



Orleans Parish, Louisiana – 2015 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update
Section 4 – Community Profile

Section 4. Community Profile

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4.1 History

The City of New Orleans was founded in 1718 by Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, and in 1722 became the capital of the French colony. The original settlement was in the area now known as the Vieux Carre, or French Quarter. In 1763, New Orleans became a Spanish colony under the Treaty of Paris, and soon after, became the capital of Spanish Louisiana. After being returned secretly to France in 1800, New Orleans was sold to the United States in 1803 as part of the Louisiana Purchase.

New Orleans grew in size and prominence during the 19th Century. By 1852, New Orleans was the third largest city in the U.S. The growing population fueled development upriver and downriver from the French Quarter. Already a major port for many decades, New Orleans became a railroad hub in the late 1800s.

In the early 20th Century, many of the swampy areas of New Orleans were drained. This allowed development to continue towards Lake Pontchartrain, establishing the neighborhoods of Gentilly and Lakeview. Further increasing development in parts of town not along the Mississippi River, was the addition of 2,000 acres of reclaimed land, created by the Levee Board after building a seawall that extended 3,000 feet into Lake Pontchartrain in 1927. Later developments extended further east, and also on the west bank of the Mississippi River. Starting in the 1960s and continuing into the 1980s, new neighborhoods were established in New Orleans East and Algiers. In the 1990s, new development was confined to smaller infill projects within the urban core, including condominiums in downtown New Orleans, and the redevelopment of public housing.

Like many major U.S. cities, New Orleans' growth was outpaced by the growth of its surrounding suburbs during the last half of the 20th Century. Commerce and industry followed the population movement to the suburbs. New Orleans's economy was further weakened by the oil bust of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Between 1960 and 1980, New Orleans population decreased 21 percent. Starting in the early 1990s and continuing through 2005, the rate at which New Orleans lost population slowed, and City officials worked to diversify New Orleans' economy.

In August of 2005, New Orleans experienced one of the worst disasters in the history of the United States when Hurricane Katrina made landfall. Katrina caused almost a total evacuation of the city, flooded approximately eighty



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percent of the area, and generated an estimated \$17 billion in damages¹. Many areas of the City with the worst damage included neighborhoods developed on drained land that was originally low-lying swampy areas. Since the hurricane, the population recovery has exceeded expectations. Ten years after Katrina, more than half (40) of New Orleans' 72 neighborhoods have recovered over 90 percent of the population they had before the levees failed.

On April 20, 2010, an explosion occurred at the Deepwater Horizon oil rig, located approximately 41 miles off the southeast coast of Louisiana. This oil spill was the largest in US history, causing devastating environmental and economic impacts for New Orleans. In June of 2015, the city accepted a \$45 million settlement for losses incurred from the event. The city has pledged to use the funds for resilience initiatives, including water management, and coastal and ecosystem restoration.

4.2 Geography

Orleans Parish is located in Southeast Louisiana at 30.07 degrees North latitude and 89.93 degrees West longitude. The City sits between the Mississippi River to the south and Lake Pontchartrain to the north. It is bordered by Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, and St. Tammany Parishes. The land area of the Parish is 180.6 square miles.

The boundaries of the City of New Orleans and Orleans Parish are coterminous. Because of this, the names New Orleans, City of New Orleans, and Orleans Parish, are used interchangeably throughout the Plan.

The topography of New Orleans consists of mostly flat land with elevations across the Parish close to, or below, sea level. Although there are a few ridges in New Orleans, such as the Metairie Ridge and the Gentilly Ridge, the highest spots in the City are still only a few feet above sea level and nearer the Mississippi River. With the exception of the easternmost section of the Parish, all of Orleans Parish is surrounded by levees. These levees along the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain result in a topography that is similar to a saucer. As a result of this topography, all rain that falls in New Orleans must be pumped out of the city by New Orleans' extensive network of pumps.

Water figures prominently in the topography of New Orleans. In addition to being located between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain, New Orleans also contains a large area of marshland. Twenty-five percent of the Parish is marshland². While most of this area is uninhabited, the marshes provide recreation areas for people and habitat areas for wildlife. The marshes also help protect Southeast Louisiana from the effects of coastal storms.

