Heat Action Planning for NOLA

Public Meeting

City of New Orleans

March 30th, 2026

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Our purpose

Why are we meeting?

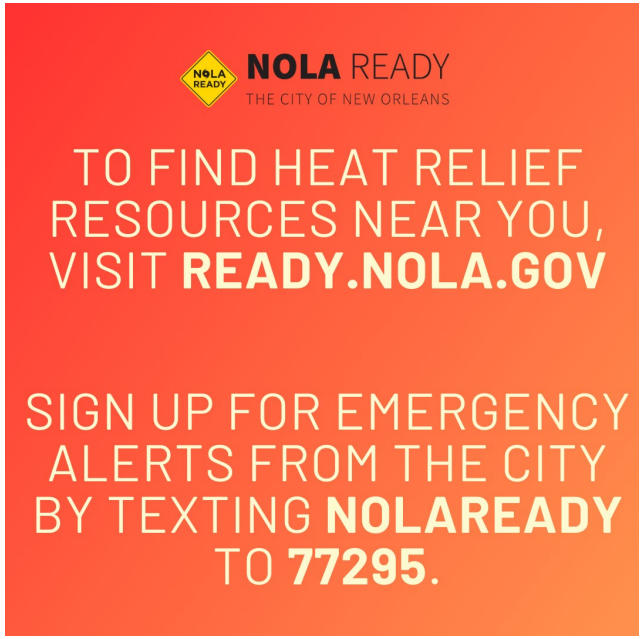
The City of New Orleans is developing a

Heat Action Plan

to mitigate the effects of heat, with particular attention to New Orleans' most vulnerable residents.

We are here today to *share progress* with community.

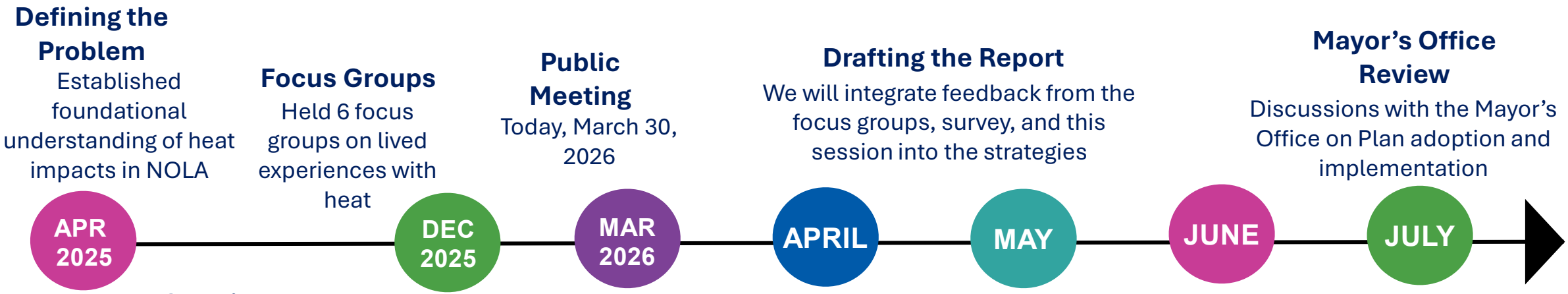
Survey Open Until May 1: New Orleans Heat Action Public Survey via **nola.gov/heatplan**



Agenda

- Welcome & Housekeeping
- Introduction to Heat Impacts in NOLA, Arup + Rhie Planning (20 minutes)
- Public Engagement, TVG (20 minutes)
- Example Strategies, Arup (20 minutes)
- Q&A (15+ minutes)

Plan Development Timeline



Project Deliverables Available at: nola.gov/heatplan

Consultant Team

Arup

Maggie Messerschmidt
Shikha Srinivas
Alyssa Eamranond
Heather Rosenberg

TVG Planning

Corinne DuCré-Villavaso
Delaney George
Bri'ana Lawson

Agaru Consulting

Maggie Pullen

Rhie Planning

Chris Rhie

Bold: speaking today

Heat Impacts in NOLA

Extreme Heat Events in NOLA

Advisory alerts

Heat Advisory: the forecasted heat index* is **higher than 108°F** OR the forecasted temperature is **higher than 103°F for 1 to 2 days**

Excessive Heat Warning: the forecasted heat index is **higher than 113°F** or the forecasted temperature is **higher than 105°F for at least 2 days**

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Urban overheating impacts

Overheating endangers our lives and impacts our critical services and infrastructure

Loss of life or injury

Ecosystem impacts and biodiversity loss

Decreased wellbeing/health of people in cities

Downtime for businesses, infrastructure & services

Decreased productivity and loss of income

Lost revenues or property value

Repair costs and increased operating costs

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Contributors to extreme heat

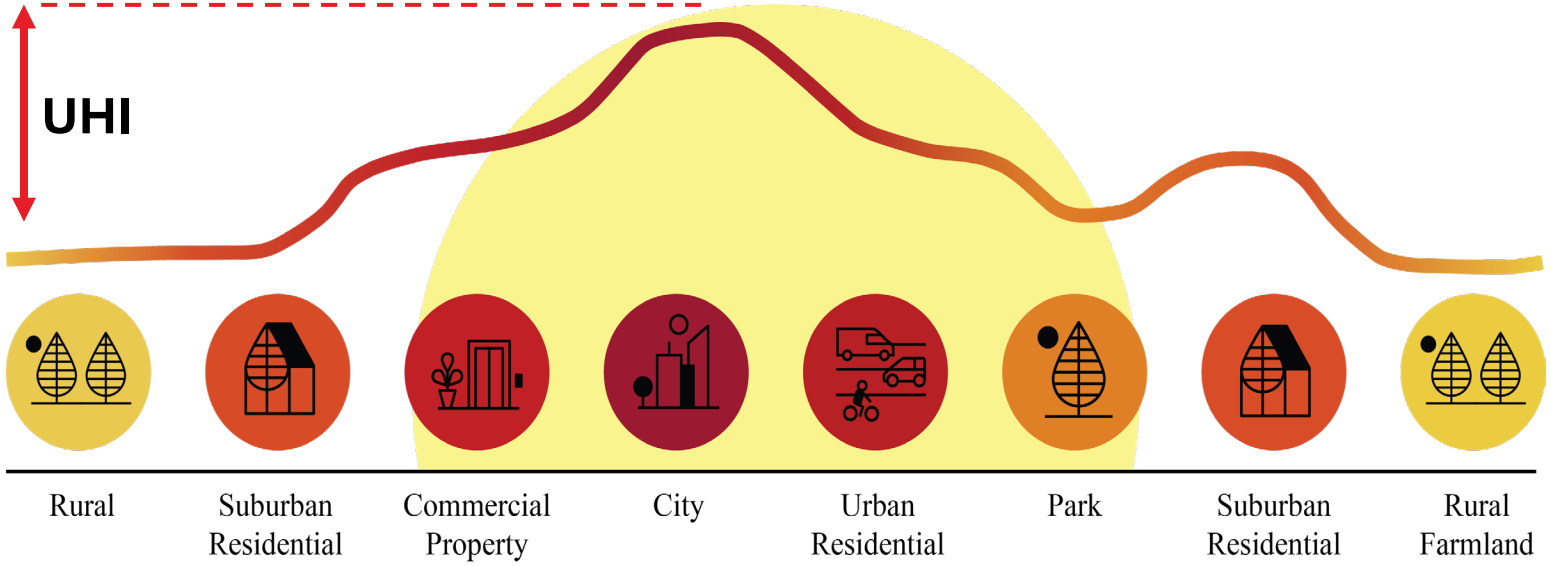
Climate change + UHI Effect

1

Climate change is causing increasing heat waves and longer warm seasons.

