

The team established an online discussion board to enable those with Internet access to keep up with what was going on and to ask questions. The extent of the use of this resource varied from community to community. As the planning processes continued, the discussion forum transformed from its primary purpose as a discussion forum for long-range planning processes into a multipurpose, community-rebuilding resource board.

The town hall meetings were structured to solicit as much information as possible from citizens about what they wanted for the future. When citizens arrived at the meeting, a team member met them at the registration desk, which allowed the citizens to interact with a friendly person from the moment they arrived. Children who attended the meetings received their own newsletters, which included a word find puzzle, a maze, and simple articles on what community planning is and how to become a planner. After registration, a team member directed the citizens to a map where another team member showed them the location of their respective property. Judging by the number of identifying dots that team members placed on the map for each property represented, the team could assess whether the meeting achieved representation from throughout the county. This map activity also offered citizens an opportunity to meet with a planning team member. Another map showed all the development proposals that the county had approved in the citizen's community along with the development-proposal site plan. This additional map provided important and timely information that allowed residents to stay informed about future development.

First Town Hall Meeting

The town hall meeting structure was specifically designed to gain input from everyone, ensuring that the voices of only a few citizens did not dominate. These meetings were designed so that two town hall meetings were held per community; one meeting was held at the beginning of the planning process and one was held near the end of the planning process. For example, the dates of the town hall meetings were scheduled in January and March 2006, September and December 2006, September and December 2007, and March and June 2008. As detailed in the following text, the

first and second town hall meetings were designed to gather different types of feedback from the communities.

During the first town hall meeting, citizens first met in small groups to discuss what they liked best about their community before the storm, what they liked least, and what they would do to improve the community. Citizens participated in a written survey concerning their employment and housing and the types of development and policies they wanted for the future.

Citizens also participated in a Visual Preference Survey that allowed them to share their thoughts about appropriate and inappropriate types of development. Citizens used electronic voting keypads to vote on the images, and the results were displayed instantly. The keypad tool has been tremendously popular. At the Saucier town hall meeting, residents booed and applauded as the results appeared. For the planning team, it was an effective way to show that the team understood the community's culture and its goals for the future.

To ensure that the process was as inclusive as possible, students engaged in further outreach by canvassing rental properties and the FEMA trailer park for one-on-one dialogue with residents in these areas. Students have used a number of different tools for canvassing, including surveys and video recording of the properties and landscapes.

The planning team summarized the resulting feedback in the next community newsletter, which then created additional opportunities for a wider participation, especially from those citizens who had not yet been engaged in the planning process. Because the priorities that the citizens set are equivalent to the priorities identified in the plans, the information from the meeting set the foundation on which each community plan was based. The team then returned to Ohio State University to work on the plans. Every few weeks, the planning team provided the citizens steering committee with materials to review and comment on. An elected member of the Harrison County Board of Supervisors and the zoning administrator visited Columbus, Ohio, to review the students' draft plan before they sent it to citizens for review and comment.

About a month after the town hall meeting, the students made a draft plan available for review in the community both on line and in specific local venues. They also sent a newsletter to every property owner, summarizing the key policy and design choices in the plan, which enabled citizens to provide feedback that was then integrated into the draft plan.

Second Town Hall Meeting

The planning team hosted the second town hall meeting in Harrison County, where team members presented the revised draft and asked for feedback. The meeting followed the same process as the first town hall meeting, which included meeting citizens at a registration desk and guiding them through a mapping activity. A few important highlights of this meeting are described in the following paragraphs.

Team members received citizens' feedback using electronic voting keypads to vote on the identified goals, which showed the extent of community unity on specific goals. The planning team verbally mirrored the citizens' words; for example, citizens had said that they would like "to see businesses

look better," so the team used the words "to see businesses look better." By hearing their words repeated, the citizens could easily know that the team had listened to what they wanted. A team member would then explain the available alternatives—in this case, for example, the county could pursue sign standards for businesses. To measure the citizens' priorities of the planning strategies, the team used dot-voting via wall boards. As part of this process, citizens indicated their priorities by placing dots next to the strategies they supported. This tool allowed community members to see their neighbors' opinions and provided the opportunity to interact with the team members who were stationed at each strategy sheet.

