PLANNING FOR POST-DISASTER RECOVERY: NEXT GENERATION

Symposium Summary

Overview

On February 10–11, 2011, the American Planning Association hosted a scoping symposium in its Chicago office to explore a number of essential issues in guiding the Planning for Post-Disaster Recovery: Next Generation project as it moves forward. Invited participants focused on helping APA to

• define the appropriate audiences and central issues for the project;
• delineate the guiding principles in planning for post-disaster recovery;
• refine the outline for the PAS Report; and
• identify criteria for best practices and potential case examples to study.

The summary below is an attempt to encapsulate the main threads of discussion during the symposium.

Attendees

The symposium's post-disaster experts consisted of David Miller, David Godschalk, FAICP, Gavin Smith, Gerry Jones, Lincoln Walther, Barry Hokanson, AICP, Laurie Johnson, AICP, and Ken Topping, FAICP.

APA attendees were Bill Klein, AICP, Jim Schwab, AICP, Joseph MacDonald, AICP, Tim Mennel, Rana Salzmann, David Morley, AICP, and Kirstin Kuenzi.

FEMA attendees were Jennifer Burmester, Matt Campbell, Roy Wright, Erin Miles, and Steve Castaner.

Introductory Remarks

Representatives from FEMA kicked off the conversation on Thursday afternoon with commentary on the necessary interaction between community involvement in planning and hazard mitigation. They suggested that the 1998 "Green Book" is a great starting point, but many lessons have been learned and practiced since. So, there is a lot of opportunity for growth. They reminded attendees that there are new expectations for federal, state, and local governments, and they emphasized the importance of capitalizing on the awareness of these expectations. Next, APA's Director of Research and Advisory Services Bill Klein discussed strategic points of intervention for planners and planning:

• Visioning and goal setting
• Plan making
• Plan implementation
• Development review
• Public investments

In response, Godschalk noted that monitoring, analyzing, and assessing is necessary and may be missing from the strategic points list. Campbell stressed the importance of monitoring leadership capacity (given the sheer number of plans,

communities may not have the capacity to implement all of them). Smith stated that planners can be these capacity builders/dispute resolvers/coalition builders, and that they can achieve this through outreach and training. He stated that planners have to realize that they are active in hazard mitigation—acting not just as technicians but advocates as well.

Project Audience

The conversation then shifted to Jim Schwab, Manager of APA's Hazards Planning Research Center, who raised the question of audience for the project report. He asked which audiences that might benefit from the project might have missed the original report. Schwab suggested that mitigation staff tends to read planning reports more closely; whereas, recovery staff members and emergency managers may be more likely to skim this type of report. He emphasized that the report needs to include the emergency management community and suggested that derivative products (e.g., podcasts, training tools, briefing papers, a planning curriculum course, etc.) could be used to keep prospective readers interested in the project over the course of its lifespan. Schwab said that these derivatives could be placed into an online toolbox.

Godschalk reminded attendees that post-disaster may be too late and that the audience needs to be focused on mitigation. He suggested that the movers-and-shakers of the community need to realize the importance of hazard mitigation and act on it.

After agreeing with Godschalk, Klein clarified that the focus of the project is planning that needs to be done pre-disaster to avoid making the same post-disaster mistakes that have been made in the past.

Johnson added that since this is a report about recovery, it is unique. She explained that during the immediate recovery period time is very compressed, where normal processes are happening, but at a very rapid rate. Johnson stated that the goal is to get back to the "new" normal and suggested that recovery planning is completely outcome-driven—although planners and emergency managers are very different in orientation. Planners think long-term and emergency managers think short-term. Campbell brought up his belief in a more holistic planning approach, where all the roles are defined and then shared.

In an attempt to summarize earlier comments, Godschalk offered that the ultimate goal is a jointly constructed vision of resilience. What should our community be like when we know we have hazards? He reminded attendees not to forget the private sector and its involvement in this process—small business owners, social services, etc. Godschalk stressed that the big takeaway regarding the audience for the report is that it is not a guidance document just for planners.

Central Issues

Next, the discussion turned to the central issues that the project (and the symposium) needed to highlight. Smith brought up planning's key roles in recovery—finding organizations and fostering collaboration between all groups. And he emphasized the importance of teaching this process of collaboration.

Other attendees noted that the project needs to highlight what has been learned from the Disaster Mitigation Act and the Stafford Act (and discuss why these lessons have not reached local government and local planners). Miller brought up the need for programmatic change to financial resources for post-disaster recovery and mitigation.

The experts kept returning to the planner's role in recovery. Hokanson noted that some of the biggest challenges come from within the profession; planners do not see emergency management as within the scope of issues they need to focus on in their work. He suggested that the project needed to have one foot in each camp—planning and emergency management—to bring the two professions together. The FEMA attendees stated that perhaps the new National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) could be the catalyst for this connection.