In the future, heat waves will become more common, longer lasting, and more dangerous.

2



The Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect describes the warmer temperatures urban areas experience compared to their rural surroundings

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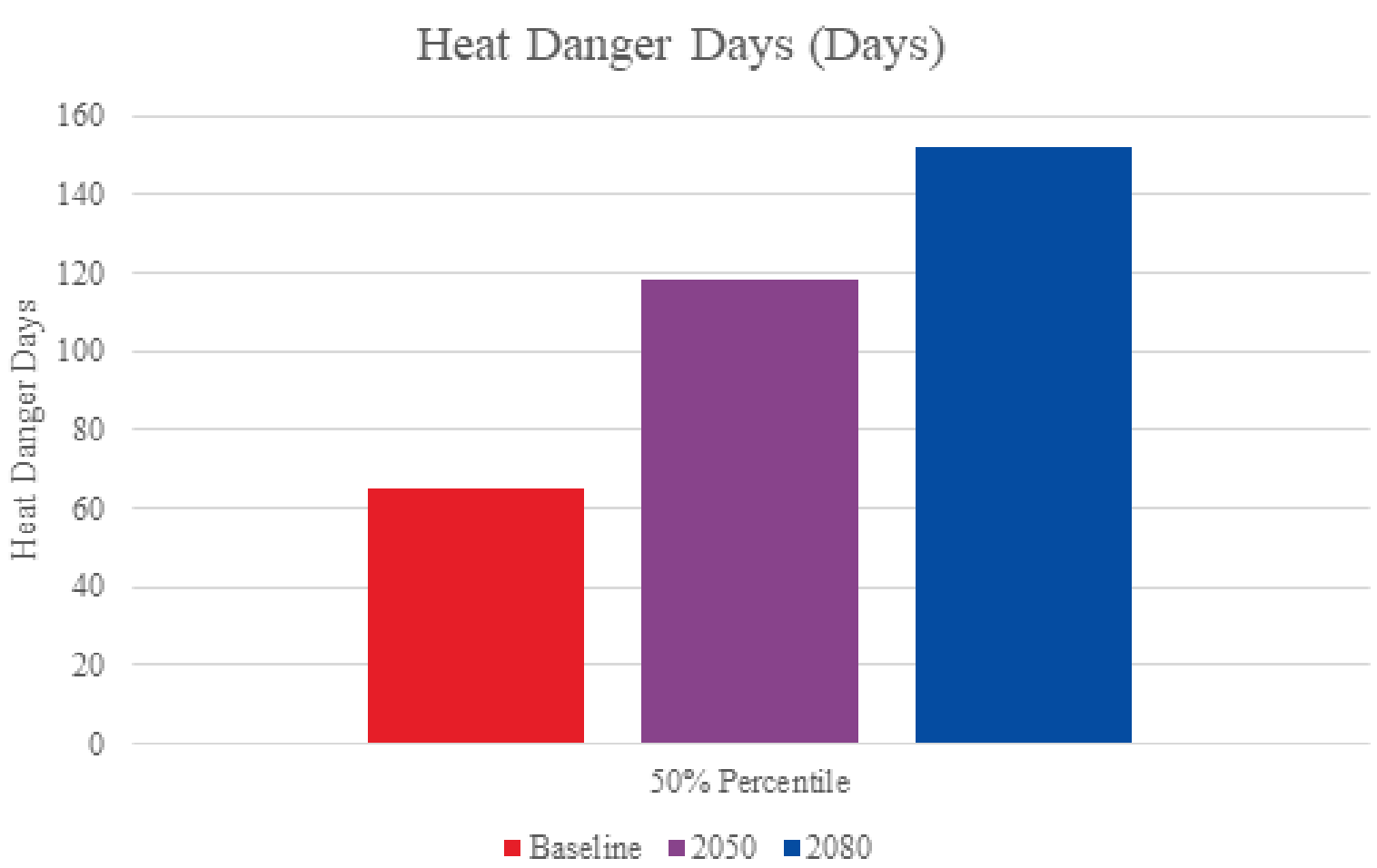
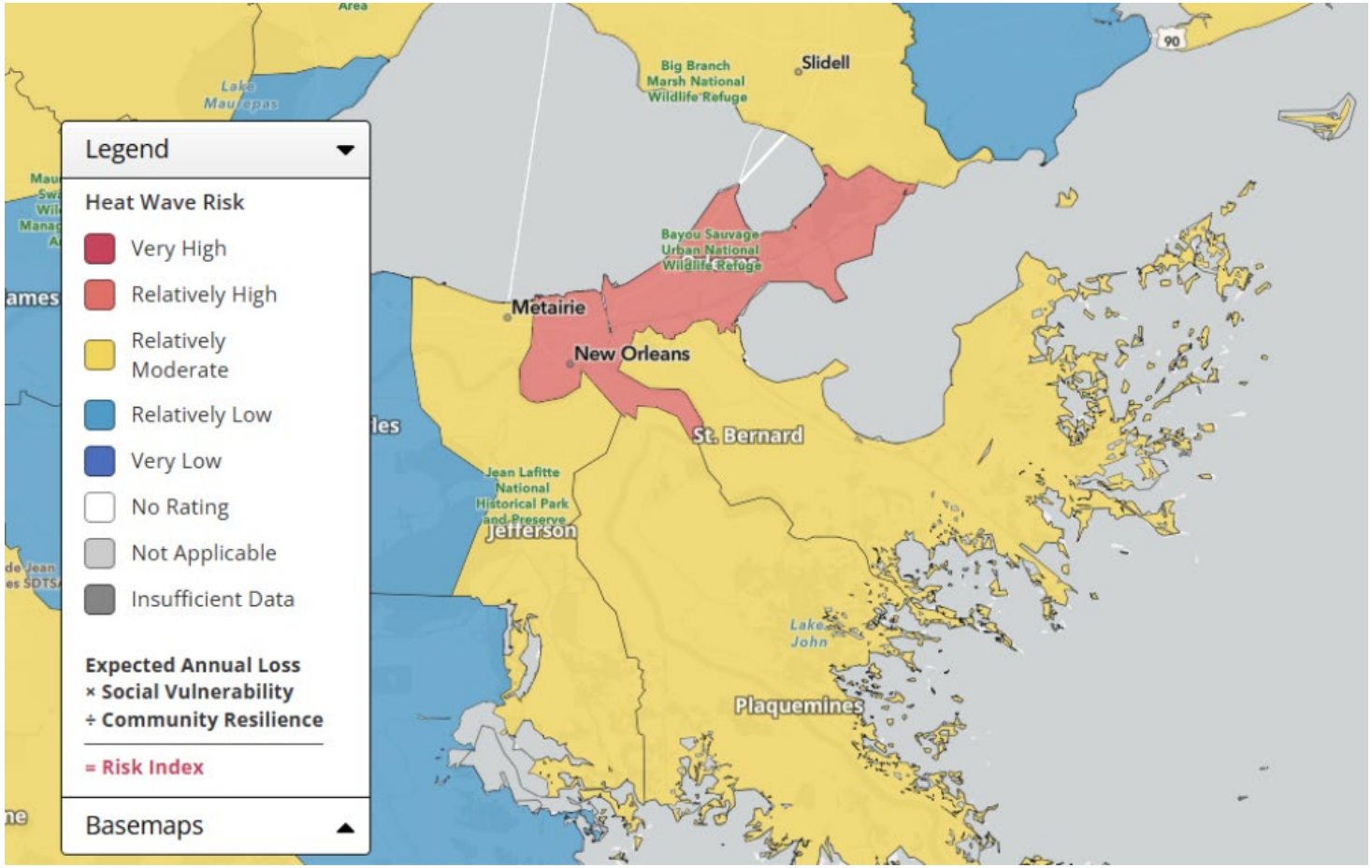
NOLA Climate Projections

