

THE

LANDRIEU

PLAN

Mitch  
**LANDRIEU**  
MAYOR





On August 29<sup>th</sup> 2005, the worst natural disaster in American history struck our home. The destruction was catastrophic. The reach of the storm's fury was absolute. Rich, poor, black, white, old, and young -- we were all brought to our knees and everything about our lives changed. We need leadership that can be effective and work at all levels of government and the business world. We need leadership that understands the gravity of our situation and, most importantly, leadership that can bring our people together to focus on the results that we seek.

Today, our City government is not meeting its obligation to the people of New Orleans. Our people need answers and action from their leadership and they need it now. Our city needs a steady leader who can bring people together, stick to a plan and get results.

Our city needs a leader who is passionate about public service and who understands that we are in the business of delivering essential services for those who want to live and conduct business in New Orleans.

Our city needs somebody who will be honest and who is able to make tough decisions because they are not beholden to any one special interest or constituency. Simply put, we need a leader who can restore the credibility of New Orleans so the rest of the nation will invest in our future.

Citizens across our city have participated in the Mayor's Bring New Orleans Back Commission, and a lot of good work was done. I agree with much of the vision that is offered in the recommendations that have now been adopted by Mayor Nagin. However, I am concerned that the recommendations have not been verified by true community feedback and that neither the mayor nor the plan outlines how the plan will be implemented. Little focus was given to the most important question the Mayor needs to ask: How are we going to fix city finances and restore basic services that our families and small businesses rely on each and every day in their neighborhoods?

The strategic document I present to you addresses the fundamental issues our city faces. It offers you a clear idea of the things that I will do immediately and the process we will use to get there. The next Mayor must first ensure that city government can provide the essential services to citizens and businesses and stabilize our economy. Then together, we can begin to work toward a shared vision of a great city that is the center of the New South. As mayor, I will help you get the answers you need. I will focus on priorities at City Hall to lay a strong foundation for the future of New Orleans.

I value community input and strong coalitions. I want to work with the City Council, the Orleans Legislative Delegation and our Congressional members. I know what needs to be done, and I know how to get results.

I ask you not only to trust my vision for this city, but also my experience and my record of making government work. We only have one chance to get this right; we have no room for error. Every ounce of energy in my body, every fiber of my being is committed to making this a great place for all of our families and for all of America.

We only have one chance to get this right. This is home, it's time to rebuild and to rebuild a better city.

Sincerely,

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b><u>Mitch Landrieu – A Record of Reform and Leadership</u></b>	<b>1</b>
Making Government Works as Lt. Governor	1
Record of Reform in the State Legislature	2
Record of Accomplishment in the State Legislature	3
<b><u>The Landrieu Vision for City Government</u></b>	<b>4</b>
<b><u>Restoring Basic Services</u></b>	<b>6</b>
Selecting Competent Leadership	6
Fix City Finances by Budgeting For Outcomes Process	7
Restore Public Safety	8
Electricity and Gas	9
Debris Removal/Waste Removal	9
Basic Infrastructure	10
Medical Infrastructure	10
Reorganize City Government	11
<b><u>Repopulating New Orleans</u></b>	<b>12</b>
Fairness and Equity	13
Fighting Blight and Rebuilding Neighborhoods	13
Affordable Housing	14
Current Barriers to Repopulation	14
Informational Support	15
<b><u>Hurricane Protection and Preparedness</u></b>	<b>16</b>
Hurricane Preparedness	16
Emergency Preparedness	17
<b><u>Rebuilding Our Economy</u></b>	<b>19</b>
Economic Development	19
Pre K-12 Education	20
<b><u>How We Will Govern</u></b>	<b>21</b>
Guiding Principles	21
Leveraging Expertise and National Interest in New Orleans	22
Work Closely With Baton Rouge and Washington, DC	22
Use Our Diversity to Create Success	23
Be A Model of Integrity	23
<b><u>Conclusion</u></b>	<b>24</b>

## Mitch Landrieu – A Record of Reform and Leadership

Mitch Landrieu has a strong record of creating public-private partnerships to make government work for the people of Louisiana. He has worked with Democratic and Republican Governors and legislators. He has been at the forefront of some of Louisiana's most sweeping reforms over the past 18 years.

Landrieu will bring his same energy, dedication and passion for public service to the Mayor's office. He will be responsive, honest and tough. He understands the basic responsibilities of City Government, and he will restore credibility with citizens, businesses, and government leaders who want to invest in rebuilding New Orleans.

### ***Making Government Work as Lt. Governor***

- Mitch Landrieu was inaugurated the 56<sup>th</sup> Lt. Governor of Louisiana in January of 2004. When Landrieu took office, his concept was simple – build a streamlined and efficient organization that eliminated bureaucracy, created better opportunities, focused on results and was accountable to citizens.
- **Leadership to Rebuild Tourism Post-Katrina:** As Lt. Governor, Landrieu led efforts to restart New Orleans' tourism industry. Immediately after the storm, Landrieu brought together industry leaders and national experts to develop a strategic plan, *Louisiana Rebirth*. Under Landrieu's leadership, the tourism industry is speaking with one voice and hitting the marks established in their strategic plan.
- **Transforming Government:** After just one year in office, Landrieu increased the state's advertising budget by almost 20% through cost-savings and streamlining of operations. In three areas of customer service, Landrieu both improved the delivery of services and reduced costs. Landrieu also implemented a new budgeting process focused on results.
- **Return on Investment for Taxpayers:** Under Landrieu's leadership, the Office of the Lt. Governor delivered a strong return on investment for the taxpayers of Louisiana. For every \$1 the spent on marketing, they returned \$15 to the state coffers in taxes.
- **Cultural Economy Initiative:** As part of his creative and entrepreneurial style of governing, Landrieu launched the Cultural Economy Initiative. The initiative is designed to create jobs through Louisiana's unique culture – including, our food, music, arts, film and architecture. According to research, Louisiana's cultural economy is a \$202 million industry that employs over 140,000 people. Landrieu set forth objectives and action plans for the economic growth of Louisiana's cultural industries.
- **Principles of Governing:** Landrieu's reforms are guided by his five governing principles: Our diversity is a strength, not a weakness; we must work to expand and diversify Louisiana's economy; we must work regionally to compete globally; we must add value to raw material, native talent and intellectual capital; and, we must set our goals to international standards, not the southern average.
- **Public Private Partnerships:** Landrieu focused on adding value by building unique partnerships. For example, the Office of the Lt. Governor partnered with the America's WETLAND Campaign and Shell Oil to put interactive kiosks in all of our state's visitors centers and open the America's Wetlands Birding Trail.