Using citizens' feedback from the second town hall meeting, the team made final revisions to the plan and presented it to the Harrison County Board of Supervisors for adoption. The process is designed to create transparency and to communicate the citizens' needs throughout the plan. The citizen-participation process is fully documented in an appendix included in each plan. This documentation provides the opportunity for those citizens who may not have fully participated to understand how citizens were represented in the planning process.

Building Community Trust

One of the first priorities during the engagement process was to gain the community's trust. As planners from out of state and "up north," we had the responsibility to overcome this barrier as early as possible to establish a credible citizen engagement process.

The team members faced the realities and challenges of building trust when they arrived at the town hall meetings. At the Saucier meeting, the first citizen who arrived immediately got on his cell phone and started calling everyone he knew, telling them to get down here because there were folks from up north here and that could only be bad news. This feeling was not uncommon. The planning team regularly received questions about why the county would bring in people from up north. To overcome the barriers of being from a northern university, the team adopted two strategies. First, at the beginning of the first meeting, when Evans-Cowley introduced herself, she acknowledged the citizens' potential fear and anxiety they may have if outsiders, with whom they have had no previous relationship, impose their community's redevelopment on them. One of the main questions local residents raised at the outset of the planning process was why a school in Mississippi was not leading the planning efforts. Evans-Cowley pointed out that, because Mississippi has only one planning school and one architecture school, and those schools' resources were being directed to other local communities, the Board of Supervisors had asked for out-of-state support. She also explained that the focus of this process was not to tell the community what to do, but to listen to what they wanted and to translate that into a plan that the local Board of Supervisors could use.

On the positive side, because we were a university-based team rather than a consulting firm, citizens thought they were helping the students learn. They seemed to enjoy being around college students. After the citizens understood that the team was there to really listen to what they had to say, they were more open to sharing their opinions and participating in the planning process. This process is consistent with the idea that by building trust through engaging citizens, the result can mean enhanced social capital (Burby, 2003; Gruber, 1994; Innes, 1996).

Evaluating Progress

One year after Hurricane Katrina made landfall, the Ohio State team began to evaluate its team's work and the plans that had been developed in all Harrison County communities, including those of all the cities and the unincorporated communities. The goal was to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of our team in comparison with others to determine what areas we needed to improve on and where we might best build on our work. We evaluated plans for integration of key principles for rebuilding, such as hazard mitigation, environmental protection from future storms, continuity with the principles of new urbanism, engagement of citizens, and the factual basis for making decisions, setting goals, and developing strategies. Overall, the authors believe the most important outcomes of the planning process are transparency and citizen engagement, a plan that recognizes and addresses natural hazards, a plan that recognizes the need to protect environmental resources, and a plan that is achievable.

Evaluation results of all the post-Hurricane Katrina rebuilding plans in Harrison County showed a wide range of attention paid to environmental and hazard mitigation concerns. Rebuilding plans for the cities in Harrison County were primarily completed by consultants who participated in the Mississippi Renewal Forum. Results from the environmental evaluation suggested that the plans created by Renewal Forum consultants were largely focused on urban design and failed to incorporate significant attention to the protection of the natural environment (Evans-Cowley and Gough, 2008). The *Community Plan for Pineville*, completed by Ohio State University, scored the highest on the environmental evaluation. Pineville has a large portion of its land area in wetlands. Its plan, which has a goal directly related to environmental protection, promotes a wide range of actions and implementation strategies to protect its abundant environmental resources. These environmental resources are viewed as assets to the community, providing potential for ecotourism. For example, the plan calls for developing boat launch areas for nonmotorized boats to enable residents and visitors to travel along Bayou Portage and stop in the town center for a meal (Harrison County, 2007a). The plan integrates environmental protection measures, and it is clear from the citizen-participation element that the residents strongly support this goal. When the team asked residents what they liked most about their community, they frequently mentioned the natural environment and beauty, trees, fishing, and rural character (Harrison County, 2007a). Although the plan received the highest rating in the evaluation for environmental protection, the authors found room for improvement based on a literature review on environmental planning.

