2009

The Beacon of Hope/University of New Orleans Community Recovery Project: 2009

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INTRODUCTION

In the direct aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Beacon of Hope Resource Center (BOH), a non-profit focused on resident driven neighborhood recovery, was founded on February 14, 2006 in New Orleans, Louisiana. The BOH started as a place where returning residents could find information about contractors and building permits, find a hot meal, first aid, volunteers or, use a phone or fax machine, and provided a physical locale for residents to meet and share information. From the outset, the BOH Model was based upon a community-led framework. The Beacon of Hope administration and staff provide support services and training to residents that are active and engaged in their communities. The Beacon M.O.D.E.L. (Mapping. Outreach. Development. Empowerment. Leadership.) for sustainable neighborhood revitalization and community empowerment is implemented in each of the twenty Beacon neighborhood sites city-wide. Today, this model is comprised of eight separate and distinct components: volunteer coordination, blight eradication, block captains, property condition surveys, communication/data management, infrastructure repair, neighborhood outreach, and crime awareness. One of the most important tools used to assess neighborhood conditions are parcel level property condition surveys.

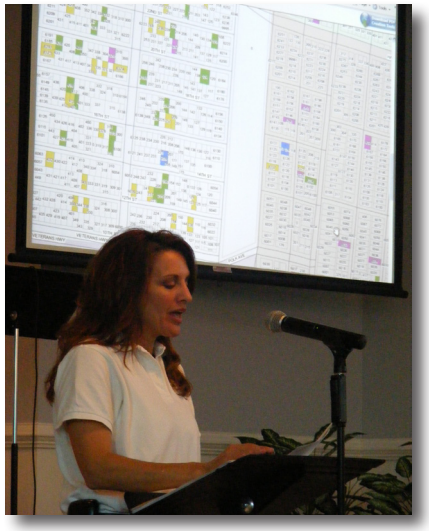
Setting itself apart from the countless condition surveys that have been conducted in post-Katrina New Orleans, the BOH has always maintained that neighborhood surveys be conducted by the residents of the affected neighborhood. Interested neighborhoods contact the BOH to establish a new 'Beacon' and are provided with supplies, training and support to develop a 'survey captain' system. The 2006 neighborhood condition surveys and maps were produced by hand and results were discussed during community meetings in order to give residents a visual picture of their neighborhoods recovery. Residents began to identify, and report, blighted properties to City authorities and act in a coordinated effort by utilizing the administrative structure put in place by the BOH. By conducting the surveys with neighborhood survey teams, residents controlled the data and its quality. During the summer of 2008, Milissa Orzolek, a University of Washington Geography graduate student, helped BOH bring its survey production into the digital world by introducing the organization to the software capabilities of ArcGIS. While these maps and surveys were immensely popular the growing time constraints of producing such maps and surveys, along with the more complex analyses residents now demanded neccesitated the hiring of more staff, but funding limited this movement forward.

An LDRF grant was awarded to develop a pilot surveying and mapping program in Gentilly. Without this generous grant, the current surveying and mapping project that is continuing to spread throughout Gentilly would not have been possible. This grant has allowed the Beacon of Hope to parter with The University of New Orleans to create the Beacon of Hope/University of New Orleans Community Recovery Project
(BUCRP) to create a more systematic approach to creating an overall surveying and mapping process that could be applied more broadly across the City of New Orleans.

THE BEACON OF HOPE/UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS COMMUNITY RECOVERY PROJECT (BUCRP)

Creating Partnerships

In August of 2008, a successful pilot community-university collaboration called the "Beacon of Hope/University of New Orleans Community Mapping Project" (BUCRP) was started to assist the Beacon of Hope with mapping. Under the direction of Tina Marquardt, BOH Operations, and with the help of Dr. Michelle Thompson and graduate student Brian Baldwin, the BUCRP was able to continue the BOH's mapping program. After an initial assessment, it was determined that the BUCRP should assist with development of a program to standardize survey instruments, data collection, as well as provide on-site training and implement BOH GIS protocol and practice. After their initial free one year license expired, the BOH purchased an ArcView 9.2 user license through a Tech Soup membership and began importing previously collected survey data into ArcCatalog. Immediately, the value of using GIS for data analyses and graphic presentation, at first seen by small groups, was presented to hundreds of local residents and local government. Mapping results are used always used to gauge recovery, identify infrastructure problems and blight, and encourage businesses and residents to return. Today the mapped data provides a clear picture to local government regarding recovery progress, infrastructure problems, and blight.