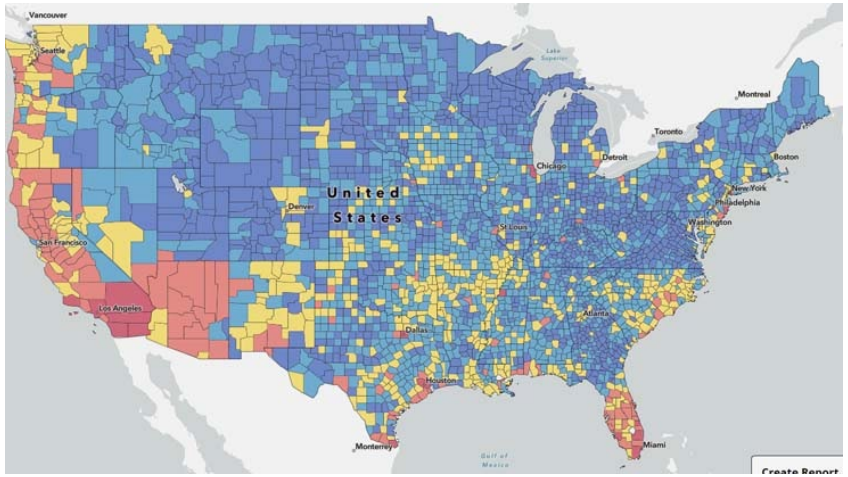
Heat Danger Days



# of high heat risk days (> 88◦F) per year increasing from about **65 to 150 days** by the end of the century

Heatwaves in NOLA





In 2023:

28 fatalities

400+ emergency room visits

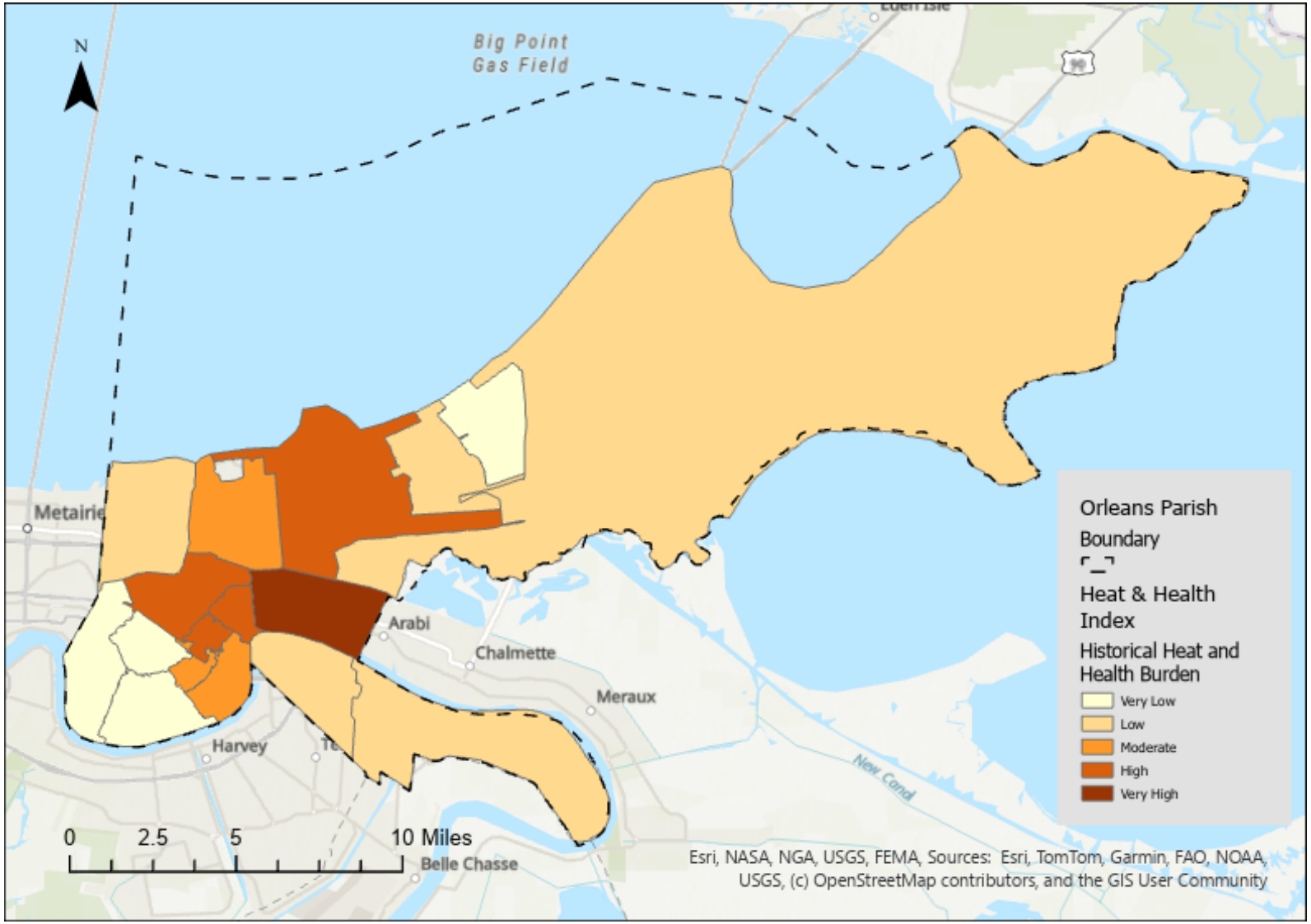
Screenshot of the FEMA National Risk Index for Heat Waves for the City of New Orleans and surrounding regions

Heat Exposure and Health

CDC Heat and Health Index (HHI)

The **Historical Heat and Health Burden** module captures measures of previous experience with heat at the local level. It includes:

