



PLANNING FOR RECOVERY MANAGEMENT

The National Disaster Recovery Framework identifies local government as having the primary role of planning and managing all aspects of community recovery. As of yet, however, there is no set formula for the design and authorities of local recovery management organizations. The time-compressed post-disaster environment will inevitably require organizational adaptations with added capacity to manage the recovery process. Local political and administrative leaders will need to rethink how decisions are made and their level of oversight and control. City management activities in turn will need to be restructured to address the added demands associated with recovery and rebuilding. It is important to ensure that the proper authorities are in place once these leadership and management decisions are made. Also, effective community recovery requires many partners to be effective—from all levels of government and neighboring jurisdictions, and with community, faith-based, and nonprofit organizations and all residents, businesses, their associations, and other private-sector investors and organizations.

KEY POINT #1

Determine how decisions will be made and who leads in local recovery management.

KEY POINT #2

Clearly define the organizational structure for local recovery management.

KEY POINT #3

Legalize the authorities for local recovery management.

KEY POINT #4

Formalize and engage partnerships into local recovery management.



KEY POINT #1

Determine how decisions will be made and who leads in local recovery management.

The National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) identifies local government as having “the primary role of planning and managing all aspects of the community’s recovery” (Federal Emergency Management Agency 2011a, 22). After all, local governments are ultimately accountable for the physical, social, and economic outcomes of the recovery process.

Also, with their daily, direct contact and provision of services, local governments have the greatest ability to positively and directly influence all the decisions made and actions taken by thousands of recovery stakeholders. This “collective action” of an “ecosystem of builders” is what ultimately defines a community’s recovery

process and it includes government agencies including neighboring jurisdictions; community, faith-based, and nonprofit organizations; residents, businesses, their associations, and other private–sector investors and organizations; and the public-at-large.

Determining “who decides” and “how decisions are made” are defining elements of a community’s recovery management process. Post-disaster decision making is more complicated than in normal times in large part because of the time-compressed environment of post-disaster recovery as well as the challenges of appropriately engaging the ecosystem of recovery rebuilders (Olshansky, Hopkins, and Johnson 2012). Thus, post-disaster decision making is rife with tensions to streamline authorities and speed up normal bureaucratic processes, while simultaneously ensuring equity and sufficient time for informative and inclusive deliberations.

Effective recovery leaders learn to balance the extreme environment created by disasters with business

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public Participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced decisions	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspiration are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Fact sheets •Web sites •Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Public comment •Focus groups •Surveys •Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Workshops •Deliberative planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Citizen advisory committees •Consensus-building •Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Citizen juries •Ballots •Delegated decision

Recovery Impact

SPEED

Accelerate decision-making and fast-track stakeholder actions

DELIBERATION

Take time to understand and empower stakeholders to “tip in”

Source: (IAP2 2007), see http://c.yumcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/imported/IAP2%20Spectrum_vertical.pdf

as usual. They also learn to organize and prioritize decisions using the best available information and consider the balance that must be made between speed and deliberation. The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (2007) can be used as a guide to considering how the range of public participation approaches fit into a speed-deliberation continuum of recovery decisions and their intended impacts. (Figure 1 provides an illustration of this.) Where each kind of recovery decision resides on this spectrum is likely to vary by community and be influenced by preexisting political and governance dynamics. However, some decisions, such as the expediting of permit review and the locations of temporary road closures, may be able to happen quickly without a lot of deliberation, whereas planning the potential change or relocation of uses or prohibiting rebuilding will require more deliberation and stakeholder engagement to facilitate communication, generate new ideas, and address stakeholder concerns.

Local legislative bodies and elected officials are the ultimate recovery leaders, responsible for ensuring that there is both open discourse and transparency in government decisions and actions, monitoring community well-being, and helping to evaluate options and opportunities as they emerge. Elected officials are ultimately responsible for the key decisions and actions taken by their local government, and some decisions will be extremely difficult to make—sometimes defying the expert’s opinions or unpopular with the public. It is important for local legislative bodies and elected officials to determine which decisions they need to be involved with, and to what degree, and which can be delegated to recovery management staff, local agencies, and others. Some city councils establish a recovery committee—often composed of members of the council’s standing committees involved in the recovery, such as budget, infrastructure, and land use—to help expedite decisions and prioritize those decisions that should come before the full council.

