

Policy versus politics: post-Hurricane Katrina lower-income housing restoration in Mississippi

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Much of the discourse post-Hurricane Katrina focuses on recovery efforts in New Orleans. Meanwhile, the Mississippi Gulf Coast receives relatively little attention. Mississippi exemplifies how state political-economic ideology counters federal plans or policy intentions through a neoliberalism, accompanied by neoconservative values, favoring economic development and higher-income households over housing opportunities for lower-income groups. The particular case of East Biloxi describes how neoliberal and neoconservative interests influenced post-disaster land-use and other decisions threatening the lower-income and racially diverse community. Thinking broadly, a housing policy that includes restoration of lower-income households matters very little when state officials controlling implementation do not value government intervention that could further racial justice and social equity. Opportunities for racial justice and social equity may occur through a community sector that not only strengthens the social glue between area groups, but also builds social bridges with outside entities such as non-local community-based allies, academic units, advocacy organizations and federal legislators, while agitating for the provision of housing targeting lower-income households. Planners and policymakers must be visionary, courageous, and seek ways to enhance community sector efforts.

Keywords: land use/zoning; low-income housing; minorities; policy

Introduction

Since 2005, after Hurricane Katrina, the state of housing for lower-income households along the Mississippi Gulf Coast has remained in crisis. Of the 220,384 housing units estimated to be damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, almost 30 percent were renter occupancy and one-of-every-three owner-occupied units were uninsured (Office of the Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding 2006). Meanwhile, in comparison with the Louisiana decision of increasing the housing allocation from 77 to 86 percent and committing unspent housing funds to lower-income units, Mississippi not only reduced the amount of disaster Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) recovery funds allocated to housing from 65 to 52 percent, it also diverted \$770 million for affordable housing restoration to economic development activities (Stuckey 2008; GAO 2009; Bohrer 2009). Thus, by

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spring 2009, only 20 percent of disaster CDBG recovery funds spent on housing recovery went to increase the supply of housing for lower-income households (Steps Coalition 2009).

This paper offers an explanation as to why the post-Hurricane Katrina affordable housing crisis persists and describes the agency undertaken to overcome it. For even in disaster recovery, federal policy intentions may be incompatible with the neoliberal ideology and neoconservative values of the regional and local political culture. Neoliberalism is defined here as the rejection of government guarantees in welfare right protections such as housing and other redistributive supports necessary for enhancing quality of life; while, in turn, government assuming responsibility for protecting freedom, safeguarding the right to retain property, and pursuing a *laissez-faire* approach to market competition is deemed acceptable (Hackworth 2007; Hayek 1960; Friedman 1984; Kekes 1997). Neoconservatism denotes a desire for the return to a set of social values, some of which foster exclusion by race (Hackworth 2007). The point to be made clear is that given the obstacles that can arise out of an incompatibility in ideology and values, a well-intentioned housing plan or policy may have little impact on lower-income households without careful consideration given to an implementation strategy that seeks racial justice and social equity as a specific outcome.

In the case of the Mississippi Gulf coast, state officials – having received federal waivers from mandated spending requirements as well as control over the administration and implementation of disaster CDBG housing recovery funds – seek to advance a neoliberalism favoring economic development and higher-income households over affordable housing opportunities for lower-income groups. In addition, the particular case of the East Biloxi community exemplifies how the underlying pro-growth stance of the state and local government provides the subtext for land-use decisions that threaten the legacy, cohesion, and integrity of the most racially diverse community in the city of Biloxi. As a consequence, opportunities for racial justice and social equity may only occur through collective engagement on the part of the community sector that continues to build social bridges and agitate for the provision of housing targeting lower-income households.

After providing a theoretical framework, this paper continues with an historical analysis of the East Biloxi community. Details about the decisions made by Mississippi officials negatively influencing lower-income housing opportunities followed by a description of community-sector actions to secure affordable housing come next. The chapter concludes with some recommendations for planners and policy makers seeking to ensure racial justice and social equity in housing policy more generally beyond the Mississippi Gulf coast and post-Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts.

Theoretical framework

Conversations about providing affordable housing along the Mississippi Gulf Coast should be about more than just meeting the shelter needs of lower-income households. The discourse would be better placed within the context of a discussion about the political actions that advance neoliberalism and, consequently, for whom and how government should intervene. The over-arching political-economic ideology in Mississippi post-Hurricane Katrina recovery is one where meeting the needs of the market receive priority over government intervention to address the housing needs of lower-income Gulf-Coast residents. Restoring and expanding economic development particularly beneficial to the corporate community and

higher-income groups became the measure of good governance (Harvey 1989; Leitner 1990). Thus, intent on advancing neoliberalism, decision making, extant regulations, and land-use controls often created change that strengthened the market at the expense of housing for lower-income groups (Kaiser, Godschalk and Chapin 1995, Hackworth 2007).