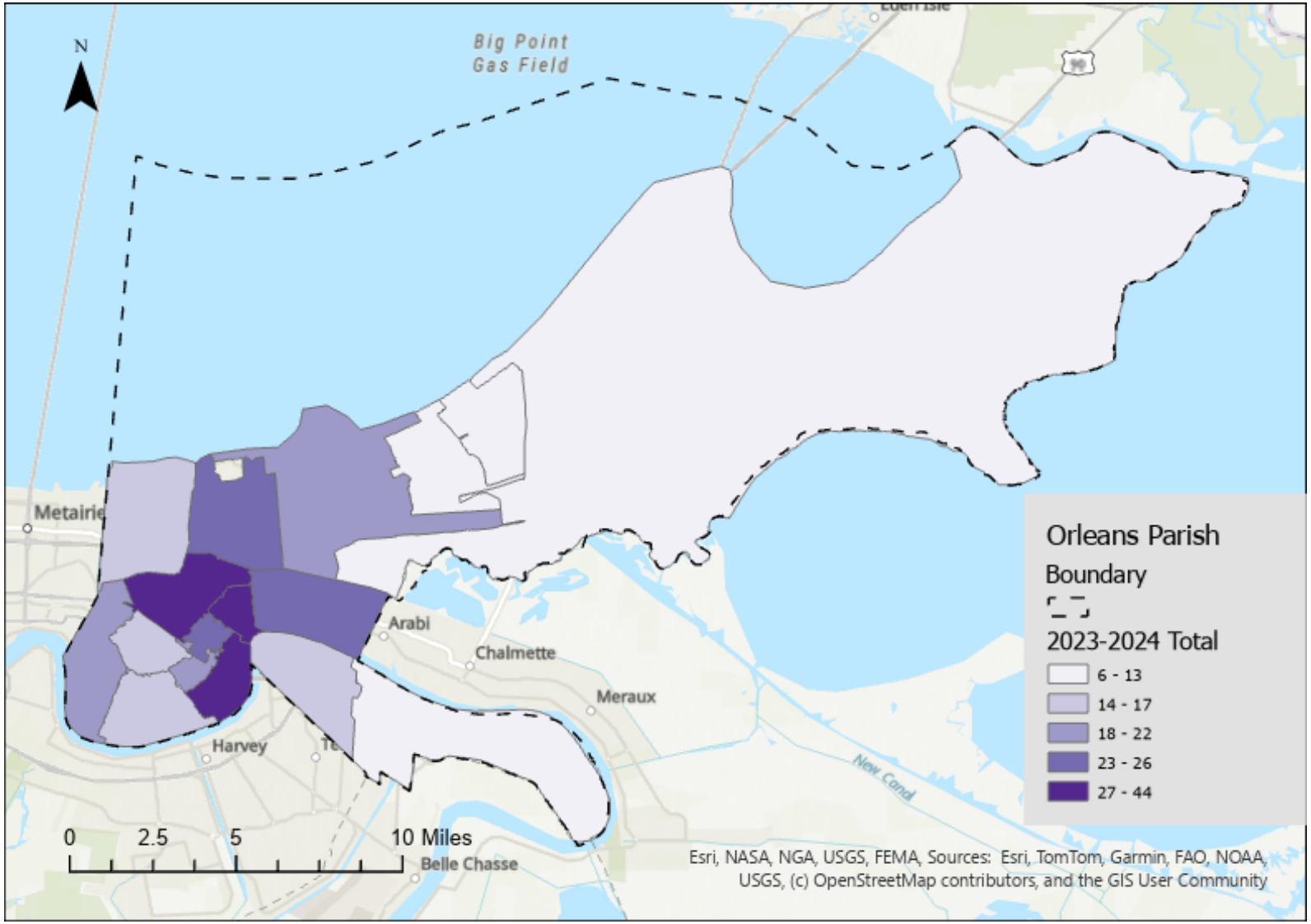
- Number of extreme heat days (95% percentile of heat)
- Heat-related illnesses (Emergency Medical Services activation)



Heat Exposure and Health

Heat Calls for Service (NOEMS)

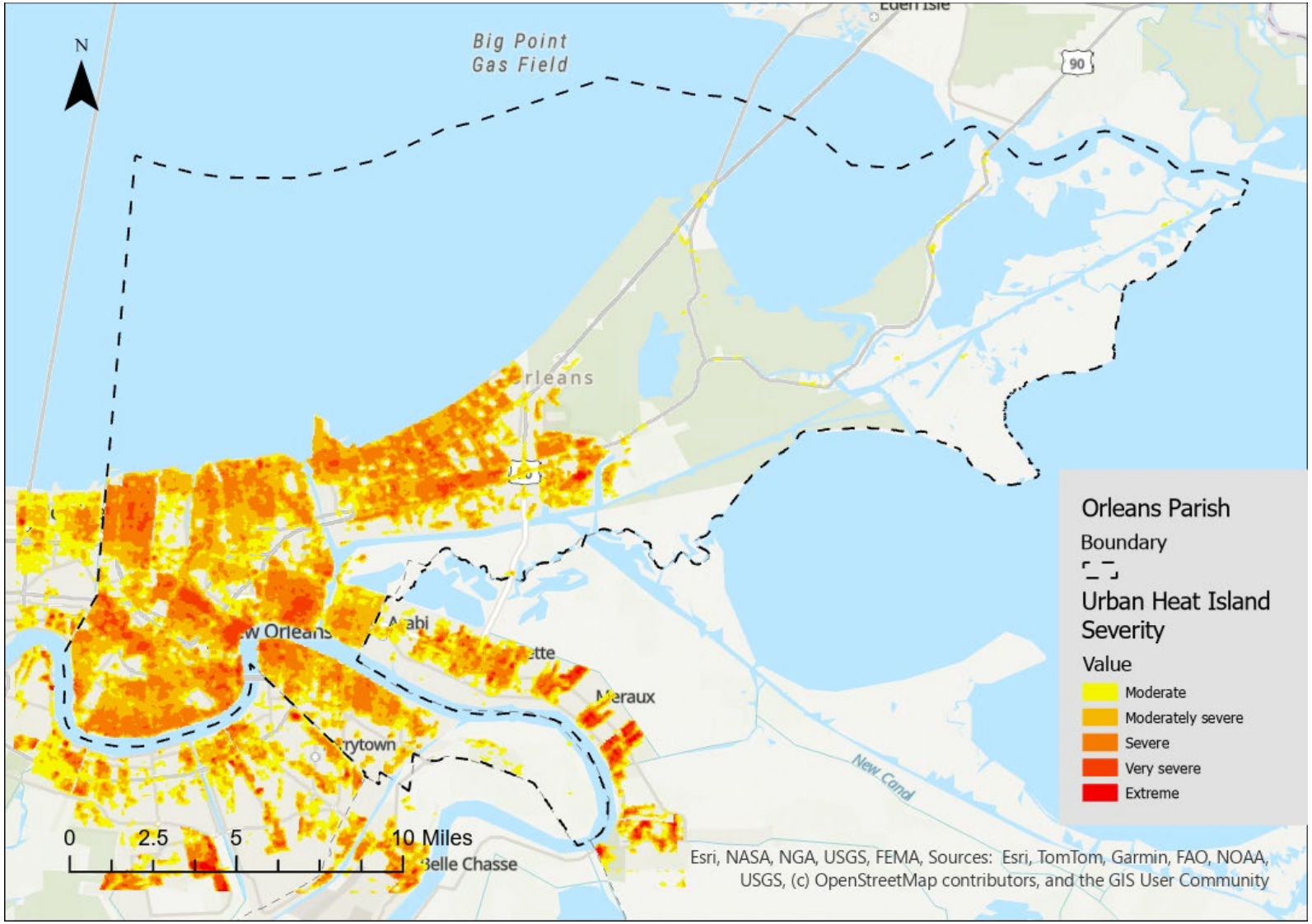
New Orleans Emergency Medical Services (NOEMS) on heat-related calls for service by zip code