## **Record of Reform in the State Legislature**

- Landrieu served in the Louisiana House of Representatives for sixteen years, representing the 89<sup>th</sup> district in the Broadmoor neighborhood of New Orleans from 1987 – 2003. In describing Landrieu’s legislative record, the *New Orleans Gambit* wrote, “Mitch Landrieu’s career is a study in the fight for reform.” As a leader of the “Young Turks,” Landrieu advocated a non-partisan approach to governing focused on results. Landrieu received the Chamber of Commerce Business Champion Award in 2001 and 2002.
- **Reforming State Government:** In 1988, he chaired a commission that worked to consolidate the offices of registrar of conveyances, recorder of mortgages and custodian of notarial records. As a legislator in 1993, he pushed legislation to consolidate New Orleans’ seven assessors offices into one. In 2000, Landrieu was appointed to the House Select Committee on Fiscal Affairs charged with identifying cost savings in state government. Landrieu advocated for ethics reform legislation, including bills strengthening state ethics law enforcement and bills regulating lobbyists and campaign contributions.
- **Fiscally Conservative Reforms:** In 1993, Landrieu shepherded through the House a constitutional amendment designed to limit Louisiana’s debt. In 1993, he successfully led a coalition to restructure government instead of cutting healthcare programs and raising fees. In 1996, Landrieu supported a failed bill that would have put the revenue from video poker and riverboat gambling into a trust fund for state colleges. In 1999, Landrieu led an effort to have the state’s \$4.4 billion tobacco settlement placed into a trust, allowing the Legislature to only allocate the interest earned every year. In 2001, Landrieu advocated a tax overhaul in lieu of taxes on gambling. He criticized the state’s dependence on taxing industries like gambling and oil and gas to fund services
- **Doing the Right Thing:** As a Legislator in 1989, Landrieu took a stand against newly elected State Representative David Duke.
- **Leading Juvenile Justice Reform Movement:** Since 2002, Landrieu has led the fight to reform the state’s juvenile justice system. Landrieu pushed legislation to close the notorious Tallulah prison and established a committee to plan a new agency to oversee the state’s juvenile justice programs. Landrieu remains at the forefront of this important reform as the Chair of the Juvenile Justice Commission.
- **Stimulating Economic Growth:** Landrieu’s work as a legislator on the House Ways and Means Committee helped make possible the construction of major economic development projects in New Orleans - including the Morial Convention Center expansion, the New Orleans Arena, the National D-Day Museum as well as improvements to the Contemporary Arts Center and the Children’s Museum.
- **Driving Bio Tech Initiatives:** Landrieu successfully pushed initiatives to build the state’s biotechnology and biomedical research institutions. Landrieu sponsored legislation to fund biotechnology research by increasing the cigarette tax. Landrieu crafted legislation to fund the Louisiana Cancer Research Consortium of New Orleans, a partnership between the Louisiana State University and Tulane University Health Sciences Centers. In 2001, Landrieu authored legislation that allows health facilities in New Orleans to issue bonds for Cancer Research Centers.
- **Sports and Economic Development:** In 2002, Landrieu worked to bring the Hornets to New Orleans. A key element of the agreement with the Hornets was a revenue stream to subsidize facility maintenance from discretionary funds that Legislators previously used for pet projects. His efforts demonstrated a strong ability to build consensus in the Legislature and land nationally competitive economic development deals.

- **Pushing for Education Reform:** In 1999, Landrieu supported a proposal to change the selection of the Orleans Parish School Board from election to appointment by the Mayor. Looking to national best practices, Landrieu argued that Baltimore and Chicago had tremendous success in giving the mayor control of schools.

## ***Record of Accomplishment in the State Legislature***

For 16 years, Mitch Landrieu represented New Orleans in the State Legislature, where he focused on implementing true fiscal reform while fighting to create jobs and expand economic opportunities across the state. Mitch is an accomplished leader who has been able to work effectively to deliver real results.

<b>Legislative Accomplishments Capital Outlay</b>	<b>Major Budget and Tax Reform Initiatives Supported and Implemented (1988 – 2004)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tchoupitoulas Corridor</li> <li>• Demolition Camp Street Ramp</li> <li>• Audubon Park Golf Course</li> <li>• Broadmoor Play Spot</li> <li>• Superdome Renovations (host to three Superbowls)</li> <li>• Arena Construction and Renovations</li> <li>• Children’s Museum</li> <li>• D-Day Museum</li> <li>• UNO Research Park</li> <li>• Jazzland</li> <li>• Aquarium of the Americas</li> <li>• Insectarium</li> <li>• Zephyr Stadium</li> <li>• LSU Health Sciences Center</li> <li>• Supreme Court Restoration</li> <li>• Airport Renovations</li> <li>• Port Improvements</li> <li>• Magazine Street Renaissance</li> <li>• Dryades YMCA Reconstruction</li> <li>• NORD Playgrounds/Pool</li> <li>• Le Petit Theatre Renovations</li> <li>• Funding for Sports Foundation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limits on Future State Debt</li> <li>• Programmatic Budgeting</li> <li>• Revenue Estimating Conference</li> <li>• Balanced State Budgets</li> <li>• Tax Reform</li> <li>• Code of Ethics Reform</li> <li>• Campaign Finance Reform</li> <li>• LSU/Cancer Consortium</li> <li>• Education Reform</li> <li>• Creation of Rainy Day Fund</li> <li>• Tulane Scholarship Reform</li> <li>• Consensus Revenue Forecasting</li> <li>• Feasibility Studies for Capital Outlay Projects</li> <li>• Mineral Trust Fund for Certain Revenues</li> <li>• Surplus Funds to Retire Debt Early</li> <li>• Expenditure Limit on Government Growth</li> <li>• Tax Credits for Inventory Taxes</li> <li>• Elimination of Double Taxation of “S” Corporations</li> <li>• Reduction in Number of Local Sales Tax Collectors</li> <li>• Reducing Reliance on Sales Tax</li> <li>• Broadening Income Tax Base</li> <li>• Creation of Tobacco Trust Funds</li> </ul>

Mitch Landrieu was recognized by Louisiana Business and Political organizations throughout Louisiana:

- Chamber of Commerce Business Champion Award (2001, 2002)
- Legislator of the Year Award – Alliance for Good Government (2002)
- Legislative Leadership Award – Orleans Parish Medical Society (2002)
- Outstanding Legislator Award – Victims & Citizens Against Crime (2002)
- Friends of the Parishes Award – Louisiana Police Jury Association (1998)

## The Landrieu Vision For City Government

***“So much was broken before the storm. Today we have an unprecedented opportunity to fix the things that didn’t work in New Orleans well before Katrina even entered the Gulf. In education, housing, transportation, poverty, regionalism and government efficiency we have the chance to lead the nation’s cities and show them how they can make their communities better.*”**

***We need leadership that can restore our credibility, nationally and internationally. We need leadership that can be effective and work at all levels of government and the business world. We need leadership that understands the gravity of our situation and, most importantly, leadership that can bring our people together to focus on the results that we seek.”***

The future of our city requires a total transformation of the way we do business in New Orleans. City Government must reorganize itself to meet the challenges of the day. While some may be daunted by this reality, we approach this opportunity with anxious optimism. We realize the potential to rebuild ourselves as a truly great city.