4.3 Climate

New Orleans is located in a humid subtropical climate zone, characterized by hot, usually humid summers and mild to cool winters. The monthly daily average temperature ranges from 54.4 °F in January to 82.9 °F in July and August. The lowest recorded temperature was 6 °F on February 13, 1899. The highest recorded temperature was 104 °F on June 24, 2009.

The average precipitation is 62.7 inches (1,590 mm) annually; the summer months are the wettest, while October is

¹ NOAA NCDC Database: Orleans Parish, Hurricane and Tropical Storm Events

² Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Fur and Refuge Division, and the U.S. Geological Survey Biological Resources Division National Wetlands Research Center. —1997 Louisiana Coastal Marsh Vegetation Map



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the driest month. On average, there are 77 days of 90 °F + highs, 8.1 days per winter where the high does not exceed 50 °F, and 8.0 nights with freezing lows annually. In a typical year the coldest night is around 30 °F. It is rare for the temperature to reach 100 °F or dip below 25 °F.

New Orleans experiences snowfall only on rare occasions. The most recent three snowfall events occurred in 2008, 2004, and 1989.

Table 4.1. Monthly Temperature Data in degrees Fahrenheit

Month	Avg. Temp	Ave. Max Temp	Avg. Min Temp
January	54.4	67.6	43.3
February	56.9	65.9	44.1
March	63.0	70.9	54.7
April	69.5	75.1	63.6
May	76.0	81.7	71.4
June	81.4	85.9	76.9
July	82.9	87.5	79.7
August	82.9	88.7	76.4
September	79.5	85.4	74.9
October	71.0	80.5	56.2
November	62.1	68.7	53.0
December	56.0	65.0	48.3
Annual Averages	69.6	74.2	60.9

Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association; Audubon Weather Station; 1893-2015

4.4 Economy

Since World War II, New Orleans' economy has been largely based on trade, energy, tourism, and to a smaller extent, industry and manufacturing. The New Orleans economy remained diversified and strong until the 1980s with the decline in the oil sector. Since the 1980s, the New Orleans economy has relied more heavily on trade and tourism.

Today, New Orleans is still home to one of the major U.S. ports and an extensive network of ground transportation routes in and out of the city. Some of the major imports that pass through New Orleans include coffee, sugar, bananas, and bauxite. Exports include oil, petroleum products, grains, and textiles.

The following table indicates the city's workforce distribution by sector. As the table indicate, more than a quarter of the workforce is employed in the education services, health care, or social assistance sector.



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Table 4.2. Workforce Employment by Sector

Sector	Percent of Workforce Employed
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	26.5%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	17.0%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	12.0%
Retail trade	9.3%
Construction	6.0%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	5.4%
Public administration	5.3%
Other services, except public administration	4.6%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	4.9%
Manufacturing	4.1
Wholesale Trade	1.9%
Information	1.8%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	1.3

