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New Orleans
Community Congress II:
Towards the Next Era of Participatory Democracy

**An Evaluation Research Report
commissioned by *AmericaSpeaks*
Office of Research and Evaluation**

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Introduction

A strong turnout of a broad cross-section of the New Orleans population, not only in New Orleans but in four diaspora cities, lent legitimacy to a unique public conversation about recovery priorities. Community Congress II, the deliberative forum for public input on the city-wide recovery priorities, was held on December 2, 2006, as part of the official Unified New Orleans Plan process. Designed and conducted with America Speaks, it brought together over 2500 New Orleanians, linked together electronically in five different cities plus additional smaller gatherings in libraries in many diaspora communities. Our research team took an intimate look at the gathering in New Orleans itself to draw out the lessons for deliberative democracy.

The overall feedback in New Orleans shows that participants were delighted with the chance to talk with others, express their opinions, come up with their own options, connect with people at the diaspora sites, get immediate feedback from their votes, and make a contribution to the recovery plan. Almost everyone interviewed liked the design and format of the day. Everyone appreciated the chance to add options from the tables. Almost all affirmed the objectivity of the theme team in condensing their table reports and reporting back new options. The vast majority that we interviewed left feeling satisfied with the day and more optimistic about the future of New Orleans. Even those who had been skeptical left impressed and pleased. But the final evidence of the day's success, most said, will come in actions taken: Will the UNOP plan reflect their priorities? Will actual investments reflect the plan? Despite a general 'planning fatigue,' frustration, and incredulousness at the fact that more than a year had past and little progress was visible, most said that citizen involvement in major issues facing the city should become a regular part of city governance, and that more events like CCII should be held.

Almost everyone interviewed thought the quality of the table conversations had been very good. While a significant number of the tables dwindled to three or fewer people by the end, many tables had rounds of hugs and exchanges of contact information before breaking up. The table conversations observed showed that almost everyone spoke up at least once, and that the conversations were respectful of differing opinions.

Truly CCII was a remarkable event in a challenging setting on the road to participatory democracy. In a city plagued by racial divisions, economic disparity, and mistrust, the event demonstrates that dialogue across difference, inclusion, representation, voice, and transparency are deeply satisfying qualities that spark a sense of common purpose, connect one another through a shared love of place, and rekindle faith in the future of their beloved city.

CCII represents the second generation of public participation in governance: beyond the decide-announce-defend model of one-way information flows; beyond the line-up-behind-the-mic approach to public comment meetings; beyond the public opinion polling or focus groups; and beyond the 'usual suspects' approach of rounding up the key stakeholders to figure it out behind closed doors. CCII

was an example of *deliberative civic engagement* aimed at bringing the whole system into the room for thoughtful discussion and choice-making on wicked issues—i.e. those that have multiple causes and effects, involve trade-offs, and reflect values. As such it pushed the edge of experience in a setting that is still grappling with how to enforce the three minute rule at board and commission hearings, a setting where the experts may not want to contend with public input, or where the elected officials may not want to create expectations that are difficult to fulfill. And it pushes the leading edge of innovations in large scale deliberative democracy across the country.

Our evaluation research addresses not only the immediate responses of the participants themselves and the observations of key stakeholders; it also involves a continuous observation of 16 tables in New Orleans (and six in two diaspora locations that are reported elsewhere). From this we cull out the lessons for the second generation of participatory democracy and point out the emergent edge of the third generation.

I. CCII in Context

According to key informant sources, the idea of a multi-site interactive planning event with AmericaSpeaks had its inception immediately after the November 2005 symposium in New Orleans with the American Institute of Architects. Within hours of the completion of the AIA event, the Committee for Better New Orleans (CBNO/MAC) approached AmericaSpeaks with the question “can you do a multi-site meeting?” The hope was to have a meaningful opportunity for civic engagement that included the diaspora in decision-making. The original target for the meeting was early spring 2006 as a follow-up to the Bring Back New Orleans Commission. CBNO/ MAC began a campaign of proposal writing and speaking to many individuals and groups and AmericaSpeaks worked to develop their resources. Initial proposals did not receive needed attention, and this effort fell in the shadow of political campaigns and the beginnings of the New Orleans City Council sponsored Lambert-Danzey planning process.

The initiative re-emerged in April 2006 when the Louisiana Recovery Authority hired Concordia, a local architectural and planning firm with international reputation, to spearhead and staff the third and final phase of recovery planning, the Unified New Orleans Planning Process (UNOP). UNOP, with funds provided by the Rockefeller Foundation, Greater New Orleans Foundation and the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund, had the mandate to bring all recovery planning processes together into one city-wide document. The UNOP structure included an oversight board (New Orleans Support Foundation), and a citizen advisory board (Community Support Organization-CSO). There was verbal agreement by the Mayor, the City Council, and the City Planning Commission to the UNOP process on July 5, but a formal memorandum of understanding was not signed until August 28, 2006.

The UNOP process started with an introductory meeting on July 30th broadly characterized as “chaotic” but which led to the assignment of nationally recognized planning teams to each district. After the MOU with the city was signed, a series of meetings in the 13 planning districts of New Orleans began. These meetings afforded local residents input into selecting key recovery projects for their neighborhoods.

Throughout this time period, Concordia and CBNO/MAC continued the campaign for broad citizen engagement and the involvement of AmericaSpeaks, and brought together conflicting factions in the delicate politics of New Orleans recovery planning. The New Orleans Support Foundation voted in early September 2006, to collaborate with AmericaSpeaks for Community Congress II with the understanding that AmericaSpeaks would raise the estimated \$2.4 million needed for the event.

There were three Community Congresses planned in the UNOP process. Community Congress I, the first city-wide UNOP meeting was a poorly attended event (300 persons) and did not have pre-Katrina representation. However, within an extremely tight timeframe UNOP and AmericaSpeaks conducted an effective public outreach effort going well beyond the traditional definition of a public information campaign, to attract large numbers with broad demographic representation to CCII. As a result CCII gained the legitimacy it needed to become a turning point in the UNOP process. Community Congress II was a multi-site event, with 2500 current residents and members of the diaspora linked by

satellite in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Atlanta, Dallas and Houston and by webcast in 16 other cities. With some exceptions, the participants in this Congress were a much closer reflection of pre-Katrina demographics. According to UNOP, CCII “focused on updating New Orleans residents on recovery efforts, creating a public dialogue to identify rebuilding priorities, and strengthening public awareness for continued recovery and rebuilding efforts.”

Overview of the Day. Upon arrival, each participant was given a folder of material that contained an agenda, a discussion guide, an overview of the impact of Hurricane Katrina, a map of the 13 planning districts, a worksheet and a resource guide. Participants at CCII sat at assigned tables in small groups of 8-10, each with their own table facilitator. After introductory speeches, Carolyn Lukensmeyer and David Camp gave guidance to the process from the front of the room as participants were asked to listen to informational presentations, read the guide book and discuss and respond to multiple questions throughout the day. Technology enabled the participants to give feedback via computer or to vote with keypads and receive rapid results on large screens in the front of room. Interspersed with these activities were interaction with other sites, a moving rap performance, a poem based on participants’ words and a presentation of a painting created in the room that day.

The discussions throughout the day gave feedback to the planners on the following:

- The demographics of who attended CCII
- What we want to preserve about New Orleans and what we want to change
- Who plans to stay, leave or return
- Major Issues:
 - Infrastructure – Roads, Transit, Utilities
 - Flood Protection
 - Rental and Affordable Housing
 - Neighborhood Stabilization
 - Education and Health Services
 - Other Public Services (Police, Fire, Criminal Justice)
- At the end of the day, participants were given 16 options that had emerged throughout their voting patterns, 14 of which had been generated by participants themselves. Participants were asked to select the five that they felt were the most important to rebuilding the city.

Follow-up. The priorities set at CCII were available within a few days on the UNOP website. In addition, attendees received a personal mailing of the results of the meeting. This transparency has characterized the UNOP process.

II. Methodology

The intent of this research was to hear the voices of participants at the New Orleans site and to gather their experience into a picture of Community Congress II. It is therefore based on the data gathered in New Orleans through primarily qualitative methodologies, with some use of the keypad data generated on the day of the event. Themes were allowed to emerge from the qualitative data and are reported below.

The methodology design and data gathering was a joint effort among four researchers: Patricia Wilson, Ph.D., University of Texas, Julianna Padgett, Ph.D., Southern University at New Orleans, Judy Wallace, MA, independent consultant, Lars Hasselbad Torres of AmericaSpeaks. Our team also included fifteen research assistants who collected data through table observations and exit interviews in New Orleans (similar data was collected at the Dallas site and is available separately). The analysis and report were completed by Dr. Wilson, Dr. Padgett and Ms. Wallace.

Data was collected through the following mechanisms. Summaries of each are included in the appendix.

Table observations (16). One researcher was assigned per table. The researcher sat near or at the table if there was room. The observations were done in three rounds: Discussion Cycle 1, Discussion Cycle 2, and Discussion Cycle 3. Each of these observers documented the number of times each participant

spoke, the general content of what was spoken, the tone, range and quality of the discussion and the role of the facilitator.

Exit interviews (28). These exit interviews were designed to get brief, immediate feedback as individuals left the event. Fifteen questions were asked to determine the person's experience at their table, any challenges in the decision-making process, and overall levels of satisfaction.

Focus groups (3). Three hour-long focus groups were held immediately after the event. The groups of 6-8 people, divided roughly according to districts, allowed the researchers to have a longer conversation with participants. Focus group participants were asked to describe their experience during the event and what challenges had been faced. Each person was offered a gift of \$20 for his or her participation.

Stakeholder interviewers (17) (pre- and post-event). Telephone and in-person interviews were completed with 17 key informants to determine their expectations for the event or their reactions to CCII, and to understand their views of the UNOP story and CCII. These included city officials and leaders in the UNOP process and several neighborhood leaders. A number of city and state officials were unresponsive to our request for interviews.

Cross-tabulations of keypad data by race, income, gender, age, own/rent status, and place of residence pre-Katrina, on polarized votes and attrition.

Review of facilitator post-event survey data provided by AmericaSpeaks, especially issues of what went well and what was challenging for facilitators.

III. Key findings

The UNOP process, and particularly CCII, represents an important, unprecedented first step in a new kind of citizen engagement in New Orleans. CCII was a positive experience for those attending and sparked a new level of trust in the UNOP process. Community Congress II affirmed the ability of New Orleanians to set priorities together for the good of the whole.

Respondents felt that three clear messages had been given: New Orleanians are united and can work together for the good of the city, we want to come back and rebuild, and we want to be part of the decision making – counted and heard. Indeed, the single most important message coming out of the December 2, 2006 Community Congress II is a clear call for continued civic involvement in the ongoing recovery process.