Our optimism is rooted in our faith that so many around the world love our unique and diverse culture. Katrina did not wash that away. No place else can duplicate what is authentically New Orleans. Our anxiety comes from a deep sense that if we do not lay the core foundation, it may take years before we get our city back. This is our only opportunity.

Throughout the city, families, churches, non-profit institutions, and businesses are reorganizing themselves. They are starting by restoring a sound foundation based on their current situation and their most immediate basic needs. City Government needs to do the same thing – get back to the basics.

The fact is, even before Katrina there was a lot wrong with all levels of government in this state. Our structure of state and local government has fostered turf mentality and parochialism. We are too focused on power and control and have not focused enough accountability and responsibility.

Consequently, we have not been getting the results people want. That is why many of our own Louisiana college graduates – our best and brightest – were leaving for better opportunities in other states, evacuating long before the storm.

We have an opportunity now to create a great city. Its foundation must be a government that works better, is responsive and trustworthy, delivers the essential city services effectively and operates in a manner that creates opportunities for all. But we must get the foundation laid correctly. And this is our chance to do it.

As Lieutenant Governor, Mitch Landrieu has represented New Orleans and Louisiana across the country and world. He has been to Congress; he has met with international government and business leaders and corporate executives from some of the top US companies. He has seen firsthand how important it is for us to restore our credibility and repair a reputation that exists about Louisiana.

He has also spent a great deal of time visiting residents in the city and evacuees still displaced from their homes. He has felt their frustration and despair over the lack of consistent and reliable information coming from City Hall.

Mitch Landrieu has put together this strategic business plan to restore the foundation of city government first. His vision is for a culturally rich city that has the infrastructure for a modern economy starts with making City Government work smarter, more efficiently and faster. His first priority as Mayor will be to reorganize City Government to get people the answers and results they seek:

1. Better services
2. Accurate information
3. Honest and open government
4. Equal opportunity to share in the economy

From this foundation, he will build a transparent and accountable administration that will restore our credibility with those who want to invest in our future.

Mitch Landrieu is the only candidate in this race with the experience, the record and the ability to bring a diverse coalition of people together to fight for a common goal – the survival of New Orleans.

# Restoring Basic Services

**“City government’s primary responsibility is to provide basic services – police and fire protection, streets, sewage and water, electricity and gas, and sanitation - in a fair and equitable manner. The mayor must first focus on restoring these basic needs and stabilizing the city’s finances.”**

City government’s primary responsibility is to provide basic services - police and fire protection, streets, sewage and water, power and sanitation - in a fair and equitable manner.

Hurricane Katrina had a devastating impact on the city’s utilities, infrastructure and capacity to provide basic services. In addition, the current leadership has not been focused on these basics needs. Mass layoffs and lack of planning caused unsteadiness and abandonment of key responsibilities of City Government. In many cases, we still do not even know the full extent of the damage and the implications in terms of repair costs and timing. But, the BNOB vision presented by the Mayor says very little about how he plans to restore these basic services.

As a city, we cannot be whole until our infrastructure is fully functional again. As Mayor, Mitch Landrieu will ensure that we have the planning, personnel and funding in place to get each of these vital systems back up to full operation within the earliest possible timeframe, including:

1. Selecting Competent Leadership
2. Fixing City Finances by bringing a *Budgeting for Outcomes* process
3. Restore Public Safety
4. Electricity and gas
5. Debris/Waste Removal
6. Basic Infrastructure
7. Medical Infrastructure
8. Reorganize City Government

## **1. Selecting Competent Leadership**

Mitch Landrieu’s administration will be professionally managed. The mayor will focus on leadership and external relationships, and empower the CAO position like that of a city manager. The CAO will be the second in command to the mayor and will be accountable to the Mayor. All city operations will report to the CAO.

Given the uncertainty of city finances, the significant layoffs and multiple reorganizations under the previous administration, Landrieu’s administration will focus first on stabilizing the City’s finances, immediately restoring essential services to the population and safety. Next, we will charge the CAO with developing a reorganization plan for the government operations to implement the budget.

We will use a search firm to assist in recruiting and hiring the key leadership positions in the new administration. We will hire the best professionals in the country, give them the authority they need and hold them accountable for producing results.

Key hires include:

- Chief Administrative Officer/City Manager
- Police Chief
- Director of Economic Development
- Director of Finance and Budget
- Director of Housing and Neighborhood Redevelopment
- Director of Emergency Preparedness

## ***2. Fix City Finances by Implementing a Budgeting For Outcomes Process***

The first order of business is to get a handle on city finances. The honest answer to the people of New Orleans is that city finances are in shambles and we must begin to make sense of the City's financial capacity and tax base.

The solution is to develop a budget based on incoming revenue and assistance dollars from the State and Federal Government that covers basic and essential services first. Reconstructing the City financially must include the following:

- Ensure fair and equitable property assessments and aggressive tax collections.
- Renegotiate bank debt to defer principal payments for three years.
- Continue aggressive push for federal financial assistance to cover the deficits and to provide for non-recurring infrastructure reconstruction costs during this three year recovery period.

However, given the magnitude of the damage and the city's current situation, the next Mayor will also have to take immediate actions to avoid a cessation of essential city services due to a lack of funds in the current fiscal year. Also, in light of the now fully recognized culpability of the Federal Government, the city needs to pursue relief immediately from the Federal Government.

- **FEMA reimbursement of straight time** – We have to go back to the President and our Congressional leaders and ask them to reconsider reimbursing severely damaged jurisdictions on a straight time basis for essential services that are reimbursable through the Stafford Act. We have to ask for this retroactive for the past 6-7 months of expenses for basic city services. We can agree upon a timetable/phase down schedule for the remainder of the next three years as the city rebuilds its tax base and reorganizes government to meet the needs of its new population.
- **Eliminate local match to FEMA** -- Right now, the LRA is planning on using CDBG money to assist in covering the local share of the FEMA reimbursement. We need to persuade Washington to waive the reimbursement from New Orleans, given the magnitude of the disaster and the culpability of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

- **Revisit loan forgiveness** – It is blatantly unfair that other states and local governments had access to Community Disaster Loans that were forgivable, and New Orleans did not, especially since so much of our loss was due to the failure of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. We must revisit this issue with Congress. Eliminating this debt will help the City’s borrowing capacity and fiscal rating.
  
