



# COLLEEN MCHUGH, M.C.P.



## Experience Profile

Colleen McHugh has ten years of experience in climate and resilience planning. In close collaboration with public and private sector partners, McHugh has helped to lead several long-range resilience and climate action planning projects at the Institute, including the award-winning *Resilient Houston* strategy, the **Louisiana Climate Initiatives**, and a **Civil Works Strategic Plan** for the Southwestern District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. She has extensive experience managing ambitious and inclusive planning processes, facilitating interdisciplinary workshops, designing projects and policies, providing technical and programmatic support through implementation, and communicating complex issues to a general audience through clear visuals and language.

Prior to joining the Institute, McHugh spent five years working in the public sector in New Orleans, advancing resilience and sustainability projects and programs that have become national best practices. She was instrumental in the development of New Orleans' award-winning *Resilient New Orleans* strategy, the city's first-ever **Climate Action Plan**, the city's \$141M award-winning proposal for the **National Disaster Resilience Competition**, the design and implementation of neighborhood-scale green infrastructure and nature-based solutions, and the customization of climate adaptation decision support tools. She focused on long-term visioning, strategy, and integrated planning, and successfully translated those efforts into proven implementation and cross-departmental collaboration. Her work engaging engineering and design technicians, and forming partnerships with community organizations, has produced positive, lasting impacts on the city's resilience and associated projects.

McHugh began her career working on urban planning and policy issues in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has a master's in City Planning with a Certificate in Urban Design from MIT and a B.A. in Global Studies with a minor in Geography from UCLA. McHugh was awarded an Excellence in Public Service Award by MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning in 2016 for her leadership in advancing resilience planning and projects in New Orleans.

## Company Role

Senior Adaptation Planner

## Education

Master's in City Planning,  
Certificate in Urban Design,  
Massachusetts Institute of  
Technology,  
2013

B.A.

Global Studies,  
University of California, Los  
Angeles,  
2009

## Areas of Expertise

- Climate Action Planning
- Urban and Community Resilience
- City and Regional Planning
- Policy & Program Development
- Nature-based Solutions for Climate Adaptation
- Urban Design
- Science and Data Visualization and Communication

## Professional Experience

The Water Institute of the Gulf	2018-Present
• <i>Senior Adaptation Planner</i>	
City of New Orleans	2016-2018
• <i>Resilience Design Manager</i>	
New Orleans Redevelopment Authority	2014-2016
• <i>Resilience Planning Fellow</i>	
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	2011-2013
• <i>Research Assistant</i>	
San Francisco Planning & Urban Research (SPUR)	2009-2011
• <i>Editorial Assistant</i>	

## **Selected Projects**

### **Louisiana Climate Initiatives Task Force (Ongoing)**

*Louisiana Governor's Office of Coastal Activities*

The Institute is advising the Governor's Office through a one-year planning process to support the Climate Initiatives Task Force in developing a roadmap and specific actions to meet the state's ambitious goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, set through an Executive Order of Governor John Bel Edwards. This effort engages more than 135 multidisciplinary experts across the Task Force, four Advisory Groups, and six Sector Committees, as well as the public, throughout a transparent and collaborative planning process grounded in a Structure Decision Making (SDM) framework to ensure that competing priorities are fairly considered. This structured process will advance the Task Force's discussions and assist in bringing its diverse membership to consensus on fundamental objectives, goals, and ultimate outcomes. Colleen is serving as the Planning Lead for this effort.

### **Resilient Houston (2018-2020)**

*Rockefeller Foundation, the City of Houston*

The Institute oversaw a multidisciplinary team of experts to support the City of Houston in the development of a comprehensive resilience strategy in support of the City of Houston's participation in 100 Resilient Cities (now the Global Resilient Cities Network). The work aims to enhance the city's long-term vision to build resilience to the shocks – such as hurricanes and rainfall flooding – and stresses that can weaken the fabric of a city. Colleen served as lead project manager and directly advised Houston's Chief Resilience Officer over the 18-month development of the strategy.

### **Louisiana Watershed Initiative (Ongoing)**

*State of Louisiana*

The Institute is providing technical and programmatic support to the Louisiana Watershed Initiative (LWI), a suite of related efforts to improve the way residents and governments understand, address, and respond to flood risk across the state of Louisiana. Colleen is advising state agencies on several technical and policy aspects of the program, including connecting the watershed modeling program to governance, policy, and decision support elements of the overall initiative. The Institute's planning and policy role strengthens LWI by emphasizing regional and watershed-based collaboration, coordination, governance, coalition-building, and decision-making.

### **Civil Works Strategic Plan (2019-2020)**

*U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Southwestern Division*

The Institute worked in collaboration with Arcadis and ILSI to develop a fifteen-year strategic plan for the USACE Southwestern Division's Civil Works program. This planning process included engaging Corps leadership, staff, and external stakeholders in an identification of key risks and opportunities; grounding input in desktop research; translating that analysis into a vision, strategic goals, and tactical objectives to guide the Civil Works program over the next fifteen years; and accounting for future uncertainties through scenario planning.

### **Dutch Dialogues Charleston (2019)**

*Historic Charleston Foundation, the City of Charleston*

Dutch Dialogues® Charleston is a community-driven project of local, national and international flood, engineering and planning experts, city officials, nonprofit partners and local residents to develop and design solutions for Charleston's increasing flood challenges. Dutch Dialogues Charleston was led by The Water Institute and Waggoner & Ball Architects, with support from the Royal Netherlands Embassy.

### **Gentilly Resilience District | National Disaster Resilience Competition (2015-2018)**

*City of New Orleans*

New Orleans participated in HUD's National Disaster Resilience Competition, which sought innovative and transferable solutions to some of the most pressing risks facing local communities. Colleen worked on the City's \$141M-award winning proposal for and early implementation of the Gentilly Resilience District, a network of integrated green infrastructure projects and complementary initiatives that will reduce flood risk, spur economic opportunity, improve health, encourage neighborhood revitalization, and adapt to a changing natural environment.

### **Climate action for a resilient New Orleans: 50% by 2030 (2017)**

*City of New Orleans*

The City of New Orleans' first climate action strategy proposes 11 strategies and 25 actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent by 2030. Colleen served on the core team that developed the strategy as an editor, writer, and director of graphic content. She worked to align the vision of the climate action strategy with the city's resilience strategy, produced original infographics, and laid out the design for the final report.

### **Planning tools for climate adaptation (2016-2017)**

*City of New Orleans, Trust for Public Land, Deltares*

Colleen oversaw the development of two planning tools to support data-driven and collaborative decision making about where and how to invest in green infrastructure and climate adaptation projects. The Trust for Public Land [Climate Smart Cities](#) decision support tool is a GIS-based online mapping portal that uses local data to prioritize investments in climate action based on environmental, social, and health data. The Deltares [Adaptation Support Tool](#) facilitates design workshops where a range of stakeholders can identify and compare potential green infrastructure measures for a project site and quantify their performance in meeting water storage and climate adaptation goals.

### **Resilient New Orleans: Strategic actions to shape our future city (2015)**

*City of New Orleans, 100 Resilient Cities*

The City of New Orleans' resilience strategy proposes bold yet pragmatic actions to adapt the city to a changing natural environment, invest in equity, create flexible and reliable systems, and prepare for future shocks. Colleen served on the core team that developed the strategy as a planner, writer, editor, photographer, mapmaker, and graphics director. The strategy was developed by researching challenges facing New Orleans, gathering input from stakeholders with relevant knowledge, and sourcing best practices from around the world.