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Building Disaster Resilience in Small and Mid-Size Businesses

Taylor Daigle

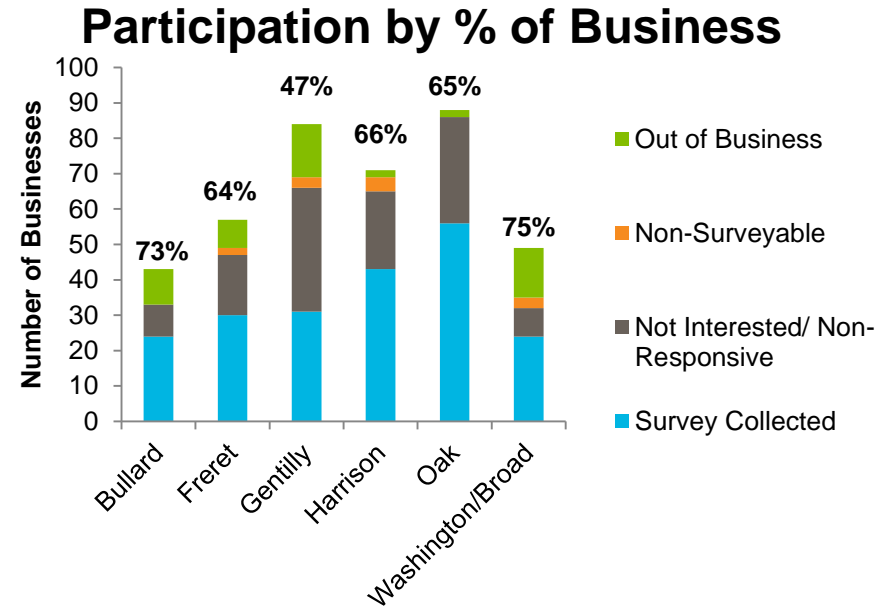


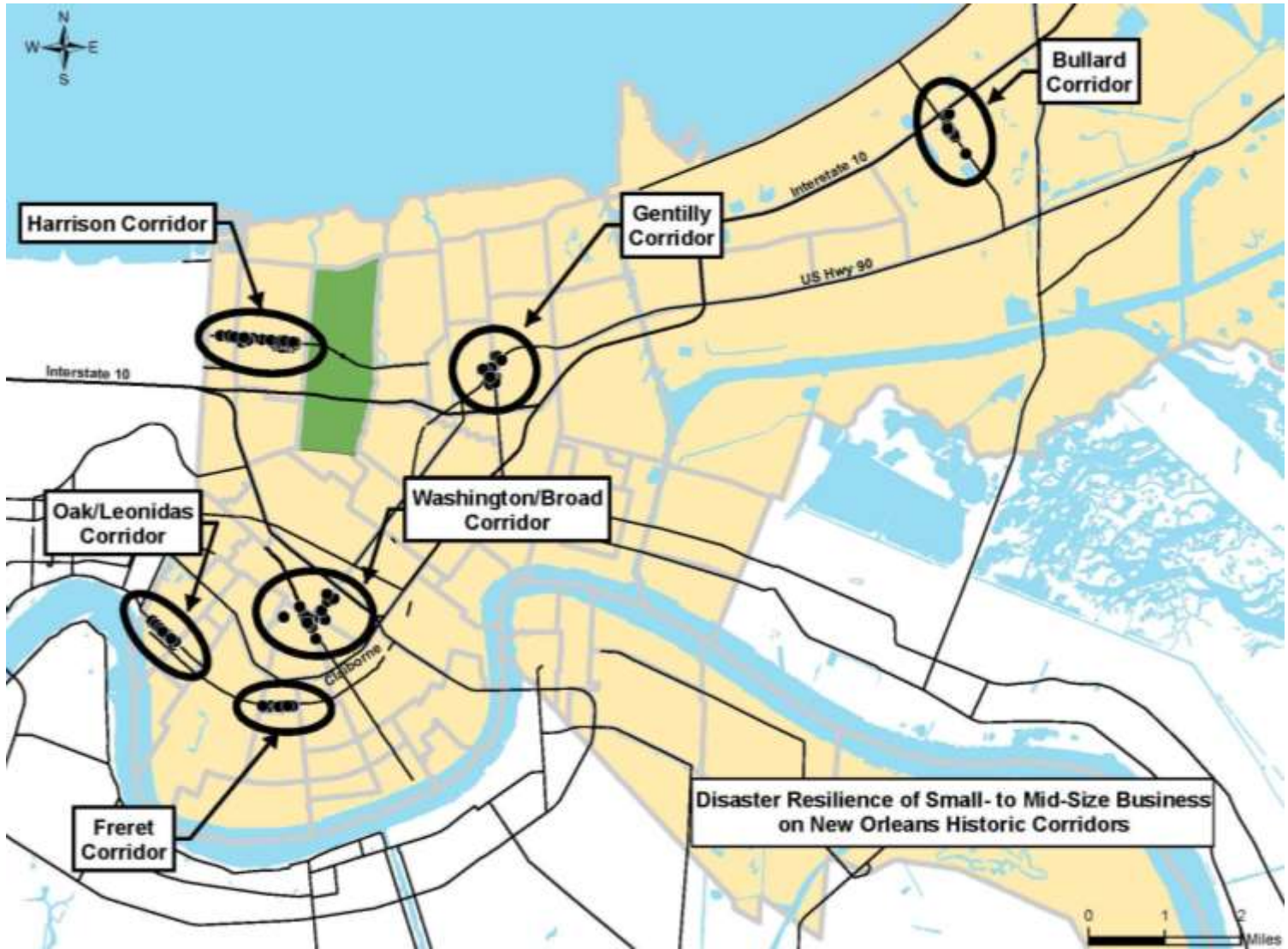
Strong Partnership



Project Overview

- Survey developed based upon Ten Essentials for Disaster Risk Reduction
- Focus: Six Corridors in New Orleans
- Focus Group on Scorecard: Businesses, Associations, Government Representatives
- Conducted over 200 Interviews
 - Visited each business up to 3 times
 - Goal: 60%; Achieved: 63%
- Training Conducted by Corridor





Survey Topics



– “Cover Sheet” (Characteristics)

1. Previous Disaster History
2. Awareness of Potential Disasters and Impacts
 - Perceived risk, place in supply chain, role in community
3. Disaster Preparedness
 - Emergency plan, awareness of programs to assist post-disaster
4. During a Disaster
 - Confidence in insurance, reliance on utilities, back-up systems, mitigation efforts, employee evacuation and communication
5. Recovery Efforts and Building Back Better
 - Returning after evacuation, programs for rebuilding