- **Additional CDBG grants** – We will work with the LRA to provide additional assistance through CDBG grants to the City to prevent cash/service bankruptcy.
  
- **Assistance from Governor and Legislature** – We will ask the Governor and the Legislature to freeze at pre-Katrina levels the population and number of household counts used in the state revenue sharing formula until after calendar year 2008, based on a three year initial recovery period.

Hurricane Katrina has certainly reduced much of the City’s fiscal base, and many services may, in the short and intermediate term, have to be seriously curtailed. We can and will, however, survive these problems by:

- Re-examining and reforming our fiscal structure.
  
- Aggressively pursuing federal, state, and foundation funding.
  
- Working effectively with non-profits, the private sector and other governmental agencies to help leverage our efforts
  
- Controlling expenditures, working smarter, and selling, if needed, city-owned assets to fuel the recovery.

Mitch Landrieu’s administration will focus on key priorities and results by implementing a *Budgeting for Outcomes* process that prioritizes all activities using a strategic plan, a scorecard and a reorganization plan for the city. This process has been used in other states, and in just two short years Landrieu used this process to cut costs and streamline operations in the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. The subsequent savings allowed Landrieu to be able to invest in the most aggressive marketing campaign in Louisiana’s history.

Mitch Landrieu will take office in the beginning of June, and will present a new budget to the city council in the beginning of September that will be focused on results and will show a new organizational structure in the executive branch designed to achieve these key results.

### **3. Restore Public Safety**

Before Katrina, public safety and crime was our number one issue. As we repopulate the city we must have a criminal justice system that works. This includes the police department, the District Attorney’s office, the FBI, the courts, and the social service agencies. Our efforts must begin with a professionally run and effective police department.

Mitch Landrieu will take immediate steps so we get ahead of this issue as we repopulate the city.

- Conduct a professional search for police chief.
- Make funding the police department a key priority.
- Demand that the police chief has a zero tolerance for fraud and corruption at any level of the department.
- Adequately staff the police force to serve every community.
- Provide the police department – and all of our first responders – with the resources they need.
- Continue to coordinate regionally with the FBI and all local law enforcement officials to monitor criminal movement and activity.
- Create a mechanism so complaints of alleged police misconduct can be made and investigated outside of the department.

#### ***4. Electricity and Gas***

After September 11th, the Federal Government helped Con-Ed restore their power grid in New York City. Entergy and the City of New Orleans deserve the same support. As we rebuild our city, we need a power grid that is reliable and energy that is affordable.

We cannot afford for the costs of rebuilding the damaged grid to be passed on to consumers. When the current Mayor eliminated the Department of Utilities, he also eliminated a layer of oversight and accountability over Entergy. Rather than fight with the City Council, the Mayor must take the lead and coordinate on this crucial issue.

The bottom line is that we need to consider all options to secure for New Orleans a reliable energy source with competitive rates. We need to support all efforts to not have the cost of rebuilding the energy grid passed on to the ratepayers, including:

- Supporting Entergy's request to Congress for relief.
- Reviewing the city's contract with Entergy to see if there is a better deal for taxpayers.
- Considering whether it makes more sense for the City to own the power grid and outsource the management of it.
- Determining how future emergency response and rebuilding efforts will be handled and paid for.

#### ***5. Debris and Waste Disposal***

The first and most immediate priority is getting FEMA to agree to remain active in New Orleans for as long as it takes. They have to stick with us while we clean out and rebuild our housing infrastructure - and that could take years. As Mayor, Mitch Landrieu will meet with the Corps of Engineers and FEMA on a weekly basis for progress reports on debris and car removal until New Orleans is clean.

We also need to assess our landfill sites to make sure we have capacity and are not turning our landfills into environmental contamination hazards.

In addition, we need to develop a better neighborhood-by-neighborhood sanitation/waste disposal plan for our city. As we repopulate, we want to become a clean city – including the French Quarter – so we must address the unique needs that each area has based on commercial and residential density.

## **6. Basic Infrastructure**

Fixing the basic infrastructure that supports our neighborhoods and that our people and businesses rely on must be a top priority.

- Within 60 days of taking office, Landrieu’s administration will assess all city infrastructure and develop a rebuilding program to support population growth.
- Too many streets in New Orleans are unsafe right now. Getting our traffic control system operable and pot holes fixed are immediate priorities.
- As we rebuild our streets, we must coordinate the work of the Sewage & Water Board with other city agencies.
- Restructure the public transit system, including the streetcar system, to support the workforce as well as the tourist economy.

## **7. Medical Infrastructure**

Our medical infrastructure is not fully equipped to meet our need for routine and emergency medical care. Hurricane Katrina dealt a blow to our physical capabilities, in terms of damage to hospital facilities, equipment and office space. It also dealt a blow to our professional capabilities, as doctors and medical staff were forced to evacuate and lost their homes and belongings like the rest of us.

We must do everything we can to ensure that the medical services industry recovers to its pre-storm strength, that it is capable of meeting the community’s needs and that it can innovate and expand.

Central priorities in this effort will be:

- Appointing a person accountable to Mayor, through the CAO to focus on our medical infrastructure needs.
- Bringing in heads of all private and public hospitals to create a dialogue with medical providers to assess critical needs.
- Identifying Federal and State resources to support rebuilding our medical infrastructure.
- Working to make certain the Tulane and LSU teaching hospitals and medical schools and the LSU life sciences return to New Orleans.
- Providing primary medical services in community neighborhoods and re-focus care on preventive medicine, health promotion and chronic disease prevention.
- Developing neighborhood health clinics in conjunction with schools as community resource centers.

- Strengthen all facets of environmental health, including testing and monitoring, full remediation measures, and dissemination of information on environmental hazards.
- Evaluate and then help to restructure the medical sector's disaster response capabilities to ensure that medical services will be available immediately to all residents when future disasters occur.
- Leverage local and state workforce training funds and work with our local colleges and universities to increase our ability to train and re-staff our medical facilities.

## **8. Reorganize City Government**

Mitch Landrieu has always been an advocate for more efficiency in government. In 1993 he supported merging New Orleans seven assessors into one office. As Lieutenant Governor he has transformed his Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism into a model office of efficiency that is focused on results.