The BUCRP was initially hampered due to lack of adequate public GIS data and plotting until a partnership was formed with Lynn DuPont, Senior Planner/GIS Coordinator, from the Regional Planning Commission. The BUCRP remains a community/municipality/university partnership that continues to evolve. By late Fall 2008, BUCRP produced a 1:2,100 condition map of the New Orleans Lakeview neighborhood with 7,197 parcels. This map was brought to neighborhood meetings and residents were awed by the spatial representation of their survey data. While the survey results had been widely distributed, it was the visual representation of this data in digital and hard copy that awakened residents to the true picture of their neighborhoods recovery.

The stimulus that allowed the BUCRP to develop and expand in its current form was the LDRF grant that allowed the Gentilly pilot project to develop. Expanding from Lakeview into Gentilly required a great deal of time and effort to create the surveying and mapping tools, provide residential training, and produce condition maps with the data that is collected by each neighborhood. The current program has been incredibly successful and well recieved across Gentilly.

METHODS

While the tools for mapping and surveying are given to the residents to conduct their own surveys, the BUCRP must first develop these tools. The development of the walking maps and survey sheets for each neighborhood is one of the most labor intensive steps of the process.

Table 1 Residential Property Survey Indicators

Team Name _____		DATE _____		
Address	**Prop_Desc**	**Prop_Stat**	**Mrkt_Stat**	**Notes**
5526 SPAIN ST				
5516 SPAIN ST				
2335 ODIN ST				
2329 ODIN ST				
2323 ODIN ST				
2315 ODIN ST				
2309 ODIN ST				
2303 ODIN ST				
2304 ODIN ST				
2310 ODIN ST				
2316 ODIN ST				
2324 ODIN ST				
2330 ODIN ST				
2336 ODIN ST				
5424 SPAIN ST				
5418 SPAIN ST				
5404 SPAIN ST				

Using the City of New Orleans parcel data, neighborhoods are split into survey team sectors; which are sections of roughly 50-100 parcels. There is one survey captain per sector. The survey captain team data is then imported into a spreadsheet, where it is ordered into a pattern based on walkability. Each of the survey captains receives a walking map that was created in ArcMap, a printed survey sheet (shown in Table 1), and an overall map of their neighborhood which denotes where their specific survey sector is. The survey teams are then trained to survey their neighborhood based on a standardized set of indicators (shown in Table 2) that have been used in neighborhoods across the city. With all of this data standardized, the data can be analyzed for citywide trends and combined with city data sets more

Map 1 Residential Survey Results Map

Table 2 Blank Residential Survey Form

Prop_Desc	Prop_Stat	Mrkt_Stat
House	NGNS - not gutted, not secured	FSBO - for sale by owner
	NGS - not gutted, secured	FSBA - for sale by agent
	GNS - gutted, not secured	For Rent
	GS - gutted, secured	Road Home
	Secured	n/a
	RNG - renovating	
	RED - renovated	
	RO - renovated occupied	
	NCC - new construction completed	
	NC - new construction	
	NCO - new construction, occupied	
Vacant Lot	Slab	
	Site Ready	

Table 3 Completed Residential Survey Form

Team Name __Robert__		DATE __10/2/09__		
Address	**Prop_Desc**	**Prop_Stat**	**Mrkt_Stat**	**Notes**
6100 ST ROCH AVE	House	GNS – Gutted, Not-Secured		weeds/garage not gutted
2347 MADRID ST	House	RO - Renovated-Occupied	NA	
2341 MADRID ST	House	NCC - New Construction (	NA	
2346 MADRID ST	House	RO - Renovated-Occupied	NA	
2352 MADRID ST	Vacant Lot	Site Ready		weeds
6038 ST ROCH AVE	House	GS – Gutted, Secured		weeds
6032 ST ROCH AVE	House	RO - Renovated-Occupied	NA	
6026 ST ROCH AVE	House	GS – Gutted, Secured	Road Home	
6020 ST ROCH AVE	House	GS – Gutted, Secured	Road Home	
6014 ST ROCH AVE	House	RO - Renovated-Occupied	NA	
6008 ST ROCH AVE	House	Secured - Interior status u	Road Home	
6000 ST ROCH AVE	House	RO - Renovated-Occupied	NA	
2360 VIENNA ST	House	GS – Gutted, Secured		Trailer
2368 VIENNA ST	House	NC - New Construction		
5934 ST ROCH AVE	House	Secured - Interior status u	Road Home	