Fainstein and Fainstein (1996) prompts planners, theorists, and others about the importance of grounding an analysis of planning in the political realities of place in order to reveal the political values and interests embodied in planning procedures as well as to determine which social groups benefit. This reminder carries weight as neoliberalism in the United States is often associated with a brand of neoconservatism that seeks to revive a past set of social conditions (Hackworth 2007). The penetration of race into housing policies and land-use planning, particularly in a political-economy undergirded by the epoch of slavery and practices of racial and expulsive zoning, have resulted in caste-like discrimination, isolation, and restricted residential, economic, and wealth-building opportunities (Powell 2008, Ross and Leigh 2000, Silver 1997, Rabin 1989). As a consequence, Goldsmith (1999) contends not only that the practicing land-use planner cannot afford to ignore the penetration of race, but planning professionals must forcefully confront racial inequality and discrimination in order to craft a new social agenda that increases the likelihood for good planning of the metropolis.

Instead of advancing an agenda that tackles racial injustice and social inequity directly, critics contend planners perceive their interests to be more directly linked to privatistic growth (Klosterman 1985, Floglesong 1986); and, as a consequence, decision-making power concerning land use primarily includes public officials and developers while the community sector lacks real authority. For example, the alliance between planners and the private sector, culminating in massive redevelopment through the Urban Renewal program, was based on rational land use patterns that also brought about many challenges unresolved decades later by the planning profession (Weiss 1985). Lasting from 1949 to 1974, Urban Renewal became the means for pursuing an economic agenda of eliminating blight, with the intent of increasing property values. Alternatively, its social agenda of slum clearance, most typically the residential areas of Black and poor people received such a low priority that displacement or lack of quality relocation housing became commonplace (Weiss 1985).

To date, every federal program since Urban Renewal has excluded the community sector, in particular the full participation of residents from lower-income and Black areas, as a major player in the redevelopment process, leaving developers only responsive to the public sector (Ho 2007). Model Cities (1966–1974) required municipalities to include resident participation in redevelopment plans; however, approaches to gaining citizen input typically amounted to tokenism (Arnstein 1969). Urban Development Action Grants (1977–1989) sought to increase capital investment in places under duress but failed to require the engagement of the community sector as an active player in a manner that would question the types of redevelopment undertaken in their neighborhoods by the private sector (Nathan et al. 1980). Empowerment Zones (1993–2009) marked a return to the Model Cities call for bottom-up community participation in urban redevelopment activities. However, success towards accomplishing this goal was greatest during planning and application phases while significant decreases in citizen input occurring at the implementation phase contributed to less positive redevelopment outcomes (Gittel et al. 1998). The CDBG program, one of the longest continuous federal

redevelopment programs, created through the merger of several categorical grants, maintains broad and rather loose requirements for citizen participation that emphasize enhanced communication rather than power sharing among public, private, and community sectors (Ho 2007, Bunch 1977, Johnson and Associates 1978). This 70-year period of effectively excluding the community sector as a formidable player in housing and other urban redevelopment efforts – with promises of jobs and community improvement, but *accompanied* by unaddressed gentrification and displacement – gave birth to the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) movement (Gross 2007, Salkin and Levine 2007, Cummings 2007).

Through the CBA approach, the community sector in several locales has met success in shifting the burden of uncertainty to the developer and negotiated more just and equitable benefits that increase the certainty of community survival and integrity (Cummings 2007, Baxamusa 2008). The politics of organized labor; the accountability of the CBA coalition to the affected community; the role of government in negotiation and implementation; and the strength of the market should be taken into account when considering the potential success of a CBA (Swanstrom and Banks 2009, Wolf-Powers 2010). Pastor (2007) recognizes CBAs should not be limited to strong-market cities in which the regulations help to redistribute benefits and calls for an exploration into how they can be used to restore growth and revitalize areas that have been long neglected in more distressed cities and regions.

In many communities along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, there is a prevailing absence of some of the above mentioned factors necessary for CBA success. Opposition is also relatively pronounced to the more general art and science of planning (Talen 2008). Where the planning function exists, it typically resembles a type of planning more compatible with neoliberalism; a managerial bureaucratic form of planning claiming to be neutral and noninterventionist in placing limits on neoliberal activity. Yet, neoliberalism produces and supports large-scale private-sector economic growth over the type of social justice that would improve the quality of life in lower-income communities. In response, an emergent agency manifested by the community sector through building alliances and social bridges becomes the primary means of gaining federal intervention for affordable housing. Such is the case of the East Biloxi community in the City of Biloxi, Mississippi.