Forum for Learning. Community Congress II provided a forum for civic education that gave participants a broad understanding of the issues and how others throughout the city felt about those issues. Furthermore, because the forum included a wide range of demographic groups, participants considered the findings from the keypad voting legitimate. They found it valuable to know how others in the room – and not just at their tables – felt.

Forum for rebuilding community and social connections. Overall, participants appeared to experience CCII as a confirmation that New Orleans lives and is coming back. Respondents were very positive about seeing and hearing from other New Orleanians at remote sites. They discovered that they shared many of the same concerns and hopes with those at their table and in the diaspora, despite diverse neighborhoods and backgrounds.

Forum for setting priorities. CCII asked residents to give input into critical planning issues, make trade-offs, and set priorities for the recovery plan. Dependable flood protection was their strongest area of agreement. The participants reviewed options and created their own.

Forum for galvanizing the planning process. It also appears that Community Congress II played an important role in galvanizing people around the planning process. CCII increased many people's optimism about the planning process in the city and their sense that citizens need to be a part of the process going forward. For those participants in the diaspora, it was the first time for many to have input in the UNOP process.

Challenges to the day. While CCII can be considered a success, there were difficulties faced. Beyond the delayed start, the late ending and the overpacked agenda, parts of the process led many to question the long term meaning of the results. The concerns identified raise the question of how much deliberation and what kind of input a community needs to make wise decisions. AmericaSpeaks' model suggests that despite the process issues identified below, that New Orleanians set viable priorities that can guide the finalization of the UNOP recovery plan and eventually the rebuilding of the city. Below are the challenges that were experienced by participants and may have impacted the results:

1. Participant concerns on the public information available for CCII mostly addressed access to information before meetings. There was little information for participants about what to expect or what they were committing to and background material for the day was not provided until arrival at the event.
2. Concern about the questions and options. Many participants found them either unclear, too general, or presented in a way that was biased. As a result participants were unsure about the interpretation or intention of the option as presented. They did not know if their vote matched the intention of the option. Hard issues that New Orleanians need to address were not raised fully in this forum.
3. Unclear voting instructions. At several times during the day, instructions were changed. Participants were confused about the use of the keypads at these points, raising the issue of the validity of these votes.
4. Limited discussion time, which did not allow conflicts to be resolved or shared understanding to be reached. Most of the discussion periods were limited to about 20 minutes which included reading information in the participant guide. With 8-10 people at a table, participants' feelings "in the moment" could be recorded, but there was little time to come to new understandings among participants.
5. Underrepresented groups, especially renters, low income households, and youth.
6. Unequal participation rates in table conversations. Women spoke more often than men and whites more often than blacks. Men were more likely to leave early than women. About two thirds of the participants were left by the last discussion cycle.
7. Difficult conditions for facilitation and uneven quality of facilitation at the table discussions. Facilitators overall enjoyed the event, were satisfied with their roles and are overwhelmingly willing to serve at future America Speaks events. They felt strongly supported by America Speaks staff, felt the technology was engaging, and greatly enjoyed their interaction with participants. They had primary concerns with the limited time for consensus building, unclear voting instructions, and the clarity of the options as stated. It was found that about 50% of the facilitators were consistently good, about 40% showed mixed skills and 10% showed consistently poor skills.
8. Usefulness of the results. Many said the results gave mixed or unclear directives to the planners because so many priorities were discussed.

IV. Analysis of Key Process Issues

Our analysis presents insights into the building of social trust, demographic representation, attrition of participants, inclusion and voice, voting patterns, issues and options, quality of dialogue, and facilitation.

Building Social Trust and Sense of Community

The very act of bringing citizens together to make decisions is also an opportunity to confirm the existence of a shared community and to build what Muhlberger (2006)¹ refers to as "social trust." The building of social trust refers to a belief that a group has the capacity to solve problems and the

¹ Muhlberger, Peter. (2006). *Report to the Deliberative Democracy Consortium: Building a Deliberation Measurement Toolbox*. Virtual Agora Project, Carnegie Mellon University. Retrieved December 27, 2006 from <http://www.geocities.com/pmuhl78/DDCReport.pdf>.

willingness to collaborate. These are the foundations of community engagement which will need to be expanded as the community deepens its understanding of participatory democracy.

The past 15 months have brought often confusing social messages of who is “welcome” in New Orleans. There have been few opportunities in the previous planning processes for city-wide dialogue to work through the many difficult social issues facing recovery. However, the data shows that Community Congress II provided participants several means to confirm that New Orleanians have a shared community, both locally and in the diaspora. It also confirmed a strong belief that people are willing to work together for the good of the whole city.

The spirit of this event is described from participants’ own words in the exit interviews, table observations, focus groups, and key informant interviews. The responses indicate that the meeting fulfilled many social needs critical to building social trust:

A Forum for Rebuilding Community and Social Connections

- The meeting was designed for a reunion of city residents as well as providing the opportunity for interaction of diverse residents. In Houston, observers state that it was difficult to stay on the agenda at some tables because so much socializing was going on. Exit interviewees said, “wonderful to see people who want to come back” and were “seeing people I knew - hadn’t seen in months.”
- The meeting was an opportunity to create new relationships. The morning began with tables of participants mapping their residences, introducing each other and then sharing, “What it is about New Orleans that we want preserved?” People who had never met began to know each other early in the day. One exit interviewee, who initially was very skeptical, said, “Close proximity made people bond. Hope everyone had a table like ours.”

A key informant said, “My husband was going to leave at lunch but stayed through to the end. Many people stayed through to the end. Stayed because the way the tables were put together – diversity – everyone really bonded. I think it was that they were mixed up and had time to meet each other at beginning. Didn’t leave early because they didn’t want to let their table down. Became loyal to each other. An interesting community phenomenon. That was worth a lot. If there was a way to capture that and do it again....”

Another key informant: “The good thing was to have everyone putting in their input. To see that energy. Closest I’ve felt to being in New Orleans since Katrina. Everybody was skeptical at the beginning. No one knew each other before and at the end everyone was friends and hugging. Is a good start. Need to build on it. Hope the energy will lead to what needs to be done.

- The meeting unified participants across the multiple sites. The multi-site technology was an important aspect of this meeting and made a big impression on most people. The meeting showed the ability and importance of New Orleanians working together wherever we are.

A key informant said: “People saw the other sites. We all know they are out there, but we felt them. We’ve known they were there in our heads, but this time we felt them in our hearts. People in the other cities – it was very uplifting to them that at last someone wants to hear what they had to say. Those folks are going to insist that their voices be heard. Really powerful.”

Seven of 28 exit interviews made direct comments about working together including: “We all need to be unified and on the same page.” “We can work together for a common good,” “I see this as a 1st step – we’re getting together,” “Important to be together, not easy to divide,” “We can work together for New Orleans,” “Working together accomplishes much.”

A Forum for Learning

- The meeting was an opportunity for the growth of trust and respect among participants. For many tables, the participants experienced mutual, collaborative learning that increased understanding of each other and the issues.

As one key informant says, "People were impressed by their neighbors and strangers." Another talks about how her table dealt with trust: We didn't rush – we spent more time talking about the first topic. We trusted that other tables would talk about the 2nd topic. Trust the neighbors and trust the "we," the city to do the discussion and come up with some ideas. Some of the ideas were excellent.... The community needs to have these issues brought to them."

Focus Group: "Most important to see how despite some differences, most talked and reflected in general, and we were amazingly the same. All have real sense of priorities after 14 months and where we focus our attention. "We're here living it. It was validating."

A table observer: "The group was friendly with each other; the group was impressed they were able to vocalize their opinions and participate in the planning process. They were interested and engaged throughout the day. They were also impressed with the capability to communicate with the other cities.

Focus Group: "The best thing that emerged for people was the chance to sit down together and talk about various issues with other New Orleanians. Everyone liked talking about each issue and coming up with a consensus, including when they brought something new to the table, that wasn't one of the choices. The spirit of collaboration was strong."

A focus group member: "Healing? This is healing that's taking place right now, in this room."

- The meeting helped define what kind of people New Orleanians are.

Many participants felt proud of what New Orleanians are accomplishing. This meeting was another expression of their determination. An exit interviewee said, "We are a community, a group of survivors and we will stand steadfast."

Focus Group Member: "You are a New Orleanian and live here, you are a hopeful being. We have hope and we believe we can rebuild. We can do it with or without a lot of help. Without help, it just will take longer, but we'll do it."

Another said, "We are formidable and willing to go out on a limb with our own resources, our own wit and our own backbones to accomplish" what we believe we need to."

A Forum for Setting Priorities

- The meeting showed that the participants were willing to make decisions that consider the needs of the whole city. Participants, for the most part, interacted and voted considering the needs of the whole city. At most of the 16 tables that were observed, participants made decisions considering the needs of the whole city. While they may start a discussion grounded in their own neighborhoods, the discussions most often incorporated their understanding of the diversity of the city.

A table observer noted: "The participants were a good mix from various parts of the city and different income levels. All seem genuinely concerned about each other and the whole city. It was wonderful to see how much they care about this city. Overall, they were glad to participate, they see to value the process and feel heard and I believe being involved in this congress. Gave them hope."

A key informant: "Every day it gets harder to address the fundamental question of where to rebuild. There are people who made individual decisions to rebuild in areas that are pretty dicey. Those people are going to get hurt. The mayor keeps saying he wants the free market to make the decisions. Letting alone that we don't live in a free market society, the market by definition creates losers and creates winners. Why we want to base our city's recovery on a principle that guarantees that some of the citizens become losers, beyond my comprehension. Mindboggling to me."

A Forum for Galvanizing the Planning Process

- The meeting resulted in citizens requesting more community engagement. Participants clearly want ongoing participation in the recovery process.

Focus group member: “I hope they will keep trying. Important for me to hear other people respond and know what other neighborhoods were thinking.”

A key informant: “This needs to continue. These organized methods to use in all matters. People were impressed by their neighbors and strangers. It illuminated the need for dialogue – people have solutions but no one is listening to them.”

Key Informant: “Certainly UNOP and this meeting is more effective than anything we had prior to this. Everyone talking about “unprecedented.” Haven’t had this level of civic involvement before – a forum for involvement. Hope because we have a smaller population, we can do a lot more of this. Doesn’t have to stop. Risk is that government officials will have some loss of outcomes. If you really want to get to something that everyone is going to buy-in to, that’s going to lead to a better future to the city.”

Key Informant: “Because of the lack of resources, people are really investing in this planning process. There is a big worry in a lot of neighborhoods that once this planning process is finished, the hotshot planners will go away and will say we’ll take it from here and no more involvement from residents. They want to stay involved. Not let it be “leave it to us.” Someone has to think about sustaining the level of involvement in a productive way. It could easily go away if there is no leadership.”

- The meeting pointed the way for continued community connection in decision-making, especially the inclusion of the diaspora.