Many local elected officials and legislative bodies also establish *recovery advisory committees and task forces* to serve as advisory bodies raising issues, publicly vetting proposed policies, projects, and programs and designing more effective strategies and solutions; but leaving ultimate approval of implementation actions to the elected officials and legislative body. In some communi-

ties, the advisory committee or task force is supported by subcommittees that align with the operational areas of a local recovery management organization or the major topics of the recovery plan. Sometimes, these committees and task forces are more directly involved in the recovery, such as business improvement districts and community development corporations that are actively involved in design, funding, construction, and even long-term management of recovery projects.

Day-to-day leadership for local recovery management also needs to come from the top of city management. In a typical city-manager form of local government, this will likely be the city manager’s office. In a strong mayor form of local government, the responsibility may fall to the mayor or city administrator’s office. This does not necessarily mean that the top executive must fulfill the recovery manager position; however, it does mean that he or she should assume responsibility for determining who does.

The NDRF recommends appointing a Local Disaster Recovery Manager (LDRM) with post-disaster responsibilities to lead in the creation of a local recovery organization and initiatives and coordinate their activities, including any post-disaster recovery planning efforts. The recovery manager should also work with state and federal recovery partners in damage and impact assessments, prioritizing recovery issues and needs, identification of recovery funding sources, measurement of recovery progress, and ensuring effective and consistent communication with stakeholders and the public. Authentic “two-way” communication between government and stakeholders as well as the media is also critical to effective local decision making. Without it, suspicion, rumors, antagonism, and mistrust are more likely to emerge.

KEY POINT #2

Clearly define the organizational structure for local recovery management.

After most large disasters, governments create new organizations or significantly rearrange existing departments and agencies in order to address recovery challenges (Johnson and Olshansky 2013).

Commonly designed to serve a variety of purposes and governmental settings, these agencies differ

depending on the type and scale of coordination they provide and the scope of their authority, especially regarding the flow of money and information. They also provide a range of substantive recovery functions such as the repair and rebuilding of public facilities and infrastructure, housing, and economic activity.

In designing the recovery management structure, it is important to pay close attention to the organizational coordination and transition issues—especially in moving from emergency response to recovery, but also in the transition from recovery back to normal governance structures. There will inevitably be some overlap between implementation of the emergency operations and the recovery plans. Emergency response and many short-term recovery operations will likely be led by the emergency management organization and the Emergency Operations Center though some of the short-term recovery operations, as well as most all of the long-term recovery operations, will be organized through the recovery plan and its recommended organizational structure. In making any organizational transition, there needs to be a clear division of resources, especially staffing, and a way to ensure that the continuity of operations started under one management structure continues smoothly under the next.

Federal Recovery Support Function (RSF) model. The federal government uses a system of RSFs to address recovery. These RSFs, defined in the National Disaster Recovery Framework (FEMA 2011), are Community Planning and Capacity Building, Economic, Health and Social Services, Housing, Infrastructure, and Natural and Cultural Resources. Each of these functions has a mission and is led by a coordinating agency, but also has primary agencies and supporting organizations

identified within the framework. Local governments are not required to follow the federal RSF structure but may choose to develop an RSF structure that suits their needs. In 2012, Fairfax County, Virginia, adopted a Pre-Disaster Recovery Plan that is organized around a series of RSFs modeled on the NDRF (Fairfax County 2012).

Redevelopment agency model. Some cities use existing redevelopment agencies, or create recovery management organizations that replicate many of the features of redevelopment, to facilitate post-disaster recovery. Redevelopment agencies quite often have the range of staff skills needed for community recovery as well as valuable legal authorities and procedures, such as the power to use tax increment financing to rebuild infrastructure and spur private development and the capacity to assemble parcels, including the use of eminent domain in certain circumstances (Spangle Associates 2002). When the 1989 earthquake destroyed over half of Santa Cruz, California's downtown commercial district, the city council established a redevelopment department to undertake a number of important planning and legislative initiatives and lead the downtown rebuilding (Santa Cruz Public Libraries 2014).