Subsequent studio courses used a more sophisticated model for determining areas to protect from development, known as the Land Use Conflict Identification Strategy (Carr and Zwick, 2007). The *Community Plan for Henderson Point-Pass Christian Isles* received the highest overall score for hazard mitigation (Evans-Cowley and Gough, 2007a) Henderson Point was the most heavily impacted community in Harrison County, with 100 percent of the community impacted by up to 30 feet of storm surge. The plan has several goals directly related to hazard mitigation, and it promotes a wide range of actions and implementation strategies to create a more disaster-resistant community (Harrison County, 2007b). One might expect this community to have a strong hazard mitigation angle to its plan because only 24 homes were left standing after Hurricane Katrina came ashore (Mixon, 2006). The plan identifies the location of hazards, describes the characteristics of hazards, assesses the population exposed, and describes the environmental impacts of the disaster.

One challenge of incorporating hazard mitigation elements into the Harrison County plans was dealing with citizens' disinterest. For example, although the Henderson Point plan integrates hazard mitigation measures, citizens who wanted to rebuild their community the way it had been showed little interest in hazard mitigation. They did not support the Advisory Base Flood Elevations, which required houses to be built up to 25 feet above ground level. Also, citizens rejected proposals by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) to build a levy for the community. Although the *Community Plan for Henderson Point-Pass Christian Isles* addresses the hazards in the communities and sets goals and policies to support efforts to address them, the potential for devastating loss from rebuilding attempts if another hurricane hits is enormous because nearly all the land area is in a 100-year flood zone. Research has found that it is often difficult to engage citizens in discussions of hazard mitigation (Birkland, 1996; Burby, 2003). This finding proved to be a serious challenge for the students who wanted to protect the community to the greatest degree possible but had to respect the citizens' strong ties to the land and need to rebuild their community. Ultimately the students found that the most effective way to engage in discussions about environmental protection and hazard mitigation was to frame the issue around their values and concerns. For example, in DeLisle and Pineville, the same tools that promote hazard mitigation and environmental protection also promote the preservation of rural character. By talking to citizens about tools for rural preservation, the students found much higher levels of support than if they had discussed the tools in the context of hazard mitigation.

In evaluating the planning process, the planners clearly realized that they need to work closely with the emergency managers to implement land use policies and capital improvement investments that can effectively protect communities from future disasters. In all cases, the evaluation of post-Hurricane Katrina community plans exposed areas for improvement in environmental protection and hazard mitigation. In their dialogue with citizens, planners need to acknowledge the realities and concerns of the long-range protection of these communities and their environment. Harrison County communities should integrate the planning documents prepared by the local government's emergency management office, FEMA, USACE, and other organizations into their own long-range plans as a means for better addressing environmental and hazard mitigation elements. The Mississippi Development Authority recently approved funding for further comprehensive planning for communities along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. This additional funding should allow for implementation of environmental and hazard mitigation policies and strategies and is critical to the long-range protection of communities.

Balancing Educational and Community Objectives

Each studio course was structured to provide learning experiences that combined intense, direct community service with explicit learning objectives, preparation, and reflection (Dewey, 1948; Kolb, 1984). For example, each course required students to prepare weekly journal entries reflecting on what they were learning, and, at points throughout the quarter, students reflected on the conflicts between what they viewed as good planning, what the community wanted, and what political constraints existed. Providing opportunities throughout the quarter to reflect on learning objectives helped students focus not just on the community plan, but also on what they were learning. One of the biggest challenges for the instructor was the overwhelming long-term plan-

ning needs for Harrison County. There were always many more projects that the county needed help with than there was time available to complete them. Almost weekly, the county asked the team to take on more work. It was critical for the instructor to try to balance the educational objectives with the county's needs. Fortunately, the county mainly needed long-range community planning, which was an ideal fit for the learning objectives of the comprehensive planning studio course. Throughout the planning process, educational objectives had to be balanced with community objectives. For example, the Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District (SMPDD) approached the planning team with an idea to create a senior village to address the affordable housing needs of seniors, which is a universal issue for most communities. SMPDD, in working with the consulting firm PBS&J, secured a commitment from the firm to donate at least 35 green mobile homes. These mobile homes have an environmentally friendly design and meet requirements for accessibility according to the Americans with Disabilities Act. They are available as part of the Mississippi Cottage program. SMPDD had identified a site known as the County Farm (a 640-acre property given to Harrison County) as a location for the development. They asked the planning team to develop a site plan for the project. Although citizens expressed strong support for a senior village, they did not support locating the village at the County Farm. As a result, the instructor was in a quandary. Should the students develop a site plan without a site or should the team stop and redirect its attention elsewhere? The instructor thought it would be a valuable learning exercise to design a conceptual site plan, develop a partnership proposal on how the county might participate, conduct a market analysis, and develop an initial pro forma (see exhibit 1). The students then provided the site plan, proposal, and analysis to SMPDD and PBS&J,

