

# THE NEW ORLEANS INDEX

— TRACKING THE RECOVERY OF NEW ORLEANS & THE METRO AREA —



## August 2009

“Though New Orleans has been somewhat shielded from the recession due to substantial rebuilding activity, four years after Katrina the region still faces major challenges due to blight, unaffordable housing, and vulnerable flood protection. New federal leadership must commit and sustain its partnership with state and local leaders by delivering on key milestones in innovation, infrastructure, human capital, and sustainable communities to help greater New Orleans move past “disaster recovery” and boldly build a more prosperous future.”

## ABOUT THIS NEW ORLEANS INDEX

This fourth anniversary edition of the New Orleans Index examines the social and economic recovery of the New Orleans metro area, four years after Hurricane Katrina and the related levee failures. Relying on more than fifty indicators, we examine recovery progress to date for the city and its surrounding metro area which includes Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, and St. Tammany parishes. Key findings are highlighted in “at-a-glance” graphic representations.

For the first time, we have added neighborhood-level indicators of population recovery for the city of New Orleans (Orleans Parish). Readers seeking even more detail can visit the [GNOCDC.org](http://GNOCDC.org) web site for interactive maps and more detailed analysis. And we continue to publish several indicators of recovery for New Orleans’ 13 planning districts, which were the geographic areas for which specific plans were developed when New Orleanians gathered in late 2006 to develop the Unified New Orleans Plan.

## HISTORY OF THE NEW ORLEANS INDEX

In December 2005, the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program began monitoring the social and economic recovery of the Gulf Coast region through the publication of *The Katrina Index*. The Index provided members of the media, key decision makers, nonprofit and private sector groups, and researchers with an independent, fact-based, one-stop resource to monitor and evaluate the progress of on-the-ground recovery in Louisiana and Mississippi.

In 2007, *The Katrina Index* was released as a joint collaboration between the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center and the Brookings Institution in order to bring an even better, more tailored assessment of recovery of the New Orleans region. Beginning with the second anniversary edition, we changed the name to “*The New Orleans Index*” to shift the emphasis of recovery away from a named disaster to a great American urban center. Over time, we’ve added new indices to provide a more comprehensive picture of the economic, social, and fiscal health of the greater New Orleans region. And, as neighborhood-level data becomes available, we incorporate it into the Index when it can inform relevant and current policy decisions.

Going forward, *The New Orleans Index* will be issued every August to provide a detailed analysis of the recovery at the anniversary of Katrina. The Greater New Orleans Community Data Center releases data briefs throughout the year, and the Brookings Metro program regularly includes New Orleans in its analysis of trends across metro regions.

## Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful for the meticulous background research, data compilation, analysis support, and design provided by Data Center staff Elaine Ortiz, Denice Ross, and Melissa Schigoda, as well as the attention to detail and quick turnaround in producing this document by Dallas Hewitt at the Harahan DocuMart. The authors are also grateful to Dek Terrell and Ryan Bilbo of Louisiana State University for their special compilations of small area employment data.

Both the Data Center and Brookings would like to thank the Blue Moon Fund for its support of the New Orleans Index as well as activities to help New Orleans organizations use the data to support recovery-related planning and decision-making. Further, Brookings and the Data Center are grateful to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation for their support of the New Orleans Index, and to Baptist Community Ministries and United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area for their ongoing support of the Data Center.

Finally, both the Data Center and Brookings would like to thank the many individuals from federal, state, and local agencies and organizations who have provided us with the most robust and up-to-date information available. Their tireless efforts to collect and make public these data have been invaluable to the large audience of users of this Index.

*Cover photo by Julie Plonk*

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# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

By Amy Liu and Allison Plyer

## New Orleans Four Years after Hurricane Katrina

The nation's deepening economic recession has produced dissolution and despair across the country as many communities grapple with the social and economic ramifications of massive layoffs, prolonged unemployment, shuttered businesses, and home foreclosures. By contrast, rebuilding from the woes caused by Hurricane Katrina has helped cushion greater New Orleans from the ravages of the downturn.

As New Orleans ends its fourth year since the hurricane and levee failures, the region has been buoyed by post-disaster recovery efforts and its fortunate industry mix.

Specifically, this year's special anniversary edition of the New Orleans Index finds that:

- **The New Orleans economy is weathering the recession relatively well due in part to its industry composition.** The New Orleans metro area lost 0.9 percent of its jobs since last June, compared to the 4.1 percent lost nationally. The industries hardest hit—manufacturing and construction—comprise relatively small shares of the New Orleans economy and since last June have shed few jobs. The four largest sectors of the region's economy—trade and transportation, government, leisure and hospitality, and education and health services—either stagnated or added jobs. The New Orleans metro area's unemployment rate rose to 7.3 percent while it climbed to 9.5 percent for the nation.
- **Ongoing rebuilding activities are attracting people, jobs, and investments, further shoring up the greater New Orleans economy.** New Orleans added more than 8,500 households (actively receiving mail) in the past year, the biggest one-year expansion since 2007, reflecting a mix of new and returning residents. While home rebuilding has slowed dramatically since 2007, post-disaster infrastructure investments in the levee system, schools, police stations and other public facilities have continued apace. Since July 2008, FEMA has paid over \$800 million for infrastructure repair projects across the five-parish area. In the city of New Orleans, 94 facilities and public works projects were completed as of April 2009, and 113 more were under construction.<sup>1</sup>
- **Yet New Orleans is not immune from the economic crisis.** Like many metropolitan areas, the housing market has stalled, with home sales down 39 percent and new construction down 48 percent. The slowdown in consumer spending has contributed to a plunge in city sales tax revenues with 21 percent fewer receipts from general sales, motel/hotel stays, and motor vehicle purchases in April and 6 percent fewer receipts in May compared to the previous year.
- **Further, massive blight, affordable housing for low-income workers, and significant flood risk remain the area's major challenges.** While there are fewer unoccupied residences in Orleans, St. Bernard and Jefferson parishes this year, the scale of blight remains high—65,888, 14,372, and 11,516 residences, respectively—posing significant challenges for local governments. Steep rent increases have abated, but at 40 percent higher than pre-Katrina, rents remain out of reach for

<sup>1</sup> City of New Orleans: Monthly Progress Report, Recovery Projects, April 2009. Available at [http://neworleans.iprojweb.com/doc/monthlyreport\\_april2009.pdf](http://neworleans.iprojweb.com/doc/monthlyreport_april2009.pdf)

many critical workers. Typical rent for an efficiency apartment is \$733 per month, unaffordable for food preparation, health care support, and retail sales workers. Finally, a timeline recently released by the the Army Corps of Engineers indicates that they are behind schedule in completing the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System by 2011. While the levee system will be improved when finished, additional protective measures and land use provisions will be necessary to protect the city from Katrina-strength storms.<sup>1</sup>

Residents and leaders are eager to get beyond “disaster recovery” to implement bold plans for creating a sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous city and region. Locally, key moves are creating the foundation for transformation to meet residents’ long-term aspirations. Last November, New Orleans voters approved two important amendments to the city charter. The first gave the city’s master plan teeth by requiring all zoning and land use requirements to conform, providing predictability, market confidence for development, and a more transparent and organized process for public participation. The second measure provided a dedicated revenue source to the newly created Inspector General’s office, giving the office steady resources necessary for accountability in the wake of pervasive public mistrust, waste, and fraud. And recently, the City Council approved funds for a newly created, quasi-public New Orleans Economic Development Corporation to lead the city’s economic growth activities and provide a measure of continuity across mayoral administrations.

The Obama administration and the next mayor of New Orleans must work together with the state to build on this current progress to help the city truly reinvent itself.<sup>2</sup> The administration has many opportunities to lead a robust interagency effort that applies new policy initiatives that leverage the economic assets of New Orleans—in innovation, human capital, infrastructure, and quality neighborhoods. For instance, to invest in people and innovation, the administration could help state and local leaders resolve the future of Charity Hospital and facilitate the delivery of quality, affordable health care for all residents while making a critical investment in the growth of its health care cluster. To maximize interagency efforts, the Office of Gulf Coast Rebuilding’s leadership, institutional knowledge, and established partnerships must be retained and elevated within the White House.<sup>3</sup> In addition, state and local leaders could partner with Congress and the Obama Administration to take advantage of new federal opportunities—linking school reform with neighborhood revitalization, investing in green industries (including coastal restoration and protection), and bolstering ports, major transportation and freight corridors.

With strong partnerships, local leadership, and leveraged assets, New Orleans could emerge as a model of resilience for metro areas recovering from natural catastrophes or major economic shocks, as those triggered by this recession.