Landrieu was a leading supporter and advocate of a single levee board and worked during the last special session to make sure the legislation passed.

As Mayor, Landrieu will advocate for and support:

- Merge New Orleans seven assessors to one.
- Merge the Offices of Notarial Archives, Conveyances and Mortgages with Clerks of Court.
- Merge criminal and civil clerk's offices.
- Request that the State Supreme Court to do an assessment of the Criminal and Civil District Courts caseload and make a recommendation for number of judgeships based on need and capacity.
- Adequate funding for a Juvenile Court system as recommended in Landrieu's Juvenile Justice Reform package

Landrieu also will assess the structural performance and organization of city government and present a reorganization plan with his first budget in September. Landrieu's recommendations will be based on his philosophy that we need smaller and more efficient government.

# Repopulating New Orleans

***“Housing is the key to our recovery. We need to bring our residents back. It is critical that City Government provide current and accurate information as well as technical assistance to those who want to return or move to New Orleans, so they can make informed choices about where they want to live.”***

Under Mayor Landrieu, the city will adopt a housing policy that will be rooted in neighborhoods and will focus on quality of life and giving residents the information they need to make informed choices.

Mitch Landrieu’s housing plan is a plan to repopulate and grow the city.

- Use the neighborhood planning process to help determine how to use the entire 116,000-acre footprint of the city.
- Incorporate new FEMA maps and enforce statewide building codes as guidelines for the rebuilding of the city’s neighborhoods.
- Develop LRA homeowner assistance programs that work for New Orleans residents.
- Work with all citizens who want to return or move to New Orleans by providing them access to information they need to make informed decisions about their homes. Our people need more than an encouragement to come home; they need specific information, including:
  - Louisiana’s Homeowner Assistance Program
  - Availability of City services in their neighborhood
  - Vulnerability to future hurricane flooding and FEMA elevation requirements
  - Environmental issues
- Neighborhoods in New Orleans have begun organizing their planning groups. Mitch Landrieu supports this work and will continue the process until all areas have a Neighborhood Recovery Plan that addresses:
  - The provision of city services at adequate levels to ensure a safe, healthy and vibrant community.
  - Parks, recreation areas, community centers, medical facilities, childcare and elder services to meet the needs of each neighborhood.
  - Housing that includes a balanced mix of affordable and market rate housing which is near commercial centers and employment.
  - Transportation routes (cars, buses, trucks, light rail, bicycle and pedestrian) to guide growth and make neighborhoods more livable and more accessible.
- Expedite the opportunities for temporary and transitional housing so that our residents and the workforce can return to the city while their permanent residences are repaired or replaced.

## ***Fairness and Equity***

A fair and equitable housing policy must address how the homeowner is treated and how New Orleans is treated by the state.

New Orleanians deserve a clear explanation as to what their options will be in terms of federal and state recovery assistance in the months ahead.

The proposed LRA buyback plan is a good start. The goal remains getting people who lost everything assistance to rebuild their lives.

The people of New Orleans are as much victims of a man-made disaster as they are a natural one. Therefore, just as the state has argued to Washington, DC that it is only fair that Louisiana receive an equity share of resources based on the level of damage. Mayor Landrieu will argue the city's case in Baton Rouge to ensure we get our fair share of the CDBG funds and that the city is compensated based on the amount of damage it suffered. This means that in certain situations, the LRA should design the buy-out plan formula to recognize that the failure of the levees was a man-made disaster and the responsibility of the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Government.

The New Orleans Business Council made strong recommendations for adjustments to the LRA's plan that will help achieve fairer settlements for New Orleans' homeowners. Mitch Landrieu supports these recommendations to the LRA:

- Make sure homeowners in the flood plain who did not have insurance, but whose loss was due to levee failure, are not penalized for the man-made disaster.
- Make sure homeowners whose property losses were due to levee failure maintain any legal and moral rights they may have for full compensation from the federal government.
- Compensate any homeowner who must give up his or her home because it is in an area that is declared unsafe at 100% of their pre-Katrina value (less insurance and FEMA).

## ***Fighting Blight and Rebuilding Neighborhoods***

If we are going to give people resources to rebuild, then we need to be aggressive in dealing with abandoned and unsafe blighted properties in our neighborhoods. This issue will impact whether residents decide to stay and where they will rebuild. Everyone is concerned about the quality of life and property value of their neighborhood.

The city will need a plan to deal with abandoned commercial and residential properties.

- We will review the process that exists for the city to claim blighted properties and look for ways to make it quicker and more efficient. As a high priority, we will ask the City Attorney to develop strong procedures for the efficient redevelopment of unsafe and blighted property.
- As the LRA buyback program begins, we will facilitate the transfer of property so that it can be redeveloped and become a positive asset for neighborhoods based on neighborhood plans.

- We will ask the LRA to put aside a portion of the housing CDBG funds for local municipalities to deal with abandoned and blighted properties (this includes residential and commercial blight).
- We will ask the LRA, as part of their Homeowner Assistance plan, to require homeowners receiving assistance to continue the upkeep of their property.

## ***Affordable Housing***

In our city, affordable housing must be a top priority. We need both rental and owner-occupied housing that is available for the working poor, the disabled and the elderly.

We can ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing throughout New Orleans by:

- Repairing and renovating the pre-Katrina inventory of blighted housing currently owned by the City.
- Reconstructing and repairing homes in areas deemed safe for redevelopment and bought as part of the LRA’s Homeowner Assistance program.
- Redeveloping HANO properties in partnership with private developers.
- Developing affordable home ownership options used in other cities such as cooperative housing and condominium ownership.
- Land Banking: Through the buy out program, the city and state will likely take on the management and/or disposition of perhaps large numbers of sites. Modeled after the land banking programs of such cities as Cleveland, Atlanta, Baltimore and others, the new Administration can manage the disposition of land and properties in a progressive way. The properties might be redeveloped as in-fill sites in close neighborhood settings or be assembled, where appropriate, for larger scale mixed income, mixed use development.

## ***Current Barriers to Repopulation***

The issues of paramount importance to the City’s land use planning—and currently barriers to the city’s repopulation—are:

- **FEMA MAPS:** Before any decisions can be made about rebuilding our homes, and about the future of our neighborhoods, we must know what the FEMA requirements will be for us to qualify for federal flood insurance. The FEMA flood elevation maps will be the key determinative factor for many homeowners in the decision to rebuild, to relocate, or to sell.
- **STORM PROTECTION REPAIR** What confidence can we have that our homes and our livelihoods will be adequately protected by the levees and coastal wetlands the next time a storm comes our way? We have been told that we will have Level 3 protection in place for June 1, with a promise of Level 5 thereafter. But, this assurance needs to become something which is absolutely firm, something we can rely on.
- **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN** People will not return if they are not confident that the city has a realistic and workable plan for the next emergency. This must encompass not only emergency personnel and supplies, but also facilities, transportation, and communications.