Historical overview and contemporary scene of East Biloxi

Located in Biloxi, the seat of Harrison County government as well as the fourth-largest city and the second-largest metropolitan region in the state of Mississippi, the early beginnings of East Biloxi as a racially diverse community can be traced to after the Civil War where slave ownership on the Mississippi Gulf Coast was not a common experience and the emancipated Africans began to settle, beginning with the Pleasant Reed family (Ohr-Okeefe 2010). As the city continued to urbanize beyond the antebellum period, East Biloxi became the economic engine of the city due to its ideal setting (on a peninsula) for low-wage work in manufacturing, shipping, and the fishing industry. In the 1970s, Vietnamese began to settle in East Biloxi, primarily working in the seafood industry. Through the 1980s, the seafood industry experienced stagnation and significant decline, easing the way for Harrison County approval of dockside gaming by voter referendum in 1992 (Posadas 1996). In less than a decade, the gaming industry became the dominant sector of the Biloxi

economy. In fact, with seven of 11 coastal casinos, the heart of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Casino Industry is located in the East Biloxi community.

On August 29, 2005, when Hurricane Katrina struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast, East Biloxi took on water from the north and south that encircled the peninsula (Clancy and the Knight Foundation 2006). Both the seafood and gaming industries experienced massive and extreme devastation. Moreover, in addition to a loss of businesses, wages, and employment, four out of every five housing units received damages beyond repair and lower-income residents in East Biloxi bore the brunt of this catastrophe (Clancy and the Knight Foundation 2006).

Pre-Hurricane Katrina, East Biloxi maintained a population of 12,702 residents; and a demographic and housing breakdown indicates the community was 53 percent white, 32 percent Black, 12 percent Asian, 3 percent Latino, and 53 percent rental occupancy (Warnke 2006). Post-Hurricane Katrina, East Biloxi is a browner, older, and lower-income community. An equal distribution of the 8,500 community residents exists post-Hurricane Katrina between whites and Blacks at 40 percent, while Vietnamese and Latinos/as make up 15 percent and 5 percent, respectively, of the population (Hope CDA 2008). This contrasts with the city, where the overall racial composition is estimated to be 71 percent white, 18 percent Black, and 6 percent Asian (Bureau of Census 2008). People over the age of 55 prior to Hurricane Katrina represented 25 percent of the East Biloxi population; whereas after Hurricane Katrina they represented 43 percent of 511 respondents to a community survey (Warnke 2006). The smaller share of respondents between the ages of 20 and 44 (33 percent) may correlate with the 45 percent decrease in the post-Hurricane Katrina East Biloxi school enrollment in comparison to 22 percent decline city-wide (Warnke 2006, City of Biloxi 2010). Studies seem to lack determination regarding where this population has moved or their desire to return, although Warnke (2006) suggests they may no longer reside in East Biloxi due to transferable work skills among adults and the relatively lower economic and logistic burden of relocation in comparison to those with larger or extended families. Just as striking is the decline in annual family income among East Biloxi survey respondents, as depicted in Figure 1.

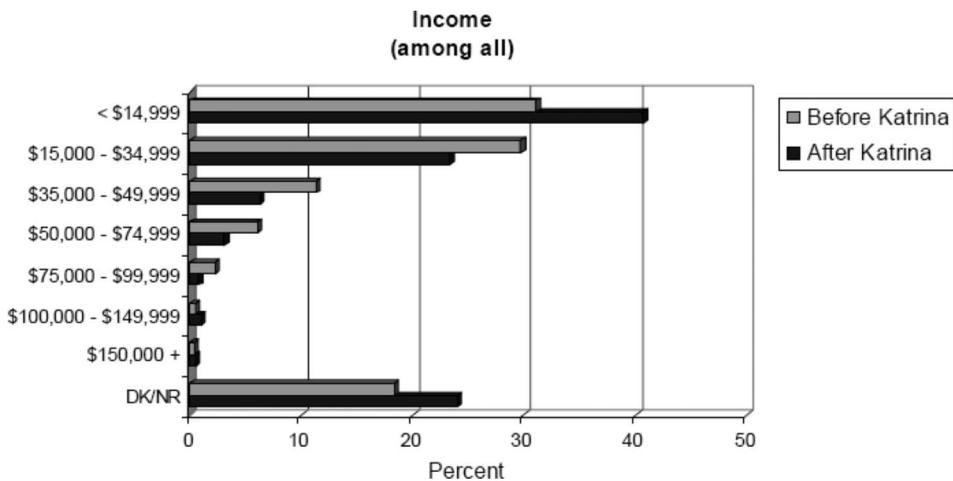


Figure 1. Annual Family Income of Residents in East Biloxi, 2006. Source: Warnke (2006).