- 1 US Army Corps of Engineers. “Hurricane & Storm Damage Risk Reduction System Contract Information.” Available at [www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/hps\\_contract\\_info.aspx](http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/hps_contract_info.aspx); National Research Council. “The New Orleans Hurricane Protection System: Assessing Pre-Katrina Vulnerability and Improving Mitigation and Preparedness” Available at [www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=12647](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12647).
- 2 The primary for the 2010 mayoral race is on February 6, with a run-off election on April 22. Mayor Ray Nagin is not eligible due to term-limits.
- 3 The extension of the executive order that established the Office of the Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding expires on September 30, 2009.

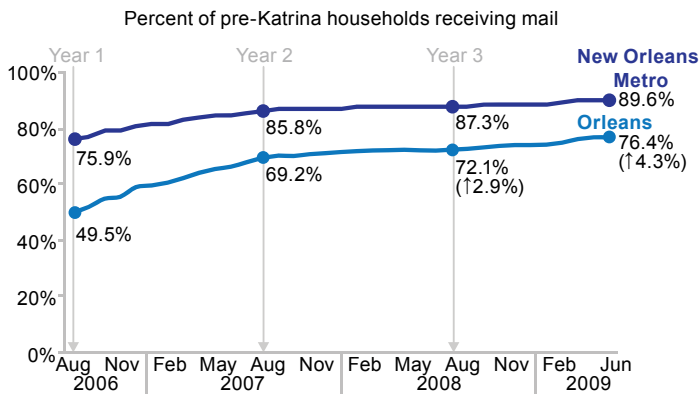
## Population Trends

- **This past year, population growth picked up pace in the city of New Orleans, reaching 76.4 percent of pre-Katrina residences actively receiving mail, a 4.3 percentage point increase from last August.** All parishes gained residences actively receiving mail from August 2008 to June 2009, with Orleans Parish, St. Bernard and St. Tammany experiencing the largest absolute gains. New Orleans' rate of growth has increased over the prior year. From August 2008 to June 2009, Orleans Parish added 8,577 active residences compared with 5,345 added from August 2007 to June 2008. The New Orleans metro area is now home to nearly 90 percent of the pre-Katrina number of households receiving mail.
- **Although the New Orleans population continues to grow, new neighborhood-level data available quarterly shows that twelve neighborhoods lost more than 50 active-address households from June 2008 to June 2009.** As new rental and homeownership opportunities become available, the overall population of the city is shifting even as new households are moving into the city. [See Recovery of New Orleans by Neighborhood on page 17 for more details.]
- **While growth in households has increased since August 2008, growth in school enrollment across the metro area has slowed, suggesting that recent arrivals to the metro area are likely singles and childless couples.** The metro area gained 12,400 residences actively receiving mail from August 2008 to June 2009 up from a 7,896 increase in the third year after Katrina. Although total school enrollment reached 78 percent of pre-Katrina levels by spring 2009, growth in school enrollment has slowed—increasing only by 3,800 compared with 7,513 in the previous year—indicating that many new households may be without children.
- **Hispanic children represent a growing share of the student population, increasing to 5.6 percent of total metro-wide school enrollment by spring 2009; while black students reached 42.8 percent by spring 2009.** Before Katrina, black children accounted for 49.1 percent of all public and private school enrollment in the metro but fell to 39.1 percent by spring 2007. The share of black students has continued to rise since 2007 reaching 42.8 percent by spring 2009. In contrast, immediately following Katrina, Hispanic students grew as a share of all public and private school students, from 3.6 percent pre-Katrina to 5 percent by spring 2007, and to 5.6 percent by spring 2009.
- **Total enrollment at New Orleans' colleges and universities grew 5 percent since spring 2008, including 1,502 more students at Delgado Community College.** The graduation of the “Katrina class” in May 2009 marked the four-year anniversary of Katrina at local colleges and universities, and while some schools are struggling with post-Katrina recruiting, others are exceeding expectations. Total spring enrollment levels at SUNO, Delgado Community College, and Tulane University have grown three consecutive years, even as larger classes of students that started pre-Katrina have graduated.

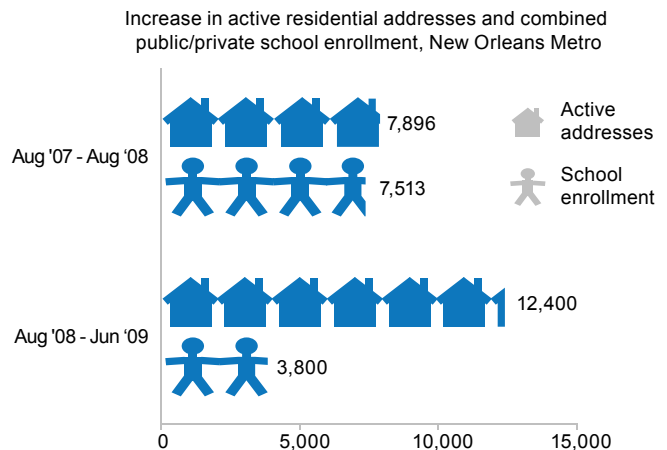


# Population At-a-Glance

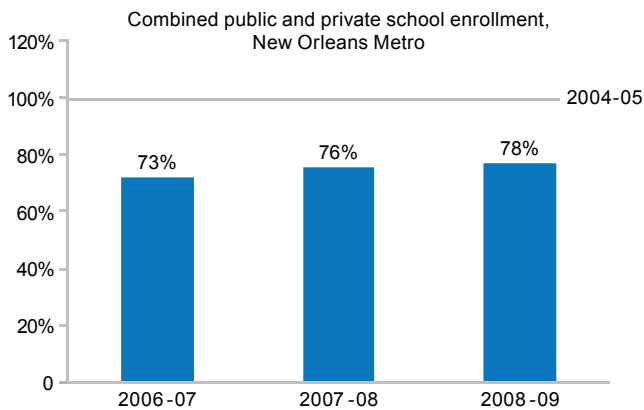
The population of the city and metro area grew at a faster rate in the fourth year after Katrina than in the previous year.



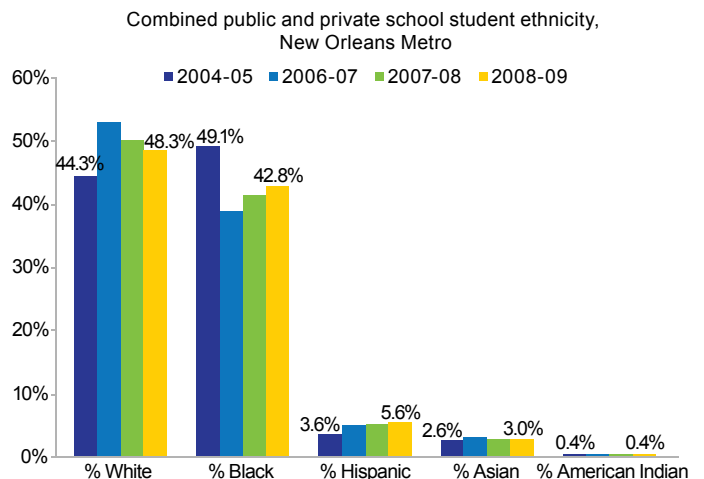
While growth in metro area households has increased since August 2008, the increase in school enrollment slowed in the 2008-09 school year, suggesting that recent arrivals are predominantly singles and childless couples.



Total public and private school enrollment continued to grow reaching 78 percent of pre-Katrina levels by the spring of 2009.



Black children continue to make up a growing share of total public and private school students, reaching 42.8 percent of total students by the end of the 2008-2009 school year, while the share of Hispanic children climbed to 5.6 percent.



Top graph source: GNOCCDC analysis of USPS Delivery Statistics Product. Bottom graph source: Louisiana Department of Education and Trinity Episcopal School. Note: 2005-2006 data is not presented due to uncertainty of school enrollment in first year after Katrina.

Top graph sources: GNOCCDC analysis of USPS Delivery Statistics Product, Louisiana Department of Education and Trinity Episcopal School. Bottom graph source: Louisiana Department of Education. Note: 2005-2006 data is not presented due to uncertainty of school enrollment in first year after Katrina.