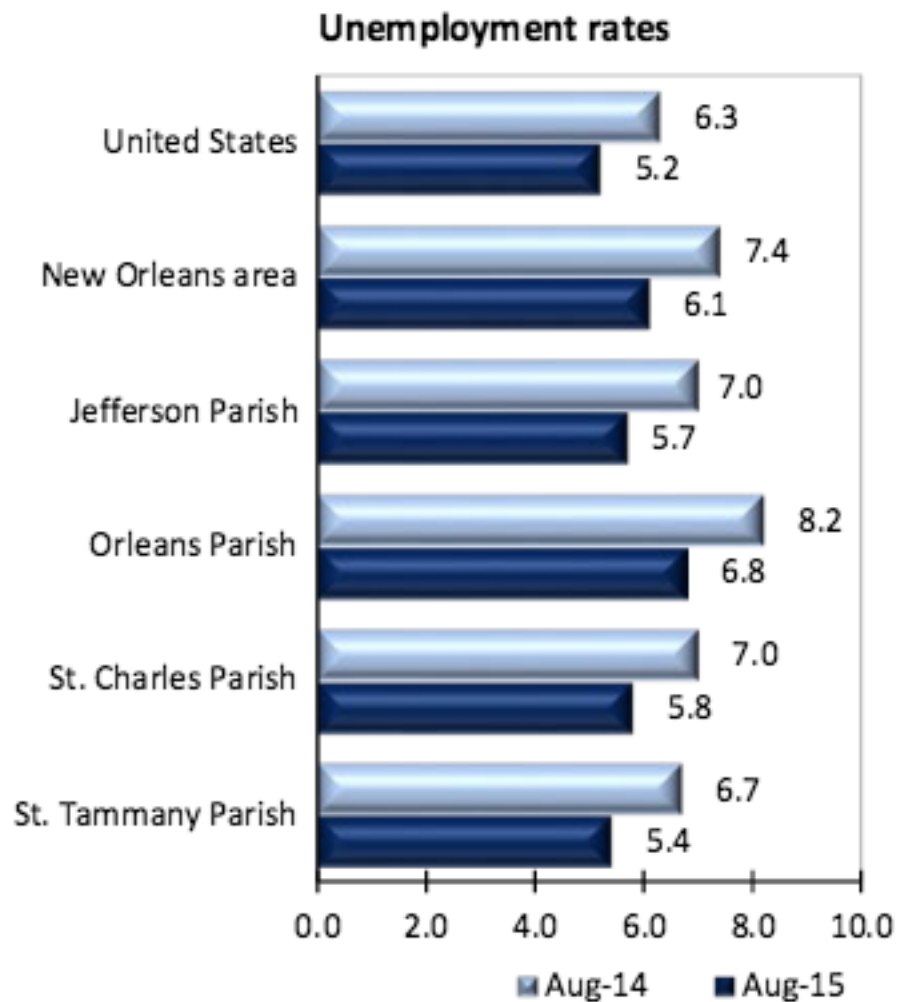
Source: ACS 2009-2013 5-year estimates



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In 2014, the city's median household income was \$37,146, well below the national average of \$51,939. The city's unemployment rate is almost on par with national levels: In August 2015 New Orleans' unemployment rate was 6.8 percent, versus the national average of 5.2 percent.

Figure 4.1. Orleans Parish Employment Rates Compared to the National Average



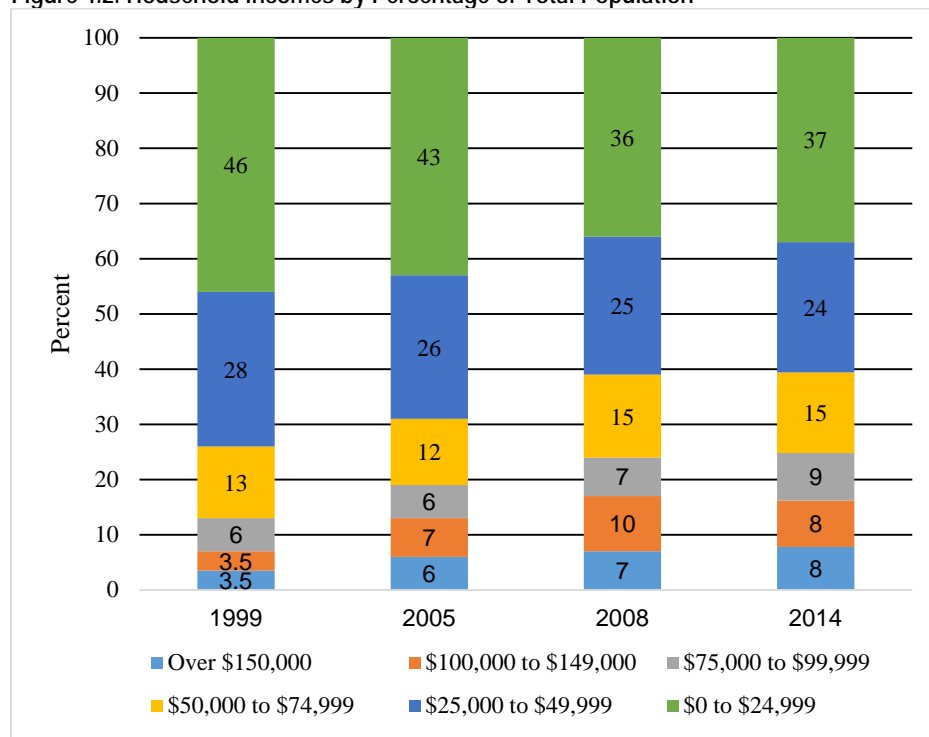
Source: U.S. BLS, Local Area Unemployment Statistics



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Prior to 2005, New Orleans experienced a slow increase in household incomes. Due to Hurricane Katrina, which caused a significant shift in the city's demographics, household incomes increased significantly. In 1999, only 26 percent of Orleans Parish households earned incomes exceeding \$50,000. By 2008, that same group of households earning incomes of \$50,000 or greater, expanded to 39 percent.. As of 2014, that number stands at 40 percent.