After Hurricane Katrina, a small increase among survey respondents occurred in the percentage of families making over \$100,000. The greatest amount of change happened amongst four of the seven cohorts representing annual family incomes between \$15,000 and \$99,999. Those groups lost annual family income. Given that only a modest percentage of survey respondents in the higher income cohorts indicated an increase in annual income, it appears East Biloxi families earned less than before Hurricane Katrina. The data suggest that 31 percent of East Biloxians responding to the survey attained an annual family income of less than \$14,999 prior to Hurricane Katrina; whereas, after the storm, 41 percent – approximately two of every five survey respondents – obtained \$14,999 or less (Warnke 2006). As annual family incomes declined to well below the US poverty threshold of \$19,806 for a family of four (Bureau of Census 2005), the demand for restoring the East Biloxi affordable housing stock became an even more important task to meet.

Government influence on the provision of affordable housing

When further consideration is given to Mississippi-Gulf Coast housing concerns post-Hurricane Katrina, lack of delivery on permanent, safe, and affordable housing in a timely manner is about more than shelter. It entails advancing the social fabric of community as well as the human development and structures that foster opportunity and security. As economic vitality returns and expands, availability of lower-income housing units included in a mix of housing types is necessary to meet the household demand and corporate-sector sensibility for safe and affordable shelter in close proximity to jobs (Living Cities and Clancy 2006, Sanderson 2007). However, housing policies and land use policies (together) have worked against restoring East Biloxi and other Gulf-Coast communities – let alone making them better for lower-income residents than what existed before Hurricane Katrina. Mississippi officials, and ultimately the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the provision of waivers lowering the requirement that 50 percent of CDBG disaster recovery funds go to the benefit of lower-income households, simply made the state's most vulnerable residents a non-priority (National Low Income Housing Coalition 2007, Shorrock 2007).

Mississippi State legislature: Land use changes and influence on development patterns

Hurricane Katrina brought massive destruction to both housing and economy along the Mississippi Gulf coast. One of the hardest hit sectors was the Mississippi casino industry – the third largest in the nation (Stutz 2005). In 2005, Gulf Coast casinos accounted for 45 percent of the total state tax revenue from gaming (Byrd 2006). Specifically, Biloxi casinos employed 15,000 people, making them the leading private-sector jobs producer in the city, and were wiped out (City of Biloxi, as found in Pipa and Green 2006). Second only to the US Air Force in economic impact, more than one-third of Biloxi's general fund came from casino-generated tax revenues (Pipa and Green 2006). Pre-Hurricane Katrina, Biloxi casinos netted \$1.2 billion and the Mississippi Gaming Commission estimated \$4 billion could be gained by 2010 from expansion (Levack 2006). The restoration and growth of gaming facilities was, therefore, an important priority for post-Hurricane Katrina recovery.

On October 17, 2005, new legislation was passed and signed into law known as Mississippi House Bill 45. Prior to this law, all Mississippi casinos were non-land

based. House Bill 45 permitted casino gaming structures to locate up to 800 feet inland from the 19-year mean high water line only in the three southernmost counties (Harrison, Hancock, and Jackson) bordering the Gulf of Mexico. What is more, while the actual casino gaming structures were restricted, ancillary land uses – including hotels, restaurants, shops, surface parking, and parking garages – could extend beyond the 800-foot inland limit onto land zoned as waterfront.

Since implementation, House Bill 45 has succeeded in bringing a recovery of the gaming industry. In 2007, Biloxi casinos grossed \$929 million and brought in over 20 million visitors (City of Biloxi 2008). The casino industry was poised for expansion, but this has been slowed due to the national recession. For example, in addition to the eight out of ten pre-Hurricane Katrina casinos now operational, three more have been approved for development (City of Biloxi 2008). Biloxi mayor, A.J. Holloway, expressed interest in developing a total of 22 casinos, while some City Council members envision a few more than the already existing eight casinos for the future (Chang 2008). Even the lower of the two numbers is a significant increase in an industry that already owns 30 percent of the non-residential land available in Biloxi (City of Biloxi 2008). The two councilpersons representing East Biloxi (out of seven making up the city's ward-based system) support a greater focus on housing and community development issues. However, with the pro-growth stance of the mayor and the majority of city council, and particularly with casino development and ancillary activities now permissible as land-based activities and touted as a visible sign of recovery, House Bill 45 has contributed to the loss of integrity experienced by the East Biloxi community.