## Economy Trends

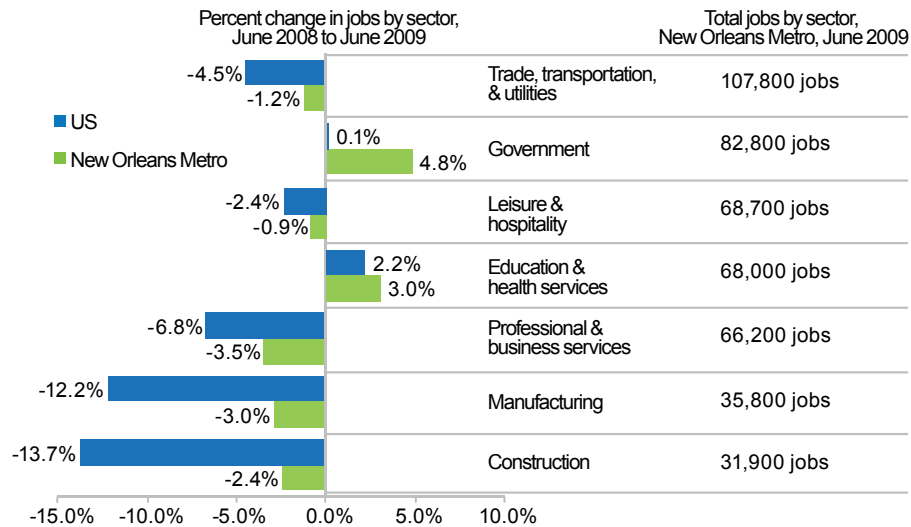
- **The New Orleans metro area continues to weather the national recession relatively well, only losing 0.9 percent of total jobs since last June compared to a 4.1 percent loss for the nation.** Industry sectors with the largest declines nationally since June 2008—including construction and manufacturing—shed relatively few jobs in the New Orleans metro and represented a relatively small portion of the region’s overall economy. Of those sectors with more than 50,000 jobs in the region, only professional and business services suffered severe job losses (down 3.5 percent). Leisure and hospitality lost only 0.9 percent of all jobs, and the trade, transportation and utilities sector is down only 1.2 percent. Education and health services and government added jobs, at 3 percent and 4.8 percent, respectively.
- **The non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in the New Orleans metro area surged to 7.3 percent in June 2009, up from 5.9 percent one month ago, and 4.6 percent last June.** Meanwhile the seasonally adjusted U.S. rate reached 9.5 percent, up from 9.4 percent one month ago, and 5.6 percent last June. The one-month spike in the unemployment rate for the New Orleans metro was caused primarily by a sharp rise in the number of people seeking work, rather than by job losses. Compared to the 100 largest metros, New Orleans had the sixth lowest unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2009.<sup>1</sup>
- **The non-seasonally adjusted New Orleans metro area labor force increased to 534,000 in June 2009, a nearly two percent increase from one month ago, and 1 percent lower than last June.** Meanwhile the seasonally adjusted U.S. labor force fell slightly since last month, and is up 0.3 percent since June 2008. In the New Orleans metro area, 8,964 people entered the labor force in search of summer work between May and June 2009, accounting for nearly all of the surge in the area’s unemployment rate.
- **New Orleans sales tax revenue declined in April and May 2009 for the first time since 2006, reflecting the national decline in consumer spending.** General sales tax revenues for the city of New Orleans were down from a year ago by 22 percent in April and 2 percent in May. Other tax revenues seemed to be even more deeply affected by the recession: Motor vehicle tax collections were down 18 percent in April, and 28 percent in May, and hotel/motel tax revenues were down 12 percent in April and 24 percent in May.
- **General cargo handled at the Port of New Orleans was down 19 percent in 2008, signaling the effects of not only a national, but a global recession.** In 2007, 7.4 million short tons of general cargo passed through the port, compared to only 5.9 million in 2008. A 32 percent drop in the volume of imported iron and steel products handled at the Port was the largest reason for the decline. Iron and steel imports, which typically account for 50 to 70 percent of general cargo tonnage handled at the port, accounted for less than 41 percent of general cargo in 2008.<sup>2</sup>

1 The Brookings Institution. “MetroMonitor.” Available at [http://www.brookings.edu/metro/MetroMonitor/unemployment\\_rate.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/metro/MetroMonitor/unemployment_rate.aspx)

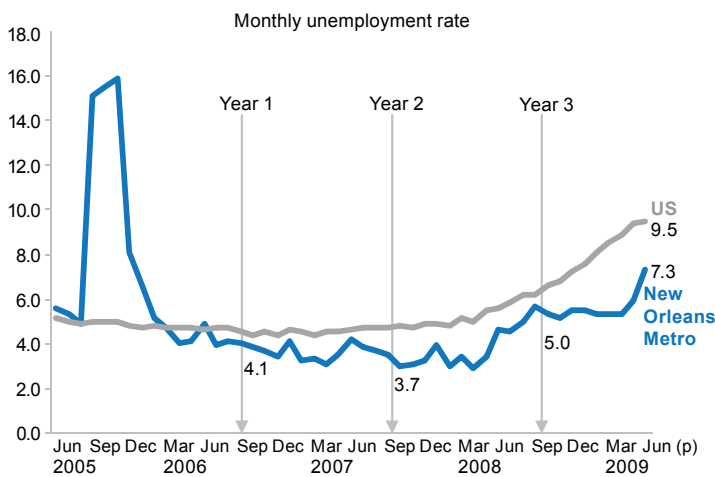
2 Personal communication: H. Wilbert, Marketing Department of the Port of New Orleans. July 20, 2009.

# Economy At-a-Glance

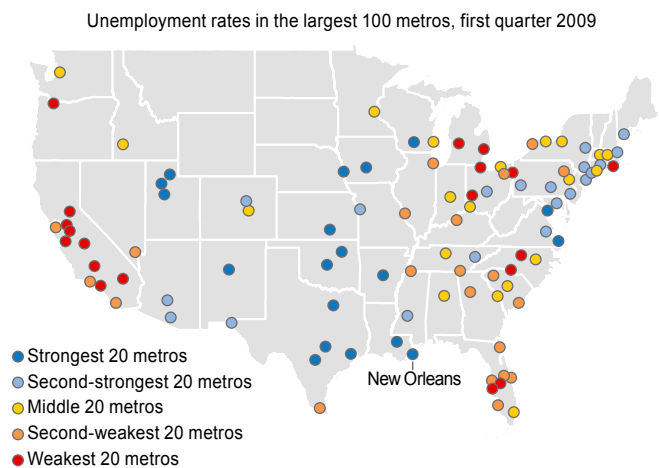
The New Orleans metro economy is weathering the recession with job gains or relatively few job losses in most key sectors.



Although unemployment in the New Orleans metro has risen in the fourth year after Katrina, it remains lower than the national level.



Based on its relatively low unemployment rate, of the largest 100 metros, New Orleans ranks among the strongest.



Top graph source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics.

Bottom graph source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Bottom graph source: Brookings, "MetroMonitor." Available at [http://www.brookings.edu/metro/MetroMonitor/unemployment\\_rate.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/metro/MetroMonitor/unemployment_rate.aspx)

## Housing Trends

- **The market for single family homes across the metro area cooled in 2009, with sales volumes and average prices down markedly from one year earlier.** The total number of homes sold in the metro area fell to 686 in May 2009, down 23 percent from one year earlier and nearly half the number sold in May 2006 and May 2007. Comparing first quarter 2008 to first quarter 2009, housing prices across the New Orleans metro fell 0.3 percent—although not as steeply as the national decrease of 6.3 percent, or the 6.9 percent average decrease for the 100 largest metros across the same time frame.<sup>1</sup>
- **In its fourth year of disaster recovery, the pace of home reconstruction and new construction has slowed in New Orleans.** From September 2008 to May 2009, the monthly average number of residential permits issued in the city was 420, down from 676 in September 2007 through August 2008, and from 912 in the prior year. Similarly, the monthly average of new residential housing units authorized for construction fell to 197 since September 2008, down from 218 in the third year and from 211 in the second year of recovery.
- **As of June 2009, the Road Home program has disbursed \$7.95 billion in grants to 124,219 underinsured homeowners, the vast majority of whom will rebuild.** As the Road Home transitions to a new contractor, only 8,635 applicants remain—half of whom are still demonstrating their eligibility. In Jefferson and St. Tammany parishes, where housing damage was often minor in severity,<sup>2</sup> ninety-nine percent of Road Home recipients will rebuild their homes. The largest number of grants has been distributed to homeowners in Orleans Parish, where 90 percent are rebuilding. In St. Bernard, only 64 percent of grant recipients are rebuilding. Through this program the state has acquired 9,418 properties in the five-parish area from homeowners choosing not to rebuild.
- **Orleans and St. Bernard parishes continue to have very high numbers of vacant and blighted residences, though these numbers have declined in the fourth year of recovery.** Since last September, Orleans and St. Bernard parishes reduced their inventory of vacant and blighted residences by 3,839 and 816 respectively. However, as of March 2009, the share of unoccupied residential addresses in Orleans and St. Bernard, at 31 and 53 percent respectively, exceeds other cities also grappling with excess land and buildings. In absolute numbers, New Orleans has 65,888 unoccupied residential addresses—nearly as many as Detroit.<sup>3</sup> In St. Bernard, 14,372 residences are unoccupied. [See Recovery of New Orleans by Neighborhood on page 17 for more details.]
- **Many essential service workers in the New Orleans area cannot afford the fair market rents of an apartment in the region.** According to analysis of 2008 data, there are many workers in occupations with high labor shortages, such as food preparation, health care support, and retail sales, who spent more than 30 percent of their monthly income to rent even an efficiency apartment in the area.