Social Vulnerability and Heat

Urban Heat Island Severity

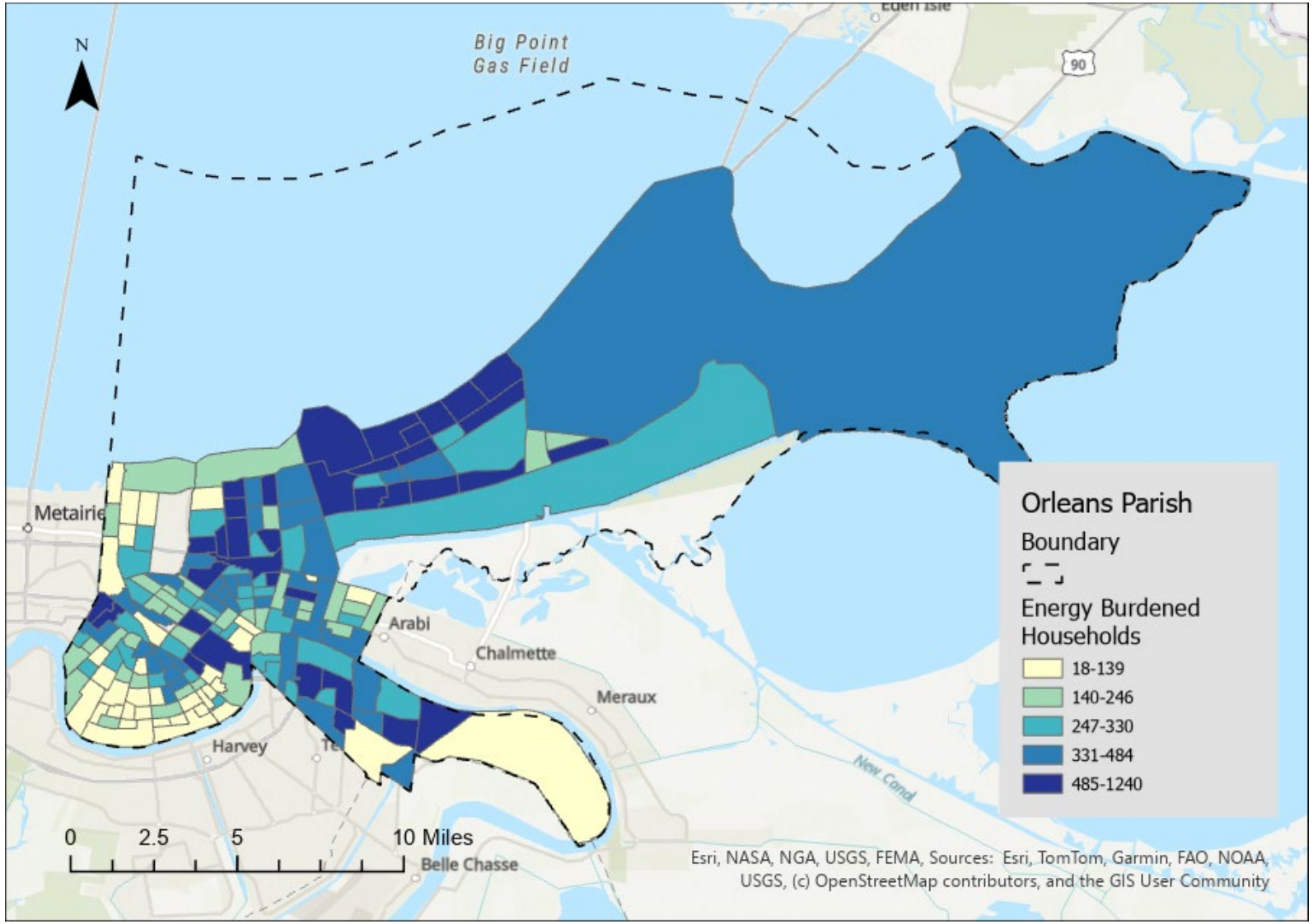
Urban heat islands within the City of New Orleans with elevated daytime land surface temperature (LST) ~1.25 degrees Fahrenheit above the city average.



Energy Insecurity and Heat

Energy Burdened Communities

Households with a high energy burden pay more than 6 percent of their income on energy bills



Heat Disparity within NOLA

- **Historical Development Patterns**, such as redlining and development post Hurricane Katrina, leads to **disparities in both heat burden and ability to respond** by**:**
  - Race
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Housing status (i.e. houseless, house but no AC)
  - Tree cover/shade
  - Socioeconomic status

Scan of the original HOLC map of New Orleans, shown near map of Urban Heat Island severity

Public Engagement

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Who is Most Impacted by Extreme Heat

Extreme heat does not impact all residents equally.

Who we engaged

- Aging Population
- Culture Bearers
- Outdoor Workers
- Transit-Dependent Residents
- People Experiencing Homelessness
- Families, Women, and Children

Why this matters

- Limited access to cooling
- Prolonged outdoor exposure
- Health and mobility vulnerabilities
- Economic constraints

Photo source: iSeeChange

Approach and Methodology

Intentional Targeted Community-Based Outreach & Engagement
September – November 2025

Outreach

- Through trusted service providers and community organizations working with target populations
- *Tactics*: mail, phone, and word of mouth

Engagement

- Pop-up/112 surveys
- 6 focus groups

Result

- 143 people consulted

From Engagement to Action

We didn’t just collect input, we listened with intention and gathered real, lived experiences from the community.

The following slides highlight:

- What we heard
- Key, insights, challenges and barriers
- Community-driven solutions

This directly informs our recommendations.