- **ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION** The extent of environmental contamination in our neighborhoods since Katrina and Rita has not been fully documented and returning residents are uncertain what risks they face. This information needs to be made complete and distributed publicly, and full remediation needs to be undertaken immediately.
- **TRANSITIONAL HOUSING** Even under the best of circumstances, rebuilding our neighborhoods will take time. Until our homes are reconstructed and more rental units become available, we will need transitional housing in all of the planning districts. We must secure this housing on an expedited basis so that people—the workforce assisting in the city’s recovery and all citizens—can return now.
- **RECONSTRUCTION LABOR POOL** The reconstruction of damaged homes in our city will be an enormous job by any measure. To get the job done quickly and well, we will need a huge supply of trained labor, a challenge which will be at the same time an unprecedented opportunity.

### ***Informational Support***

To help citizens have better access to accurate information, Mitch Landrieu will:

- Establish a center for evacuee communications and assistance. This will be organized by City Hall with assistance from faith-based community leaders.
- Create a web page providing “How-To” information for working with architects, contractors and suppliers.
  - Provide up-to-date city permitting information.
  - Provide sample (and simple) contract forms that will help individuals set basic agreements for scope, price and schedule with contractors.
  - Provide lists of contractors, sub-contractors and suppliers that have met certain “better business” or reference requirements.
  - Provide a sample budgeting tool to homeowners so they can calculate and monitor total costs for their project.
  - Give neighborhoods a venue to post information about their recovery progress so that displaced residents can stay up-to-date on what is going on in the city.
- Work with the LRA to create a help-line and rebuilding centers where homeowners can get information and assistance.
- Work with community and faith based organizations to create mobile community centers – equipped with electronic and print resources and staff – that can serve communities in their neighborhoods as we go forward.
- Partner with universities, homebuilding experts and neighborhood leaders to facilitate ongoing seminars that help residents share experiences, consult experts and get ideas for help.

# Hurricane Protection and Preparedness

***“New Orleanians have a right to expect their homes, their livelihoods, and their investments to be protected as promised. We contribute more than our share to the national economy. And, we contribute extraordinarily to the culture and history of this country. We should expect these contributions to be valued and protected as part of our national interests.”***

## ***Hurricane Protection***

The fundamental role of government is to protect its citizens. Government failed to protect its citizens from the effects of Hurricane Katrina and from the devastation brought by the ensuing floodwaters. The government purported to protect New Orleanians from a storm of Category 3 strength and in fact it did not.

### ***Science, not politics, needs to dictate the strategy***

We have learned that tying a number—3, 4, or 5—to our system of flood and hurricane protection is not the whole story. What we need is a fundamental change in our approach. Yes, we need the strongest levees that engineering can offer. We need to move our pumping stations to the lake. We need flood gates at the canal openings at the lake. We need internal barriers within the city to isolate flooding, should it occur. And we need our barrier islands and coastal restoration to buffer us from the severity of storms in the future.

We need to put together the findings of the Pontchartrain Basin Foundation with its 11-Step Plan for storm protection, the Super Dutch model for flood protection, the recommendations of the Coast 2050 Commission for coastal restoration, and the findings of university researchers studying best engineering solutions both in our state and around the world.

### ***Levee/Coastal Protection***

While the Mayor has little direct control over the Corps of Engineers or the new Levee Boards, the mayor does have the “bully pulpit” and needs to use it effectively. The Mayor also has a responsibility to the citizens to participate in levee discussions to make sure that the Corps of Engineers is doing their job correctly and in a timely manner.

As mayor, Landrieu will:

- Appoint a single individual reporting directly to the Mayor to serve as a liaison to the Corps of Engineers on the repair and stabilization work on our levee system.
- Support efforts of the Congressional Delegation as well as state and community leaders to get a fair share of off-shore royalties as a dedicated source of revenue for a comprehensive wetlands barrier system.

- Engage former Mayors and regional leaders to make the case to Congress and to the American people about the importance of levees and flood protection.
- Use the power of his “bully pulpit” to keep the story of the levee failures and our coastal wetlands restoration before the American People. He will work with America’s WETLAND Campaign to develop a national grassroots effort to support this issue.

## ***Emergency Preparedness***

With Hurricane season approaching, we need steady and effective leadership in the city immediately. Our government’s response after the hurricane was an utter failure. As a city, we must do more -- much, much more. We need more than a contra flow evacuation plan. We must build into our emergency response the ability to handle every aspect of a disaster, through an integrated, coordinated, multi-layered approach.

Of all the candidates in this race, Mitch Landrieu has a very specific and unique perspective on this issue. He sat in the command center, he was in the Superdome, he helped deploy Wildlife and Fisheries agents and he worked side by side with citizens, first responders and others who were pulling people from their roofs to safety. Mitch Landrieu saw firsthand what worked and what did not.

One of the things we now know is that vertical evacuation does not work if it disconnects the Mayor from command and control in a crisis and prevents crucial and timely decision making. In times of crisis, the Mayor of New Orleans must be in a place where he or she can communicate with authorities at all levels.

We also cannot be afraid to ask for expertise and help. Immediately upon taking office, Landrieu will:

- Conduct drills with top-level staff for emergency situations. He will insist that the President, the Governor and the Mayor work out a protocol to establish immediately a unified and coordinated command and communications structure in the event of another threat from either a storm or a terrorist attack.
- Ask that the Federal Government help set up and equip a state-of-the-art emergency response center in New Orleans for the duration of the next hurricane season, including a Navy command vessel to be moored at the New Orleans riverfront to marshal response operations under a unified command.
- Work with FEMA to immediately issue RFP’s for pre-event standby contracts covering FEMA reimbursable essential city services. Local businesses will be encouraged to bid on and participate in these contracts.
- Ask the US Conference of Mayors to assist us in developing sister-city agreements for evacuation. In return, we also will be prepared to host evacuees of other cities if they have a disaster.
- Review and update the evacuation plans for all hospitals and nursing homes to ensure their readiness.
- Work with tourism and hospitality industry to review and update their evacuation plans for visitors and to develop, with FEMA, clear and consistent policies for use of hotels in the state by evacuees and response workers.