Exhibit 1

A Site Plan for a Senior Village
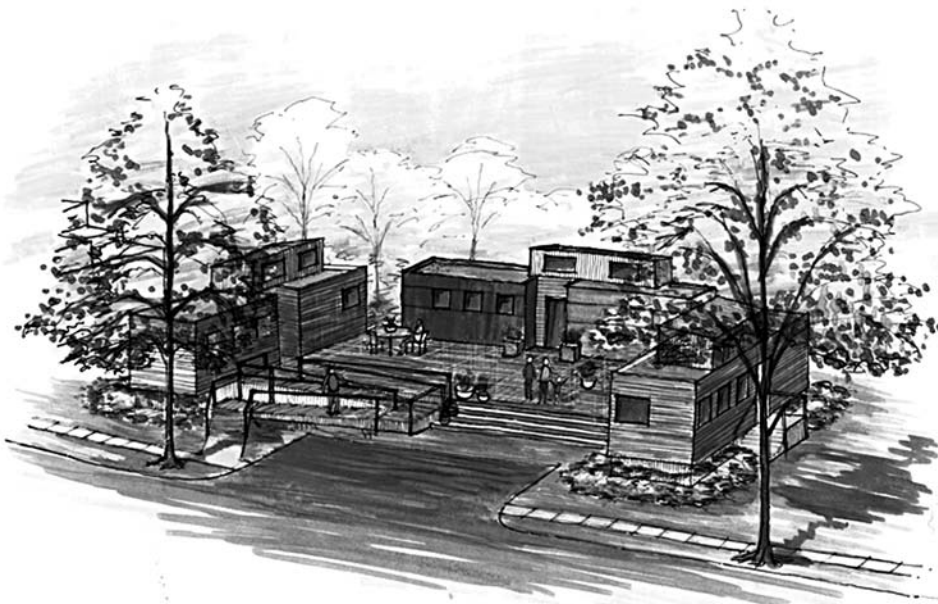
This conceptual site plan integrates 50 green mobile homes and an assisted-living facility on a 10-acre site.
Credit: Matthew Leasure.

who used the materials to make a presentation to the Harrison County Board of Supervisors on how a senior village could be developed. As of October 2008, SMPDD is seeking a site that could be used for the project. Ultimately, the project met educational objectives and a community need.

In another case, the county strongly desired that the planning team work on the Scenic Byway application for the designation of State Highway 605. The students participating in the studio were already very busy working on the community plan for this area. Although preparing an application would be a learning exercise for the students, the instructor thought it was inconsistent with the learning objectives of a comprehensive planning studio. After ongoing discussions with the county, the county decided to reallocate staffing resources and hire a student intern from Ohio State to specifically focus on the application rather than making it a studio activity.

Although challenges always existed to balance educational requirements and the needs of Harrison County, the overall goal of combining direct community service and learning is to transform classroom learning into skills the students can use to make a difference in the community—in this case, Harrison County (Eyler, Giles, and Braxton, 1997). At the end of the planning process, the university hopes that, as a result of working with the communities in Harrison County, the students will have positive attitudes toward their own communities, greater involvement in politics, and instilled values of citizenship (Ahmad-Llewellyn, 2003; Hunter and Brisbin, 2000; Kirlin, 2002). In reviewing the students' journals, instructors found that their attitudes toward citizen engagement had clearly changed. Although at the beginning of the course students viewed citizen participation as an important part of planning, by the end of the process they understood how engaging citizens could result in a truly positive transformation for a community.

Obstacles to Success

The university team faced a number of challenges in executing the participatory planning process. An initial challenge was how to reach out to citizens who had been displaced by the hurricane. For example, in DeLisle, the Post Office was not delivering mail to individual addresses. Instead, recipients had to go to a central post office outside of their community to get their mail. Those living outside the community were often moving from place to place, and they were not necessarily having their mail forwarded. Phones were of limited use because some people were still living in tents. The team used a variety of citizen outreach approaches as described in the previous sections but also reached out to area churches and businesses and used word of mouth to promote the process.