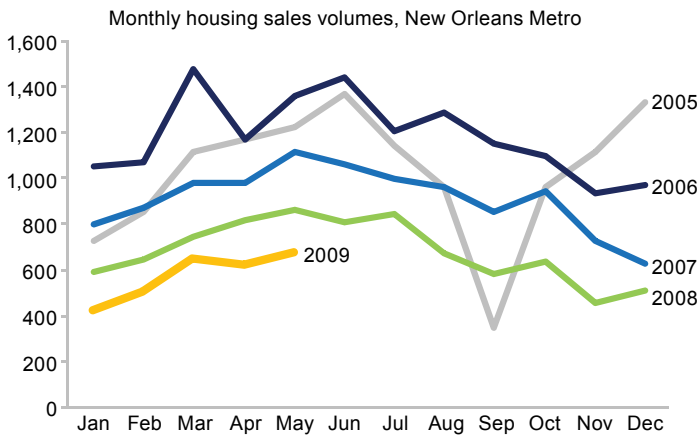
1 The Brookings Institution. "MetroMonitor." Available at [http://www.brookings.edu/metro/MetroMonitor/~/\\_/media/Files/Programs/Metro/metro\\_monitor/metro\\_profiles/new\\_orleans\\_la\\_metro\\_profile.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/metro/MetroMonitor/~/_/media/Files/Programs/Metro/metro_monitor/metro_profiles/new_orleans_la_metro_profile.pdf)

2 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. "Current Housing Unit Damage Estimates, Hurricane Katrina, Rita and Wilma, February 12, 2006." Available at [http://gnocdc.s3.amazonaws.com/reports/Katrina\\_Rita\\_Wilma\\_Damage\\_2\\_12\\_06\\_\\_\\_revised.pdf](http://gnocdc.s3.amazonaws.com/reports/Katrina_Rita_Wilma_Damage_2_12_06___revised.pdf)

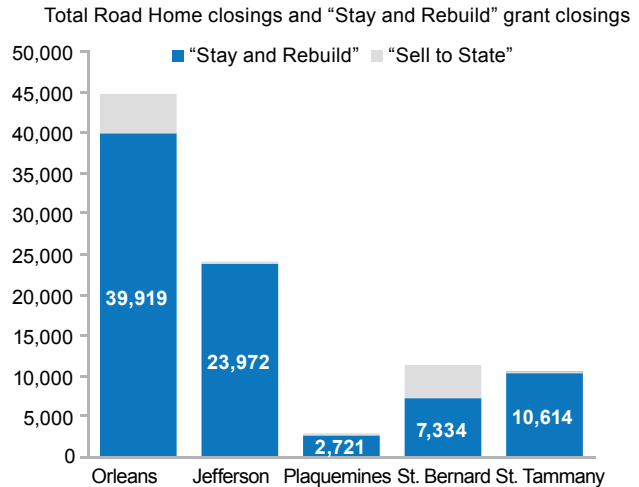
3 Greater New Orleans Community Data Center. "National Benchmarks for Blight." Available at <http://www.gnocdc.org/BenchmarksforBlight/>

# Housing At-a-Glance

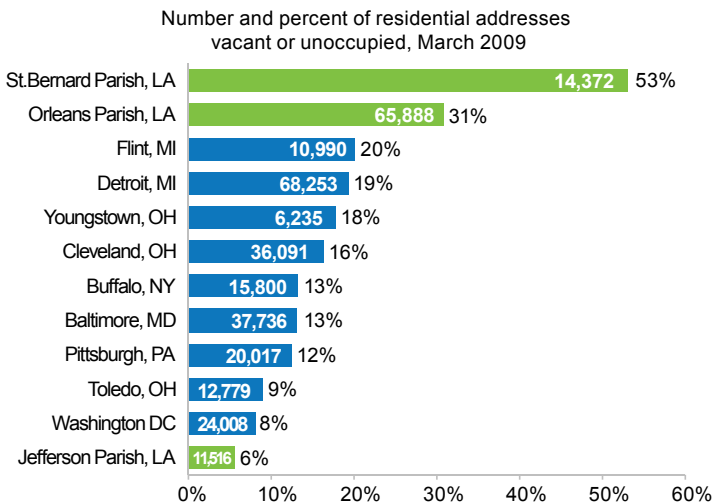
**Metro area home sales volumes were 23 percent lower in May 2009 than the previous year.**



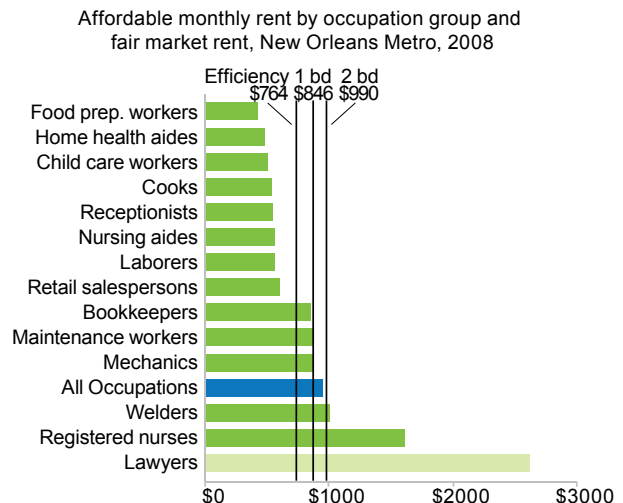
**The largest number of Road Home recipients is in Orleans Parish where the vast majority will stay and rebuild.**



**New Orleans area parishes, like many cities around the country, are grappling with large numbers of unoccupied residential addresses.**



**Few workers in key service sector jobs with high vacancies can afford an apartment in New Orleans metro with 30 percent (or less) of their monthly wages.**



**Top graph source:** New Orleans Metropolitan Association of Realtors. **Bottom graph source:** GNOCDC analysis of HUD Aggregated USPS Administrative Data on Address Vacancies.

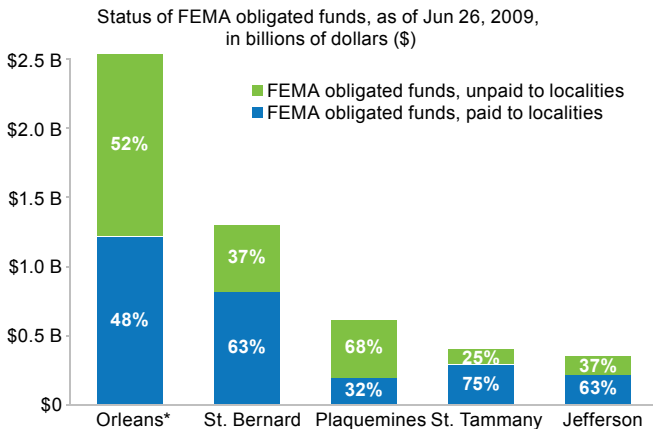
**Top graph source:** The Road Home Program. **Bottom graph source:** BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. **Note:** Lawyers are provided for contrast, but did not have large vacancies.

## Infrastructure Trends

- **FEMA has obligated an additional \$900 million for infrastructure repairs in Louisiana since last July, bringing the total to nearly \$7.8 billion, of which 58 percent has been paid to localities.** Nearly four years after Katrina, total funding approved for disaster recovery is still on the rise—particularly in hard hit parishes where damage is so extensive that local governments are overwhelmed trying to document it all. Over the past year, FEMA obligated an additional \$510 million for Orleans Parish and an additional \$201 million for St. Bernard Parish. Slightly less than half of the total \$2.5 billion obligated to private and governmental entities in Orleans Parish for debris removal and infrastructure repairs remains to be paid.
- **In the fourth year after Katrina, sixteen additional schools opened in the New Orleans area.** In hard hit St. Bernard Parish, three public schools opened and in Orleans Parish, eight public and two private schools opened in the last year. In St. Tammany Parish one additional school and in Jefferson Parish two additional schools have opened since the third anniversary of Katrina.
- **A flurry of child care center openings in Orleans and St. Bernard parishes has boosted their shares of centers to half the pre-Katrina number for the first time since the storm.** Since August 2008, 22 child care centers have opened in Orleans Parish bringing the total to 141 or 51 percent of pre-Katrina, up from 43 percent. In St. Bernard, five child care centers opened, bringing the total there to 50 percent of pre-Katrina. In St. Tammany one child care center opened, while in Jefferson Parish the total number of licensed child care centers fell by two over the last year.
- **Between May 2008 and 2009, average daily ridership on public transportation rose 10 percent, but remained well below pre-Katrina levels.** In the fourth year of recovery, ridership on public buses and street cars increased and the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority began offering new “Lil Easy” service in Lower Ninth Ward, Gentilly and Lakeview neighborhoods. (This service runs small 15-seat buses on custom routes with passengers reserving seats in advance.) But by May 2009, ridership remained at only 43 percent of pre-Katrina levels.
- **New Orleans remains vulnerable to storm-related flooding—but how vulnerable is currently unknown.** The Army Corps of Engineers continues work on the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System that is intended to provide protection from a storm surge that has a 1 percent chance of occurring any given year. However, Katrina was a 0.25 percent storm, stronger than the level of protection for which the system currently under construction is designed. Because no regularly-updated indicators exist on land loss, coastal restoration, and mitigation of flood risk due to human engineering, tracking recovery in this realm is challenging.