Figure 4.2. Household Incomes by Percentage of Total Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2005; 2008; 2014 ACS-5 year Estimates

4.5 Transportation

New Orleans has an extensive transportation network. It is served by air, rail, water, and ground transportation systems.

Aviation

The Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport (LANOIA), the largest airport in the region, is owned and operated by the City of New Orleans. However, the LANOIA is located in Jefferson Parish, the Parish directly west of Orleans Parish. LANOIA is considered a medium-sized hub airport, and as of January 2015, has surpassed its pre-Katrina passenger levels.

The New Orleans lakefront Airport is located in Orleans Parish on the southern shore of Lake Pontchartrain. The airport has three runways that serve mostly private and military aircraft. The largest of the three runways is nearly seven thousand feet in length, allowing it to service large aircraft.



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Rail

Amtrak provides passenger rail service to New Orleans. Amtrak routes connect New Orleans to the Northeast, the Southeast, the Midwest, and Southern California. New Orleans is also served by six Class 1 freight railroads: Union Pacific, Kansas City Southern, Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Canadian National, Norfolk Southern, and CSX Transportation. In addition, the City owns a non-profit switching railroad, the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad (NOPBRR). The NOPBRR interchanges with all Class 1 railroads serving New Orleans.

Ports and Waterways

New Orleans is located in the heart of the world's busiest port complex – Louisiana's Lower Mississippi River. The Port of New Orleans is one of America's leading general cargo ports, and is ranked number one in the country for import steel, natural rubber, plywood, and coffee. The Port of New Orleans is also the only deepwater port in the U.S. served by six Class 1 railroads. As of 2014, the Port of New Orleans handles more than 1,000,000 cruise ship passengers per year.

Important navigable waterways in Orleans Parish include the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC, or the Industrial Canal) and the Mississippi River. The IHNC connects the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain. From 1968 until 2008, the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) provided a shortcut from the Gulf of Mexico to the Port of New Orleans. Following Hurricane Katrina, U.S. Congress de-authorized MRGO, closing it to all ship travel in 2008. MRGO was closed because of its magnifying effect of the storm surge from Hurricane Katrina. To permanently close MRGO, the USACE constructed a rock closure across MRGO at Bayou la Loutre in 2009. In 2010, the USACE constructed a floodwall with navigational gates at Bayou Bienvenue and Gulf Intercoastal Water Way (GIWW) to reduce the risk of damage from future storm surges from the Gulf of Mexico and Lake Borgne.

Roads, Highways, and Bridges

Several major highways pass through New Orleans. The largest is Interstate 10, which handles over 131,000 vehicles per day. New Orleans also includes the spur routes I-510 and I-610. Louisiana Highways 11 and 90 pass through New Orleans. While New Orleans has many major corridors, it also has an extensive network of small streets. Many of the streets in the older sections of the city are very narrow, and driving space for cars is further limited by the lack of off-street parking.

Traffic congestion is a major problem during an evacuation. The number of routes out of New Orleans is restricted by the bodies of water surrounding the City. The major route out of New Orleans is Interstate 10, which runs east-west, crossing Lake Pontchartrain to the east, and the Bonne Carre Spillway to the west. Highway 90, which runs east-west, and is the only other possible evacuation route, crosses the Mississippi River.

These limited evacuation routes for New Orleans are the same routes used to evacuate the lower-lying parishes that border the City, compounding congestion during evacuation. The only routes out of St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes pass through Orleans Parish. Similarly, residents in west Parishes evacuating east, must travel through New Orleans on I-10, creating more congestion overall. As a result, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD) has developed a contraflow map for emergency evacuation. When the contraflow plan is in effect, all travel lanes on the interstates move evacuees east, west, and north out of New Orleans.