The large casino facilities that once existed on barges along the coastline are now being constructed on land that once served other purposes in the community. Moreover, additional casino development continues to infiltrate into the community of East Biloxi, driving up land costs and reducing the amount of viable land to achieve affordable housing goals. Seeking purchase by casino developers (offering homeowners more money than they have ever seen or received), many requests from property owners on the periphery of casinos have been received by the planning department to rezone property designated as residential to waterfront. These homeowners may be able to cash in on the rezoning and sale of their properties; however, the implication for remaining community residents, particularly those of lower-income, is increased taxes and higher rents (Pipa and Green 2006). Thus, the right to return to East Biloxi is exacerbated by this shift in land use that has resulted in a reduction of residential area, higher costs, and an affordable housing crisis. Put another way, in exchange for the advancement of casino development onshore, land use designation enhancing affordable housing availability in East Biloxi has been compromised.

The Barbour administration: Uneven distribution of CDBG disaster recovery funds for housing

With federal legislators giving complete authority to Governor Haley Barbour over the \$5.5 billion disaster CDBG recovery allocation, Mississippi placed priority on enhancing large-scale economic development and restoring shelter for wealthier households affected by Hurricane Katrina. Low-income homeowners, renters, and public housing residents received very little attention and resources. In fact, not long after congressional approval of the CDBG funds, Mississippi requested HUD

remove requirements prioritizing funding for affordable housing provisions (National Low Income Housing Coalition 2007, Steps Coalition 2008). HUD granted this request. When Mississippi gave attention to affordable housing alternatives, it occurred much later, involved less funding, and disbursement took place at a much slower rate in comparison to housing occupied by wealthier individuals (Step Coalition 2009).

Initially, Mississippi allocated 65 percent of the special CDBG funds to housing. Almost three years later, that amount had been reduced to 52 percent (GAO 2009, Stuckey 2008). The reduction had virtually no effect on restoring the shelter needs of wealthier residents. As of March 2009, Phase I of the Homeownership Grant Program, a non-income targeted housing program benefitting wealthier insured residents; received 50 percent (\$1,375 billion) of the \$2.7 billion CDBG funds allocated for housing (Steps Coalition 2009). Moreover, this \$1,375 billion also indicates disbursement of 99 percent of all funds dedicated to Phase I.

Instead of a more equitable distribution of the reduction in housing support, low-income households bore the brunt of the funding cuts, due to the failure of Mississippi administrators in spending down the appropriated amounts of four income-targeted programs: long-term workforce housing; public housing; small rental assistance; and Phase II of the homeowner grant program. Just 20 percent (\$536 million) of the \$ 2.7 billion CDBG funds allocated for housing went to these income-targeted housing programs (Steps Coalition 2009). A more poignant fact remains that \$1.264 million was allocated specifically for income-targeted housing programs and almost \$600 million was diverted for expansion of the Mississippi State Port Authority at Gulfport (Sanchez 2009; Steps Coalition 2009). In addition, another \$200 million was diverted to fund economic development and revitalization in Hancock County (Mississippi Development Authority 2009). Hence, Mississippi experienced a 60 percent shortfall from the initial projection of affordable housing, including virtually no funding for public housing until 2008 (Steps Coalition 2009).

Top priority being given to restoring wealthier homeowners and enhancing a large-scale economic agenda over the shelter needs of lower-income homeowners and renters ensures affordable housing availability along the Mississippi Gulf coast remains in a state of crisis (Gillette 2009). The lack of priority and appropriate compensation for low-income homeowners has resulted in numerous individuals living in dilapidated structures and at least 2,000 households taking up renter occupancy. Together with 2,322 pre-Hurricane Katrina renter households unable to meet the post-Hurricane Katrina rental rate increase, and another 1,750 on the waiting list for available public housing units, the Barbour administration finally acknowledged a need and moved from exhibiting virtually no concern for affordable housing to requesting an additional 5,000 Section 8 housing vouchers from Congress (Steps Coalition 2009). However, at the sixth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, failure to establish initial priority means that Mississippi needs to complete over 5,200 units just to reach its 2011 goals for affordable housing (Morse 2010).

The community sector response

The community sector remains concerned over the threat posed by casino development to the community. At the same time, concern exists about the large-scale devastation, as over the long term East Biloxi may resemble areas of cities in the Midwest and Northeast faced with large-scale abandonment and vacant

properties. Faced with this dual threat, federal waivers of required resources to be spent on lower-income households, and a state political environment that favors more wealthy households and large-scale economic development projects, the community sector has carried out agency in three ways: assistance from non-Gulf Coast-based allies, self-reliance, and collective action around structural change. The subsections that follow describe this agency in greater detail.