A key informant said emphatically: “On Saturday, we raised the bar. We cannot make any more community decisions, without including the displaced citizens. That is what I am most happy about. That has been appalling to date. That has been mind-boggling to me. We are making decisions without speaking to those people. No one can claim to be presenting community decisions without those voices going forward.”

Factors That Can Build or Limit Social Trust

The CCII set a stage. It was an historic event and in large part the result of a strong belief in citizen participation held by UNOP leaders and AmericaSpeaks. Much of the rest of this document points to issues that can continue to build social trust or begin to limit a capable community. Critical to social trust are representation, inclusion, a good quality of dialogue and good facilitated processes.

The challenge to building social trust lies not, at least initially, in depending upon the “people,” but on those leaders who design meetings, set agendas, do outreach, and ultimately implement the outcomes of these meetings. While UNOP has made huge strides for the city, New Orleans is in an early stage of learning participatory democracy.

Representation

The racial and ethnic diversity at the New Orleans convention center was visible at a glance, a welcome contrast to CCI held just a month before. The confirmation came at mid- morning when nearly 1000 of the more than 1500 participants pressed into their keypads their individual answers to the collective question “Who’s here”? All five sites together represented a remarkable microcosm of pre-Katrina New Orleans in terms of race, but underrepresented low income households and renters.

The gathering in New Orleans mirrored the stark reality of the demographics of diaspora: a much larger representation of whites, homeowners, and high income earners than in the diaspora sites, and a much smaller representation of low income earners, African Americans, and renters. It was clear who had been able to return.

Table 1 Representation

a. CCII Comparative Racial Composition

Race	Pre-Katrina	Percent All sites	Percent NO site
Black	67%	64%	44%
White	28%	27%	44%

b. CCII Comparative Household Income

Income	Pre-Katrina	Percent All sites	Percent NO site
< \$20K	35%	25%	15%
> \$75K	19%	20%	30%

c. CCII Comparative Homeowner/Renter Composition

	Pre-Katrina	Percent All sites	Percent NO site
Homeowners	46%	65%	78%
Renters	54%	29%	16%

In terms of age, youth were underrepresented at the New Orleans site and the middle-aged (45 to 64) were overrepresented. All districts were represented, with only District 5 (Lakeview) standing out as significantly over-represented. The much publicized District 8 (Lower 9th Ward and Holy Cross) was represented in proportion to its pre-Katrina population, as was District 9 (East New Orleans). In terms of gender, our table observations indicate a predominance of women over men at a ratio of approximately 60 percent to 40 percent.

Exit surveys indicate that a large majority of attendees in New Orleans were those already active in neighborhood or district level recovery planning. Organized civil society--the faith community, neighborhood and community groups, and local non-profits--was represented. Some of the key stakeholders interviewed noted the lack of business and developer representation at CCII and in the UNOP process in general.

Attrition

As in many day long public meetings, attendance at the New Orleans event was not constant throughout the day. According to keypad votes, it peaked at midday and dropped to 63 percent of that by the last vote. Our table observations, which included those not using their keypads, showed maximum attendance at the first discussion cycle, dropping to 66 percent of that by the last discussion cycle (mid-afternoon). Our analysis of the keypad data shows that the demographic composition of those who stayed across all sites was very close to that in the morning. There was little or no racial or income bias in the attrition. Our table observations show that whites had a higher attrition rate than blacks, and men had a higher attrition rate than women.

Table 2 Attrition Rates

By Race

Race	% Remaining
White	58%
Black	72%

By Race and Gender (Ages 26-65)

Race & Gender	% Remaining
Black Women	74%
White Women	76%

Black Men	65%
White Men	50%
For Women over 65	
Elderly Black Women	85% Remaining
Elderly White Women	80% Remaining

Inclusion and Voice

The broad demographic representation of pre-Katrina population, the sign language interpreters on the front stage and the translators for Spanish and Vietnamese at the CCII were critical to the event's success, but even these do not tell the whole story. We also looked closely at other indicators of inclusion. As we approached it in this study, inclusion has three components: did the individual participate, did the individual feel comfortable expressing themselves and does the individual feel that their participation will have an impact. We hoped to see how different demographic groups contributed to the conversation and decision-making and how they felt about the experience.

In order to get a sense of inclusion, i.e., actual participation in conversations at CCII, we explored three sources of information. One, we looked at the number of times different types of people spoke at the tables. Two, we asked questions about "listening, expressing and being heard" in our exit interviews. Third, we asked questions about "being heard" in our Focus Groups. Again, these findings come from participants in New Orleans only.

In general we learned, as detailed below, that most of those interviewed in the exit interviews and almost half of the focus group enthusiastically expressed a sense of being heard and being included. We found that all demographic groups spoke up in the table conversations, but that African Americans, while contributing substantially to table discussions, did not participate as frequently as whites. We also learned, particularly from focus group participants, that there was confusion using the keypad-voting technology, and a need for clarification of language in several parts of the agenda. These times of confusion could have led to an experience of not being included in the larger results.

Number of Times People Spoke. The assumption of this data is that one way to define inclusion is the degree of participation in table conversations. To determine the degree of participation, our team of observers sat at 16 randomly selected tables and recorded data for the 134 participants at those tables. During the 3 cycles of table discussion and voting, they documented the individual's race, gender and age category and noted how many times each person spoke. (The number of times spoken does not capture other important aspects: length of time spoken, nature or impact of the intervention, etc.)

Our examination of the number of participants during each Discussion Cycle, and the weighted average of number of times spoken per person by each demographic group across the three Discussion Cycles shows the following key points (see Tables):

- Whites spoke more frequently than blacks
- Females spoke more frequently than males
- White females spoke more frequently than black females
- White males spoke more frequently than black males.

Our findings suggest that not all demographic groups contributed equally to the table discussions. Though all demographic groups contributed substantially to table discussions, white females contributed the most frequently per person and black males contributed least frequently per person. The following chart shows the average number of times spoken per person in a single discussion cycle.

Table 3a. Average No. of Times Spoken per Person

	Discussion 1		Discussion 2		Discussion 3		Across Discussions		
	#Persons		#Persons		#Persons		# Times Spoke	Times Spoke by Race	Times Spoke by Gender
	#	%	#	(%)	#	(%)	(weighted average)		
Female Blacks	48	36	47	40	37	42	6.4	Blacks 5.4	Female: 6.8
Male Blacks	29	22	24	21	19	22	4.4		
Female Whites	26	19	23	20	17	19	9.1	Whites 7.7	Male 4.8
Male Whites	24	18	16	14	11	13	6.2		
Female Other	4	3	3	3	3	3	4.9	Other 3.9	
Male Other	3	2	2	2	1	1	2.9		
Total	134	100	115	100	88	100			

While almost all the observed tables had either a black majority or an equal number of blacks and whites, we also looked at the evenly matched tables alone. The disparity between blacks and whites in number of times spoken per person was greater at the six tables with nearly even numbers of both races at the beginning of Discussion Cycle One. At these tables African Americans spoke an average of 6.5 times each across the three cycles, while whites averaged 9.8 times each per cycle.

Table 3b. Average No. of Times Spoken per Person at Heterogeneous Tables

	Discussion 1		Discussion 2		Discussion 3		# Times Spoke (average)
	# persons		# persons		#persons		
	#	%	#	%	#	(%)	
Blacks	24	46	22	48	13	44	6.5
Whites	25	48	23	50	16	53	9.8
Other	3	6	1	2	1	3	7.0
Total	52	100	46	100	30	100	

Were you comfortable expressing yourself? A second approach to understanding inclusion was direct questioning of participants in exit interviews about their own experience in the table discussions.

In 28 Exit Interviews conducted at the close of the gathering in New Orleans, (20 of the 28 respondents were black female), the responses were overwhelmingly that interviewees felt included and heard. 27 of 28 felt “very comfortable” speaking their mind at their table”; 26 said they were able to “express what was most important to them”; and 23 of 25 said they were listened to “fairly well” or “very well” at their tables. Thus, some of the very group, black females, who show a low participation pattern in our table observation data, indicate that they felt comfortable expressing themselves at the table.

A black woman commented, “I wanted to bring the neighborhood’s voice to the process and be part of it myself.” She also said, “I was shocked by how much I enjoyed it, and by the quality of what other people had to say.” This latter quote is important as recognition that not only did she feel heard, but she was also listening to others. Another interviewee, a white man, said, “The keypad results were most useful because they allowed me to understand the points of view of contemporaries.” He recognizes the way that voices are heard and recognized on a large scale.

Table 3c. Exit Interviews: Inclusion and Voice

How comfortable were you speaking your mind?	Not at all	Somewhat	Very

# of 28	0	1	27
To what extent were you able to express what was most important to you?	Not at all	Somewhat	Very
# of 26	0	3	23
How well did people listen to each other?	Not well	Fairly well	Very
# of 25	0	2	21

Will your voice have an impact? A third aspect of inclusion is addressed by the question, does my participation have impact? Will my voice be included in the decision-making? In Focus Groups we asked the question “Do you feel your voice and concerns were heard today?”

The respondents in the focus group were eight black females, three black males, six white females, three white males and one “other race” male. There were 16 responses to this inclusion question across the 3 groups: 7 (44%) very positive responses and the other 9 (56%) responses were mixed or skeptical.

On the positive side, a black woman said, “It was a blessing to be heard.” Another person said, “Great opportunity to be heard individually and collectively.” Another said, “I like that they are trying to get input and be inclusive of as many people as possible. I appreciate the opportunity to give feedback and did so.” In another group in answer to the question “Who is listening?” one person said, “Nagin, councilmen, every participant, the people who were not affected hear us. It takes the mystery out of it because they saw us and heard us.”

A mixed response was from a white woman who said, “[I was] heard at the table by others, but not in the overall voting”. Several others spoke of voting confusion (“not sure if I was heard due to voting confusion,”) and were not sure in those cases if what they really meant was tabulated and heard. In two groups there was discussion around the ambiguity of language and the question of different interpretations. One person noted that few city council members were present and seemed to imply that the city government was not listening. Another person thought their voices were not being taken seriously, “afraid the authorities are not listening.” There was a conversation in one group about whether the non-literate should be heard and there was strong disagreement on that question. Again they struggled with the conundrum of valuing inclusion and yet wondering if all can realistically be included.

Voting

Besides looking at actual participation in the table conversations and who was left at the end of the day (attrition), it is useful to look at how many people were using the keypads and whether there were noticeable voting patterns by race, income, or homeownership.