It is important to note that this rebuilding effort provided the first opportunity for these communities to participate in a planning process. Harrison County adopted its first comprehensive plan in 1999. It was prepared to allow for the adoption of zoning, but it did not include any effort to engage citizens in planning for their future. Citizens in general were skeptical about the value of planning and some equated zoning with communism. These attitudes posed as big of a challenge as convincing citizens that outsiders were not intent on imposing decisions on them. In part, this opposition to planning was based on a lack of understanding about how planning could benefit their communities. To gain the community's trust, the team avoided using planning terms and instead used the citizens' own words. The largest concern of most citizens was that their rural lifestyle be maintained. The team would make statements such as, "you told us that you wanted to

make sure that the community maintains its farming areas." The team would then offer alternatives for achieving this. The citizens understood that growth was inevitable, but they were generally concerned about how such growth would ruin their communities. The planning process helped them understand that by making decisions about where growth could happen, they could use planning and zoning to effectively achieve their goal of preserving rural areas.

The students struggled to appropriately frame the plans to overcome obstacles encountered throughout the planning process (Argyris, Putnam, and Smith, 1985; Dewey, 1948; Kolb, 1984; Lewin, 1951; Schon, 1983; Whyte, 1991, 1984). The students repeatedly experienced conflicts between what they saw as good planning and what the citizens wanted. The students struggled to understand the citizens' perspective. For example, in DeLisle, where 90 percent of the housing was impacted by storm surge, the students could not understand why citizens wanted to rebuild the same houses that they had before the hurricane. The instructor pointed out that the citizens strongly value both the very low-density character of their community and the scenic rivers and bayous. The citizens' values were not grounded in hazard mitigation; they were grounded in rural preservation. By framing solutions around rural preservation, the team could help the citizens' achieve their goals and, at the same time, could fulfill its own desire to implement hazard mitigation measures.

Lessons Learned

Any community, whether or not it is facing a disaster, could use the planning process used in Harrison County. By using an empowerment planning approach, the team effectively engaged citizens in planning and provided them with the power to implement their plans. The planning process employed in Harrison County offers a number of lessons learned from both the community and university perspectives.

Community Lessons

Although students can help during a planning process, when the course is over, they move on. A critical element of this planning process was to create a way to give citizens the ability to carry on with the plan after the students had gone. A problem that any community faces in working with a consultant is having the local will and energy to move the plan forward. The planning process must be designed to build community capacity for implementation.

Creating a good plan is only the starting point. A major component of the planning process in Harrison County was to build planning capacity in each community. At each meeting, people were asked to sign up to volunteer to assist the steering committee with implementation of the plans. The county-appointed steering committees, after completion of each plan, are charged with forming a nonprofit organization to implement the plans. Finding the time and energy to volunteer to help with planning has been a real struggle for community members who are trying to rebuild their own lives and have little time for other activities. In every community, however, committed people have made it a priority to ensure that the plans are implemented. These individuals have formed community organizations that have led to the implementation of the plans. For example, the Saucier Improvement Association started a farmers market (exhibit 2). In Pineville, a property

Exhibit 2

Community Organization Starts Farmers Market

As a first action, the Saucier Improvement Association initiated a twice-weekly farmers market. This image shows the ribbon cutting for the farmers market kickoff. Photo credit: Steve Howard.

owner applied for and was selected for the pilot Leadership for Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development program. In DeLisle, a property owner worked with a land trust to place a property along the bayou in permanent conservation.

University Lessons

From the university perspective, the project has created numerous learning opportunities for students and faculty. Cultural bias was a significant issue upfront. Students' expectations for what citizens should want initially proved to be a barrier to good planning. Over time the students learned how to set aside their own values and embrace those of others. To help the students overcome their biases, at the end of the first day in Mississippi, the faculty facilitated a debriefing session with each class of students in which the students spoke of their first impressions. Student comments created opportunities for discussions on differences in cultural values between them-selves and local residents. In addition, local residents provided the students with tours through the community to help students deepen their understanding of the relationship between individual and family lifestyles and the cultural context of a given community.

The project has affected students emotionally. Crying has been a common experience throughout the planning process, and anger and frustration has often been taken out on teammates. These behaviors are in part from mental exhaustion but also are the result of being overwhelmed by the personal situations of residents in Harrison County (Evans-Cowley, 2006). Although the instructor

initially was not prepared to counsel the students through this emotionally challenging experience, she initiated a project in which each past class contributed to a "Mississippi Survivor's Guide" that offers helpful advice on how to work with teammates, the community, officials, stress, and the culture of the coast. The guide helps prepare upcoming students for their experience. A greater focus on reflective journaling later in the project's evolution also helped students with this aspect of their learning process.