- Within 30 days of taking office, have national experts in emergency preparedness evaluate New Orleans' command center and our short and long-term needs. Components of the emergency plan will include:
  - A clear plan for determining the chain of command
  - Timelines for securing critical city assets
  - Plans for emergency coordination and communication among key emergency personnel at every level of government
  - Plans for evacuating all residents, particularly those who are less mobile
  - A government continuity plan
  - A re-entry and recovery plan addressing debris removal, energy restoration, the return of residents and businesses, and environmental, health, and safety issues

The evaluation will include test runs of evacuation and city communications systems. Assessments will also include in-depth review of critical infrastructure, including: power, sewage and water, and emergency health and trauma units.

- Assess our first responders and our facilities and develop a protocol for clearly identifying who is required to stay in the city in the event of an emergency.
- Look at stockpiling supplies to take care of re-entry and mini-crises
- Conduct a series of practice drills and make reports to public about city's capacity and preparedness levels.
  - All top level staff in Mayor's office will participate and be trained for emergency response.
  - State and regional leaders will be asked to participate in these evaluations.

# Rebuilding Our Economy

***“We are going to build an economy that is knowledge based and diverse. We want everybody in New Orleans to share in our growth. We want to be a smart city that invests in education, technology, and infrastructure. We won’t settle for mediocrity anymore.”***

## ***Economic Development***

New Orleans must remain the cultural and economic hub of the region. As the region rebuilds around New Orleans, the city will have to focus its economic development on some of its key assets: culture, art, tourism, universities, the port, health care and biotechnology.

A vibrant economy providing jobs for our citizens is an essential ingredient in making New Orleans a great city.

### ***First - We must help our businesses that are here and keep them here***

- **Workforce:** Many of our businesses that returned are facing critical shortages in trained workers.
  - Must give needed workforce priority in housing.
  - Target our federal workforce training dollars to areas of critical shortage, like construction, medical and shipbuilding.
- **Leveraging the Incentives:**
  - There are a number of financial incentives and assistance to help our local businesses. We need to work with the state Department of Economic Development, the Chamber of Commerce, Greater New Orleans, Inc. and other groups to help businesses understand and take advantage of these incentives - including the GO-Zone tax credits, low interest loans, the quality jobs act, Federal workforce training dollars as well as other financial incentives and assistance.

### ***Then - We must create an environment that supports new business growth:***

- The city must develop a better business climate, including:
  - Governmental reforms that provide a level playing field, clear and consistent rules and rewards ability, not connections
  - A permitting and licensing department that is fair and efficient
  - Partnering with businesses, our colleges and universities and non-profit organizations to promote entrepreneurship and new business creation. We must be able to “grow our own” businesses and harness the inventions and intellectual capital generated by our universities.

### ***Finally - we must leverage our strengths:***

- In addition to the port and oil and gas, these other sectors are poised for growth, and the Mayor’s office is in a unique position to help these sectors flourish:

- Health care and biotech: Before Katrina, this sector provided the greatest opportunity for the creation of high-paying jobs, and it is critical that we not lose this economic engine. We must:
  - Work to ensure LSU Life and Health Sciences returns to New Orleans.
  - Nurture a stronger bio-tech industry, by building upon Mitch Landrieu's successful efforts as a legislator to bring the cancer research center and a wet lab to New Orleans.
  - Use the mayor's office to help foster cooperation between the various institutions and build a strong Medical District.
  
- Tourism/Cultural economy. As we rebuild New Orleans, we must rebuild our Tourism industry and replace images of Superdome with ones of our culture and vibrancy. As Lt. Governor, Mitch Landrieu successfully marketed Louisiana, and as Mayor he will market New Orleans, including:
  - Work with the Tourism industry to continue to tell New Orleans' story and to target events that have significant economic impact.
  - Target growing industries like film, video, music and digital entertainment with our strong incentive program.
  - Target bringing the next National Democratic and Republican Conventions to New Orleans. The Conventions would bring needed revenues to the City and would keep the City's needs visible to federal lawmakers and the rest of the nation.
  - Ask the Governor to issue an Executive Order barring all public associations receiving either funding or other assistance from the state from having meetings and conventions outside of Louisiana until at least 2010. The state cannot afford at this time the loss of the revenues from these meetings, and the New Orleans area and other metropolitan areas would greatly benefit from retaining such spending within the state.
  
- Higher Education: New Orleans is home to Delgado, Dillard, Loyola, Holy Cross, Tulane, Southern University of New Orleans, University of New Orleans and Xavier and LSU medical school. These institutions of higher learning are critical to New Orleans' economy and we must help them recover and thrive post-Katrina.
  - Integrate their priorities into the city's legislative agenda.
  - Help them assess their future land needs and where possible, support these needs.

## ***Pre K-12 Education***

- A quality PreK-12 educational system is a foundation for a strong economy. The mayor must play an important role coordinating with the State in the rebuilding of our schools. As our neighborhoods are rebuilt, we need neighborhood schools that are integrated into the community.
  - We must demand and expect the state to do a better job overseeing our schools, so the children of New Orleans get the educational opportunities they deserve.
  - As mayor, Mitch Landrieu will push for investments in education from the government and private sector.
  - As mayor, Mitch Landrieu will include in his annual "State of the City" address a report on how our 3<sup>rd</sup> graders are reading, how we are faring in the reduction of what was an unacceptable drop out rate, and the success of our high school seniors.

## How We Will Govern

***“We must make our recovery a model of performance, accountability, and ethical behavior. Like it or not, our reputation has gotten in the way of the assistance we need. I will have a zero tolerance for corruption in city government. There will be no bribes, no contract brokers. Everyone will be able to access city hall for personal or business needs on a level playing field, regardless of who they are. If anyone experiences otherwise, I want them to call me directly. We must change the way government operates.”***

The real issue in this election is who can build and sustain consensus around a unified plan and bring people together to achieve the goals of the plan. Throughout his career, Landrieu has been a consensus builder and a consistent leader on issues that mattered most. Mitch Landrieu knows how to work with others, and he understands that the city cannot remain isolated as it rebuilds. Mitch Landrieu’s administration will aggressively seek public-private partnerships and nurture these partnerships to leverage precious resources and assets that will help the city rebuild

### ***Guiding Principles***

Mitch Landrieu’s administration will start from a set of deeply held guiding principles:

- We consider our diversity a strength, not a weakness.
- We must seek to expand and diversify our economy.
- We think regionally so we can compete globally.
- We need to add value to our raw talent and raw materials.
- We will set the highest standards of excellence for all that we do.

The people of New Orleans deserve certain things:

- A government that is responsive, honest and capable.
- A Mayor who understands the basic responsibilities of City Government.
- A steady leader that has the ability, know-how and credibility to get things done.