Community-based allies from outside the Gulf Coast

Without policy priority, affordable housing along the Mississippi Gulf coast has been difficult to achieve in a post-Hurricane Katrina environment. Abounding financial barriers such as insurance and land cost tripling in price has been a contributing factor. Another contributing factor is the sparse existence of pre-Hurricane Katrina nonprofit organizations and contractors that do affordable housing to meet the demand. Organizations actively engaged in affordable housing activities serving the Mississippi Gulf coast prior to the storm included Back Bay Mission (Biloxi), Mercy Housing (Gulfport) and Visions of Hope (East Biloxi, whose building was destroyed). All faith-based, these organizations were inundated with requests that overwhelmed their small staffs, especially while they also had to deal with launching their own personal and organizational recovery efforts. The lack of contractors may be attributed to the ability of casino and condominium developers to pay top dollar while those desiring affordable and rental housing could not afford the higher price. Hence, the need existed for assistance from groups outside of the Gulf Coast familiar with the intricacies of affordable housing.

Several organizations from other parts of Mississippi and the nation contributed support for affordable housing, in an attempt to close the gap widened by post-Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts targeting economic development and wealthier households. For example, the Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Clayborn County Community Action Agency (AJFC) Inc., serving nine southwest Mississippi counties, came to the coast and secured contractors from outside the gulf area to work in the region, which helped to lower the cost of some affordable housing development (Lowe and Shaw 2009). With support from NeighborsWorks America and Umbrella of Churches – an ecumenical organization located in California – Voice of Calvary Ministries (VOCM), headquartered in Jackson, Mississippi, built Victory Gardens, a 16-unit new-construction housing development in a McComb, Mississippi, subdivision inhabited by 7,000 evacuees (Adebonojo 2006). Another NeighborsWorks affiliate; Dependable, Affordable, Sustainable Housing for La Grange (DASH), of the west Georgia municipality of LaGrange, established a subsidiary organization, DASH for the Gulf Coast, in Mobile, Alabama. Dash for the Gulf Coast planned to build 310 homes over a 10-year period in an area of Pascagoula, Mississippi, wiped out by Hurricane Katrina (Adebonojo 2006). Not only did NeighborsWorks America ascertain a presence through affiliate organizations, it opened a regional office in Mississippi and provided resources for representatives of community-based organizations intricately involved in hurricane recovery efforts to attend its National Training Institute and the Community Leaders Institute (NeighborsWorks 2007). Thus, in addition to contributing to meeting the need for affordable housing and local capacity building, these activities provided a means for coastal residents to become a part of

a larger network of activists involved in community development efforts from across the nation.

Self reliance

The organizations mentioned above made important contributions to affordable housing provisions for those residing on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Still, the lack of policy priority and other circumstantial challenges exacerbates the need. As a consequence, many Gulf Coast residents, and East Biloxians in particular, have organized themselves and engaged in activities exhibiting a high degree of self-reliance.

The primary organization established as a result of community self-help and resiliency in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is the East Biloxi Coordination, Relief and Redevelopment Agency – now Hope Community Development Agency (Hope CDA). Hope CDA serves as a full-service resource center for individuals, families, small businesses, and community building activities (Hope CDA 2008). Driven by the East Biloxi Community Plan, a large-scale community-based participatory planning process, Hope CDA remains particularly focused on meeting the vision for affordable housing development in East Biloxi (Warnke 2006, Hope CDA 2010). In so doing, one of the most valuable partnerships Hope CDA established has been with the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio (GCCDS).

Previously known as the fifth-year design studio of Mississippi State University, College of Architecture, Art, & Design, and located in Jackson, Mississippi; the renaming to GCCDS occurred in order to reflect the new mission of the design studio after moving to East Biloxi post-Hurricane Katrina. More importantly, the rather horizontal and collaborative relationship between GCCDS and Hope CDA has proven beneficial to both parties as well as to East Biloxians specifically. Values of service, proximity, and experience have honed a practice that builds trust, sustains long-term community engagement, restores a sense of community and provides affordable housing (Perkes 2009).

Not long after the storm, GCCDS met an immediate Hope CDA need by generating maps used to coordinate the work of volunteer groups. Building upon that nascent trust, GCCDS continued to respond to requests by offering mapping services to Hope CDA and other community-based partners that document several concerns related to rebuilding, such as: flood zones, changing land uses, levels of destruction in Vietnamese and other neighborhoods, and progress made towards recovery. Located within the offices of Hope CDA, GCCDS has received funding awards, fellowships sponsoring interns, and has successfully organized architects and planners to provide affordable housing assistance to East Biloxi households most in need (Perkes and Gasper 2009).