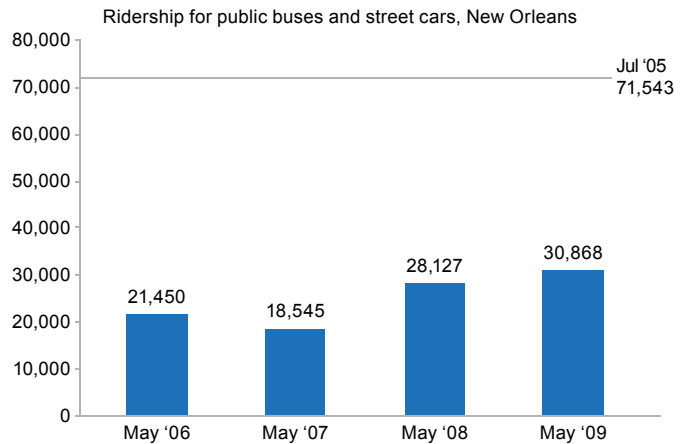
# Infrastructure At-a-Glance

**By June 2008, Orleans and Plaquemines parishes had received less than 50 percent of the FEMA Public Assistance funds obligated to them.**

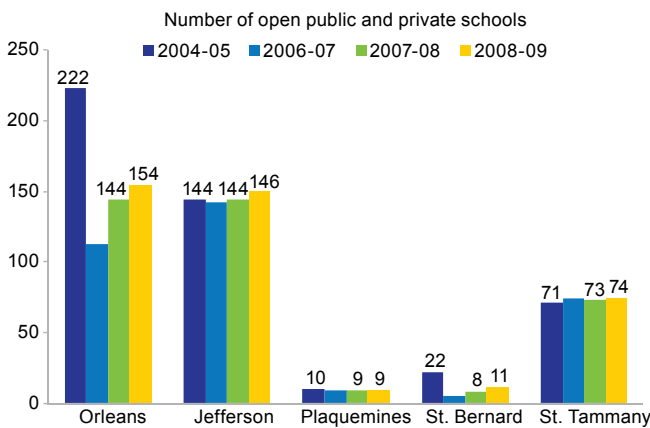


\*Includes City of New Orleans, Recovery School District, Charity Hospital, NO Airport and the NO Convention Center

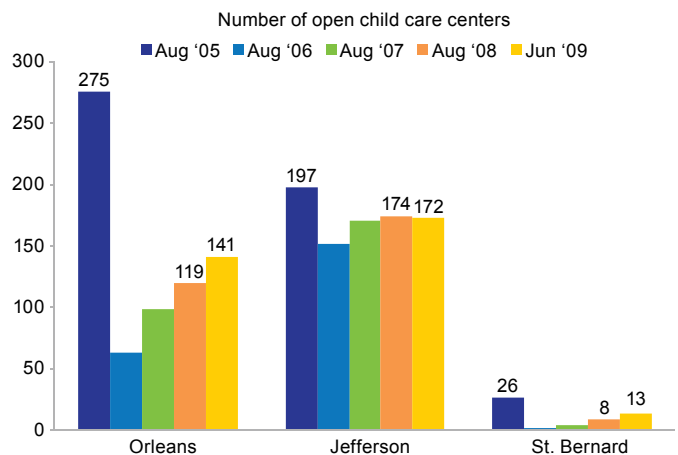
**By May 2009, average daily ridership on regional public buses and street cars had grown 10 percent over the previous year, but ridership remains at only 43 percent of pre-Katrina.**



**In the fourth year after Katrina, sixteen additional schools opened in the New Orleans area.**



**Since August 2008, there continued to be a steady pace of child care center openings in Orleans and St. Bernard parishes.**



**Top graph source:** FEMA. **Bottom graph source:** Louisiana Department of Education.

**Top graph source:** New Orleans Regional Transit Authority. **Bottom source:** Agenda for Children and Louisiana Department of Social Services Bureau of Licensing.

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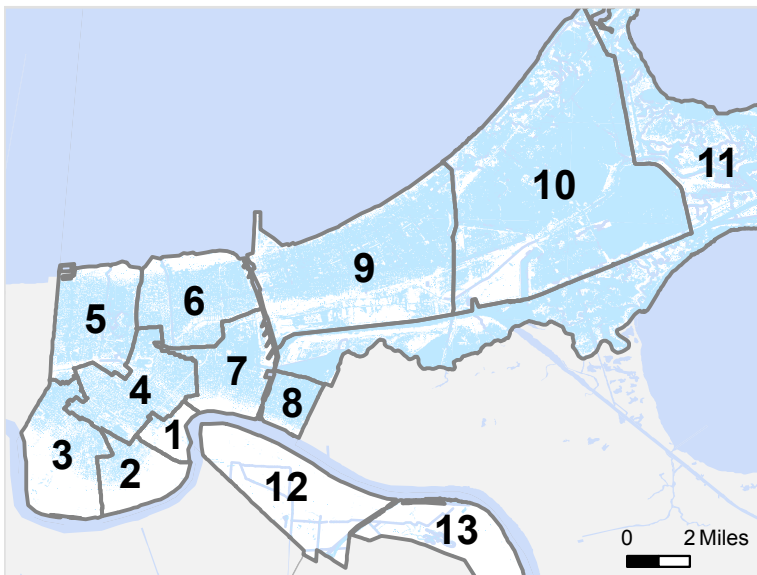
# Recovery of New Orleans by Neighborhood

When the levees protecting New Orleans failed in August 2005, approximately 80 percent of the city was flooded. The business district and main tourist centers were relatively undamaged, but vast expanses of many New Orleans neighborhoods were inundated, making this the largest residential disaster in U.S. history.

The extent of damage varied greatly from one part of town to another. Some areas received one foot of flooding while others were submerged by 10 feet of water. The rate of recovery has also varied across the city.

In this section, we examine recovery indicators across the 73 neighborhoods and 13 planning districts of New Orleans to reveal trends across smaller areas that may be masked by citywide figures. New Orleans has 73 official neighborhoods that form 13 planning districts. (See reference map below for planning district boundaries and names of neighborhoods within each.)

## Extent of flooding from Katrina



District	Neighborhood Names
1	Central Business District, French Quarter
2	Central City, East Riverside, Garden District, Irish Channel, Lower Garden District, Milan, St. Thomas, Touro
3	Audubon, Black Pearl, Broadmoor, Dixon, East Carrollton, Fontainebleau, Freret, Hollygrove, Leonidas, Uptown, West Riverside
4	Bayou St. John, BW Cooper, Fairgrounds, Gert Town, Iberville, Mid-City, St. Bernard Area, Seventh Ward, Tremé/Lafitte, Tulane/Gravier
5	City Park, Lakeshore/Lake Vista, Lakeview, Lakewood, Navarre, West End
6	Dillard, Filmore, Gentilly Terrace, Gentilly Woods, Lake Terrace & Lake Oaks, Milneburg, Pontchartrain Park, St. Anthony
7	Bywater, Desire Area, Desire Development, Florida Area, Florida Development, Marigny, St. Claude, St. Roch
8	Holy Cross, Lower 9th Ward
9	Little Woods, Pines Village, Plum Orchard, Read Boulevard East, Read Boulevard West, West Lake Forest
10	Village de L'Est
11	Lake Catherine, Viavant/Venetian Isles
12	Algiers Point, Behrman, Fischer, McDonogh, Old Aurora, US Naval Support Area, Tall Timbers/ Brechtel, Whitney
13	English Turn