easily. Several meetings are held with BOH staff before the surveying to ensure that residents are comfortable with the maps and the suryeying process itself.

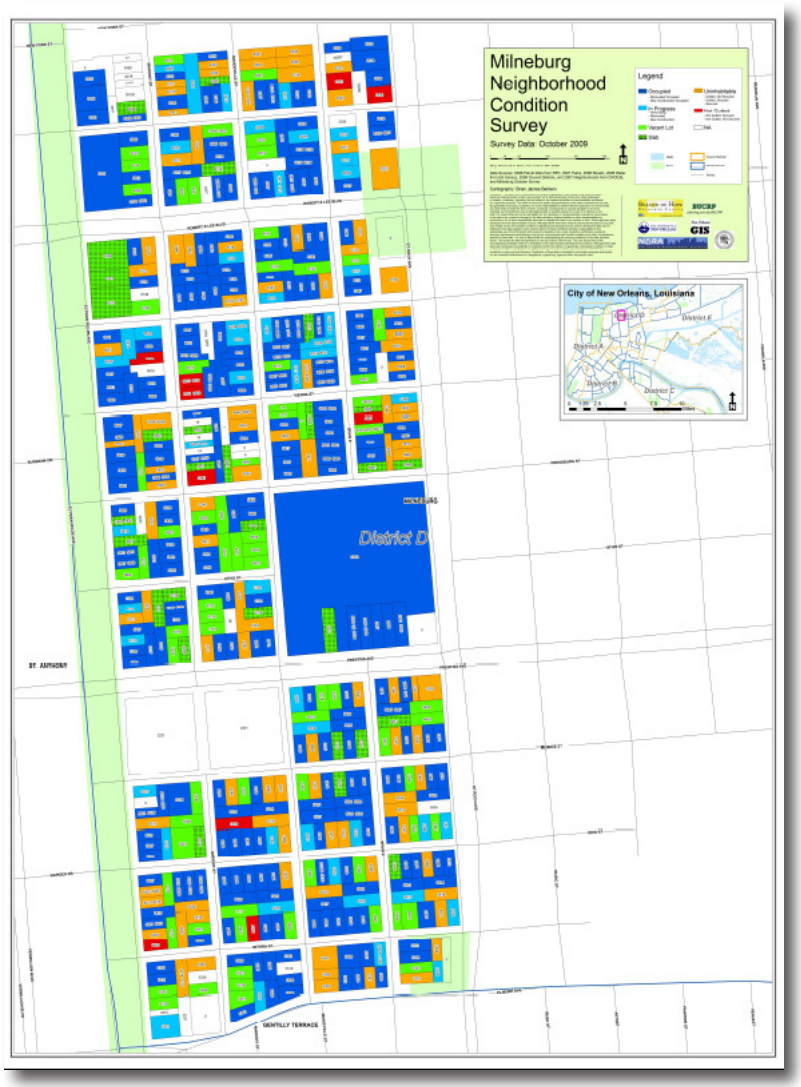
When the survey data is finally collected by residents and input into a spreadsheet database provided to the Data Team Manager, it is returned to BUCRP for mapping and analysis. This is the one drawback to the current process. There is a significant time commitment that must be devoted to input the results from an average of 800 parcels that are found in a neighborhood. Currently, the Beacon of Hope is exploring a partership between Neighborhood Housing Services of New Orleans to create a scan-able survey form that would eliminate this task. Each survey form would be completed in the field and then simply scanned into a database for analysis. However, the cost of automating this process is not feasible at the current time.