In terms of keypad usage, the statistical data showed a significant discrepancy between attendance at the New Orleans site and use of the key pads. The highest vote count in New Orleans was just over 1000 yet reported attendance was over 1500. Therefore it can be concluded that no more than two thirds of the attendees in New Orleans were using the key pads. Our table observations reflected a number of instances where people were either confused or had lost interest in voting. There are several reasons that persons may not have been using keypads including that the keypads were not working properly, that participants didn’t know how to use them or that at any given time, a fairly large amount of participants were not at their seats or were uninterested in the voting process. Our exit surveys nevertheless indicate that the key pad results were still accepted by most participants as valid representations of public opinion

There were four ‘bifurcated’ votes among all respondents (at all locations), i.e. where the largest categories were ‘highly unsupportive’ and ‘highly supportive’, with the middle categories receiving fewer votes. A statistical examination of these votes showed no significant disparities in race, income, or homeowner/renter breakdown except on one question: “Fund low and moderate-income public

housing.” On that question the vote was significantly polarized between high income and low income, owners and renters, and whites and blacks.

Given that there are sharp divisions in the New Orleans community about public housing, there is an obvious need for a deepened understanding of all sides of this critical issue. The vote indicates that higher income and home ownership tends to decrease one’s willingness to fund public housing and that there remains, even after the table exchanges at CCII, a social divide about public housing. The implication is that more public conversation will be needed, and that a setting like CCII cannot heal the sharp social divisions around public housing and other critical decisions.

Issues and Options

The agenda of CCII was the development of priorities around key issues: Flood Protection; Roads, Transits and Utilities; Neighborhood Stability; Rental and Affordable Housing; Education and Health Services and Other Public Services. For each issue, participants were given three or four options to discuss and then to vote on their preference. Several concerns have been raised about the framing and clarity of issues and options.

The Framing of the Issues and Options. According to our key informant interviews, the framing and wording of issues and options was an interactive process itself between the city-wide team, the AmericaSpeaks staff, with several focus groups to receive citizen input. This process was questioned in our key informant interviews and it was felt that different stakeholder groups had not been adequately involved in the development of the options. Some community-based spokespersons as well as facilitators felt the options were biased and expressed concern that the options were created “in the back room” by special interests. Private sector spokespersons expressed a strong desire for the level of detail to be sufficient to guide investment allocation priorities and to put forth for discussion the benefits of private/public partnerships. In a focus group discussion about the ambiguity of questions and lack of dollar amounts to accompany options, one person suggested, “Why can’t we have involvement in devising the questions?”

Clarity of Wording. The concern about the vagueness, “dumbing down”, and misunderstanding of questions was a theme across all of our sources. Several people in focus groups, exit interviews, key informant interviews and the facilitators talked about how the wording of the options left them very open to interpretation. As a result, participants were not sure their votes represented what they wanted as they might have been confused by the wording. “I was surprised by how wide open the wording was,” said one woman, “and I was not quite sure when it went up on the big screen, I was not sure as I read between the lines what some of those statements actually meant.” Another woman offered, “I did not vote the way I intended because of misunderstanding and vagueness of material. It seemed like a shot gun approach.” She also spoke of confusion on options or issues that were reversed in order when they voted.

One point here (as well as in table observations), was confusion and frustration about the meaning of “greatest need.” Many participants were confused about whether this meant areas where there was the largest population or areas of greatest devastation. An African American man stated,

One example [where the] wording was the opposite of what most thought it was--diametrically opposed opposite--was giving something to where they were most needed. Most people took it to mean in East New Orleans or Lower Ninth, but when we read the pros and cons, it said “where the most people are” not the devastation. I’m not a conspiracy theorist, but because it was there in at least 4 or 5 different questions, that led to mass confusion.

Level of specificity. The options presented were mostly couched in general terms. In the first two cycles, the options included a free market approach. (e.g. let individuals decide where to build), a mixed approach (give individuals incentives to build in specific areas); and a strong public sector approach (e.g. regulate decisions, increase taxes or fees). In Cycle 3 (infrastructure for public services)

the first two options were also general: spread investments equally or concentrate them in areas of greatest need. The only option with some level of detail was the third option in Cycle 3: save money by combining schools and other public services into multi-function 24/7 community service centers.²

It emerged from our interviews that various stakeholders, both private sector and community-based, had expected a greater level of specificity in the options at this advanced stage of the recovery planning process, in order to grapple with the difficult trade-offs and come to consensus on a clear set of priorities.

Quality of Dialogue Consensus-Building

The feedback from participants shows their deep appreciation for the chance to discuss the issues with fellow citizens in a small group format, hear others' points of view, and notice commonalities. Most participants felt satisfied with the quality of the dialogue and the choices made. Our analysis however shows that most table conversations were unable to deepen their level of conversation to work with differences and emerge new consensus. While important differences among participants can and do emerge, the 20-30 minutes of time allows for a recording of those shared values as well as differences, not a working through to a new level of understanding.

This recording of shared values as well as differences is a valuable contribution of AmericaSpeaks.

Dialogue theory (see C. Otto Scharmer, for example) suggests additional thresholds of public conversation. We used the following typology, integrating the work of C. Otto Scharmer³ and Sam Kaner⁴, to indicate a trajectory for deepening public deliberation and entering a third generation of participatory governance based on generative dialogue.

Four Levels of Public Conversation

1. Talking Nice (politeness) is the most basic initial conversational field, essentially a non-conflictive non-reflective download of each participant's current view or experience: in other words, taking turns saying what you think and listening politely to the others. Consensus is typically reached by accepting the view of one or two dominant participants or stringing together the various opinions and priorities expressed.
2. Talking Tough (debate) is a download and defense of one's current view or an attack of another's, often with an analytical quality (breaking wholes into parts) aimed at getting one's own view to prevail. Rather than consensus, the winning position is acknowledged by majority opinion, as opposed to an integration of all concerns.
3. Reflective inquiry (dialogue) is a mutual inquiry towards shared understanding that navigates beyond the clash of opposing views and experience; it involves revealing and testing the accuracy or utility of one's own assumptions and views, and seeing reality from a larger perspective (a larger whole). Consensus is typically created by reframing individual views into a larger perspective.
4. Generative dialogue is the co-creative and empathic experience of sensing together the emergent possibility or potential in a situation, a new synthesis or whole.

² The multi-function community centers is a proposal that Steve Bingler and Bobbie Hill of Concordia, have written extensively on, and worked to incorporate in Federal programs and local initiatives around the country since the late '90's. They were the first to articulate this approach in the U.S. and it has been a concept broadly discussed throughout New Orleans during the past year.

³ Senge, Peter, C. Otto Scharmer, J. Jaworski, and B. Flowers, *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future*. Boston: Society for Organizational Learning, 2004

⁴ Kaner, Sam (1996). *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, B.C.

Consensus is arrived at as collective wisdom, a group knowing or felt shift in the group field, after which the way forward (the highest emergent future) becomes clear.

Deliberative democracy introduces Levels One and Two, polite conversation and debate, and at its best enters into Level Three, reflective inquiry. The following describes the findings from our table observations:

Pre-Level One:

There were a few instances observed, like the following in one table observation, of not getting to Level One, i.e. of not creating a safe and comfortable space for all to participate:

“Two African American women said almost nothing the entire time, appeared confused, didn’t seem to know how to use the key pads, and left early, despite the efforts of two of the vocal white participants to explain and clarify things for them.”

Level One: Talking Nice

Most of the tables that we observed (at least 9 out of 16) stayed at Level One. On the upside Level One conversation can play a valuable role in the initial stages of building, or rebuilding, trust in a divided and traumatized city. It is a chance for people to gather in a safe space where they can express their own views without fear, listen to the views of the “other” without having to attack or defend or take sides, and realize commonalities. It is a way of establishing, or re-establishing, basic civility in civil society. It softens stereotypical images of the ‘other’ and reinforces a sense of civic responsibility and mutual respect.

On the downside the ‘business-as-usual’ conversations of Level One run the risk of recreating old patterns of domination and deference. It is common for the group to quickly come to consensus by adopting the position of the one or two most vocal participants in order to avoid the tension and discomfort of conflict or protracted discussion. Alternatively, a group may come to quick consensus by simply stringing together the varying opinions and priorities in a loose compromise. Facilitation author Sam Kaner calls such quick consensus ‘premature closure.’ Little or no time is spent exploring each other’s view or brainstorming new ideas. No attempt to reconcile conflicts is made. Consensus reached in this manner is likely to unravel quickly after the event.

The following quotes from table observations exemplify Level One conversations.

Politeness

- “People listened respectfully to each other.”
- “The tone of the group was very optimistic; conversations were very pleasant and productive.”
- “The conversation was collaborative and accepting of differences of opinion. Not much conflict. Only Cycle 2 ended without consensus, but all seemed to be OK with that.”
- “The best thing to emerge was the realization that their neighbors were on the same page as each other. The worst was the table’s inability to delve deeper into their discussions and think more creatively.”
- “The participants tended to have already formed opinions, not necessarily changing because of the information which was presented today. They discussed by stating their viewpoints; there was not much discussion of creating compromises of their viewpoints, but compromises were created by combining their viewpoints.”
- “Many people had similar opinions to start with. There were no turning points, no real changes in tone (respectful and collaborative), no conflict. The discussion was inclusive of everyone’s view points.”
- “Everyone at the table was included in the conversation. One person tended to dominate the conversations, but never excluded anyone.”

Premature Closure

- “Joe was very well informed and able to articulate priorities, options, and general opinions of the group. No one was willing to disagree with what he said.”
- “He led most of the discussions and was so well informed that he made smooth work of the tradeoffs. Everyone was open to listening to the opinions of each participant, but he captured the minds of all.”
- “Questions, clarifications, consensus. Very collaborative, friendly. No turning points, no excitement, very flat, no real highs or lows, even tone.”
- “The opinions of a couple people were quickly accepted as the opinion of the group with little discussion, but everyone had a chance to speak their opinion.”
- “Once everyone started to converse with one another they found they had common interests. The sense of unity was the best thing to come of the group.”
- “The first issue elicited a wide range of opinion, but there was a turning point when the two most vocal participants shared facts about the ability to pay for damage repairs. The group then came easily to consensus.
- “The group decided to blend options 2 and 3. This seemed to be a way to include everyone’s viewpoint – as a compromise, a way to best answer the question, rather than reaching a true conclusion.”
- “While the table was willing to discuss each person’s opinion, mostly it was defense of fixed positions, a discussion of those, rather than truly reaching consensus.”
- “The one turning point occurred around the issue of 24/7 schools: The first speaker disagreed with the notion. The second speaker disagreed with her and mentioned specific times and uses for 24/7 schools. The first participant then changed her mind and the rest of the group quickly agreed”.

Level Two: Talking Tough

We observed at most six tables that got to Level Two, however briefly. At those tables there was some consideration of a range of views, followed by open conflict among views. Rather than the premature closure of the business-as-usual conversation, the ‘groan zone’ of open conflict is reached in Level Two. Here is an example from the tables that did reach the groan zone at least in one conversation, but did not navigate their way through it.

