

Rebuilding a New World in the Gulf Coast **Leadership 18 Concept Paper**

Introduction

Leadership 18 is a coalition of America's largest, best known and most-widely respected charitable organizations. These organizations have come together to collectively address critical issues facing American society.

Looking back on the visible affects of this season's hurricanes, there is a greater understanding of how the absence of financial wellbeing contributes to issues related to housing, healthcare, mental health services, employment, child care and education among others. In and of themselves, these conditions often become unmanageable challenges that erode family stability and cohesion. However, in light of the hurricane devastation, particularly as it relates to the compounding effect these natural disasters have had on urban areas already challenged by inherent poverty and eroding social conditions, Leadership 18 has committed to empower local communities from the ground up and energize local organizations to rebuild and redevelop the Gulf Coast area – in particular the city of New Orleans – as a model of successful and prosperous urban living in America.

Now What?

As David Brooks of the *New York Times* stated, "Hurricane Katrina has given us an amazing chance to do something serious about urban poverty. That's because Katrina was a natural disaster that interrupted a social disaster...It has created as close to a blank slate as we get in human affairs, and given us a chance to rebuild a city that wasn't working."

Frankly, he's right. A great opportunity has been presented to us not just to rebuild the previous social structure of some of our nation's poorest states, but to make it better. And if we can capitalize on this opportunity by providing healthy, self-sustaining and economically vibrant communities, then we will have gained more than any hurricane could ever take away.

In order to rebuild a better state of human existence and create a new dynamic among those rebuilding the Gulf Coast states, Leadership 18 recommends the efforts be focused specifically on four key areas, each of which is meant to *put people first*. The four key areas are:

1. Ensuring the viability of our neighborhoods by providing affordable mixed income housing, basic services such as banks and grocery stores, pleasant and mixed-use surroundings and readily-accessible health care services and mental health services including doctors, clinics and hospitals. To accomplish this Leadership 18 will:
 - a. Join together federal, state and local governments, for-profit companies and not-for-profit agencies to develop collaborative solutions for urban planning.
 - b. Solicit the assistance and engagement of healthcare providers, insurance companies, medical specialists, mental health experts, educational institutions and health-related causes to provide a variety of healthcare resources including easily accessible electronic medical records that ensure patient privacy and confidentiality.
 - c. Call upon environmental, nature and recreational specialists to provide sufficient availability of green space for recreational, athletic and leisure pursuits.
2. Providing for the development and education of our children with adequate childcare and early learning opportunities, mentoring of teens, sufficient academic support, guidance on lifestyle choices and quality after school programs. To accomplish this Leadership 18 will:

- a. Promote early learning inside and outside the home using proven programs and techniques to ensure greater success in school resulting in higher graduation rates and lower illiteracy.
 - b. Advance the concept of adult mentoring, peer-to-peer counseling, the importance of making good choices and personal commitments to develop a solid value structure.
3. Encouraging the self-sufficiency of our citizens with job training, the creation of jobs that pay enough to sustain a family, home ownership, higher education assistance, small business development and family asset accumulation through a series of coordinated programs as well as tax incentives and grants. To accomplish this Leadership 18 will work in conjunction with others to:
- a. Offer respectable jobs with steady pay and related benefits as the basis of creating self-sufficiency and moving from dependence to independence.
 - b. Supply education and training opportunities at all levels to guarantee the availability of skilled workers.
 - c. Provide job training and education accounts for people to have access to the jobs created by the community's re-emergence, and resources to help those previously unemployed and underemployed be eligible for jobs that offer a sustaining wage for families.
 - d. Expand the current one-stop job and career services centers to offer a full range of employment and training resources located along public transportation access points.
 - e. Create and expand services that support work such as transportation, childcare, healthcare, mental health services and provide access to make it easier for those who are disabled and/or disadvantaged to get and stay on the job.
 - f. Facilitate home ownership through incentives and joint public and private sector programs to create personal financial security and commitment to a community.
4. Empowering local leadership and community involvement by recruiting, training and supporting community groups, business and faith-based leaders and committed individuals who care about and will work toward ensuring the future of their communities. To accomplish this Leadership 18 will work in conjunction with others to:
- a. Develop leaders who have a vested interest not only to ensure the future, but to ease service delivery and create efficiencies.
 - b. Train those who work on behalf of the community to inspire a true sense of belonging and a desire to contribute to an improved lifestyle.

How?

- Leadership 18 is calling for a \$10 Billion fund of federal money to be invested over a 5-year period to focus entirely on the human development aspects of Gulf Coast redevelopment. These funds, generated from new efforts, will be used to fulfill the delivery of services and the development of a solid base from which to move forward. A key source of these funds will be through Federal tax incentives targeted at companies, non-profits and individuals who are positioned to help in the redevelopment of communities in the Gulf Coast. Leadership 18 will ensure these investments are coordinated with other efforts already underway at the local and state level.
- The organizations committed to this work have and will continue to devote a diverse array of resources to lead and leverage other assets for the long-term rebuilding. In addition to our own financial support and expertise, Leadership 18 will seek to secure commitments of time, treasure and talent from all stakeholders (companies, foundations, media, academic institutions, individuals, other non-profits) to rebuild lives. This unprecedented collaboration among the nation's leading social service organizations will give greater lift to the federal, state, and local funds that will undoubtedly make up the majority of the resources needed.