Key Findings

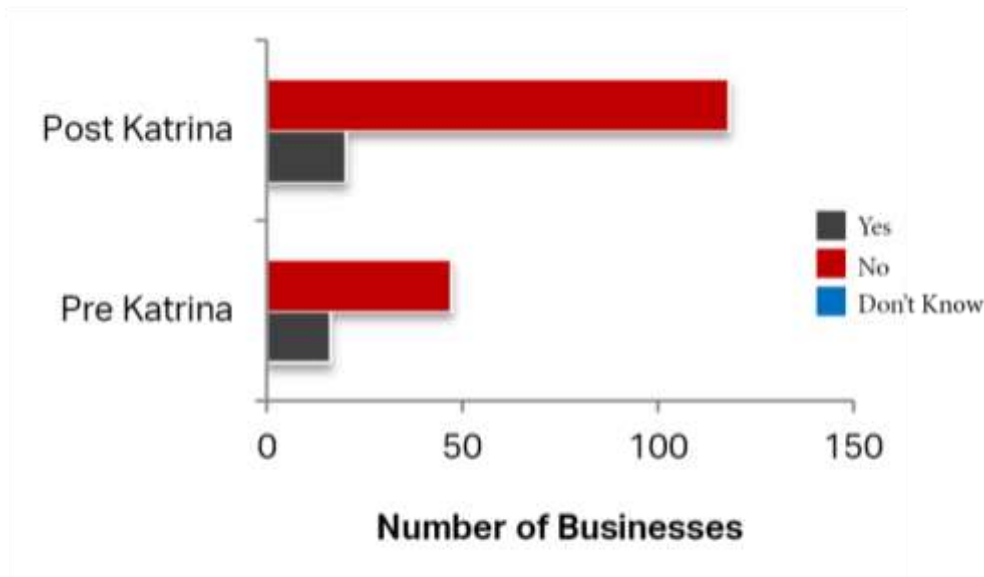
- At least 1/3 of businesses reported having **never** been impacted by a disaster
- Less than 1/4 of businesses have a written emergency plan
- Only 18% of businesses surveyed have an awareness of natural disaster programs
- 87% of respondents have confidence in their insurance
- Businesses established prior to Hurricane Katrina are generally better prepared than newer businesses.



Q11 Are you aware of programs that can help your business prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters?



A surprising finding, only 18% of respondents, 37 businesses, claimed to be aware of natural disaster programs. Professional Services had the highest awareness of programs (27%) of any business type, while Restaurants had the lowest (11%).



Actions Businesses Can Take To Improve Resilience:

- Understand what natural disaster grant programs are available

Actions to Improve the Resilience of the Business Corridors:

- For each corridor, establish a Corridor “Resilience Champion”

Actions the City May Take to Strengthen Disaster Preparedness:

- Establish a Mechanism to Support a “Resilience Corridor Champion” Program
- Develop and Distribute Emergency Resource Materials
- Establish and Publicize Training and Awareness Building Programs
- Provide Resilience Information to all new Businesses

Q15

How dependent is your business on public utilities?

Q16

Does your business have backup systems?



A major takeaway inferred from Questions 15 and 16 is that high acknowledgement of dependency on utilities does not widely equate to businesses having backup systems in place. More recently established businesses tended to have fewer backup systems, as seen in the table below. Businesses established after a major disaster were less likely to have backup systems.

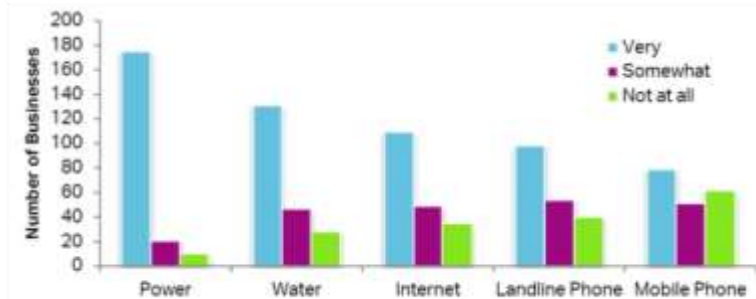
Actions to Improve the Resilience of the Business Corridors:

- Identify the businesses that have backup power supply and who may be focal points during a time when power is out

Actions the City May Take to Strengthen Disaster Preparedness:

- Establish a no- or low-interest loan or grant program
- Maintain a Supply of Backup Power Systems

| Backup Systems | | | | |
|----------------|-------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| | Pre Katrina | Post Katrina | Pre Isaac | Post Isaac |
| Power | 31% | 17% | 23% | 18% |
| Water | 17% | 11% | 15% | 8% |
| Communications | 21% | 15% | 17% | 15% |



Q19 Has your business taken any storm/flood proofing measures?