- “There was enough time to reveal conflict but not to deal with it. The conflict was uncomfortable for people. Some people left, both vocal and quiet ones. The four remaining all agreed.”
- In one focus group, an African American man said he had really hoped they would work to come to consensus at the tables. He wanted to really grapple with issues such as housing, and did not sense that had happened at the level needed.
- A white woman who had voiced her love and appreciation for the diversity of New Orleans, said that the difficult issues and the various points of view have to be dealt with, that we must be able to put ourselves in another’s shoes. And yet, she said, we were far from this level of coming together: “As a member of this city I want to embrace it all and find how we can make sense of it.

Level Three: Reflective Inquiry

One of the observed tables made it through the ‘groan zone’ to a deeper level of inquiry and shared understanding that would be characteristic of Level Three, and a few individuals experienced the kind of turning points or shifts in their own view that typify

Level Three.

“The vocal participants struggled with difficult trade-offs and the reality of budget limitations. They really tried to grapple with what the best choice would be, whether it was on housing, education, or how to locate public services. They seemed to care deeply about how their choices would be implemented in reality. They wanted the best for all and yet seemed to know that not everything is possible. They disagreed, they listened to one another, and they attempted to better understand the issues. They expressed frustration, not with one another, but the enormity of what they were trying to do in a very limited time.”

Level Four: Generative Dialogue

None of the observed tables experienced the generative dialogue of Level Four. One table that we heard about in a post-event focus group, but did not witness, might have reached Level Four: they reportedly worked through their differences, came to a common understanding, and there on the spot designed together an innovative approach to meet community health needs.

Facilitation

In AmericaSpeaks 21st century town hall formats, facilitators play a crucial role to help conversations flow and get tasks completed. For CCII, AmericaSpeaks had a very short timeframe to prepare and the bulk of their extensive facilitator recruitment was done in only six weeks. AmericaSpeaks used their extensive network and contacted individuals as well as key local and national organizations. The recruitment material clearly defined the capacities needed and made a consistent call for persons of color so the facilitator team would reflect the demographics of the city. They set up an online registration for facilitators and made training easy through both a phone and in-person training. Because of the high count of registrations, they were recruiting facilitators up until the last minute.

Facilitators recruited for CCII were asked to have significant experience facilitating small group face-to-face deliberation, to be comfortable with strong emotional expression, and know how to identify emerging themes and build toward consensus within a tight timeframe while respecting differences and not inserting their own opinions. The primary instruction in the pre-event facilitator training, according to one facilitator, was to be sure to bring the table to consensus on each of the questions.⁵

Numbers. Of the 635 applicants for the facilitator role, 250 total facilitators participated and were assigned as follows: New Orleans (100), Houston (41), Atlanta (37), Dallas (26), Baton Rouge (14). The remainder of facilitators (32) were located in 14 other cities. Facilitators were selected on the basis of their general experience, their previous experience with America Speaks and how they heard about the opportunity. If there was any unsureness about the level of their experience in small group facilitation, AmericaSpeaks followed up with a phone call or email. Those who the recruiter wasn't comfortable with, were invited to be recorders or volunteers.⁶

Previous Experience. Of the 635 applicants, 139 had facilitated previously at an AmericaSpeaks event, 17 had facilitated at CCI, and 15 had facilitated at the Nov 2005 Louisiana Rebuilding meeting at which AmericaSpeaks had been a partner. This data for the 250 facilitators selected is not available.⁷

Pay. Because of the New Orleans disaster, some professional facilitators in New Orleans thought that a stipend would help recruit local facilitators. AmericaSpeaks honored that request and paid 50 stipends of \$100.00 only to New Orleans residents who served as a facilitator at the New Orleans site. Those coming from out of town or at other sites were totally voluntary, which is AmericaSpeaks' usual policy for these events.. The AmericaSpeaks recruiter felt that the stipend was an effective recruitment

⁵ Email from Susanna Haas Lyons, AmericaSpeaks, October 19, 2006. UNOP_Dec2_callforfacilitators_v1.pdf

⁶ AmericaSpeaks Facilitator post event survey and Email from Susanna Haas Lyons, AmericaSpeaks, January 29, 2007

⁷ Email from Susanna Haas Lyons, AmericaSpeaks, January 26, 2007

tool, particularly in the African American community. The stipend was voluntary and 30 New Orleans facilitators did not accept it. One facilitator commented that AmericaSpeaks should reconsider the policy of voluntary service at these events.⁸

Training. Facilitators were offered two opportunities for training or orientation: one by phone and one in person. 79.4% of the facilitators rated these trainings at 5 or above on a 7 point scale.⁹

Satisfaction. Facilitators were overall pleased with the event and their role in it. 91.9% of the facilitators rated the entire event at 5 or above on a 7 point scale, with 99.1% being willing to serve as a facilitator again. In particular, facilitators (226) commented that they were impressed with the technology (91) and the ability of residents to give input and new options (63). They felt it was important to be linked to other sites (43), were pleased with the overall structure and logistics of the event (41) and that participant interaction was strong (39). Many were thankful for the consistent support of area facilitators and the entire AmericaSpeaks staff (33). The facilitators also appreciated the diversity of participants (14), the lead facilitators' instructions (12) and the balanced table assignments (12).¹⁰

Challenges: Facilitators (216) commented on the challenges of facilitation at CCII. Comments from the post event survey included an agenda that had too many speeches and left too little time for clear understanding and consensus building (81), the voting instructions were often unclear (65), participants could not see the screens well (27), and the options were worded poorly, biased or not enough information given (25). The end of the day was very difficult, with participants leaving or tired after a too long day (40). Facilitators also noted the need for more trained recorders (12) for participant preparation (11), and for breaks for themselves and participants (11).¹¹

Performance. Without direct feedback from participants about their facilitators, comments on the facilitator skills are based only on our table observations. Using the 16 table observations, we looked at observers' comments for facilitator behavior during the three rounds of discussion. We asked observers to particularly respond to the question, "Were there particular techniques or interventions the facilitator made that seemed to help or hinder the group process?" Additionally, observers discussed facilitator behavior in their observations of turning points, conflict, understanding of questions, etc.

The challenges that the facilitators faced might help to explain the findings of our table observations. In this total of 48 discussion periods, we found that facilitators consistently performed well ("helped the group process") during half of the cycles (24 or 50%). During 19 or 40% of the cycles, the facilitators showed "mixed" capabilities and in 5 or 10% of the cycles, the facilitators were seen showing poor skills ("hindering group process").

Of the sixteen facilitators, we found that ten (63%) showed mixed skills, five (31%) showed consistently good skills and one (6%) showed consistently poor skills. Additionally, two key informants mentioned that their facilitators were not effective.

As stated, it is clear that facilitation can be challenging in a fast paced intense situation like CCII. It is possible that intensity of the situation made it difficult for facilitators to perform at their best. We also do not propose that all tables with less than effective facilitation were not able to participate effectively. Many participants stepped in and helped generate a good discussion. It is also probable that mixed and poor facilitation made the process more difficult for the participants, thus impacting their overall experience and possibly the results.

⁸ Email from Susanna Haas Lyons, AmericaSpeaks, January 29, 2007

⁹ America Speaks Facilitator post event survey

¹⁰ America Speaks Facilitator post event survey

¹¹ AS Facilitator Post Event Survey

Examples of effective facilitation. From the table observations, typical comments about facilitators who were considered effective include the following skills: effective listening and restating; summarizing; affirming everyone's participation; focusing group's attention.

- “The facilitator re-stated the discussion questions for everyone. She made sure everyone got a chance to speak by asking them specifically what they thought about the question. She also helped gain consensus by asking if everyone was in agreement about the statement, which she restated after one or a few people stated it. When there was the disagreement on mixed income, she said it was good that there were various opinions and that we need to know what these viewpoints are. She also helped people with their keypads. She did reflective listening/restating. She summarized people's opposing views.”
- “The facilitator periodically recapped participant's individual thoughts. She asked if anyone wanted to “weigh in”. She gave information regarding the options available for the answer and reiterated what their choices would be. She finally asked for a consensus answer. During polling voting, the facilitator reminded the table what their consensus was and which poll choices reflected their consensus.”
- “When under time-pressure to come to an end, the facilitator asked the participants to concentrate on the option they didn't like first which made it easier for the integrants and the group to take a decision.”

Ineffective facilitation. The table observations showed several indicators of mixed or poor performance. Here are a few examples, clustered below by indicator.

Not able to effectively focus the group:

- “Facilitator failed to intervene when discussion was dominated by one or two people and got off the topic.”
- “She was fairly timid on the whole. Did not always keep the group on track very well. They didn't always hear her and she was not always doing what it said on the screen (forgot to look at screen, seemed unfamiliar with materials.)”
- “The facilitator did not say a lot and did not really facilitate discussion. V., a participant, was probably the main facilitator type and L. just plain spoke a lot. The facilitator is a bit shy. He is a college teacher, so I was surprised at his low initiative. He was trying to remain neutral I know. As the day wore on he did push the group to come to understanding so that their thoughts could be entered into the computer. That seemed to motivate him to take more initiative.”

Not including everyone:

- “Two or three people dominated. More discussion about how it has been and not as much focus on options. Facilitator did not encourage those who kept quiet to participate. “
- “She did not do enough round robins to get all to speak. This became worse as the day wore on.”
- “There was a lot of turnover at the table during the day and she could have done more to incorporate newcomers, draw out more in introductions to help group cohere.”
- “He was not very good at facilitation. He knew his role and rules, but not very good at making conversation happen or making sure all could speak.”
-

Interrupting participants:

- “Sometimes she cut A. off in favor of others when I wasn't sure this was necessary. She was good about keeping on track for questions but unable to incorporate “digressions” or dissatisfaction with the questions and incorporate it into a discussion of expanding or creatively changing the frame of the question.”

- “Facilitator interruptions (to ensure that everyone spoke) were a hindrance. Others seemed less eager to speak up when facilitator voiced that participant speaking should stop and allow others to speak. Facilitator interjections caused change in mood of participants. At one point, there was personal conflict between D. and facilitator.”

Inserting own opinion or inappropriately talking:

- “The facilitator was overly defensive about housing projects constituents and “explained” to the table the housing project resident POV. One time was fine, but she apparently didn’t think this group “got it” and cut someone off to do it again. What she didn’t get was everyone got it very well and were taking it into consideration and looking to solutions.”
- “Facilitator became a central focus in her lengthy recaps, and people had to make her understand what they meant (she wasn’t from New Orleans). At one point she asked what do you think about staffing hospitals equally across city, when in reality the question was about infrastructure investment in health.”

Not able to help generate dialogue or consensus:

- No real consensus or conclusion was reached. In interest of time, facilitator suggested option to give and no one objected. It seemed like the emphasis was on coming up with an “answer” rather than collaborating to come up with a solution. The energy and interest was there – better facilitation and more time could have made this a more effective process
- The facilitator did not hinder the group but also could not stimulate conversation once interaction broke down.