The students and faculty learned the extreme importance of personal connections to gain information. Harrison County is a relatively closed society whose citizens do not return phone calls or e-mails unless they know the person or have a connection with the person. This attitude of exclusiveness created extreme difficulties for the students who expected they could call someone at the last minute and get an appointment before their first trip to the Gulf Coast. Students quickly realized that it was vital to create a network of people on the coast who could provide information and then use this small network to gain introductions to other people who could provide information.

Overall, the experience for the students and faculty involved has been one of tremendous learning and opportunity for professional growth. Although the goal of the course was to benefit the citizens of Harrison County, students and faculty have also experienced tremendous personal benefits. The students have departed feeling a close and personal connection to the Mississippi coast, with some of the students returning on vacation to see the progress and visit with the people they met in the community.

Conclusion

The approaches the authors used in this planning process could be used to address many postdisaster recovery situations and in any typical community planning process. The result of the Harrison County planning process has been that Harrison County has adopted each plan, with the support of the citizens in each community. The planning team repeatedly heard citizens who had attended planning meetings in other communities say, "you are doing it right"—meaning that the teams were asking people what they wanted and not telling them what to do. The mayor of nearby Long Beach said he was impressed that the planning team had actually listened to what the community wanted, and he wished that he had a school like Ohio State University working with his community (Skellie, 2007). In Harrison County, the citizens ultimately decided what their future would be. The plans created out of the HUD Universities Rebuilding America Partnerships grant program have received a number of awards from the Small Town and Rural Planning Division of the American Planning Association, the Economic Development Division of the American Planning Association, the Ohio Planning Conference, and the Congress for the New Urbanism.

The county has been so satisfied with the efforts of Ohio State University that they have awarded additional grant funds to further the work of the university. In 2006, they added Ohio State University as a subcontractor on a Coastal Impact Assistance Program grant (through the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration). The result was a countywide Smart Growth Resource Guide, which was selected for an Innovator Award from the National Association of Development Organizations. The county selected Ohio State University to receive a competitive bid contract through the Mississippi Development Authority grant program to prepare the county's compre-

hensive plan, Sand-Beach Master Plan, and revise the county's zoning and subdivision regulations, all of which will continue the partnership through 2009. In the end, Harrison County found that selecting a university resulted in an ideal partnership that has led to a long-term relationship for providing substantial design and planning assistance.

Acknowledgments

Authors

Jennifer S. Evans-Cowley is an associate professor of city and regional planning at The Ohio State University.

Meghan Zimmerman Gough is an assistant professor of urban planning at Virginia Commonwealth University.

References

Ahmad-Llewellyn, Shahara. 2003. "From Knowledge, to Service, to Citizenship," *Phi Delta Kappan* 62 (1): 62.

Alinsky, Saul D. 1971. *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals*. New York: Vintage Press.

Argyris, Chris, Robert Putnam, and Diana McLain Smith. 1985. *Action Science: Concepts, Methods, and Skills for Research and Intervention*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers: 80–102.

Arnstein, Sherry R. 1969. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35 (4): 216–224.

Birkland, Thomas A. 1996. "Natural Disasters as Focusing Events: Policy Communities and Political Response," *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* 14 (2): 221–243.

Bonck, Patrick. 2005. Harrison County zoning administrator. Personal interview (November 7).

Burby, Raymond J. 2003. "Making Plans that Matter: Citizen Involvement and Government Action," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 69 (1): 33–49.

Carr, Margaret, and Paul Zwick. 2007. *Smart Land-Use Analysis: The LUCIS Model*. Redlands, CA: ESRI Press.

Creighton, James L. 1992. *Involving Citizens in Community Decision Making: A Guidebook*. Washington, DC: Program for Community Problem Solving.

Dewey, John. 1948. *The Need for a Philosophy of Education, in Experience and Education*. New York: Macmillan: 25–31.

Evans-Cowley, Jennifer. 2006. "Preparing Students for Disaster: A Framework for Engaging in Service-Learning in Post-Katrina Mississippi," *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Scholarship* 12 (1): 109–124.