## ***Leveraging Expertise and National Interest in New Orleans***

Mitch Landrieu believes that to accelerate New Orleans' recovery it is important to continue to reach out and leverage assistance from a broad spectrum of local and national experts who are willing to help. He will create structures for assistance in key areas, including:

- A **National Advisory Board** of business and political leaders whose advice will be sought on ways the city can manage our finances, grow our economy and invest in our infrastructure.
- A **Mayor's Advisory Council** of current and former Mayors from around the country, organized in conjunction with the US Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities, to identify best practices as we rebuild government and to assist in lobbying for additional Congressional relief.
- An **Interfaith Leaders Group** of local and national religious leaders to help conduct a national conversation on the impacts of poverty and race in America to seek out ways that we can build stronger communities that understand and respect diversity.
- A **University Consortium** of local and national universities to address specific issues and bring innovative and practical solutions to the table.

## ***Work Closely With Baton Rouge and Washington, DC***

The Mayor of New Orleans must be present, prepared and aggressive in Baton Rouge. The city must work closely with the legislature so we do not lose capital outlay projects or other revenues that traditionally come from the state. No candidate for Mayor understands how to work with the legislature better than Mitch Landrieu.

New Orleans needs a leader who is strong enough to work with all regional, state and local leaders to get what New Orleans needs. Mitch Landrieu has traveled to every region of this state. He will keep working with leaders across the state to make sure they understand this is not about us and them – it is about growing and rebuilding the New Orleans region hand-in-hand with the overall growth and recovery of Louisiana. As mayor, Mitch Landrieu will:

- Communicate with the city council and other entities that go to Baton Rouge to speak with one voice before the legislature.
- Work with public and private partners to create an agenda that is clear, justifiable and reasonable and combine lobbying forces in Baton Rouge.
- Make sure that our legislative delegation is briefed early and is supportive of city legislation.
- Work with Mayors from around the state and other local government leaders to develop an agenda with the state that addresses the needs of all local governments.
- Communicate on a regular basis with our Congressional Delegation and we will continue to be aggressive about bringing Congressional Leaders and others to tour New Orleans and Louisiana.
- Work with the Governor to create a regional task force to identify, develop, and implement new approaches to regional service delivery, inter-governmental cooperation, and even regional governance.

## ***Use Our Diversity to Create Success***

The ability to build coalitions and gather input from diverse interests is crucial. The next Mayor cannot be beholden to any one special interest or sector of the community.

As Mayor, Mitch Landrieu will invest in people and the connections between them. He will:

- Appoint a Diversity Liaison for the Mayor's Office to work with all city agencies as well as business and community leaders
- Build an economy that leverages the strength of our diversity to create better opportunities for everyone to participate in.
- Establish a transparent and responsive city government that will allow everyone to have the opportunity to participate.

## ***Be a Model of Integrity***

We must make our recovery a model of performance, accountability, and ethical behavior. We have to be tough. Like it or not, our reputation has gotten in the way of the assistance we need.

Mitch Landrieu will have transparency in his administration through:

- Financial disclosure of all personal finances.
- Establishing the position of Inspector General.
- A Code of Ethics enacted by City Council or Executive Order that will set stringent ethical standards and that will apply to me, all members of my administration, and all city officials.
- Using a Qualification Based Selection process for procurement of professional services.
- Development of clear and specific guidelines for immediately suspending and ultimately terminating employees who have committed serious ethical or performance violations.

Mitch Landrieu's administration will publish an annual scorecard to tell people about the progress his Administration is making in each of the focus areas and based on key indicators:

- Population growth
- Job growth
- Per capita income
- Student achievement levels
- Crime rate
- Housing units
- Hospital beds

Bottom line: We will have a zero tolerance for corruption in government and our business community. There will be no bribes, no contract brokers, and everybody will be able to access City Hall for personal or business needs on a level playing field, regardless of who they are. We will change the way government operates.

## Conclusion

We all want to remember New Orleans nostalgically, all that was good. We have that impulse to want everything to go back to the way it was before the storm. We should not let ourselves be defined by what we have lost in these past few months, but by what we will can create for our future.

The past, the layers of history, have not been lost to us. We can recover our great spirit, our great culture and our inimitable identity. And we can absorb this event over time and emerge with a stronger sense of history still, one that now includes the survival of this storm and catastrophe.

This city was built on diversity. Our diversity has made us who we are, shaped our sense of community -- one people, united by our joie de vive. This tragedy, through great hardship, is teaching us once again that while we are different, we are one people. Diversity has always defined us. It will continue to be our strength.

The storm also restored to us our sense of community. We know one another again. Neighbors are talking to neighbors, people are sharing and helping each other. We are doing for one another in ways that inspire and strengthen our bonds. These bonds make up the network of our neighborhoods, and we will continue to work together to rebuild each part of our great city.

What are we going to do with what we have learned from this storm?

As a community, we know we will survive and we will be healthy. That is what we envision, that is what we see. We will break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. We will discard an educational system that was in shambles and we will start anew. We will shed our old skin of corrupt and broken systems. We will leave behind our reflexive stereotyping. The old problems are no longer intractable. We can leave behind a flawed system, and start anew.

What can we envision, what do we desire? We want our musicians back, we want our artists back, our writers, our tradesmen, our craftspeople, our entrepreneurs, our businesses—but, more, the New Orleans families that created them.

We know the brilliance of our home grown talent—our music, our art, our literature, our food, our houses and buildings all attest to it. Visitors swarm to see and celebrate our arts, our cultural inventiveness, our expression. Too often in the past we have sent it away, exported that talent that is uniquely New Orleans and home grown. It is time to bring it home, bring everyone home. We are going to protect and nurture these precious commodities, our cultural uniqueness, our cultural production, our home grown businesses.

And we are also going to invite others in. Yes, the local businesses were the first back. They are our heroes. But we will invite others to open. New Orleans is a place of opportunity now.

As individuals, we each learned valuable lessons that have made us stronger as well. We now approach life with a strong sense of humility. We are aware of our vulnerability but are driven by a higher purpose in life and a desire to be civically engaged.

We have learned we can survive immense hardship. We are self-reliant now, so much more so than we have ever thought to be. New Orleanians are known as a consumptive society, our “laissez les bon temps roule” approach to life. “Give me a party, throw me something mister.”

It must start today. If we focus on the basics and build a strong foundation, we will become a safe city, a smart city, an accountable city, a caring city and a world city.

We have to become makers of our own future.

We only have one chance to get this right, and the margin of error is zero.