Some of the experts cautioned against only discussing planners and emergency managers in this process without including every stakeholder in the community, such as economic developers, builders, etc. Godschalk said that they all need each

other, as this is a cyclical process, and planners can be the go-between for residents, government, and other stakeholders. Smith agreed and stated that peer-to-peer mentoring, local officials talking, planners talking, professional associations providing help, and sharing lessons learned can all be done pre-event. He suggested creating a mitigation and recovery exercise to bring all local officials together and run them through a scenario (perhaps it could be included on a CD with the report). Then Smith questioned whether this large group of stakeholders would sit down and discuss their community without an event, and he asked whether community stakeholders can or should be in charge of their own recovery.

The discussion turned to issues of scale, diversity, power, psychology, and political interactions. The attendees agreed that recovery involves all of these and questioned whose interests will actually be served by the recovery planning process.

Guiding Principles for the Report

Schwab led off the second day of the symposium by initiating a discussion of guiding principles for the new report. He asked attendees what they wanted to convey to local officials and planners. In other words, what is important for successful post-disaster recovery, and how would they convey these ideas if they could tell the mayor of a city or small town?

Burmester offered that they needed to talk about the principles of traditional risk management and bring them to light as the project moves forward.

Topping suggested that pre-event, they need to imagine future disaster losses based on known vulnerabilities by identifying and prioritizing resources and facilities that need strengthening and protection. Godschalk proposed covering this through scenario planning (to assess possibilities and a course of action).

Campbell and Smith brought up the issues of finances and the need for reinvestment. They explained that massive amounts of money come into communities in the post-disaster period, but communities are not prepared to efficiently manage and apply such money. They asked how communities should be taught to handle this money, and Godschalk offered strategic spending and investments as a response.

Walther, Miller, and Godschalk also talked about comprehensiveness and connectivity in these plans. They emphasized the importance of inclusionary stakeholder involvement and stressed that it needs to address all areas of recovery. After this inclusionary involvement has been established, the planning process can add in the issues of resilience and sustainability.

Godschalk asked, "Mr. Mayor, why do you think we're doing this recovery plan? Not just how, but why are we doing it? Push toward getting a vision of resilience for the community that serves as a guide for everything else. What is your vision, Mr. Mayor, which will propel us forward and help us get behind it?"

Thinking about individual states and localities, Smith noted a rule change in post-disaster environments to benefit your own state and asked how they could educate elected officials on how to change rules that exist to help constituents. He suggested that they could apply these pre-existing plans, rules, processes, and tools to recovery planning. States must be imaginative in their resource-sharing.

Commenting on how to keep recovery planning efforts energized, Topping stated that we need to keep everything functioning after disaster, not only short-term but into the long-term as well. He explained that sometimes, once the process takes over, people forget about the plan, and it can become a shelf document. Topping asked what pieces communities should carry out in the immediate aftermath and what pieces will be carried out later. He suggested that recovery planning needs a commitment to ongoing institutional maintenance. By including financial managers and city managers (because they spend the money), recovery can be enabled through vertical integration. Topping explained that this integration develops partnerships both vertically and horizontally, even if all agencies do not play nicely together. This thread of the conversation concluded with the thought that emergent groups rise to respond to the system's weak-

ness in a time when we all need to come together. (Emergent groups generally include new and often more informal organizations responding to new issues arising specifically from the disaster.) Planning ought to be able to recognize that that processes should anticipate emergent groups, even if you cannot pinpoint them pre-event. We can encourage these emergent groups!

Johnson raised the issue of how to organize the recovery principles in the report documents. She suggested first describing ideal principles (best practices), then explaining an accelerated situational adjustment, and finally, discussing how to adapt to the new normal. Johnson offered that the goals for recovery must be included as well. Smith added that we also cannot forget a Needs Assessment/Capability Assessment up front.

Topping stated that there should be an overlying principle (decision-tree thinking both before and after). This would look at where the decisions are in the process and who gets to make them. The local government thinks in terms of governing body agendas—if you think in terms of decision-trees and multiple organizational points, some are very formal and some are very informal. Topping suggested making a matrix of what Johnson had proposed and this overlay principle of decision-tree thinking.

Smith did not want us to forget plan quality principles and the emerging plan quality literature. He asked what makes a good plan, and suggested that recovery planning needs to have this discussion up front, along with Johnson's and Topping's points. He asked if there were a set of actions that they could distill from plan quality principles to help create an ideal post-disaster recovery planning process.

Report Outline

Next, PAS reports editor Tim Mennel walked attendees through his ideas for the draft report outline. He stated that the report should establish why planning for post-disaster recovery matters, who the audience is, what the audience wants, how the audience can develop this capacity, and when disaster hits, what do they do. The overarching framework will be chronological, but we need to maximize what we have and then fill in the gaps.

Topping agreed, stating that the report must convey the idea that nobody is immune from disasters and you have to face the reality (do not procrastinate). He explained that public officials understand money, but they also understand uncertainty. And this is very troublesome to them. Topping thought that maybe the first section of the report could be "When Things Will Never Be the Same." Miller concurred and offered that the report needs to show people what happens if you do not do something—the failure, the cost of doing nothing, etc.

Mennel then stated that the second section could be "Creating the Resilience Narrative." He explained that this section could go into the classic resiliency discussion (the capacity to survive shock and retain its form and function, and the idea of adapting), and then take it down a few levels and talk about the dimensions of resiliency and its linkage to sustainability. But part of resilience is self-reliance.