Senior Population

Tabling and surveying at the Senior Voters Caucus Annual Meeting, September 17, 2025

Insights, Challenges, & Barriers

- Struggle to stay cool
- Energy costs at home
- Mixed awareness of, and access to, “cooling centers”

Senior Population

Tabling and surveying at the Senior Voters Caucus Annual Meeting, September 17, 2025

Ideas for Solutions

- Targeted outreach to seniors about resources available
- Improved transportation and access to cooling centers
- Expanded nearby cooling options
- Funding support for utility expenses

Culture Bearers

In-person focus group at Ashe Cultural Arts Center

Insights, Challenges, & Barriers

- Insufficient shade and access to cooling resources at performances and events
- Disparities in provisions
- Health risks and emergencies
- Equity concerns
- Notable “hot spots:” Jazz Fest (Congo Square stage), French Quarter and Gentilly Fests, Broad St., Claiborne Corridor

Culture Bearers

In-person focus group at Ashe Cultural Arts Center

Ideas for Solutions

- Expanding shade in event hot spots
- Water stations on routes
- Heat safety plan and provision requirements for event permitting
- Greater representation in event planning
- Training and education on personal cooling options and emergency response

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Outdoor Workers

Virtual focus group with industry leaders in construction, energy, telecoms, engineering and public works

Insights, Challenges, & Barriers

- Localized situational factors
- Microclimates, low tree canopy, specific working conditions
- City ordinance with low threshold (80°F) creates operational disruptions
- Worker knowledge of heat symptoms and how to stay cool

Outdoor Workers

Virtual focus group with industry leaders in construction, energy, telecoms, engineering and public works

Ideas for Solutions

- Worker heat safety training
- Onsite resources e.g. mobile cooling solutions
- Alerts and actionable guidance
- Improved heat mapping
- Flexible approaches and cross-sector coordination

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Transit Dependent Community Members

Virtual focus group with leaders of transit-related organizations

Insights, Challenges, & Barriers

- Frequency inconsistency and detours
- Aging fleet with insufficient cooling
- Limited public hydration and restrooms,
- Use of transit as de-facto cooling centers
- Low tree canopy on bicycle corridors
- Microclimates
- Equity concerns

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Transit Dependent Community Members

Virtual focus group with leaders of transit-related organizations

Ideas for Solutions

- Improve and expand shade and seating
- Upgrade electric and hybrid fleets
- Increase hydration and tree canopies on major corridors especially for bikes.
- Green infrastructure (pavement)
- Cross-agency and civic org collaboration
- Real-time notifications (detours, cooling resources)
- Accountability to safety, comfort and equity

People Experiencing Homelessness

Virtual focus group with leaders of organizations working with the unhoused

Insights, Challenges, & Barriers

- Prolonged heat exposure
- Infrequent transit, long walks
- Physical and behavioral health impacts
- Limited, and gaps in, communication on heat risks and resources
- Frequented areas are also high risk: low shade with limited hydration resource provision

People Experiencing Homelessness

Virtual focus group with leaders of organizations working with the unhoused

Ideas for Solutions

- Shade structures/canopy and hydration in frequented locations
- Direct, clear outreach on resources.
- Centralized sites with cooling information and water
- Cooling centers with provisions
- Lower heat-response activation thresholds
- Coordination between City agencies, EMS and service providers

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Families, Women, and Children

Virtual focus group with organizations serving children and families

Insights, Challenges, & Barriers

- Less physical activity in extreme heat
- Dehydration and heat illness
- Lack of shade and limited cooling resources in family-frequented places
- Energy cost burden for families
- Insufficient age group alerts

Families, Women, and Children

Virtual focus group with organizations serving children and families

Ideas for Solutions

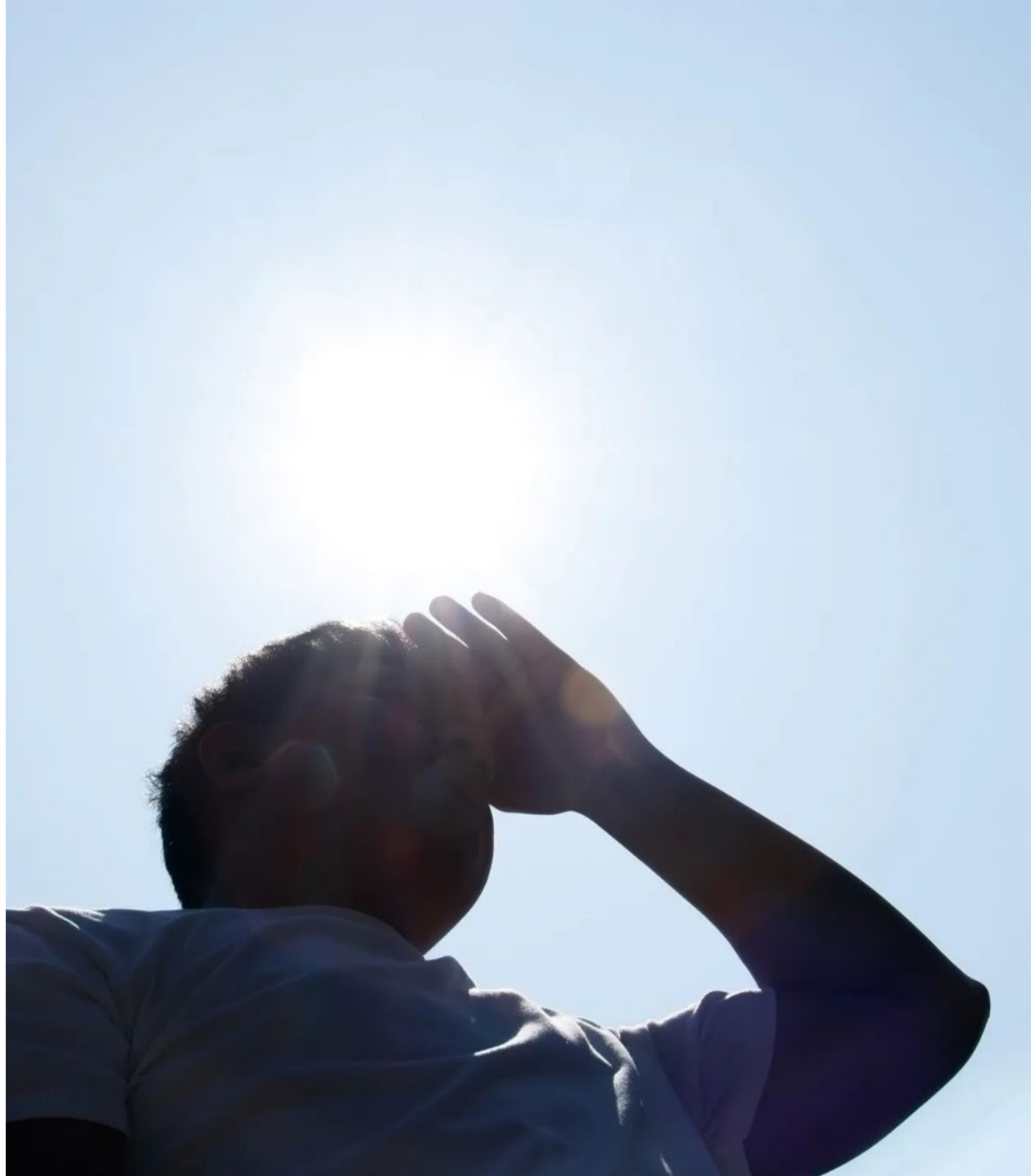
- Shade expansion, cooling surfaces and facilities, hydration points in family-frequented corridors
- Tailored alerts by age and heat thresholds; seasonal preparedness campaigns
- Better coordination among family and youth-serving orgs and City health and park agencies

Consistent themes across groups

What showed up across the six groups

Insights, Challenges & Barriers

- Availability and access to cooling resources
- Impact of insufficient transit service and shelters
- General lack of shade and low tree canopy
- Microclimate variations
- Equity implications