In Question 19, 54 businesses reported having taken storm/flood proofing measures. Of those businesses, the most common measures reported were:

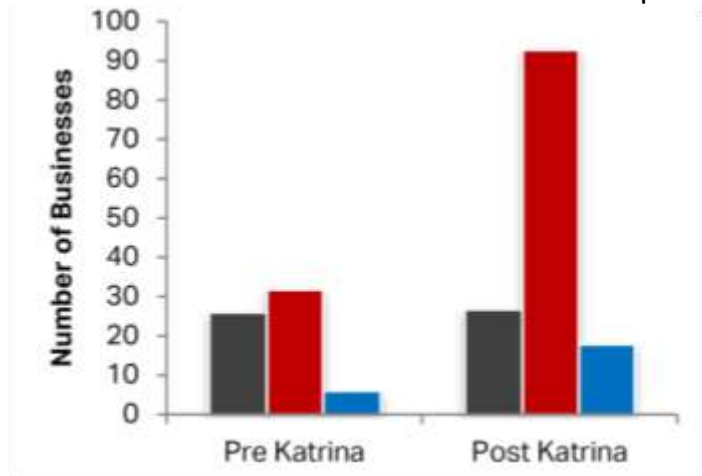
- Raising equipment/inventory (17)
- Installing shutters (8)
- Upgrading roof (8)
- Sandbags/plywood (6)
- Upgrading windows (6)
- Raising the building (5)

Actions Businesses Can Take To Improve Resilience:

- Understand what natural disaster grant programs are available
- For businesses that lease or rent their property, Understand what rights you have as a tenant

Actions the City May Take to Strengthen Disaster Preparedness:

- Establish Incentives for Business and Property Owners to Retrofit their Facilities to be flood proof and more disaster resilient



Q26

What help or support would facilitate you to better prepare for, respond to, or recover from a natural disaster?



Source:
<http://evacuspots.evacuteer.org/>

The survey concluded with an open-ended question posed to participating business representatives asking for their input on what would help them. Communication, training and awareness dominated the responses.

| | |
|---|----|
| Better, Clearer Communication from City | 25 |
| Education/Training | 22 |
| Awareness of Evacuation Plans | 11 |
| Better Recovery (Utilities and Transportation) | 11 |
| Alerts/Updates During Storm and Return Process | 8 |
| Better Infrastructure & Drainage | 8 |
| Contact List for Neighborhood / Better Neighborhood Communication | 7 |
| Awareness of Programs | 6 |
| Better Re-entry Process | 5 |
| Better City Preparedness | 4 |
| Advanced Notification | 3 |

Actions to Improve the Resilience of the Business Corridors:

- Have the Corridor resident volunteer provide informational materials prior to hurricane season
- Conduct Corridor Rehearsal Drills
- Establish or Strengthen Neighborhood Groups

Actions the City May Take to Strengthen Disaster Preparedness:

- Develop and Distribute Emergency Resource Materials
- Establish and Publicize Training and Awareness Building Programs

Preparedness **Spotlight**

- Corridor:** Freret
- Building:** Owner
- Type:** Retail/Pet Shop and Boarding
- Surveyed:** Manager
- Ownership:** Individual/Partnership

Zeus' Place opened for business in 2006. The building in which the business is located was damaged by Hurricane Isaac, forcing the owners to close for over 7 days. As a result of this disaster event, the owners brought in a generator and water purifier, secured places to move animals and added in more support equipment in the event of an emergency. Their emergency plan is verbally shared with employees and is used to conduct regular drills. As the business is very dependent on utilities, they have backup systems for power, water, and communications. Zeus' Place is involved in several neighborhood groups that discuss topics related to disaster preparedness.



In Summary

- More recently established businesses are less likely to be prepared
- “Resilient Champions” exist! Need to better tap into them.
- Vulnerability exists for small/mid-size businesses in New Orleans... survey process, findings, and recommendations have high applicability to other cities
- Some recommendations to improve disaster preparedness could be easily accomplished
- This study is a snapshot in time, but can help inform decision-making at the business, corridor, and City levels in order to increase preparedness and resilience for all.





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Thank you for participating!

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