Irrespective of its structure, the recovery management organization should be authorized to work on behalf of the elected bodies to oversee post-disaster recovery of the entire community. This includes repairing and restoring public facilities and infrastructure as well as potentially providing short-term assistance to individuals and families in need, and helping residents and businesses find needed resources to rebuild. Some of the recommended management activities include:

- ensuring that recovery decisions align with the community's recovery vision
- regularly reviewing implementation priorities and assigning implementation responsibility for recovery actions
- overseeing coordination between different levels of government
- ensuring resources and staffing are provided in a timely manner
- recommending budget requests and approval of grant agreements to implement recovery actions (State of Florida 2010, 108).

TABLE 1. KEY RECOVERY-RELATED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

Emergency Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the emergency operations center and oversee the implementation of the emergency operations plan, both of which involve other departments to execute short-term recovery tasks, such as damage inspections, demolitions, access control, debris removal, interim housing, and business locations • Primary interface with state and federal response agencies, both of which have recovery-related operations. This may include resource requests and allocations, grant applications for disaster assistance, and cost recovery for response and short-term recovery-related activities. • Coordinate the preparation of local hazard mitigation plans and post-disaster hazard mitigation grant applications
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify specific rebuilding and hazard mitigation opportunities • Expedite review of temporary housing, rehabilitation, and land-use applications as part of rebuilding; this includes environmental review • Enforce or recommend exceptions to planning-related regulations, such as architectural and design guidelines, nonconforming uses, and historic preservation • Recommend sites for interim housing or businesses, changes in land uses, and any new standards for rebuilding • Participate in the preparation of local hazard mitigation plans and post-disaster hazard mitigation grant applications
Redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate redevelopment project areas and prepare redevelopment plans for those areas • Oversee land use, rebuilding and redevelopment activities in pre-existing or post-disaster designated redevelopment project areas, including developing property and imposing land use and redevelopment controls and environmental reviews • Use powers of eminent domain/voluntary acquisition to acquire and assemble heavily damaged or blighted properties • Relocate households or businesses in property acquired by the agency • Finance operations in the project areas through the incremental increases in property tax revenues, borrowing funds, seeking funds, developing and administering grant and loan programs, and selling bonds
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage cash flow and arranging for bridge/gap financing • Oversee grant applications, damage claims, and determinations of eligible and ineligible expenditure reimbursements from state and federal disaster assistance providers, insurers, and others • Establish and oversee record-keeping and accounting procedures • Manage post-disaster audits
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure proper authorities for recovery, redevelopment, and other key recovery activities • Review decisions and actions to ensure legal authority and consistency • Oversee the preparation and adoption of any necessary ordinances and other regulatory actions
Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect the habitability and structural safety of buildings damaged by disaster, and placarding hazardous buildings • Secure damaged buildings to prevent collapse or other threats to public safety • Inspect and certify buildings for reoccupancy • Coordinate with local utilities on service restoration to damaged buildings • Enforce building moratoria • Institute contractor certification • Expedite permitting for business • Permit repairs and reconstruction • Enforce building codes or recommend exemptions and/or enhancement to building regulations, such as rebuilding to newer seismic or wind-related standards and National Flood Insurance Program compliance
Public Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage debris removal and street clean-up and reopening • Inspect publicly owned buildings and infrastructure damaged by the disaster, and closing and securing damage to prevent collapse or other threats to public safety and FEMA assessments for Public Assistance • Providing temporary infrastructure solutions as needed, such potable water, sewage disposal, treatment and disposal • Design, implement, and manage repairs and reconstruction of damaged public buildings and infrastructure, including obtaining funding and preparing grant and loan applications

TABLE 1. KEY RECOVERY-RELATED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

Transit/ Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reroute traffic around heavily damaged areas • Provide alternative means of transportation/transit • Manage repairs and reconstruction of damaged roads, bridges, and other transportation/transit facilities, including obtaining funding and preparing grant and loan applications
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify short-term and long-term housing needs of all community residents • Seek funds and develop and administer grant and loan programs for alternative housing, housing repairs and reconstruction, and affordable housing construction • Manage repairs to damaged public housing units and develop necessary assistance programs for residents
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce habitability and other public health standards or recommend exemptions and/or enhancements, such as for mold, safe drinking water, and waste disposal • Assist in interim housing design and location • Provide mental health counseling services, which may be needed well into recovery