Focused on recording, not participants:

- “The facilitator was largely quiet during this period and simply worked on typing in responses. One participant informally began to facilitate the process.”
- “Facilitator spent a lot of time reading and correcting the recorder’s entries.”

IV. What’s Next? A Call for the New New Orleans Culture of Participation

I hope they will keep trying. Important for me to hear other people respond and know what other neighborhoods are thinking.

The UNOP process, and particularly CCII, represents an important, unprecedented first step in a new kind of citizen engagement in New Orleans. There is a clear call for continued involvement in the ongoing recovery process. Already, UNOP has provided the basis for that by its mailing of the results of CCII and the posting of the results on its website. These CCII priorities are intended to guide the finalization of the recovery plan which may be presented at CCIII. After CCIII, the final plan will be presented to the Community Support Organization, the City Planning Commission, the City Council and the Mayor. From here, the approved plan moves to the Louisiana Recovery Authority and then to the federal level and potentially other non-profit and profit entities for funding. At every step, citizen participation will be vital to ensure that priorities are recognized and implemented.

“This meeting was able to jump the barrier of neighborhood boundaries and bridge them. Especially in such a divided city. This kind of interaction is important.”

Working with the Needs of All Parties

While CCII brought many parts of the city together, the clear challenge is the call for a new form of civic engagement which means a rethinking of how city leadership, neighborhoods and regular citizens interact and influence each other. This step is an enormous responsibility for all involved.

Old New Orleans – part of the problem was that participation was not part of decision making. New NO is the way of the Community Congress. Should be adopted by City Council and others as the new way of public participation and participatory decision-making.

Desire for New Relationship with Government. Currently many of New Orleans' citizens are particularly sensitive to a past of unresponsive leadership. Participants were glad that CCII was not a political forum or a place where special interests ruled, however, we also found indications that some people feel skeptical about whether leaders will pay attention to these efforts. Citizens recognize that a new level of citizen participation calls for a change in how our government operates. Participants feel that the new experiment is critical to the future of the city:

“I don't know if government is going to be the defining factor about whether the city recovers. That seems to be in the hands of the people.”

These comments highlight this concern:

- NO is struggling with a lack of leadership at the top. So if you can't do the top down planning (like in Raleigh, North Carolina), the alternative is leadership from the bottom, with real thinking from people.
- I talk to people and they tell me they know what the jack o lantern effect is. They say they understand that “I may not be able to rebuild on my lot, but I just want to live in my neighborhood and want my neighborhood to thrive.” People understand it. Leadership, that's another story. They either don't understand or don't want to talk about it publicly. People have been ahead of the leaders since the day I got back.
- The City's not for UNOP because it wants to keep the power and doesn't want voices heard.
- Some of the City Council is providing more support than others. Even though they signed a MOU, not all are supporting it with residents. Too many people have put too much time in it to talk about it in a negative way – need to support it as we go.
- We all know that City Council has never been part of this. And they're still trying to manipulate it.
- UNOP CCII was a political move to bring consensus among planning processes. The UNOP decision but not really unified because the others have not really given up their rights to their plans through this processes. Will still fight for certain outcomes that were in their plans. City council won't just role over
- Is it (the plan) going to be codified? Have teeth? How much will stick? Can the mayor do what he wants with? Is this just another exercise and the mayor will throw out whatever he doesn't want?
- There is a big worry in a lot of neighborhoods that once this planning process is finished, the hotshot planners will say 'we'll take it from here and no more involvement from residents.' Residents want to stay involved. Someone has to think about sustaining the level of involvement in a productive way. It could easily go away if there is no leadership. If left to the politicians, people aren't very confident it will be done equitably.

What Citizens Want to Talk About Next

These issues were raised as we spoke with participants in CCII. Certainly there are others to consider.

The Final Unified Plan for New Orleans

“It will be interesting to see how many people show up for the next Congress. I'm not sure everyone got the fact that the next Congress is the chance to look at the plan and comment on it. It would be worthwhile for UNOP to make sure people to understand the plan. People don't know if their comments will be reflected in the plan, at this meeting or the next meeting. What they said was well reflected back in the themes. That much they know. Don't know more than that. Just sitting and waiting.”

Where to Rebuild / Repopulation Strategies

A key informant: “Every day it gets harder to address the fundamental question of where to rebuild. There are people who made individual decisions to rebuild in areas that are pretty dicey. Those people are going to get hurt. The mayor keeps saying he wants the free market to make the decisions. Letting alone that we don't live in a free market society, the market by definition creates losers and creates winners. Why we want to base our city's recovery on a principle that guarantees that some of the citizens become losers, beyond my comprehension. Mindboggling to me.”

Public Participation - Are we willing to pay for it? Can we make the investment?

“Got to have investment. Need resources to bring in facilitation team, like a Concordia. And has to be done long enough that systems get formalized so that they take shape on their own and become more permanent. Got a good start. If we end that assistance part, that training and acculturation, it’s not going to continue on its own. Would be a very wise investment on the part of the city and state. All depends if the leadership is willing to assume that kind of expense. It’s the future of the city, future of region.”

Implementation of the Unified Plan

“I think a town hall meeting on a regular basis, as well as neighborhood participation in implementation of plans. Like neighborhood councils.”

Insurance

“Most people need more time to talk about these issues. I believe from a business perspective that we should let the market take care of the insurance. From a human side, can we truly be at the mercy of the market? One of the things we got to toss and turn with it – needs more dialogue in the future.”

What is needed to bring the renters back

“Would like to see more emphasis placed what needed to bring the renters back. I really think they are going to be left out. My biggest fear.The Road Home program needs to be revamped. It separates people. Needs to unify NO the way the CC2 did. It’s about unifying the city, not separating it. Everyone should have an equal voice. Every one should have the right to come back.”

Other suggested issues:

- Public Housing
- Education
- Follow-up with the Army Corps of Engineers
- Economic diversification
- Housing strategies to protect from flooding
- Juvenile Justice System
- Church Involvement in Recovery Efforts
- Environmental protection and tradeoffs

Note: Several participants at CCII had ideas for future civic engagement:

- We only had 2000 people out of 200,000. Why not draft people into planning participation like a jury?
- Why can’t we have involvement in devising the questions?
- We need concrete indicators in meetings like this so we can see exactly what’s being done. Steps in progress.
- Get young people involved so they get used to it.
- Design meetings that can encompass everyone - where literacy levels are not so important – this will help to expand participation.
- If we could use our schools as community centers and have internet in every school, we could do this kind of meeting on a regular basis. Write a grant to Microsoft to wire every school, and internet could link us together.

V. Specific Recommendations for AmericaSpeak

AmericaSpeaks did an outstanding job in many ways for the city of New Orleans. In particular, the gathering of the residents both living in the city and those who are displaced was an important symbol and a practical necessity to complete our recovery plan. They are to be commended for their integrity, commitment and expertise in the challenging field of civic engagement.

Our assumption is that AmericaSpeaks will continue to innovate and discover new mechanisms for public participation. Our hopes is that they will address many of the issues that provided challenges

to CCII. It is through these innovations that a new generation of participatory democracy will emerge. Three main issues that deserve research and innovation and one change in practice are suggested:

Equal Participation Rates. Efforts to make public conversations more gender inclusive and culturally comfortable are needed. We see from the participation rates in New Orleans that women felt more attracted to, or comfortable in, a dialogue setting than men. Black males appeared to be the most underrepresented group compared to their population, and white males were the most likely to leave the event early. As one African American male so poignantly put it after the event, “I will tell black males not to be scared to sit at tables like this. I would have walked out myself before coming to this.” Issues of compensation for time lost from work or rebuilding warrant examination from a gender perspective as well. The table observations also show that whites spoke more frequently overall (per person) than African Americans, even at tables that had an equal number of blacks and whites. Black women spoke more frequently than black men. The challenge is to make public dialogue and deliberation an accessible and useful medium for all genders and races, and to broaden the variety and format of civic engagement.

Building consensus: America Speaks may want to explore pre and post events that help citizens identify and work in areas that need deeper exploration and resolution. The tightly structured time periods of CCII did not allow a meaningful consensus to be reached on the difficult issues. Most tables did not get beyond airing differences. Few actually grappled with the differences of opinion enough to reconcile them, reframe them, or come up with creative solutions. Many people wanted more specifics—including figures and dollar amounts—to make more meaningful choices. They want to go beyond polite conversation or talking tough to really think through the choices together and see what’s best for everyone. With a myriad of emerging participant models, we hope that America Speaks considers incorporating those models that allow depth dialogue to be created.

Stakeholder Input. AmericaSpeaks is aware that stakeholder-generated objectives and measures developed at the outset help to ensure transparency and legitimacy. Unfortunately, the information about who developed the options and discussion guide was not available to the participants of CCII. How the framework of any work session was developed and who developed it is useful information for participants. This is especially true when, like in New Orleans, participants are faced with difficult issues. It would have been helpful to have this explanation both in writing and verbally explained.

Evaluation and Best Practice Indicators. Evaluation of both process and outcomes is becoming a standard practice in large scale public participation programs, usually with a fixed percentage (3-6%) of the budget dedicated to evaluation. These evaluations address best practice indicators and social objectives. Cost-effectiveness indicators about civic engagement would be useful, also, as the City grapples with how to incorporate further participation locally and with the diaspora population in response to the clear call for greater civic engagement that issued from CCII. The continued development of practice and cost indicators would be a valuable contribution of America Speaks.

VI. Conclusions: Next Steps for Participatory Democracy

At this writing, Community Congress III has been held. Though only involving 1300 people in four cities, America Speaks again did an outstanding job of bringing the community together. The participants clearly saw that the priorities that had been developed in CCII were being imbedded in the final plan. The UNOP plan, with the input from participants developed at Community Congress II and III, has been launched and is undergoing review by the city officials.

Community Congress II will likely be seen as the pivotal moment when New Orleanians first came together across the geography of diaspora to declare that the city is alive. CCII will be seen as the watershed event when New Orleanians gave the clear message that they are willing to work together to bring back the city they love and want to be included in making the difficult choices. The event made many people aware of the difficult choices facing the city and the need to take into account many different perspectives and concerns.

While a resounding success in the eyes of those who attended, CCII also provides important insights on how best to bring the public into the conversation on difficult issues. In that light CCII and the UNOP process lies at the cusp of the next generation of participatory democracy.

Appendix CCII Exit Interview Summary

Profile of Respondents. This summary is drawn from a total of 28 interviews from the New Orleans site. This cohort was comprised of 20 women and 7 men (1 respondent not reported), 22 of whom were African American, 4 Caucasian, and 2 not reported; with 24 approximated to be working age (26-64), 2 over 65 and 2 not reported. Respondents live throughout the city: District 1 (1) District 2 (4), District 3 (3), District 4 (4), District 6 (2), District 7 (3), District 8 (1), District 9 (6), District 11 (1) and District 12 (3). All but 3 of the respondents had been highly or somewhat involved in the UNOP process before CCII.