Transit

Public transportation in New Orleans is operated by the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA). RTA operates bus lines throughout the Parish, as well as three streetcar routes. New Orleans' famous street cars currently



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operate along St. Charles Avenue, Canal Street, Loyola Ave, Carrollton Ave, and along the riverfront through the French Quarter and Central Business District. A new streetcar line along Rampart, just north of the French Quarter, is scheduled for completion in 2015.

4.6 Community Assets

New Orleans maintains its unique cultural heritage. Residents and new-comers take pride in the City's historic neighborhoods, food, music, art, and its diversity of lifestyles. New Orleans is perhaps best known for the French Quarter Historic District and the historic architecture throughout the city. In all, New Orleans has 154 properties and districts listed on the National Register in the parish, including 26 National Historic Landmarks. During the planning process, the Planning Team also identified over 700 Critical Facilities. Due to the number of these facilities, these will be listed in **Appendix X: XXXX**.

The Riverfront, along the Mississippi River, is the location of the Convention Center, the Riverwalk, the Moonwalk, the Aquarium of the Americas, and Woldenberg Park. Other main attractions downtown include the Superdome and the New Orleans Arena. Although the downtown New Orleans Medical Center, home to several hospitals and clinics, was heavily damaged by flooding from Hurricane Katrina, progress has been made to reopen some hospitals and construct new facilities. A new bio-sciences district is nearing the completion phase, with some buildings already completed, effectively expanding downtown to the northwest. This district will house the new Veterans Affairs (VA) and Louisiana State University (LSU)/Tulane Teaching Hospitals.

New Orleans also offers many opportunities for recreation. Lake Pontchartrain and Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge provide access to outdoor and wildlife recreation. New Orleans' major parks include City Park, Audubon Park, the Audubon Zoo, and the National Jazz Historical Park (Louis Armstrong Park). Following Hurricane Katrina, the City lost two important recreational assets – Six Flags New Orleans and the Louisiana Nature Center, both located in the eastern portion of New Orleans.

New Orleans has many colleges and universities. Major institutions of higher learning include the University of New Orleans, Tulane University, Loyola University, Xavier University, Southern University at New Orleans, Dillard University, Our Lady of Holy Cross College, and Delgado Community College.

Culturally, New Orleans is a very rich city. It has a unique history, many community assets, and an advantageous location for commerce. Through hazard mitigation planning, the citizens and officials of New Orleans can help protect the city that they call home.

4.7 Population & Housing

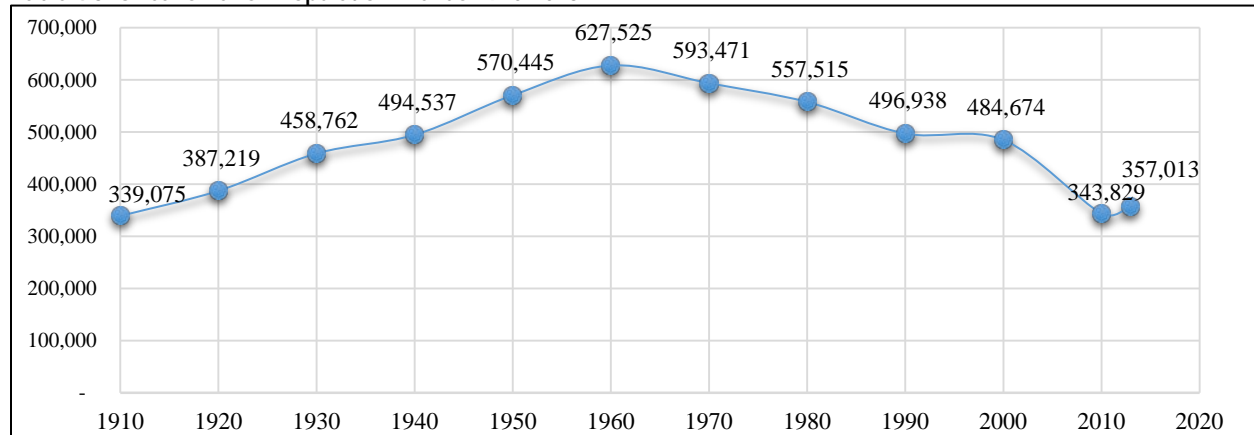
Similar to most urban cities across the country, New Orleans experienced a slow decline in population beginning in 1960. Although New Orleans lost over 130,000 people between 1960 and 1990, the decline was not as pronounced as in other U.S. cities (e.g., Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis) whose local economies were tied closely to manufacturing. However, during the 1980s New Orleans experienced a sharper decline in population as a result of the slowdown in the oil industry. Between 1960 and 1990, the population of New Orleans decreased 21 percent (from 627,625 in 1960 to 496,938 in 1990). However, from the 1990s through mid 2005, prior to Hurricane Katrina, New



