



# Gulf Coast

## About ISC

At the Institute for Sustainable Communities, we give passionate, committed people the tools, skills, and resources they need to make their communities better places to live.

Since our founding in 1991 by former Vermont Governor Madeleine M. Kunin, ISC has led 72 transformative community-driven projects in 20 countries around the world.



## Sustainable Communities Network Creating a Greener Gulf Coast

### From Crisis To Opportunity

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The Gulf Coast was far from recovered from the devastating impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita when the storms of 2008 (Gustav and Ike) hit, further reinforcing the critical need to help communities become stronger and more resilient. At the same time, the scale of redevelopment already underway in the region creates a window of opportunity for communities to embrace practices that will help them become more resource efficient, healthy and livable. As the region continues to confront complex rebuilding challenges and the threat of severe storms in the future, there is also a growing awareness of the Gulf Coast's economic and environmental significance to the rest of the US and an increasing sense of urgency around the need to advance an agenda for coastal conservation and sustainable development.

local leaders rebuild a stronger, healthier city and working with community organizations and citizens to provide the critical civic leadership that will reduce the vulnerability of their communities to future crises. Our work in Moss Point has been recognized as a model for the transformation of smaller cities and led us to undertake a broader regional assessment to explore ways to build on this successful partnership. We found that many community leaders are eager for practical ways to work together and learn from each other. With funding from the Nathan Cummings Foundation and NRG Systems, ISC is expanding its work with the launch of the Gulf Coast Sustainable Communities Network, a new forum to facilitate stronger connections among the region's most vulnerable communities.

### Linking Communities in Knowledge and Action

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ISC forged a close partnership with Moss Point, Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina – helping

### What is the Sustainable Communities Network?

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With the creation of the Sustainable Communities Network, ISC will provide local organizations and leaders with opportunities to learn, develop productive relationships and gain

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technical assistance to address priority issues. Initially, the Network will include organizations from coastal communities on the Gulf Coast, including:

- Coden and Mobile, Alabama;
- Biloxi, Lucedale, Moss Point, and North Gulfport, Mississippi;
- Calcasieu Parish, New Orleans' Holy Cross/Lower 9th Ward, Iberville Parish, Lafourche Parish, Plaquemines Parish, Tangipahoa Parish, and Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana; and
- Port Arthur, Texas

plus resource organizations from the region and beyond. The Network is open to organizations in these and other communities that have demonstrated a commitment to sustainable development of their communities. The Network will convene quarterly with a primary objective of showcasing work in progress and helping members learn from one another – as well as from outside specialists – the most effective local strategies for making communities more socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. Meetings will rotate among the different network communities and will incorporate tours and site visits to local projects, speakers and training workshops. Additional activities that are envisioned include:

- Community education events on topics such as “buying green” and “saving energy to save money;”
- Demonstration projects incorporating green technologies;
- Ongoing coaching and technical support to build the capacity of community organizations; and
- A study tour to explore best practices in one of the nation's foremost green cities.

## Unique Project Approach

The Sustainable Communities Network is a grassroots approach to address issues of community and environmental stewardship. Other emerging alliances addressing significant coastal

environmental issues such as climate change mitigation and adaptation are primarily focused on state and national-level policy reform or corporate responsibility. ISC's complementary approach is to engage people at a community level in a way that is meaningful, practical and relevant to their daily concerns about health, affordability and economic security – and to give them the tools to make a difference. In the process, ISC hopes to demonstrate approaches to making sustainability issues more relevant and accessible at the community level, particularly in communities of color and in lower-income communities, while developing a model that can be replicated in other regions.

## Reaching Out to Form Private and Public Sector Alliances

In order to deepen the Network's impact, ISC will assist with outreach to prospective corporate, government and nonprofit partners at the local, regional, and national level. This expanding web of relationships will position the Network to gain additional exposure and access to technical expertise, materials, and financial resources. As ISC facilitates these connections, we will also explore the feasibility of the Network serving as a hub for new cross-sectoral initiatives, including:

- A regional effort to create new opportunities in the green economy;
- A green purchasing collective that would make products and services (i.e., green-building supplies) more accessible and affordable;
- Alternative energy and energy efficiency demonstration projects; and
- Collaboration with local governments to advance climate action.

Ultimately the Sustainable Communities Network will strengthen local leadership, build civic and nonprofit capacity and leverage the strength of a regionally connected network of communities. By increasing access to new skills, resources, knowledge, and partners, the Network will improve the quality of life for residents while helping to create a more sustainable Gulf Coast.