There is a range of reasons residents felt motivated to turn out for Community Congress II. The most common motivator, put simply, was to ensure that their voice was heard (14), including those who said they felt responsible or those wanted to participate in the process of decision-making. Others came because they love the city and are interested in the future of a better New Orleans (6), wanted to learn about where we are now as a city (4), received notice about the meeting (3), or work with a city agency (1), with one not reported.

Of these participants, 14 considered themselves very active in the planning process, 11 somewhat active and 3 not involved.

Forum for Learning. One of the biggest outcomes of Community Congress II is that the meeting provided a forum for civic education that gave participants a broad understanding of the issues and how others throughout the city felt about those issues. Furthermore, because the demographics of the forum so closely matched pre-Katrina data, participants considered the findings from the keypad voting legitimate, and they found it valuable to know how others in the room – and not just at their tables – felt. It seems that they naturally saw the polling results as representative of New Orleanians' views generally.

- 18 out of 26 respondents to our exit interview felt that the table discussions gave them a “Much clearer understanding” of the difficult choices in recovery planning.
- In an open-ended question about what people found most helpful at the meeting, 10 of 21 respondents noted that discussions alone were the most helpful. Another three respondents (3) noted that discussions along with the keypad and theme results were helpful.
- Overwhelmingly, participants were impressed with the quality of discussion at their tables (22 of 26 “Very satisfied”; 4 “Somewhat”), the level of knowledge fellow participants brought to the discussion (18 of 23 “Very knowledgeable”; 5 of 23 “Somewhat”), and with the thoroughness of conversations (15 of 25 “Very thorough,” 9 of 25 “Somewhat”).
- While 15 of 23 respondents said the discussions did not bring a change in their perspective, 8 felt they had made a change. Two indicated they simply had a broadening of their perspective and a realization of how difficult it can be to prioritize so many important issues. One indicated she shifted her understanding of allocation issues and another of public housing issues.

Forum for rebuilding community and social connections. Overall, New Orleanians appeared to experience CCII as a confirmation of the whole community.

- When asked about hearing from other New Orleanians at remote sites, respondents were very positive: “I found communicating with the cities delightful,” said one, and “I was shocked how much I enjoyed it, and by the quality of what other people had to say.” Another said, “It was wonderful to hear them talk about wanting to come home.” Twenty (20) of 25 respondents said that seeing the people in the other sites made a big impression on them.
- Respondents had many positive reactions to the table discussions: “The close proximity of the tables made people bond. We enjoyed each other so much the time went by really fast. I

hope everybody else had a table as good as ours” said one, and “We had a diverse group of people, but we were able to come to an accord and an agreement” said another.” Still others stated that, “It was very positive and good to know there is a common understanding” and “There were honest, authentic feelings expressed.”

Forum for setting priorities. CCII asked residents to give input into critical planning issues and set priorities for the recovery plan. The exit interview captured a few of the dynamics which faced residents as they undertook this sometimes difficult task.

- ⊙ When asked which priorities identified they most agreed with, 17 out of 23 respondents said that rebuilding the levees for dependable flood protection was their strongest area of agreement. Other priorities respondents identified with included strengthening education (2), providing adequate housing, especially for renters (2), restoring neighborhoods (2) and addressing crime and resources for police (1).
- ⊙ Fewer respondents were able to express the priorities they disagreed with most. When asked, 3 of 10 said there were none or not sure, and 2 indicated that they felt resources should be spent by need, not spread equally.
- ⊙ It was easier for respondents to discuss tradeoffs. When asked about which trade-offs they found most difficult to discuss, only five said they were unsure or had no difficulties, with 2 unreported. Ten (10) of 26 respondents noted that it was difficult to make decisions between health care, schools and community safety while 5 respondents indicated levee construction in relation either to housing or the environment. Four respondents found it difficult to pick five priorities from the list of sixteen, while 2 others felt the conversation needed to take place in the context of actual dollars.

Forum for galvanizing the planning process. It also appears that Community Congress II played an important role in galvanizing people around the planning process. While CCII may not have drawn many residents not previously involved in the planning process, CCII did increase many people’s optimism about the planning process in the city and their sense that citizens need to be a part of the process going forward.

- ⊙ Only 3 of 28 respondents were not involved in planning before Community Congress II. 14 said they had been “Highly involved” and 11 respondents described themselves as “Somewhat involved.”
- ⊙ 19 of 26 respondents said that the meeting had increased their optimism about the planning process going forward, with 6 of 26 feeling that their level of optimism remained unchanged, with only 1 feeling more pessimistic.
- ⊙ 28 of 28 respondents felt that residents should be highly involved in issues and decisions facing New Orleans going forward. Respondents felt residents should attend meetings, speak out, hold leaders accountable, have more regular citizens on leadership committees, stay in touch with the diaspora and continue participative events.
- ⊙ In terms of influencing residents’ attitudes toward the planning process, 1 respondent had indicated that he was very cynical about the planning process before coming to Community Congress II. Another felt that, after the meeting, it was “Clear the city seems to be moving ahead.” Another respondent felt that they had learned that, “The UNOP process is worthwhile.”

Challenges to the day. While, according to this brief exit interview, the day was an overwhelming success, there were some difficulties faced. While, ten of 20 respondents would change nothing about the day, a few of the respondents spoke to changes they would like:

- ⊙ Three respondents (3) were concerned about the quality of the questions/options. They found them confusing, too narrow or presented in a way that supported the status quo.

- Three respondents (3) found the limited discussion time did not provide room for shared understandings at their table.
- Others would like more people, including young people (2); felt thought the day was too long (1); would like a clear lunch period (1); a bigger hall (1); and a different day for the event (1).
- Respondents were asked if there were important issues not brought up. Eight of 26 persons said yes, some issues were not raised. Six of these suggested specific issues: The following were mentioned: Diversifying economic development (1), cut-off of FEMA funding (1), Road Home (1) Entergy/public services (1) spending the money smartly (1), how to involve churches (1).

The Message that New Orleanians Gave. New Orleanians appeared to walk away from this event with an affirmation of their ability to set priorities together for the good of the whole.

- When asked to comment on what they felt was accomplished at the end of the day, one respondent said, “We came up with unified plan; can go to next step to rebuild city; great show of unity and comprehensive strategy.” Another felt that they came away with, “Better peace of mind and understanding of what city is trying to do.” A third felt it was important that, “We agreed it was a priority to make the levees capable of category 5 protection.”
- Respondents (22) felt that New Orleanians gave three clear messages: We are united and can work together for the good of the city (8), we want to come back and rebuild (7) and we want to be part of the decision making – counted and heard (5). One (1) other respondent says we gave the clear message that we want our levees fixed and another (1) felt we could only give a mixed message because there are so many priorities.

Summary

The exit interviews of 28 New Orleanians provide a quick snapshot of participants’ experience at CCII. The respondents indicate that it was a positive experience, providing a new level of trust in the UNOP process and successfully engaging residents in what many voiced hope will be ongoing involvement in the city’s decision-making processes.

Final Results: CCII Attendee Exit Interview Questionnaire

Note: A total of 28 interviews were completed, however not all respondents answered each question. The number of respondents for each question is noted as “# of ___.”

1. Which planning district, neighborhood, or ward did you live in before Katrina?

District	1	2	3	4	6	7	8	9	11	12
# of 28	1	4	3	4	2	3	1	6	1	3

2. How much have you been involved in the recovery planning process before today?

Level of Involvement	Very Involved	Somewhat Involved	Not Involved
# of 28	14	11	3

3. What prompted you to come today?

Answers	Give Input	Care Future	To Learn	Love the City	Rec’d Notice	Work for City
# of 27	14	5	4	2	1	1

4. a) How comfortable were you speaking your mind at your table?

Level	Not comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
# 28	0	1	27

b) To what extent were you able to express what was most important to you?

Level	Not at all	Somewhat	Very much
# 26		3	23

c) Is there something that you thought was really important that was never brought up?

Response	Yes	No
# 26	8	18

d) Would you like to say what that was?

8 people responded yes, six with specific issues: Economic development and need to diversity economy from tourism and medical care (1), Lack of extension of FEMA funding (1), Road Home (1), Entergy/public service (1), spending money smartly (1), involvement of churches (1).

5a) How well did people listen to each other?

Level	Not well	Fairly well	Very well
# of 23	0	2	21

b) How thorough were the conversations in general?

Level	Not thorough	Fairly thorough	Very Thorough
# of 25	1	9	15

c) How knowledgeable or informed were the people at your table on the issues?

Level	Not knowledgeable	Fairly knowledgeable	Very knowledgeable
# of 25	1	9	15

6) Did you change your perspective on any of the issues today? (Circle one):

Response	Yes	No
# of 23	8	15

b) Would you describe how your perspective changed?

Of the eight who responded yes, five gave a specific response: Broadened thinking (2), Difficult to prioritize so many important issues (1), Allocations (1), Public housing (1).

7) How satisfied are you with the quality of the conversations on the issues at your table?

Level	Not Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Very Satisfied
# of 26	0	4	22

8) How much of an impression did it make on you hearing from the people in the other cities? (Listen for answer and circle one):

Level	No Impression	Some Impression	Big Impression
# of 25	2	3	20

9. a) How do you feel personally about the decisions or choices made today?

Level	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
# of 28	1	2	0	9	16

b) Do you remember one that you most agreed with?

Issues Agreed	Flood protection	Strengthened Education	Affordable housing	Allocations of services	Resources for Police
# of 24	17	2	2	2	1

c) Do you remember one that you least agreed with?

3 of 10 said there were none or not sure, and 2 indicated that they felt resources should be spent by need, not spread equally.

10. To what extent did the event give you a clearer understanding of the tough choices and difficult tradeoffs that are facing New Orleans in the recovery process?

Level	No clearer understanding	Somewhat clearer understanding	Much clearer understanding
# of 26	1	7	18

b) What helped you get clearer?

Type	Presentations	Discussions	Diaspora Input	Results Presented	Discussions & Diaspora	Everything
# of 21	2	10	3	3	1	2

11. A lot of tough choices were made today, involving difficult tradeoffs. For you, which was the most difficult choice or tradeoff you had to make?

Stated Answers	# Respondents
None/ Not sure	4
Healthcare/school/ police/services	4
Affordable housing/rental	3
Picking last five	3
Allocation	1
Wetlands	1
Levees vs. elevating houses	1
Voucher for education	1
Incentives for developers	1
	19

12 What was the message we gave each other and our leaders today?

Message	United we stand	Want to Come Back	Want to Be Heard	Levees Important	Mixed- too many priorities
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# of 22	8	7	5	1	1
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13. If there was one thing you could change about today's event, what would that be?

