

**New Orleans Design Studio – Revitalization Strategies after the Hurricane**

Many areas along the Gulf Coast of the US were devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in August and September 2005. Following this disaster many other issues became apparent, issues like environmental injustice, race and class struggles, and the incapability of political leaders to handle this situation appropriately.



In September 2005, the Association of Community Organizers of Reform Now (ACORN) contacted several universities and asked for assistance in helping members of their organization from New Orleans’ 9<sup>th</sup> Ward to formulate a redevelopment strategy. By mobilizing architecture and planning faculty and students, ACORN could use their skills to create a strategy that might convince local, state, and federal officials to invest in this area. New alliances were formed between architecture and planning students and the former residents, who were in need of that expertise in order to fight for their right to return.



In the City and Regional Planning department at Cornell University seven separate classes worked with ACORN in the spring term of 2006. In the design studio we identified the buildings that should be saved, the services the community needed and we developed an overall strategic plan for the location and layout of housing and community buildings in the 9<sup>th</sup> Ward. Our class was also working on increasing the neighborhood’s connectivity to the rest of New Orleans. We aimed to initiate a renewed sense of community by creating a more walkable, mixed-use community that is anchored around the existing cultural institutions like churches, schools, and recreational spaces. A cluster of mixed uses would offer added value to the immediate surroundings, and would foster untapped synergies. This design studio was an important academic opportunity for students and provided valuable support to the residents.

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