

CARRI-Gulfport Team Focusing on Six Areas of Resilience

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The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina has produced many challenges for the Mississippi Gulf Coast. However, within those challenges and within the lessons learned, many opportunities present themselves.

The CARRI Gulfport Advisory Group developed a wide-ranging list of possible areas of focus to increase Gulfport's resilience. This list is based on their knowledge of the issues Gulfport faces and their experience with Hurricane Katrina and recovery to-date. In their June meeting, through a process of prioritization, the Advisory Group chose to focus on the following six areas to improve resilience for Gulfport:

- *Improving communication and collaboration across all sectors.* Much has been accomplished since Katrina to improve communication and collaboration within the non-profit sector and within the business sector. More work remains to improve the communication and collaboration across the non-profit, business, faith-based and governmental sectors. Stronger communication across these sectors will improve response and recovery in the event of a future disaster. It will also strengthen the fabric of the community in ways that should facilitate economic and community development in the current recovery.
- *Individual and family preparedness and resilience.* Overall community resilience will increase as individuals and families become more proactive and responsible in anticipating, preparing for, responding to and recovering from disaster, and as the community is able to focus attention on assistance to particularly vulnerable populations. People who are able to care for themselves become better able to take care of others. Other factors that may increase individual and family resilience will also be explored.
- *Affordability of housing.* Community resilience requires an adequate supply of both rental and owner-occupied housing for the individuals (and their families) who are employed by the local organizations that drive the community's economic engine. This housing must be both affordable and available within an acceptable distance. Katrina reduced Gulfport's housing stock and caused insurers to dramatically raise insurance rates, thus increasing cost of occupancy for both remaining and replacement housing.
- *Expediting return of businesses.* Overall community resilience will increase as business organizations (both for-profit and not-for-profit) become better prepared for disaster situations and able to return to normal operations more rapidly. Smaller organizations, especially those stretched thin in the current recovery, are most likely to neglect this important activity.
- *Increasing availability of mental health services.* Attention to the mental health needs of citizens and first responders in the immediate aftermath of a disaster is important to reduce the incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other stress-related illnesses. So too is providing longer term support for those suffering from symptoms of PTSD and for those dealing with stress or depression as a result of myriad losses and possible economic hardship during the recovery period. With mental health services already stretched thin, it is important to identify approaches that can significantly increase service levels.
- *Preserving the fabric, culture, history and environmental quality of the community.* Resilient communities retain their citizens and continue to attract new residents with

needed skills and abilities. It is important to understand what the community values and what makes Gulfport a desirable place to live. As the community of Gulfport continues to recover from Katrina, it may choose to invest in factors which are critical to sustaining its population and attracting new residents. In advance of future disasters, the community may identify and take steps to reduce longer-term risk to its history, culture and quality of life.

The Advisory Group has now initiated a process to create roadmaps, consisting of key actions and initiatives, to enhance Gulfport's resilience in each of the six areas. The roadmaps will develop in two phases. Phase 1 will center on the first three resilience focus areas: – communication and collaboration across sectors, individual and family preparedness and resilience and affordability of housing. Lessons learned from Phase 1 will be applied in Phase 2 to develop roadmaps for the remaining three focus areas.

The Phase 1 effort begins with a day-long workshop on September 19 in Gulfport. The workshop will involve a diverse cross-section of community leaders who will begin roadmaps for the first three resilience focus areas. Workshop participants will be invited to join focus area teams over the coming months to fill out the details of the roadmaps. Once the first set of roadmaps is complete, the Advisory Group will assist with implementation decisions, while simultaneously carrying out a similar process to develop roadmaps for the remaining three areas. The Phase 2 effort is expected to begin in the first quarter of 2009.

During the roadmap development process, the CARRI Gulfport team will organize, facilitate and document results of the September workshop as well as subsequent focus area team meetings to complete the roadmaps. The CARRI Gulfport team will also support and facilitate the Advisory Group in their review of and input to the roadmaps.