Evans-Cowley, Jennifer, and Meghan Gough. 2008. "Evaluating Environmental Planning in Post-Katrina Plans in Mississippi," *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 51 (3): 399–419.

Evans-Cowley, Jennifer, and Meghan Gough. 2007a. "Is Hazard Mitigation Being Incorporated into Post-Katrina Plans in Mississippi?" *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Hazards* 25 (3): 177–217.

Evans-Cowley, Jennifer, and Meghan Gough. 2007b. "Transforming Top-Down to Bottom-Up Planning in Post-Katrina Mississippi," *Progressive Planning* (Summer): 13–17.

Eyler, Janet, Dwight E. Giles, Jr., and John Braxton. 1997. "The Impact of Service-Learning on College Students," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 4: 5–15.

Forester, John. 1999. "Challenges of Mediation and Deliberation in the Design Professions: Practice Stories from Israel and Norway," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 16 (2): 116–132.

Godschalk, David R., Samuel Brody, and Raymond Burby. 2003. "Public Participation in Natural Hazard Mitigation Policy Formation: Challenges for Comprehensive Planning," *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 46 (5): 733–754.

Godschalk, David R., David W. Parham, Douglas R. Porter, William R. Potapchuck, and Steven W. Schukraft. 1994. *Pulling Together: A Planning and Development Consensus-Building Manual*. Washington, DC: Urban Land Institute.

Gruber, Judith. 1994. "Coordinating Growth Management Through Consensus-Building: Incentives and the Generation of Social, Intellectual, and Political Capital." Working paper no. 617. University of California, Berkeley Institute of Urban and Regional Development.

Harrison County. 2007a. *Community Plan for Pineville*. http://www.co.harrison.ms.us/departments/zoning/downloads.asp (accessed January 20, 2007).

Harrison County. 2007b. *Community Plan for Henderson Point-Pass Christian Isles*. http://www.co.harrison.ms.us/departments/zoning/downloads.asp (accessed January 20, 2007).

Hunter, Susan, and Richard A. Brisbin, Jr. 2000. "The Impact of Service Learning on Democratic and Civic Values," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33 (3): 623–626.

Innes, Judith E. 1996. "Planning through Consensus Building: A New View of the Comprehensive Planning Ideal," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 62: 460–472.

Innes, Judith E., and David E. Booher. 1999. "Consensus Building and Complex Adaptive Systems," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 65 (4): 412–423.

Innes, Judith E., Judith Gruber, Robert Thompson, and Michael Neuman. 1994. "Coordinating Growth and Environmental Management through Consensus Building." CPS Report: A Policy Research Program Report. University of California at Berkeley: California Policy Seminar.

Julian, David, Thomas M. Reischl, Richard V. Carrick, and Cathy Katrenich. 1997. "Citizen Participation—Lessons Learned from a United Way Planning Process," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 63 (3): 354–355.

Kirlin, Mary. 2002. "Civic Skill Building: The Missing Component in Service Programs," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 3 (5): 571–575.

Kolb, David A. 1984. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall: 39–60.

Lewin, Kurt A. 1951. *Field Theory in Social Sciences*. New York: Harper and Row.

Mixon, George. 2006. Harrison County, Mississippi, fire chief. Personal correspondence (January 5). Mailing address: 20121 West Wotham Road, Saucier, Mississippi 39574.

Moore, C. Nicholas. 1995. *Participation Tools for Better Land-Use Planning: Techniques and Case Studies*. Sacramento: Local Government Commission.

Reardon, Kenneth. 2000. "An Experiential Approach to Creating an Effective Community-University Partnership: The East St. Louis Action Research Project," *Cityscape* 5 (1): 59–74.

Schon, Donald. 1983. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.

Skellie, William. 2007. Mayor, city of Long Beach, Mississippi. Personal interview (September 5).

Thompson, Richard. 2005. "Mississippi Tackles a Tough One," *Planning* (December): 6–11.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). 2006. "Universities Rebuilding America," *Research Works* 3 (5): 1–2.

Whyte, William F. 1991. *Participatory Action Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Whyte, William F. 1984. *Learning from the Field: A Guide from Experience*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Wondolleck, Julia, and Steven Yaffee. 2000. *Making Collaboration Work: Lessons from Innovation in Natural Resource Management*. Washington, DC: Island Press.