Recovery also requires sufficient staffing to design, manage, implement, and monitor the recovery projects and programs. At the same time, the staff needs to continue all the routine local government functions, while also handling the increased workloads brought on by the time-compressed, simultaneous demands, such as processing more permits for housing and business repairs, designing and implementing public facilities and infrastructure repairs, completing all the necessary paperwork required for state and federal assistance, and conducting all the necessary inspections. Table 1 outlines the recovery-related roles and responsibilities of many typical local government departments and agencies.

Staff will also need back-up, especially to help balance work demands along with their own personal and family recovery. Some successful recovery personnel management techniques include redeploying ordinary “nondisaster” resources in innovative ways toward recovery, adding temporary staff through contract services and mutual aid agreements, and seeking specialized technical assistance. Adding staff also adds costs, however, and finding funds for these new positions is always a challenge.

Many communities have been able to secure technical assistance or grant funding from state and federal agencies, notably the Economic Development Administration and Community Development Block Grant programs and from philanthropic organizations. Instead of hiring additional staff, some communities have turned to academics and volunteers, especially in helping to assess damage, and in designing and fa-

ilitating post-disaster recovery planning. Peer-to-peer partnerships with other communities that have experienced disasters can also offer valuable opportunities for mentorship of local staff, elected officials, and even community leaders (FEMA 2011b). Other recovery-related resource and support networks might also be established with the business community, neighborhood and community-based organizations, and the nonprofit sector, and through FEMA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and its cooperative extension network, and other federal and state agencies.

KEY POINT #3

Legalize the authorities for local recovery management.

When a local emergency is declared, local governments typically grant their administrators and emergency management staff special authorities and suspend many of the normal approval and decision-making processes for a specific period of time. In major disasters, that emergency declaration period

may be reauthorized several times to extend these special authorities to cover the time necessary for staff to complete response and short-term recovery-related actions. However, the necessary authorities for long-term recovery decision making and actions are typically not addressed by the emergency proclamations and may re-

quire additional legislation and authorization. Especially after a major disaster, recovery planning and management will involve activities that were not previously anticipated and approved and require quick decisions and swift action.

The American Planning Association has developed a model recovery ordinance for communities to adapt and formally adopt and integrate into the local municipal code ahead of disaster (see Resources); it can also be adopted after a disaster. It is recommended that the model recovery ordinance specify the officers and members of a recovery management organization; the special powers and authorities that local elected leaders and the recovery management organization will have after a disaster, including the scope of potential recovery operations; and the temporary regulations and activities that the organization is authorized to administer, such as moratoria and temporary restrictions on repairs and reconstruction and the expediting of some permit review processes. If the federal RSF model is used for the recovery management organization, then it is important to also address the authorities of coordinating versus primary and supporting agencies in the ordinance.

KEY POINT #4

Formalize and engage partnerships in local recovery management.

Disaster recovery also requires strong coordination among multiple levels of government as well as voluntary and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other recovery stakeholders including impacted residents and businesses. In many cases, these partnerships are crucial to community recovery success, since

local governments are often much less experienced with disasters than the personnel of state and federal agencies.

A major purpose of the NDRF is to clearly define roles and a coordinating and partnering structure to align and unify the recovery efforts of multiple levels of government, the private sector, and nongovernmental and community organizations (FEMA 2011a). The NDRF defines the position of Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator

(FDRC), a deputy to the Federal Coordinating Officer for all matters concerning disaster recovery, including oversight of the federal RSF operations, facilitation of federal funding streams, and coordination of federal assistance and policies to support the inclusion of mitigation and resilience-building measures into community recovery planning and implementation. The NDRF also calls for the creation of State Disaster Recovery Coordinators with post-disaster responsibilities similar to the FDRC but at the state level, in establishing and managing a state structure for recovery, coordinating and collaborating with federal and local counterparts, and supporting planning, communications, and resilience and mitigation measures in the recovery process.