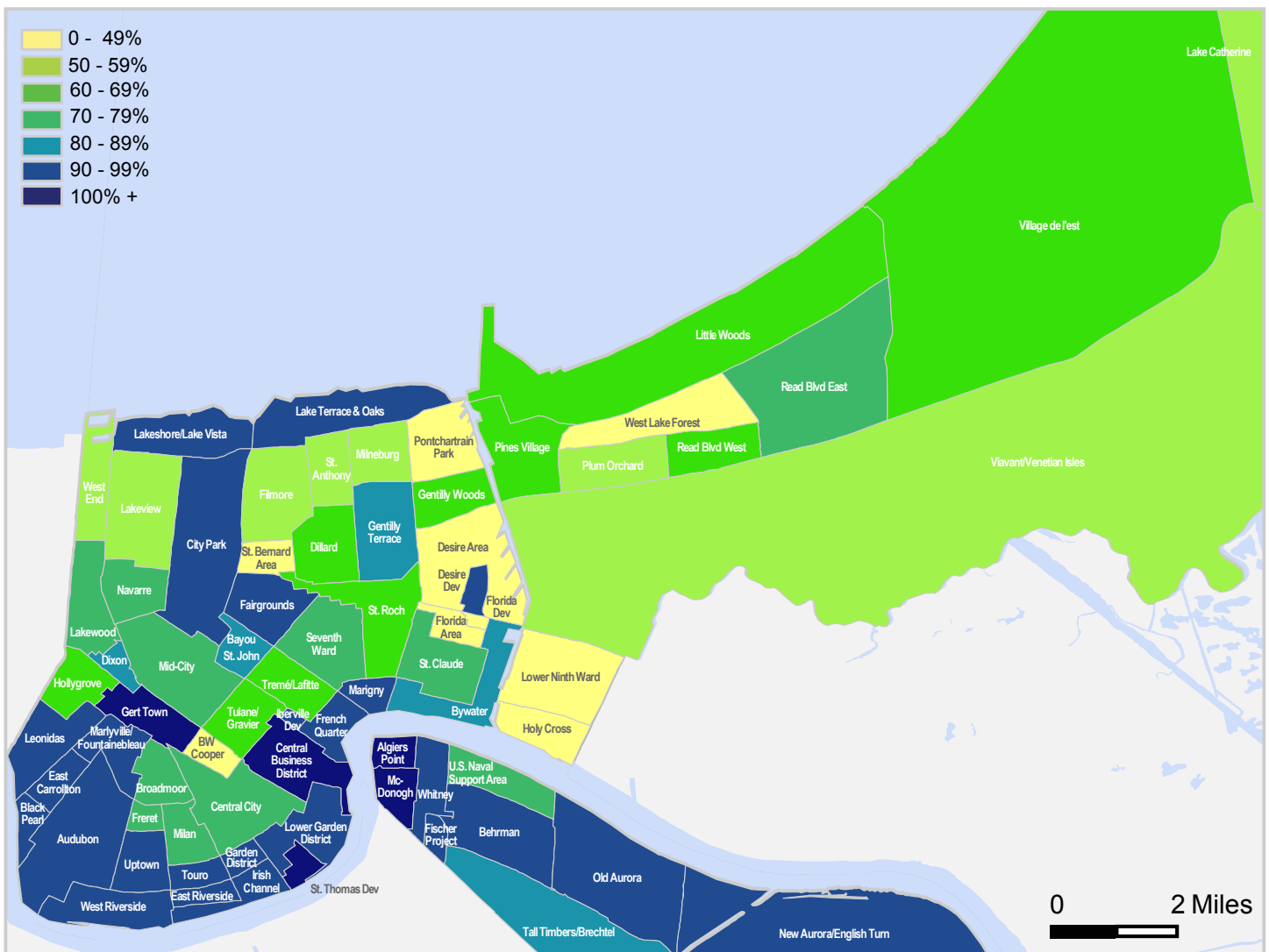
**Sources:** Brakenridge, G.R., E. Anderson (2005) Flood Inundation Vector derived from SPOT satellite image from Sept. 2, 2005. Dartmouth Floods Observatory, Hanover, NH, USA (flood extent); New Orleans City Planning (planning districts and neighborhoods).

In the following pages, we examine population trends across the 73 neighborhoods and housing trends across the 13 planning districts. This information can help residents, neighborhood groups, and decisionmakers act more strategically and effectively for their community.

# Population Recovery

Redevelopment is now a major influence in the repopulation of New Orleans neighborhoods. As of June 2009, nine neighborhoods still have less than half of the active residential addresses they did before Katrina. But three of these—BW Cooper, Florida, and St. Bernard—are home to public housing sites that have been demolished and are in the process of being redeveloped. Five neighborhoods with new developments, including single family homes, apartments and condo buildings—McDonogh, Algiers Point, Central Business District, Gert Town, and St. Thomas (or “River Gardens”)—have more active addresses than they did in June 2005.

**Percent of June 2005 addresses actively receiving mail as of June 2009, by neighborhood**

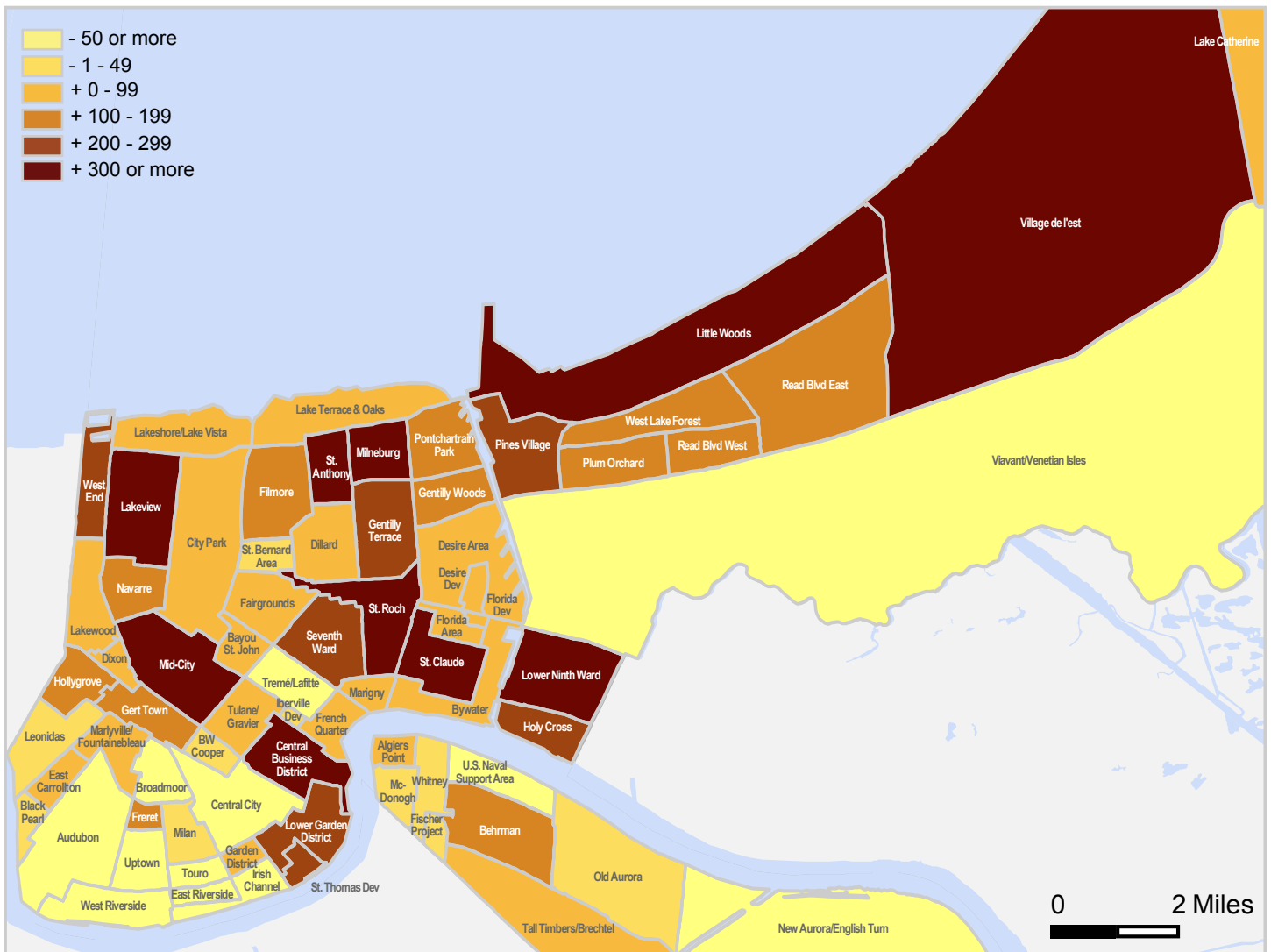


**Source:** GNOCDC analysis of Valassis Residential and Business Database.  
**Note:** For a larger version of map, see <http://gnocdc.org/RecoveryByNeighborhood/>

# Recent Population Shifts

From June 2008 to June 2009, twelve neighborhoods lost more than 50 active residential addresses, suggesting that new rental and homeownership opportunities are not only drawing additional population to New Orleans but may also be sparking moves from one neighborhood to another.