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Orleans population began to stabilize.³ In July 2005, New Orleans had an estimated population of 455,188. In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina flooded the City of New Orleans, and nearly 100% of the population was temporarily displaced. The population has continued to increase between 2006 and 2015, from 208,548 in July 2006 to 357,013 in 2014.⁴

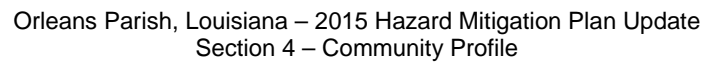
Table 4.3. Orleans Parish Population Trends 1910-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, Table DP-1; ACS 2009-2013 5 year Estimates, Table DP05

This recovery in population has exceeded most projections. As shown in the map below, by June 2015 most areas of the city had recovered to at least 75% of their pre-Katrina population.

³ “Plan For The 21st Century: New Orleans 2030, Volume 3, Chapter 2; —New Orleans Yesterday and Today: Population and Land Use Trends, pages 2.2 - 2.3, Draft January 2010.



Source: The Data Center analysis of Valassis Residential and Business Database.

The following table indicates the distribution of residents by age cohorts. Orleans parish has over 60,000 people, or 17.6 percent of its population, under the age of 5 or over the age of 64. This is relevant to hazard mitigation insofar as the very young and elderly populations may be at greater risk from certain hazards over others. For a more elaborate discussion of this vulnerability, please see *Section Five: Risk Assessment*.

Indicator	Total	% of Total
Total Population	357,013	100.0%
Under 5 years of age	22,709	6.4%
Age 6 to 64	294,210	82.4%
65 and over	40,094	11.2%

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The following table highlights certain populations that may be more at risk to hazardous events than others. For example, there are over 16,000 female headed households, with children, that have no husband present. Over 13,000 householders over the age of 65 are living alone. Variables in this table may indicate certain components of vulnerability in the city. For a more elaborate discussion of this vulnerability, please see *Section Five: Risk Assessment*.

Table 4.5. Orleans Socio-Housing Variables

Indicator	Total	% of Total
Total Occupied Households	148,398	100.0%
Female householder, no husband present, family	29,828	15.7%
Female householder, no husband present, family With own children under 18 years	16,432	8.6%
Householder living alone	57,330	30.2%
Householder living alone, 65 years and over	13,298	7.0%
Households with one or more people 65 years and over	30,626	16.1%
Number of grandparents living with and responsible for own grandchildren under 18 years	4,639	2.4%
Households With Food Stamp/SNAP in the past 12 months	30,179	15.9%

Source: ACS 2009-2013 5 year estimates Table DP02; DP03

The following table highlights ethnic cohorts in the city. Race and ethnicity correlate with social vulnerability. This vulnerability translates to a lack of access to resources, cultural differences, and the social, economic, and political marginalization that is often associated with these disparities. Language and cultural barriers can also affect access to post-disaster funding in high hazard residential locations.

Table 4.6. Orleans Parish Ethnicity

Indicator	Total	% of Total
% White	120,087	33.6%
% Black	213,632	59.8%
% Vietnamese	6,750	1.9%
% Latino	18,984	5.3%

Source: ACS 2009-2013 5 year estimates Table DP05

The following tables indicate a series of miscellaneous demographic variables that may indicate different types of vulnerabilities in the city. Over 12,000 people speak English less than very well. As such, communicating with these populations for disaster preparation, mitigation, response, and recovery may be challenging. The city also has over 16,000 residents that may be new to the city. This population may have less developed local social networks, and may be unaware of disaster preparedness activities, such as those related to hurricane preparedness and evacuation procedures.