Consistent themes across groups

What showed up across the six groups

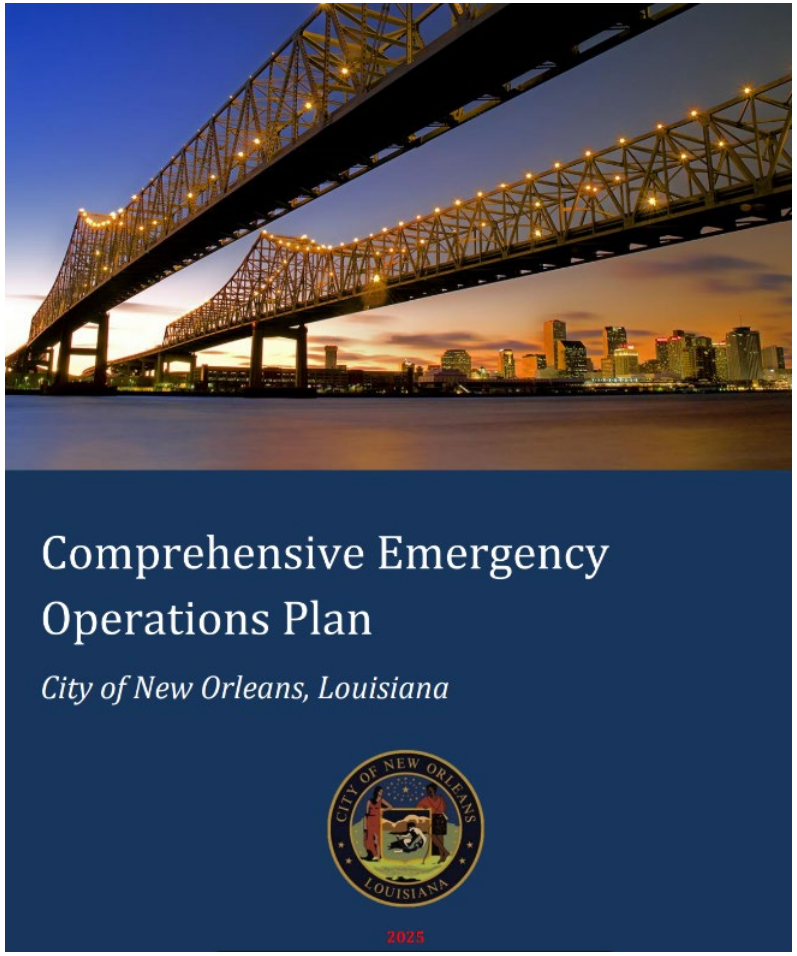
Solutions

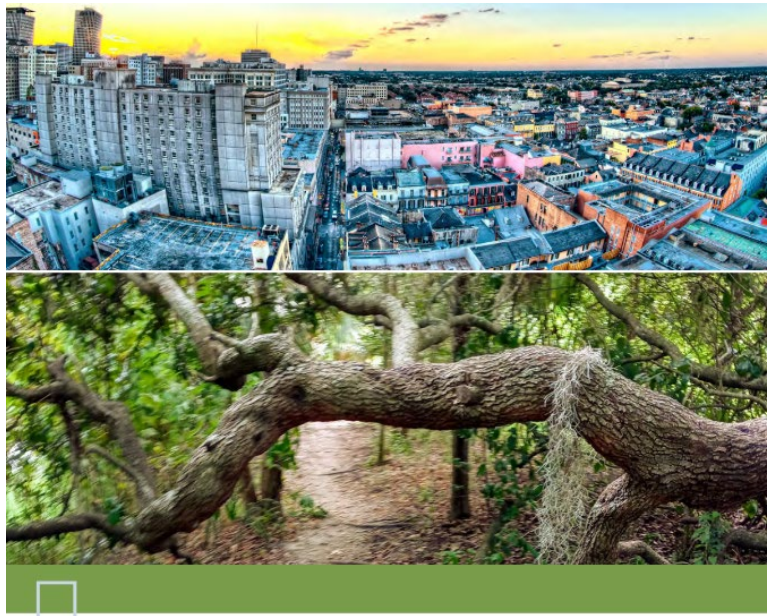
- Communications – alerts, outreach, tailored messaging
- Increased shade provision
- Better and protected transit
- Hydration and cooling center access
- Cross-sector coordination

Strategies

Developing strategies

Reviewing existing plans for heat





- Arup reviewed 15+ plans published by NOLA and policies related to heat resilience
- Team developed framework based off catalog of existing efforts
- Incorporating focus group findings
- **Next:** Incorporate survey results
- **Next:** Compare NOLA against national/international best practices

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Recommended Strategies

Overview

Goal 1: Relief During Heat Waves

A. Preparing the city's internal capacity for heat response

B. Educating, training, and preparing the community

C. Responding to heat waves

Goal 2: Creating Cooler Communities

D. Creating cooler buildings and indoor spaces

E. Cooling outdoor/public spaces

F. Preparing energy infrastructure for heat impacts

What does success look like?

Goals: Relief During Heat Waves & Cooler Communities

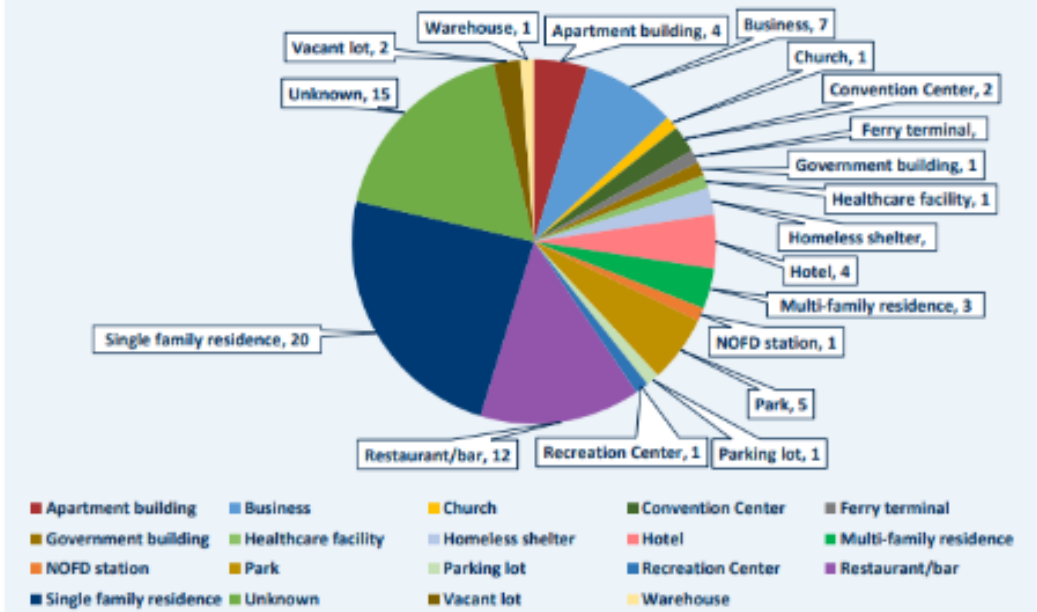
- **Health:** Reduced # of heat-related illnesses and deaths
- **Livability:** Improved livability and comfort
- **Savings:** Reduced the economic burden of heat impacts (households, local businesses, public dollars)