**Change in number of active addresses, June 2008-June 2009, by neighborhood**

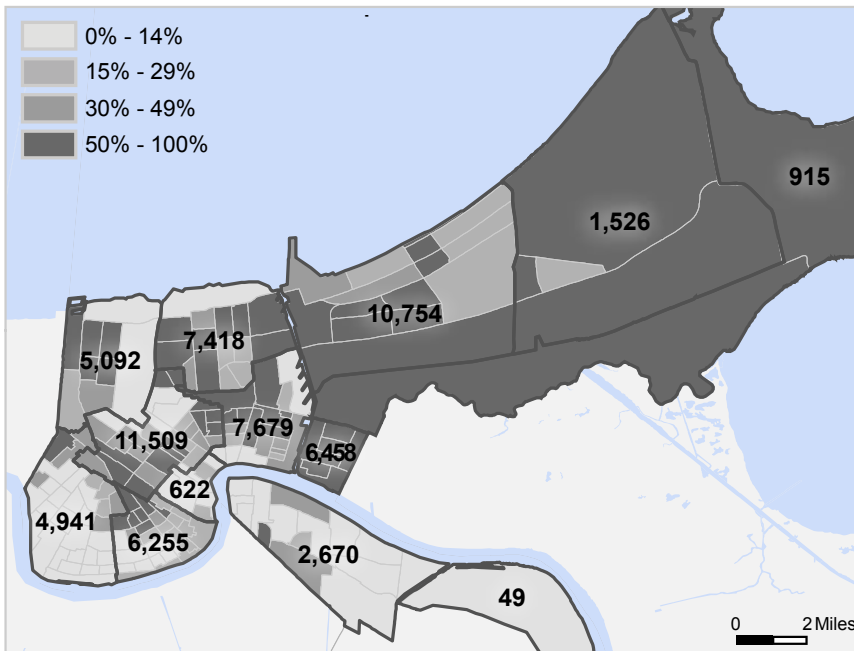


**Source:** GNOCDC analysis of Valassis Residential and Business Database.  
**Note:** For a larger version of map, see <http://gnocdc.org/RecoveryByNeighborhood/>

# Vacant/Unoccupied Residential Addresses

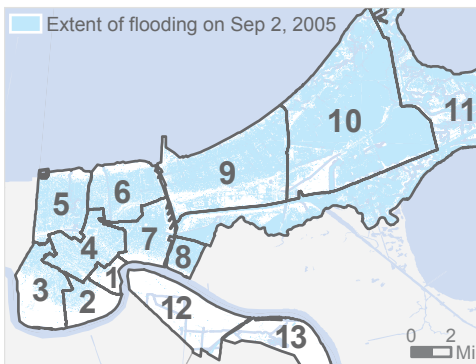
The levee failures associated with Katrina left New Orleans with an unprecedented level of residential blight. However, since September 2008, the number of unoccupied residential addresses in New Orleans has declined from 69,727 to 65,888 in March 2009 as repopulation and redevelopment continue. A relatively small number of these (7,083) are “vacant” according to the post office, suggesting that they are likely habitable residences that have not been purchased or rented. Post office data suggests that the remainder—nearly 59,000 residential addresses—are blighted or empty lots. Planning District 4 has the largest number of unoccupied addresses with 11,509. Some of these may be accounted for by three public housing projects that are being redeveloped in that planning district, but a large number are likely associated with blighted residences that were flooded by Katrina. Planning Districts 6, 7, 8 and 9 experienced extensive flooding and each has more than 6,000 unoccupied residential addresses. Even planning districts that experienced limited flooding have a large number of unoccupied addresses. For example, Planning Districts 2 and 3 have 6,255 and 4,941 unoccupied residential addresses respectively, likely due in part to significant levels of pre-Katrina blight.

## Number of unoccupied residential addresses by planning district and percent by census tract, March 2009



**Source:** GNOCDC analysis of HUD Aggregated USPS Administrative Data on Address Vacancies.

**Notes:** “Addresses” are distinguished from “properties” in that multiple addresses can be located on a single property (e.g. shotgun double). Unoccupied addresses include vacant and no-stat addresses. Vacant addresses have not had mail collected for 90 days or longer. No-Stat addresses include addresses identified by the letter carrier as not likely to receive mail for some time, buildings under construction and not yet occupied, and rural route addresses vacant for 90 days or longer. In the parishes affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, no-stat addresses include heavily damaged homes that have not been re-occupied. Due to HUD’s aggregation process, about 1 percent of records are not included. The district boundaries for planning districts 1, 2, 9, 10, and 11 are slightly modified in order to coincide with census tracts because data was only available at the tract level. Planning District 2 includes the area bounded by Magazine, Julia, I-10, and the river, which is usually included in Planning District 1. Planning District 11 includes the area between Chef Menteur Hwy and the Intracoastal Waterway, which is usually included in planning districts 9 and 10.

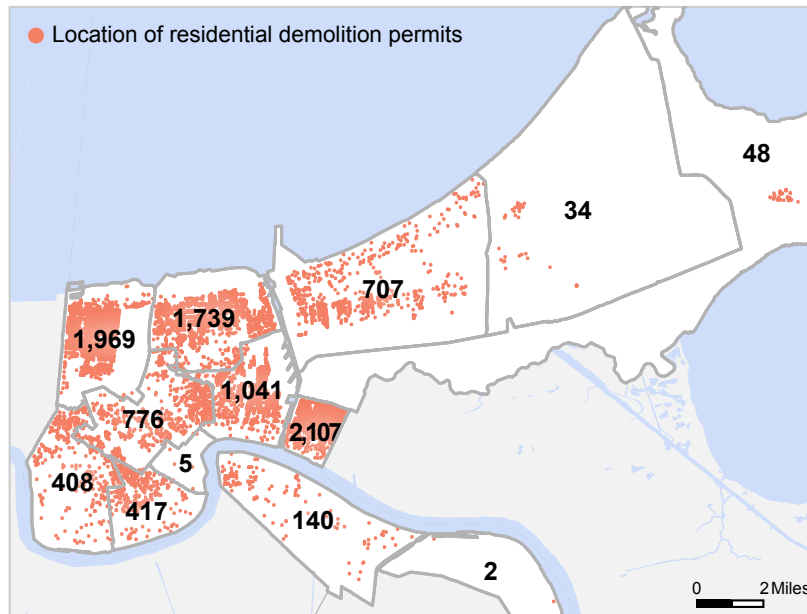


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# Residential Demolitions

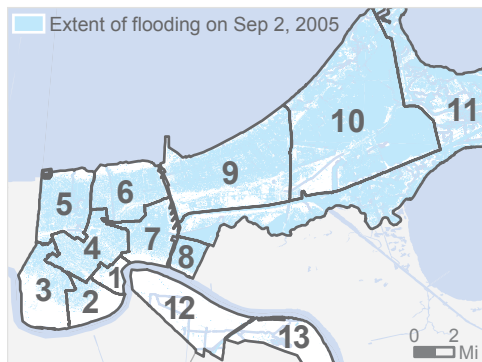
The largest number of residential demolition permits (2,107) has been issued for Planning District 8, which encompasses the Lower Ninth Ward where water funneled by the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet breached the levee with such force that homes were knocked off their foundations. In those cases where homes were reduced to splinters and cleared as debris, demolition permits were not issued, indicating that Planning District 8 likely has more than 2,107 empty lots. The next largest number of demolition permits (1,969) has been issued for Planning District 5, which encompasses the higher income Lakeview neighborhood. Here returning homeowners are purchasing and clearing adjacent lots to create larger lawns or home expansions. In Planning District 6, which encompasses the middle-income Gentilly neighborhood, 1,739 demolition permits have been issued. All other planning districts had fewer than 1,050 demolition permits, suggesting thousands of blighted structures remain.

**Number of residential demolition permits by planning district, May 2009**



Source: GNOCDC analysis of May 2009 City of New Orleans permit data.

**Notes:** Data reflects demolition permits issued since October 1, 2005. Demolition permits issued to addresses that were also issued a new construction permit are not included in this dataset in an attempt to capture data on empty lots, rather than houses being rebuilt. Duplicate demolition permits issued to the same address are also excluded.