After the survey has been input into a database and imported into ArcMap for analysis, a condition map is created for each neighborhood. Partnering with the Regional Planning Commission, the Beacon of Hope is able to provide one large hard copy of each map to a neighborhood. Each neighborhood is given one 24”x36” map and all of the finished maps are placed on the BUCRP website. This public availability of all data is another one of the BUCRP’s goals. The ability to collect survey data, create condition maps, and communicate the findings could not have been accomplished without developing a GIS implementation plan. The ability to replicate data through spreadsheet imports, provide consistent and reliable statistics, as well as seamlessly integrate public and community data was due to the standard functionality that ArcGIS provides. The BUCRP is now focused on expanding the data structure into a personal geodatabase, creating mapping standards through the use of templates, and documenting methodology and metadata for future production. The goal of the BUCRP project is to ensure that BOH is self-sufficient in its future mapping and surveying projects. As an indication of their commitment, the Beacon of Hope Board voted in November of 2008 to formally adopt GIS as part of their on-going operations as a “BOH Community Data Information System.”

DATA & ANALYSIS

Maps

After the residential survey data has been collected and input into the survey database by residents, the BUCRP takes this database and creates a condition map for each neighborhood surveyed. These condition maps serve as a focal point for residents to direct their energy towards blight, persistant problem areas, and neighborhood blocks that are struggling to recover. Every three months, a new survey is completed and a new condition map is created. With the condtion map, a report showing the percentage and numbers of survey indicator is delivered to Beacon Administrators. These maps and the reports that the surveys generate are strong tools that are used by residents to alert city government of blight, streamline code enforcement, and identify NORA offerings.



Beacon of Hope Resource Center

The University of New Orleans

BUCRP

Analysis

The BUCRP has expanded into Gentilly and is continuing to help residents with surveys and maps. After receiving the grant from LDRF, the Beacon of Hope was able to expand it's surveying and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping program. The Beacon of Hope partnered with The University of New Orleans through the BUCRP, has struggled to keep up with demand. Looking at Table 4, the surveying and mapping program run by The Beacon of Hope has already managed to survey over 10% of the parcels found in the City of New Orleans. While the program has been wildely successful in terms of residential particiaption and engagement, it is costly and time-consuming to conduct the residential trainings, survey production, and analysis. There are limited opportunities for the Beacon of Hope to expand the current scope of the project without seeking out more funds.

Table 4 Total Surveyed Parcels by Neighborhood through October 2009

Neighborhood	Parcels
Gentilly Terrace and Gardens	1,797
Lakeview	7,197
Lakewood	400
Oak Park	923
Paris Oak/Bayou Vista	766
Vista Park	407
Mirabeau Gardens	423
Sugar Hill	711
Milneburg	614
Filmore Gardens	852
Seabrook	1,417
Total Parcels Surveyed	**15,507**
Total City Parcels	146,267
% of City Parcels Surveyed	**10.60%**

On a weekly basis, the Beacon of Hope is in the field conducting meetings with residents and neighborhood groups that are starting or are interested in starting the surveying and mapping program. Data from neighborhoods is collected from the field constantly and we are continuing to update the databases for many of the Gentilly neighborhoods.

Although the Beacon has collected data on only 10% of the city's parcels to date, that fact does not take into account that many of these neighborhoods have been re-surveyd up to four times. For the majority of these neighborhoods, the Beacon of Hope is continuing to collect survey data every three months to ensure that we have the most accurate data in order to assist residents. Currently, the BUCRP is looking to partnet with Neighborhood Housing Services to further refine the mapping and survey system that is used across the city. Ensuring that there is a more standard survey system will lead to better cross regional analysis.

Table 5 Neighborhood Survey Condtion Results

Looking at Table 5, the Beacon of Hope surveying provides a distinct timeline that traces neighborhood recovery unlike any other survey or tool that is currently used in the City of New Orleans. Secondly, with the surveys being conducted by the residents themsevles, a sustainable surveying system is put in place as long as residents continue to see the results of their effort. The most commonly used indicators to show residential recovery in the City of New Orleans are both postal data and Entergy data. Both of these datasets are somewhat inaccurate in determining occupancy and blight and lack many of the indicators that are included in the survey that has been developed by The Beacon of Hope. The maps, surveys, and resulting maps are invaluable tools for residents to take action and work towards the recovery of their own neighborhoods. On a larger scale, the data that all of these neighborhoods collect can be used in coordination with Blight Data, NORA Data, LRA data, Road Home Data, and many other datasets.