In 2006, GCCDS received a HUD Universities Rebuilding America Partnership (URAP) grant and Hope CDA was identified as its community partner. Since then, the relationship has been further cemented by funding from the National Small Business Administration, the Department of Energy and the Knight and Hearin Foundations (Perkes 2009). Beyond federal grants, GCCDS's networking capacity proved useful in increasing external partnerships, garnering non-governmental support, enhancing volunteer expertise, and broadening community reach. For example, Architecture for Humanity (AFH) helped secure Warnke Community Consultants, which worked with Hope CDA and GCCDS to create and administer a

survey that was completed by more than 600 residents (Perkes 2009). These data, along with input from a series of community meetings, culminated in the East Biloxi Community Action Plan (Warnke 2006). In addition, architectural students from several states spent an alternative spring break assisting GCCDS complete a property survey of more than 4,000 lots in East Biloxi (Perkes and Gaspar 2009). Subsequently, AFH procured a rebuilding grant for Hope CDA from the Angel Network of Oprah Winfrey, which covered operating costs and \$20,000 construction grants for 75 low-income homes. Angel Network funding has been the largest and most continuous source of funds for construction received by Hope CDA (Perkes and Gaspar 2009).

All of these resources and partnerships have aided GCCDS in the completion of more than 150 rehabilitated and 50 newly constructed affordable homes and continues to sustain a well-developed process initiated by GCCDS and Hope CDA that ensures work in progress on approximately 30 new houses and 60 rehabilitated ones at any given time (Perkes 2009; Perkes and Gaspar 2009). Without a doubt, Hope CDA, GCCDS, and their partners exhibit commitment to East Biloxi residents. However, advocates understand that grants, volunteer efforts, and philanthropy lack the resource depth to rebuild affordable housing in East Biloxi at the scale and timeframe that could be advanced through appropriate enactment of federal housing policy.

Organizing, advocacy, and congress

Collective action is seen as a primary means of ameliorating affordable housing conditions towards a just and equitable recovery. Groups such as the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Boat People SOS, and the Mississippi Center for Justice maintained a presence in East Biloxi before Hurricane Katrina and still continue to do so. The post-Hurricane Katrina efforts of Oxfam America in helping to establish the Steps Coalition is a critically important step in providing continuity towards an equitable, just, and sustainable rebuilding of the Mississippi Gulf coast (Steps Coalition 2009). In fact, many of the community-based organizations founded and working on the Gulf coast pre- and post-Hurricane Katrina, including the NAACP, Boat People SOS, and the Mississippi Center for Justice are members of the Steps Coalition and seek to speak with one voice in advocating for their needs.

The Steps Coalition and its members have sought to identify the best strategy for collectively advancing affordable housing and ensuring appropriate land uses sustaining the integrity of East Biloxi. For example, the Steps Coalition continues to explore initiating a campaign for acquiring CBAs with casinos in East Biloxi and the port at Gulfport that would lead to an improvement in the quality of life in lower-income households. At the same time, because Mississippi lacks many of the protections and the enabling legislation necessary to make a truly strong CBA (Florida Planning and Development Lab 2008), advocates have undertaken other approaches that have shown some success in outcome.

When Mississippi received the waiver permitting reallocation of almost \$600 million for affordable housing to port expansion, the accumulation of diverted resources amounted to a drop in the federal requirement of CDBG disaster recovery funds targeting lower-income households from 50 percent to 13 percent (Lynch 2008). In response, representatives of the NAACP and the Steps Coalition urged

HUD to hold the State to the requirement that disaster CDBG recovery funds be spent to benefit persons of low and moderate income (US Congress 2008). Also, the Mississippi Center for Justice, the Mississippi State Chapter of the NAACP along with the Gulf Coast Fair Housing Center and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law filed a lawsuit against HUD to stop the diversion of the \$600 million and reallocate it to affordable housing objectives that benefit lower-income residents on the Mississippi Gulf coast (Stuckey 2008). Because of these efforts, congresspersons Frank and Waters, through written communication, reminded Governor Barbour of the importance of affordable housing units and requested no diversion of disaster CDBG recovery funds to the port (Frank and Waters 2009; National Low Income Housing Coalition 2009). Furthermore, all of these efforts contributed to a settlement between the advocates, HUD and the state of Mississippi that requires Mississippi to disburse \$132 million toward meeting the housing needs of lower-income household along the Gulf Coast affected by Hurricane Katrina (Mississippi Center for Justice 2010a).