Stated Answers	# Respondents
Nothing	10
Shorter length of day	3
More time to discuss	3
Better questions	3
More people/more young	2
Bigger hall	1
Day of the event	1
Clear lunch break	1
	24

14. After today's meeting, how optimistic would you say you feel about the future of New Orleans?

Level	More optimistic	The same as you did yesterday	Less optimistic/ More pessimistic
# of 26	19	6	1

15. a) As this planning process wraps up, how do you think ordinary people should be involved in issues and decisions facing New Orleans going forward?

	Respondents
Yes, should be involved	10
We are the ones affected and need to make leaders accountable	3
Use processes like this – apolitical and crossing diff backgrounds	3
Attend meetings and speak up	3
Get more people involved – outreach into neighborhoods - internet	3
All ways	2
More regular people on committees that guide the process	1
It's so time consuming- don't know	1
	26

How did you hear about Community Congress II?

Type	Mail	CCI	TV/Radio	Comm Mtgs	Email	Phone Call
# of 16	3	1	4	6	1	1

Demographics

	AGE			RACE			GENDER	
Level	Young (0-25)	Medium (26-64)	Elder (65+)	Black	White	Other	Female	Male
# of 27	0	24	2	22	4	0	20	7

List of Key Informants

Planning:

Steven Bingler, Concordia Architects
Jane Brooks, Professor of Urban Planning, University of New Orleans
Ben Johnson, Executive Director, Greater New Orleans Foundation
Poco Sloss, Member, Community Support Organization / City Planning Commissioner/ Businessman
Vera Triplett, Chair, Community Support Organization / Professor of Counseling, Holy Cross College

City Government:

Yvonne Rodriguez., Director, City Planning Commission
Oliver Thomas, President, City Council of New Orleans

Community:

Lisa Amoss, Non-Profit Consultant/ Member, Theme Team
Joe Blakk, Hip Hop Artist and Community Organizer
Latoya Cantrell, President, Broadmoor Improvement Association
Phil Costa, President, Neighborhood Planning Network
Willie Gable, Minister
Patricia Jones, President, Lower 9 Neighborhood Empowerment Network Association
Pres Kabacoff, Developer
Deborah Langhoff, Steering Committee, District 5
Keith Leiderman, Executive Director, Kingsley House
Keith Twitchell, Executive Director, Committee for Better New Orleans / Metropolitan Leadership Council
(CBNO/MAC)

Focus Group Summaries

As CCII in New Orleans was closing we gathered with volunteers who were attracted and willing to participate in sharing feedback on the day. Our purpose was to engage them in group dialogue and learn more about their experience and reflections on CCII. We 3 facilitators grouped people as nearly as possible into districts, so that there might be some commonality and resonance as they came together. On a flyer, participants were offered \$20. However, several did not know that and came because they were interested.

**Focus Group 1: District 4
Judy Wallace Facilitator**

This group was composed of 7 people, 4 women and 3 men. All were middle aged (26-64).

Black Women	White Women	Black Men	Latino Men
2	3	1	1

The overall CCII pattern of more women participant continues. This group was composed of a couple of small business owners, and probably several home owners. They came to CCII to have a voice in the planning and protect these investments. R. came to represent the voices of his area association and to hold officials responsible. A black woman was concerned about the talk of shrinking the footprint of New Orleans and came to fight against that. The overwhelming sense of the group was deep commitment to the planning and rebuilding of New Orleans. The love for New Orleans as their home, their community, the center of life was palpable. Each of these people really cared. Each wanted to do what they could to make a difference. Each had been involved for some time in neighborhood and other planning processes and would continue to do so. To me they represented true citizen involvement.

Here is what emerged in this group with quotes for emphasis.

Vagueness or Ambiguity of Language

A couple in the group talked about how the way the options were worded was very open to interpretation. They were not sure their votes represented what they wanted as they might have been confused by the wording. One woman said, “I was surprised by how wide open the wording was and I was not quite sure when it went up on the big screen, I was not sure as I read between the lines what some of those statements actually meant. It was also the topic of conversation in the ladies’ room, so this is not an isolated point of view. A lot of statements were wide open.” Another woman offered, “I did not vote the way I intended because of misunderstanding and vagueness of material. It seemed like a shot gun approach.” She also spoke of confusion on options or issues that were reversed in order when they voted.

Concern that Education was last

A black woman said, “It was significant to note that education was last ... yet in the final summation, education was in the top five. So that says that the UNOP, or whoever amassed the questions, were not closely in touch with the concerns of the people after all of this time. I was stunned as a former educator that education was last.”

Putting oneself in another’s position, working for the good of the whole, what is best for the city.

There was a discussion where the group naturally moved into expressing their deep concerns about this planning process. One man had really hoped they would work to come to consensus. He seemed to really want to grapple with issues such as housing, and didn’t sense that had happened at the level needed. A woman expressed her love and appreciation for the diversity of New Orleans. She expressed concern that the difficult issues and the various points of view have to be dealt with and yet they seem far from this level of coming together. “As a member of this city I want to embrace it all and find how we can make sense of it”. She said that they must be able to put themselves in another’s shoes.

Messages for the City Planners

One women felt that the presence of so many in itself sent a message – that they cared, that they want a say, that they want to be included, that the people are concerned, that they won’t take just anything, that they want to rebuild their neighborhoods. Another woman felt that the levee issue came across strongly. “If there are no levees, or considerable resources put toward these and wetland restoration, the rest is moot. We are not going to get a second chance.” And yet many felt that they really have no control over the levee issue.

They were stunned by the message from the young female student regarding the imbalance of security guards and teachers at her school. They felt her sense of indignation and anger, and hoped that the importance of youth and education were heard by the city. They did think that the importance of education really came across in the final priority list.

How they would like to make a difference going forward

One woman shares, “We are all pioneers. There is no blueprint. There are many struggles. I want to represent hope and positive change. There is a Buddhist quote, ‘A candle can light a place that has been dark for a billion years’. We can each be a candle to light this city. I am passionate about staying here and to help light the way for others who may still be in their darkness.” Another wants to work with the youth of the city as they are the hope of the future. She also wants to assist the disadvantaged. She believes she must care more about others than herself, that they must all work together. Another woman puts forward that she wants to help preserve the essence of New Orleans, the diversity, the amazing tolerance, the friendliness, the culture, the things that make it so wonderful to live here. She sees opportunity in disaster, the opportunity to honor those who have died and suffered, and to make the city a better, safer, and stronger place to live. [I interject that at this point we were all beginning to become teary eyed. It was quite moving to experience the depth of caring in this group].

A woman spoke about how they are learning to go out with their own resources, their own wit, whatever they can to save their city and make it a better place. They have been doing this for 14 months and will continue to do so. They will do whatever is important for their city. They may do it neighborhood by neighborhood, but it will happen. A black man talked about how he and fourteen others put their own money into buying up a piece of land that was going to be a condo development. Now these people can preserve their neighborhood and rebuild there. This would be more in the spirit of who they and their neighborhood are as opposed to outside developers.

An opportunity out of disaster

This idea emerged a couple of times during the conversation and the group seemed to resonate and nod. The storm and this disaster present a new opportunity for New Orleanians to join together, to form community much more than before. R. said that his cool little neighborhood is now a “wonderful community”. There is more like mindedness than separateness. All are hopeful. This group of people (who did not know each other) came because they have hope. “Living here is a job in itself. There is hardly time to do much else.” And part of that job is participating as a citizen in processes like CCII.

My observations and final comments

I note here that this was a group of not only very caring and committed citizens of New Orleans, but a very articulate and well-spoken group. They expressed themselves clearly, with deep emotion, but always with clarity. The emotion was not anger but a sense of passion to truly make a difference and love for New Orleans. They cared about their city, their neighborhoods, the good of the many who have not been able to return, the ones who still suffer. They had their own personal concerns, but seemed to see this in a larger perspective. And they see opportunity emerging from disaster. They were an incredible group.

Focus Group 2: District 7 and 8 (one from District 6).

Facilitator: Julianna Padgett

This group of six women and one man were motivated to come to CCII because they are working in the community, interested in the process and wanted their voices to be included. They felt that CCII was well organized and included everybody except many of the poor. Many of the participants were concerned about their personal challenges in their neighborhoods which continue from pre-Katrina, but felt some of these challenges were addressed in the meeting, especially in health and education facilities. They appreciated the small group format which helped them listen, share new information and broadened their understanding. They also felt a sense of unity and hope built at their tables. The message that they felt they conveyed is that they want something better in the city, including better services and honest politicians who work for the people.

The focus group participants felt strongly that these citizen engagement ideas should continue. People should be brought together in an organized way that keeps people focused and can produce specific, common goals. Citizens have a responsibility to stay involved from writing letters to leaders to planting flowers in their neighborhoods.

The participants were asked about how the community is healing. They said that healing requires time. Right now people are still suffering. Economic base is destroyed and many are experiencing lots of mental

health issues. “It’s like being in purgatory.” They feel that the rest of the country has forgotten New Orleans and we are off the national radar. They are very concerned about young people – “to heal you have to make your young people want to do better. Give them something drug dealers can’t. Give them a good education in a decent building.”

But when people come together, that’s healing. We are healing because we are helping and supporting each other. The LRA will help us rebuild. Reopening the Superdome was healing, auctioning tables from Galatoires is healing, getting help from churches and organizations is healing.

There are still challenges. There are lots of disparities, crime is rampant and the police aren’t helpful. It is difficult emotionally when people keep asking if your house is done.

Participants felt a personal responsibility to the city and each is making contributions in their neighborhoods and to the broader community.

Focus Group: Districts 1, 2, and 3, and Algiers

Julia Salinas, Facilitator

Summary by Patricia Wilson

Participants: 2 black males, 2 black females, 2 white males, 1 white female

This table brought together seven people representing a wide range of occupations and income from uptown, French Quarter, central city, and Algiers. They represented a broad spectrum of views about, and levels of engagement in, the recovery process. Even the most skeptical activist joined the majority in voicing strong approval of the day’s event for its transparency, the opportunity to express oneself, and the opportunity to consider some of the tough trade-offs and issues that need to be faced.

Misgivings that were expressed cluster into the following themes:

- lack of attention to renters’ issues,
- heavy dependence on literacy and verbal skills
- lack of attendance by black males
- ambiguity, generality, ‘duh’ nature, and lack of specific dollar amounts or data in the questions and pros and cons
- lack of time at the tables to come to real consensus or address the issues in a meaningful way
- lack of opportunity to develop and express their own creative solutions
- no attention to the future tax base (economic base) of the city
- fear that their voices would not be heard or taken seriously by the authorities

The table witnessed the polarization that remained, even in the room, around flashpoint issues—e.g. public housing, who should come back, and the economic base vs. social needs. What brought everyone back together was their responses to the last question, what do you intend to do now to help the recovery process? All but one expressed his or her dedication and unique approach to contributing their own time and energy towards a new New Orleans. The focus group ended with a sense of mutual respect, and several lingered to continue talking.