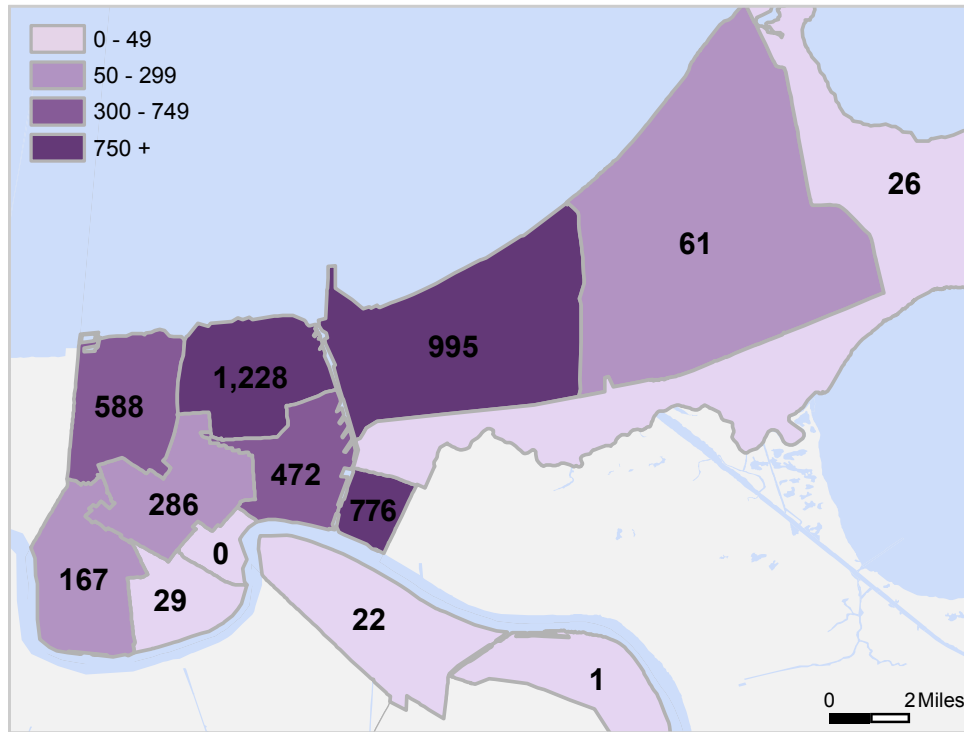


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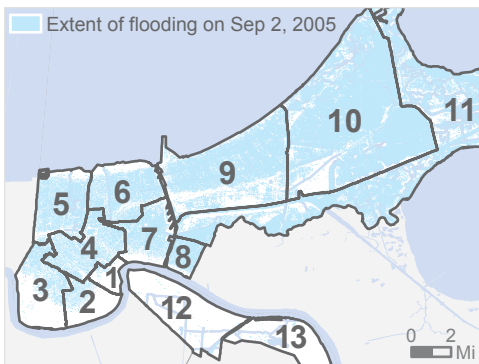
# Road Home Residential Properties Sold to the State

Through the Road Home program the state has acquired more than more than 4,600 residential properties in New Orleans as of June 2009. These properties will be turned over to the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) in phases. The largest number of these is in Planning District 6 (1,228) followed by Planning District 9 (995), and Planning District 8 (776). The maintenance and disposition of these properties presents new challenges and opportunities for New Orleans. In neighborhoods with strong markets, these properties can be sold at market rates, but in neighborhoods with weaker markets, long-term land banking and other large-scale land disposition and redevelopment policies may be necessary. Compared with most of the blighted properties in New Orleans, these properties will be easier to process because titles have already been cleared and the properties acquired. Unfortunately, they represent a relatively small portion of the tens of thousands of unoccupied residences across the city.

**Number of residential properties sold to the state by planning district, June 2009**



Source: Louisiana Recovery Authority. Note: Data reflects option selected at closing.

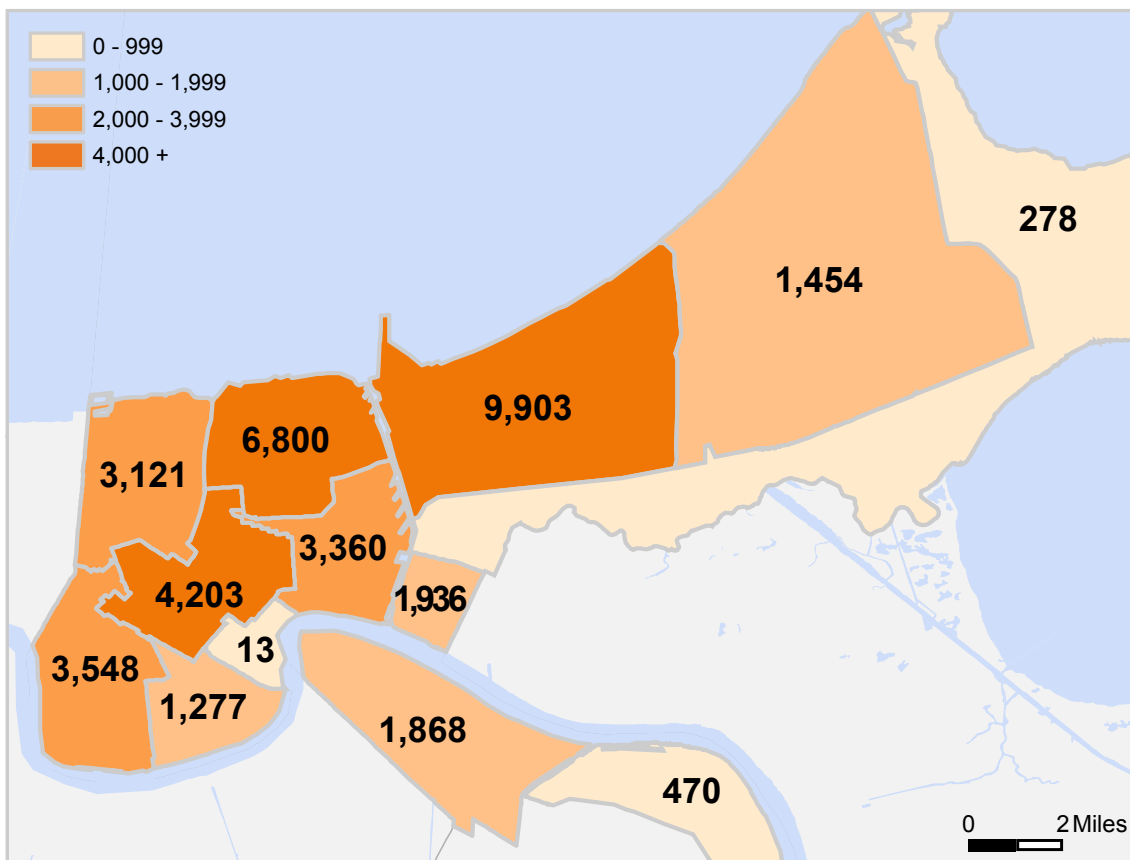


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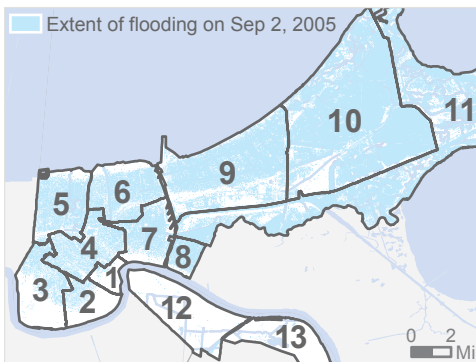
# Road Home Stay and Rebuild

A very large number of homeowners are determined to rebuild their homes, even in heavily damaged parts of the city, as indicated by the number of Road Home recipients electing the “stay and rebuild” option. The largest number (9,903) of homeowners expected to rebuild their homes is in Planning District 9, which covers much of New Orleans East. In Planning District 6 and in Planning District 4, 6,800 and 4,203 Road Home recipients respectively have chosen to use their grants to rebuild, suggesting that many vacant properties in these areas may still become rehabbed.

**Number of residential properties being rebuilt with Road Home grants by planning district, June 2009**



Source: Louisiana Recovery Authority. Note: Data reflects option selected at closing.



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**Amy Liu**

*Deputy Director and co-founder*  
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Liu's areas of expertise are in the role of federal, state, and local policies in advancing metropolitan prosperity. She is also a frequent author and commentator on such topics as economic competitiveness, urban reinvestment, metropolitan growth and development, and pathways to the middle class. Prior to Brookings, Liu worked at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (1993-1996) and the U.S. Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee.



[www.gnocdc.org](http://www.gnocdc.org)

The Greater New Orleans Community Data Center gathers, analyzes and disseminates data to help nonprofit and civic leaders work smarter and more strategically. By publishing the most reliable data in a highly usable format, [www.gnocdc.org](http://www.gnocdc.org) has become the definitive source for information about New Orleans and its neighborhoods. The Data Center was founded in 1997 and is used by federal agencies, national media, elected officials, neighborhood organizations, and local nonprofits. The Community Data Center is a product of Nonprofit Knowledge Works, partially funded by Baptist Community Ministries, United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area, and the Community Revitalization Fund.



**Allison Plyer**

*Deputy Director*  
[allisonp@gnocdc.org](mailto:allisonp@gnocdc.org)

Plyer's areas of expertise are market research and analysis, post-Katrina demographics and population estimates and New Orleans recovery indicators. Plyer received her Doctor of Science from Tulane University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine with a dissertation entitled "An Analysis of Administrative Data for Measuring Population Displacement and Resettlement Following a Catastrophic U.S. Event."