More robust than the Phase II Homeownership Grant Program, the settlement established a "neighborhood home program" to repair lower-income owner-occupied homes that remain damaged by Hurricane Katrina flooding and wind, and two other programs to increase the amount and availability of Mississippi cottages and rental housing (Mississippi Center for Justice 2010b). Clearly, the settlement does not surpass the almost \$800 million diverted from income-targeted programs in the CDBG disaster recovery funds approved by Congress immediately after the catastrophe. Moreover, none of it can be used towards long-term workforce housing or for replacing the 1,027 out of 2,198 public housing units made uninhabitable by Hurricane Katrina (Mississippi Center for Justice 2010b).

In May 2009, only one of the remaining 1,171 public housing units on the Mississippi Gulf coast remained vacant (Steps Coalition 2009). This situation suggests the intense demand for public housing far exceeded the supply. In turn, Governor Barbour expects a better than full recovery, with the eventual build of 2,500 units of public housing (Office of Governor 2009).

A better than full recovery appears to be the case in Biloxi. Including the 472 public housing units rendered uninhabitable in East Biloxi, 818 dwellings were on line in Biloxi by the end of 2009 (Donohue 2007, Biloxi Housing Authority 2011). This amount exceeds the number of public housing units in Biloxi pre-Hurricane Katrina and amounts to approximately 63 percent of the total public housing supply for Harrison County in 2004. However, the overall rebuilding effort lingers below the pre-Hurricane Katrina number of public housing units along the Mississippi Gulf Coast; and, as some municipalities placed moratoriums against multifamily rental construction, the state of Mississippi remained over 5,000 units short of the number of affordable Gulf Coast lower-income residences forecast for completion by mid-2011 (GulfCoastNews 2008, Steps Coalition 2009, Mississippi Center for Justice 2010c).

Recommendations and conclusion

This paper explains the values transmitted through land use and other decisions influencing lower-income housing restoration along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, post-Hurricane Katrina, of a neoliberal political culture. A housing policy including restoration for lower-income households matters very little when officials with

control over administration and implementation seek to advance a neoliberalism that does not value government intervention in pursuit of racial justice and social equity. A long history exists of ordering local land uses in ways that negatively influence the development of those residing within predominately Black neighborhoods and other communities of color. Planners ignoring this fact, believing they have little choice but to view land use decision-making primarily as a political process – carrying out the interest of some elected officials and developers – for shaping the economic potential of the built environment, tend to cloud and ignore the more important objectives of racial justice and social equity.

Many of the efforts of community advocates have been supported by the academy and a network of other urban affairs professionals, advocacy organizations, professional associations and allied groups. Suffice it to say; very few planners in Mississippi overtly advance a racial justice and social equity agenda in Gulf Coast recovery because such an approach is incompatible with the dominant political ideology and values of the state. Holding out expectations that planners will move beyond an existing role quite compatible with the state and local political culture may not be the best alternative. Taking a broader view encompassing planning practice and policy more generally, some planners do receive a preparation to function as trained visionaries, think comprehensively, sharpen technical expertise, build consensus, pursue justice, and advance equity. Yet, the focus primarily on technical expertise in the management (from drafting to enforcing) of land-use regulations has led to producing bureaucrats. Agreement here is with Brooks (1988) that what is needed is a return to the utopian tradition in planning, which will require a visionary and reformist spirit as well as a willingness to take risks, instead of primarily aspiring to achieve the most economically prosperous ideals benefiting a wealthier few. The equity planner must be courageous and seek ways to enhance community sector efforts and to counter the existing neoconservatism and neoliberal political culture, albeit with primary backing through federal government administration and objectives.

The federal government should provide funding directly to community-based development organizations to build organizational capacity, carry out programmatic activity, expand networks and university partnerships, and enhance community cohesion and empowerment. This feat could be accomplished by allocating and devolving to these groups a specific percentage of every dollar dedicated to economic development or wealth generation activities. Additionally, efforts should be extended to promote intergenerational leadership and skill building. For example, resources could be allocated to foster and strengthen relationships between YouthBuild and community-based development organizations. This would augment housing rehabilitation while providing young people with important labor-market skills. In conjunction with the agreements for recovery and restoration, HUD should ensure the funds be spent more quickly to accelerate the restoration of lower-income housing. In addition, HUD should vigorously enforce the non-discrimination requirements of the federal Fair Housing Act against local jurisdictions that enact land-use and other regulations that exclude racially diverse lower-income households. A more progressive approach would be to create and implement racial impact statements, similar to those found in the United Kingdom and as advocated by Powell (2010), that would further ensure no impediments hinder racial justice and social equity from taking hold through housing policy targeting lower-income households.

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