Nearly one sixth of the city has no health insurance. This is relevant for public health pandemics, which is a hazard profiled in this plan. This population may be less inclined to seek medical assistance during a pandemic event, which could pose challenges for effective outbreak control. Finally, the city has over 48,000 residents with a disability. Caring for these populations during hazardous events is critical, as they may require assistance to effectively prepare, evacuate, or manage hazardous situations.



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Table 4.7. Orleans Miscellaneous Resilience Variables

Indicator	Total	% of Total
Speak English less than "very well"	12,539	3.5%
Resided outside LA 1 year ago	16,101	4.5%
No health insurance	66,867	18.7%
Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population With a disability	48,105	13.7%

Source: ACS 2009-2013 5 year estimates Table DP02; DP03

The following table indicates selected housing variables, including housing occupancy and date of construction.

According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), older homes are at greater risk of poor repair and dilapidation, resulting in blighted or substandard properties. This is significant in assessing hazard vulnerability because these housing units may result in living quarters that are prone to higher damages during disaster events, which include high winds, tornados, hail, severe thunderstorms, and hurricanes. Almost one third of the city's housing was built prior to 1939.

Approximately 1.0-percent of all housing units in the planning area are mobile homes. Mobile homes are at a higher risk of sustaining damages during high wind events, tornados, severe thunderstorms, and hurricanes. Mobile homes that are either not anchored or are anchored incorrectly can be overturned by 60 mph winds.

78.1-percent of the city's housing is occupied. Less than half of these units are owner occupied. Occupied housing units may often be better maintained and less likely to contribute to dangerous or hazardous situations. Owner occupied units are generally better maintained and updated. Rental housing often does not receive many of the updates and retrofits required for hazard resilience. Multi-family rental units may present specific concerns (such as lack of wind resistant building practices or storm shelters). It should be noted that almost 1/6 of occupied housing has no vehicle available. This population may be dependent on public services during mandatory evacuations for hazardous events.

21.9-percent of the city's housing is vacant. Vacant homes are more likely to become derelict or fall into disrepair over time. This tendency can result in higher levels of vulnerability for communities. If vacant homes deteriorate they can be easily damaged or destroyed during hazard events (specifically high winds, thunderstorms, and hurricanes), which can result in homes becoming projectiles and wind-borne debris. Wind-borne debris can injure people, damage vehicles and other structures, as well as creating a post-impact environment where debris management is intensified.



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Table 4.8. Orleans Parish Housing Variables

Indicator	Total	% of Total
Total housing units	190,127	100%
Occupied housing units	148,398	78.1%
Owner-occupied	70,175	47.3%
Renter-occupied	78,223	52.7%
Occupied - No vehicles avail.	27,396	18.5%
Vacant housing units	41,729	21.9%
Mobile homes	1,810	1.0%
Built 2010 or later	1,735	0.9%
Built 2000 to 2009	15,105	7.9%
Built 1990 to 1999	7,028	3.7%
Built 1980 to 1989	14,476	7.6%
Built 1970 to 1979	27,533	14.5%
Built 1960 to 1969	21,660	11.4%
Built 1950 to 1959	23,598	12.4%
Built 1940 to 1949	19,498	10.3%
Built 1939 or earlier	59,494	31.3%