When major disasters affect multiple cities and states at once, federal and state administrations have sometimes appointed interagency task forces and recovery coordinators to help manage the collaboration and partnering necessary to administer recovery programs. The most recent of these is the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force, established by President Obama in December 2012, and charged with identifying and working to remove obstacles to resilient rebuilding in the Sandy-affected region (Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force 2013). The governors of both New Jersey and New York also established special offices to coordinate the long-term recovery efforts post-Sandy (see Resources).

Governmental institutions are never the only source of human, physical, and financial resources for recovery, and new organizations, both formal and informal, always emerge after a disaster. In most cases, their major purposes are to fill the information gaps and provide more resources—primarily in the form of labor, technical assistance, and communication. The business community and neighborhood groups can provide invaluable alliances in facilitating community recovery.

Volunteers, community-based organizations, and other NGOs also can be instrumental in community recovery; in particular, they assist vulnerable populations whose needs are not met by more conventional disaster assistance programs. Many communities have formalized their networks of community agencies into Long-Term Recovery Organizations that have helped to coordinate and organize volunteers and obtain additional donations and volunteer assistance to address long-term needs and assist disaster-impacted residents.

CONCLUSIONS

A well-managed local government recovery effort, with a clearly defined decision-making process, organizational structures, authorities and powers, and collaborative partnerships can provide the essential local leadership necessary for successful community recovery.

RESOURCES

American Planning Association Model Recovery Ordinance. 2014. Available at www.planning.org/research/postdisaster/pdf/modelrecoveryordinance.pdf.

American Planning Association Post-Disaster Resource List. Available at www.planning.org/research/postdisaster/programs.

Fairfax County, Virginia. 2012. "Fairfax County Pre-Disaster Recovery Plan." Available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/pdrp/.

FEMA, Federal Emergency Management Agency. 2011a. "National Disaster Recovery Framework: Strengthening Disaster Recovery for the Nation." Available at www.fema.gov/pdf/recoveryframework/ndrf.pdf.

FEMA, Federal Emergency Management Agency. 2011b. *Lessons in Community Recovery: Seven Years of Emergency Support Function #14 Long-Term Community Recovery From 2004 to 2011*. Washington D.C.: Federal Emergency Management Agency. Available at www.fema.gov/pdf/rebuild/ltrc/2011_report.pdf.

Florida, State of. 2010. "Post Disaster Redevelopment Planning." State of Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and Division of Emergency Management. Available at www.floridajobs.org/fdcp/dcp/PDRP/Files/PDRPGuide.pdf.

Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force. 2013. *Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Strategy: Stronger Communities, A Resilient Region*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Available at http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press_releases_media_advisories/2013/HUDNo.13-125.

IAP2, International Association for Public Participation. 2007. "IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation." Available at http://c.yimcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/imported/IAP2%20Spectrum_vertical.pdf.

Johnson, Laurie A., and Robert B. Olshansky. 2013. "The Road to Recovery: Governing Post-Disaster Reconstruction." *Land Lines*, July.

New Jersey, State of. Governor's Office of Recovery and Rebuilding. Available at www.state.nj.us/gorr.

New York, State of. Governor's Office of Storm Recovery. Available at www.stormrecovery.ny.gov.

Olshansky, Robert B., Lewis D. Hopkins, and Laurie A. Johnson. 2012. "Disaster and Recovery: Processes Compressed in Time." *Natural Hazards Review* 13 (3): 173–78. doi:10.1061/(ASCE)NH.1527-6996.0000077.

Santa Cruz Public Libraries. 2014. "History of the Redevelopment Agency." *Santa Cruz County History—Government*. Available at www.santacruzpl.org/history/articles/321.

Spangle Associates. 2002. *Redevelopment After Earthquakes*. Portola Valley, California: Spangle Associates.

This briefing paper was written by Laurie A. Johnson, AICP, an urban planner specializing in disaster recovery and catastrophic risk management. She has worked in planning and managing post-disaster recovery in communities across the United States and around the world. Contact her at laurie@lauriejohnsonconsulting.com.

Cover photo: James Schwab, AICP

Copyright © 2014 by the American Planning Association, 205 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1200, Chicago, IL 60601–5927. www.planning.org