Johnson brought up resiliency stages:
Phase 1: strengthening or hardening to withstand/absorb shock (classic hazard mitigation plan)
Phase 2: quick, short-term recovery, continuity of operations (going through the shock experience); stabilization
Phase 3: adapting to the new conditions

Smith reminded the attendees that different professionals use different terms and suggested developing a matrix (cross-disciplinary glossary) to help different groups understand each other.

Mennel said that the third section could be "What Constitutes a Good Recovery?" Smith agreed, saying that a community may have plans that go out the window when disaster strikes because recovery may be dictated by a narrowly defined federal grant program. The local vision conflicts with federal grant requirements, and local plans are not even considered

during post-disaster recovery. Smith questioned how to fill the gaps. He suggested that recovery planning needs an internal formalization of the interdependencies of all the players. Smith also reminded attendees not to forget household recovery along with the community's recovery. Note, though, that if you know what you are doing, then you can massage the Stafford Act to suit your needs.

As an aside, Smith added that the Stafford Act along with many other federal programs dis-incentivize planning, but he noted that experienced recovery professionals can massage the Stafford Act to suit their needs.

Mennel then suggested that the report could end with "What is the Long-Term New Normal?" He explained that this section will explore how to make the most out of what a community has after it has reached the point it has defined as recovery. One expert reminded the attendees that disaster can open up a whole new range of problems that did not exist or were not prevalent pre-event. Perhaps, the new normal can be even worse than pre-event.

Best Practices Examples

Next, Schwab segued into the final conversation of the symposium, an attempt to identify best practices examples. He asked if there was a single ideal case study that would illustrate all of the best practices the report wanted to highlight.

Godschalk discussed the length of case studies—should they be sidebars or full pages? He asked whether a report-length case study such as Katrina could be used to illustrate many different points. Godschalk suggested that the attendees must decide what they want people to learn from the case studies before we pick them.

Smith recommended choosing cases that are useful to teach about specific issues (e.g., pre-event, post-event, "wham-bam" where a place was hit multiple times, cases that are best to teach emergency managers vs. planners vs. elected officials vs. economic developers, etc.) Each case study should provide website links to the plans, ordinances, project sites, etc.

Smith also brought up a way to highlight case studies—as a number of vignettes inside a broad framework. He explained that these case studies could show what role the state played, tell the story of the disaster planning evolution, and also tell what changed as a result of this case—such as policy changes. We could even theme the case studies or cluster them together.

Topping then reminded attendees that state roles and capacities in recovery are inconsistent from state to state and that these roles and capacities have a wide variety of impacts. He suggested that the report should advocate for increased state capacity to handle the recovery needs of their citizens and communities. Consequently, state governments are part of the audience, and the report should embrace both top-down and bottom-up approaches.

Schwab initiated an exercise where attendees nominated the key thing they believe a case study should highlight. The ideas presented included the following:

- a success story (i.e., the disaster was a non-event due to pre-event planning)
- building moratoria
- different planning processes/approaches
- the line between pre-/post-event
- the cost in making readiness operational (in terms of dollars)
- pre-event planning without a past disaster as an impetus
- examine organizational structures (centralized and decentralized)
- willingness to look again (openness to change)
- improved vertical integration
- roles played by faith-based groups
- cost-benefit analysis

As the conversation ended Schwab reminded participants not to highlight "worst practice" examples. Listed below are the case study nominations offered during the final discussion of the symposium:

- Hillsborough County, FL
- Galveston County, TX
- Seattle, WA (Sustainable Seattle Plan)
- Youngstown, OH
- Kobe, Japan
- Oakland, CA
- Beaufort County, SC
- Manatee County, FL
- Oakville, IA
- Princeville, NC
- Greensburg, KS
- Mississippi Coastline
- New Orleans, LA/Katrina (Master Schools Project)
- San Bruno, CA
- Monroe, LA
- Arnold, MO (Merrimac/Mississippi Rivers)
- San Francisco, CA (Resilient SF Plan)
- Davenport, IA
- Raleigh, NC (Floodplain Mapping Initiative)
- Gulf Coast (BP Oil Spill)
- Kinston, NC
- Grand Forks, ND
- Fargo, ND
- Spencer, ND
- Cedar Rapids, IA (Jump Start)
- Des Moines, IA (Rebuild Iowa)
- New York City, NY
- Pierce City, MO
- Stockton, MO
- Americus, GA
- Hancock County, MS
- Los Angeles, CA (Unreinforced Masonry Retrofit Ordinance)
- Northridge, CA
- Santa Louisa Irvine, CA
- Evansville, IN
- Kern County, CA
- Hilton Head, SC
- Bolivar Peninsula, TX
- Fairfax, VA
- Biloxi, MS
- Mexico City, Mexico
- Silver Jackets Program
- Hurricane Katrina's impact on the California Delta Policy
- Ken Topping Model Recovery Ordinance
- Louisiana Speaks
- Project Impact
- Louisiana Training Program