Neighborhood	Date of Survey	Total Surveyed Parcels	Total Occupied	Total In Progress	Total Vacant	Total Uninhabitable	Not-Gutted	NA
SEABROOK								
	2009_09	1417	574	234	170	320	10	109
PARIS OAK/BAYOU VISTA								
	2009_06	766	447	63	52	120	16	68
	2009_09	746	456	70	55	111	14	37
GENTILLY TERRACE &								
	2009_07	1797	1297	122	69	170	24	115
OAK PARK								
	2008_08	923	258	121	211	256	8	69
	2009_06	892	315	94	199	204	5	0
	2009_10_05	893	357	94	228	199	9	6
MIRABEAU GARDENS								
	2008_08_27	432	145	79	45	118	5	40
	2008_12_17	430	135	70	24	130	3	68
	2009_09	483	136	71	24	128	3	68
VISTA PARK								
	2008_08	407	92	67	97	112	9	30
FILMORE GARDENS								
	2008_10_13	820	242	137	4	219	15	
LAKEVIEW								
	2008_07	6971	2017	1394	1185	1273	218	884
	2008_10	6962	3007	923	1940	969	106	
MILNEBURG	2009_Spring (LCIA)	6921	3318	161	1889	832	89	
	2009_10	555	259	49	90	100	10	47
SUGAR HILL								
	2009_09	711	450	20	9	97	25	109
LAKEWOOD								
	2007_09	400	143	140	20	117	1	
	2007_10	400	156	128	20	114	1	
	2007_11	400	171	113	20	117	1	
	2007_12	400	171	113	21	114	1	
	2008_02	400	173	110	22	106	1	
	2008_03	400	199	96	21	105	1	
	2008_06	400	224	82	23	94	0	
	2008_09	400	239	68	21	93	0	
	2008_12	400	253	65	23	81	0	
	2009_04	400	260	67	24	73	0	
	2009_09	400	275	60	23	42	0	

Table 6 Neighborhood Parcel Structure Status

Neighborhood	House	Vacant	NA	% House	% Vacant Lot	% NA
SEABROOK						
2009_09	1132	221	42	79.89	15.60	2.96
PARIS OAK/BAYOU VISTA						
2009_06	648	52	66	84.60	6.79	8.62
OAK PARK						
2008_08	641	214	68	69.45	23.19	7.37
2009_06	616	200	51	69.06	22.42	5.72
2009_10	632	235	26	70.77	26.32	2.91
MIRABEAU GARDENS						
2008_08_27	345	69	18	79.86	15.97	4.17
2008_10_13	345	67	17	80.42	15.62	3.96
2008_12_17	343	72	0	79.77	16.74	0.00
2009_09	343	72	0	79.77	16.74	0.00
VISTA PARK						
2008_08	278	115	13	68.30	28.26	3.19

Table 5 is an indication of the amount of vacant lots and structures that are present throughout the neighborhoods. The best use of this data is when there are multiple surveys collected so that we can follow trends. In many of the neighborhoods, there has been a slight increase in vacant lots over the survey time frame and this is most likely the result of structure demolition. One of the most important things to keep in mind with all of this data is that there are errors present. The first surveys have incorrect parcel numbers, there is human error when surveying, and all of the parcels are not always accounted for in the analysis. One of the benefits of physical inspections is our ability to correct the city's data, which we use as a starting point when creating the walking maps. Over the course of each survey, the survey tool increases in accuracy as the residents and the Beacon of Hope work together to ensure that the survey reflects a true representation of a neighborhood. Residents are encouraged to make corrections of addresses, new parcels, and doubles on their maps and survey sheets. The data manager then incorporates this information back into the spreadsheet to ensure that every address will be accounted for in the next survey process. Over time, the survey tool is continuing to evolve and improve, ensuring that accurate illustration of the neighborhood will be portrayed.