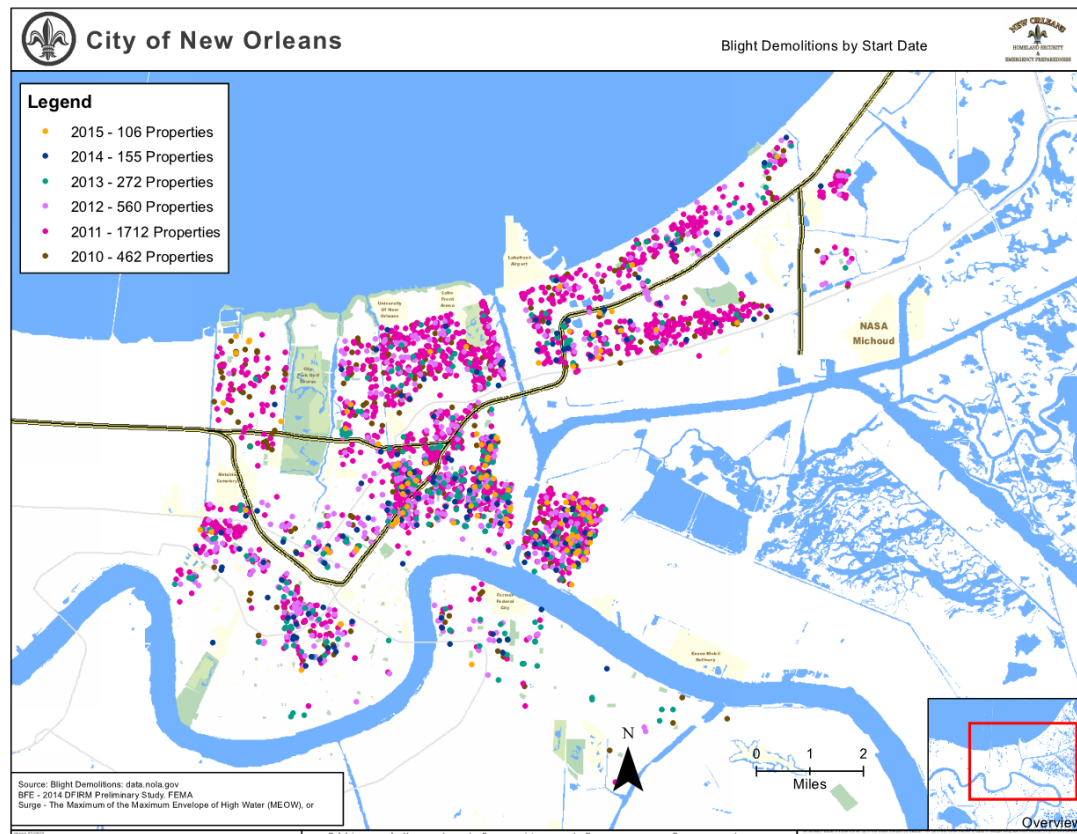
Source: ACS 2009-2013 5 year estimates Table DP04



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Figure 4.4 indicates that the city was highly productive in demolishing blighted properties in 2011. The city still has a high number of blighted properties impacting the housing makeup of the city, which will continue to be addressed over the next five years.

Figure 4.4. Blight Demolitions by Start Date



4.8 Land Use & Development Trends

Overview of Land Use and Changes, 2010 to 2015

New Orleans is divided into thirteen planning districts. Land use in most of these districts is mixed. Residential land use differs based on the time of construction. Neighborhoods built prior to World War II contain, in addition to single family homes and apartment buildings, pedestrian oriented mixed use commercial corridors. Neighborhoods constructed post World War II are predominantly suburban type single family subdivisions, strip malls, or large multi-family developments. With the exception of the planning districts in far eastern Orleans Parish, and the planning district that comprises downtown, land use is a mix of residential, commercial, and light industrial in all sections of town. Density of land use is also fairly consistent throughout the City, with the same exceptions noted above. The planning districts in the eastern sections of the Parish are less densely developed and contain more green space.

Few major changes to the land use patterns in New Orleans were expected up until the occurrence of Hurricane



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Katrina when over 70 percent of residences were flooded. As expected, there has been an increase in the number of vacant properties. In 2009, the Parish had an estimated 41,729 vacant housing units. Still, much of Orleans Parish is developed, and most of the undeveloped land lies outside of the hurricane levee protection system. The parts of the Parish within the levee system that are undeveloped lie in far eastern New Orleans.

City of New Orleans Master Plan

The City of New Orleans approved the Plan for the 21st Century: New Orleans 2030 in August 2010. The City's New Master Plan provides a comprehensive revision to the previously adopted Land Use Plan in 1999. The City's new Land Use Plan, included in the Master Plan, sets forth the policy and framework for the physical development of New Orleans, providing a guide for the City's decision makers in directing the pattern, distribution, density, and intensity of land uses that will, over time, achieve the goals for livability, opportunity, and sustainability expressed throughout the Master Plan, and provide sufficient land to meet demand for various land uses in the future.⁵

Highlights of the Future Land Use Map include:

- *No change in the overall existing footprint of the city.*
- *Preservation of neighborhood residential character.*
- *Mixed-use land use designations for greater flexibility in areas that would benefit from this.*

The future land map for the city is depicted in the following figure.

⁵ Plan for The 21st Century: New Orleans 2030, Executive Summary.



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Figure 4.5. New Orleans Future Land Use Map