A.X: Monitor and report heat-related data*

- **Potential Leads**: Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness (NOHSEP), New Orleans Health Department, New Orleans Emergency Medical Services, Orleans Parish Coroners Office
- **Example activities**: Develop standard operating procedure for data collection (weather, healthcare, syndromic surveillance, 311/911, field outreach, coroner, etc.) during extreme heat events
- **Potential metrics for success:** Annual Heat & Health Report

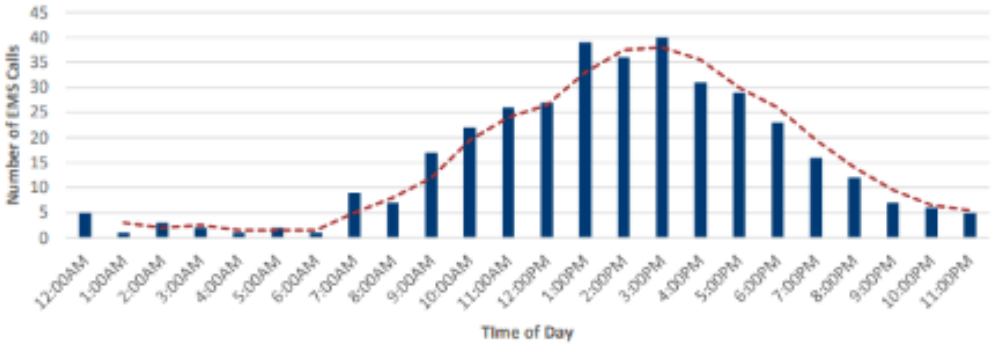
*indicates a community priority based on stakeholder engagement

Figure 17. *Location Type for 2023 Heat-Related New Orleans EMS Calls*



In addition to the location type, the time of day the call occurred was also documented and can be seen in the graph below [Figure 18.]. Using a moving average, an influx in call volume began around 7:00AM in the morning can be seen, increasing until it reached a peak around 3:00PM in the afternoon. After this point call volume began to decrease with the lowest point in the time series showing five or less calls per hour occurring between 11:00PM and 6:00AM in the morning.

Figure 18. ***2023 heat-related EMS calls by time of day***



SAMPLE RECOMMENDATION

Relief during Heatwaves

B.Y: Deliver heat information to communities*

- **Lead**: Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness (NOHSEP)
- **Example activities**: Update emergency websites with relevant resources for peak heat season
- **Potential metrics for success:** Communication materials distributed in multiple languages at higher %

SAMPLE RECOMMENDATION

*indicates a community priority based on stakeholder engagement

C.Z: Distribution of hydration and cooling supplies*

- **Leads**: Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness (NOHSEP), Office of Homeless Services and Strategy, New Orleans Recreation Development Commission
- **Example activities**: Surge capacity to distribute water, fans, cooling towels, ice packs, and other resources
- **Potential metrics for success:** coverage of distribution of hydration/cooling supplies

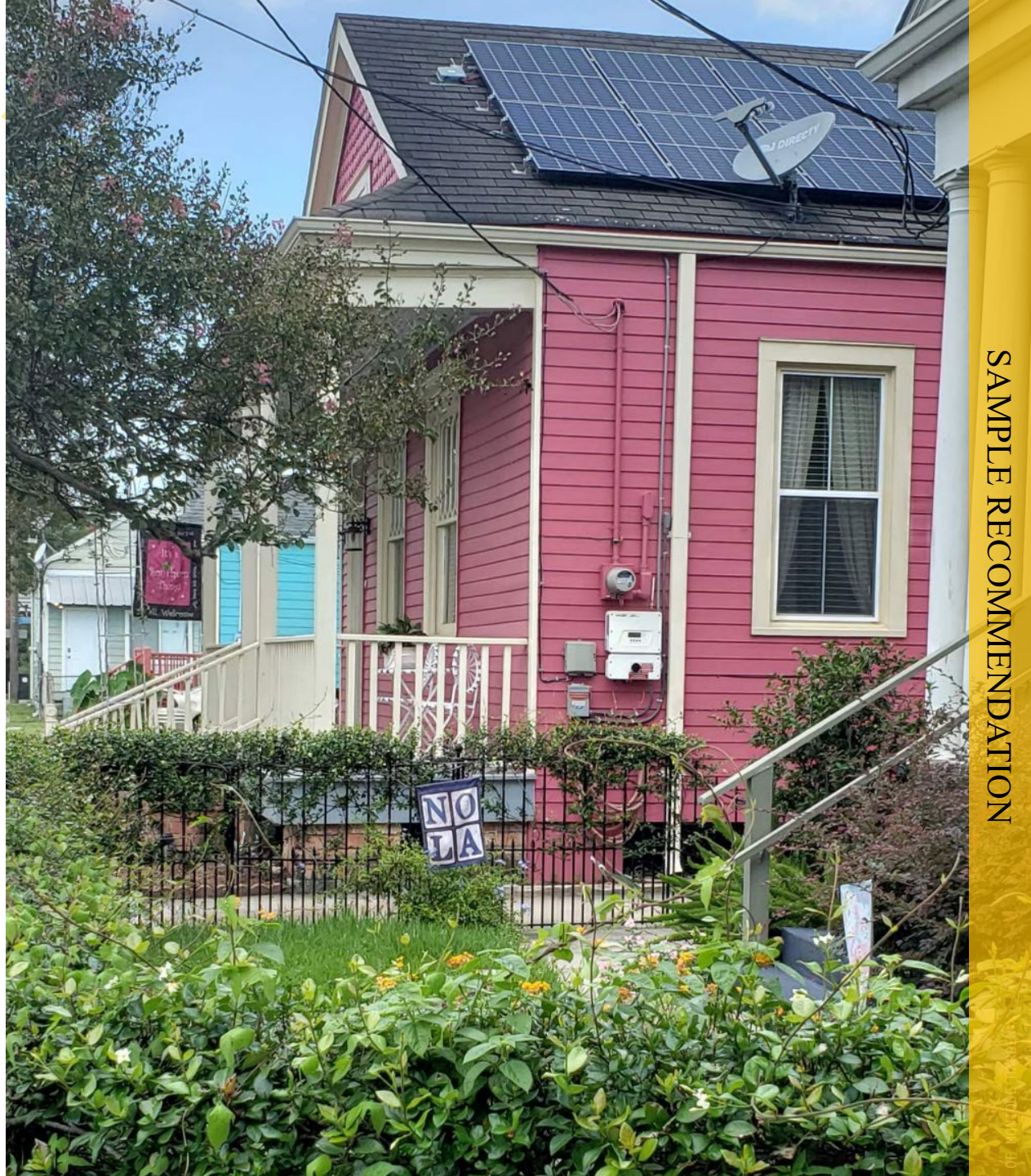
*indicates a community priority based on stakeholder engagement

Creating Cooler Communities

D.X: Retrofit and weatherize homes for heat resilience*

- **Leads**: Office of Sustainability, Neighborhood Engagement Office, Mayor's Communications Team
- **Example activities**: Share educational resources on home weatherization and energy assistance programs, Identify funding source to support construction and retrofits of residential properties to meet fortified roof standards
- **Potential metrics for success:** # of home weatherization projects, prioritized in areas with a high energy burden and heat-health risk

*indicates a community priority based on stakeholder engagement



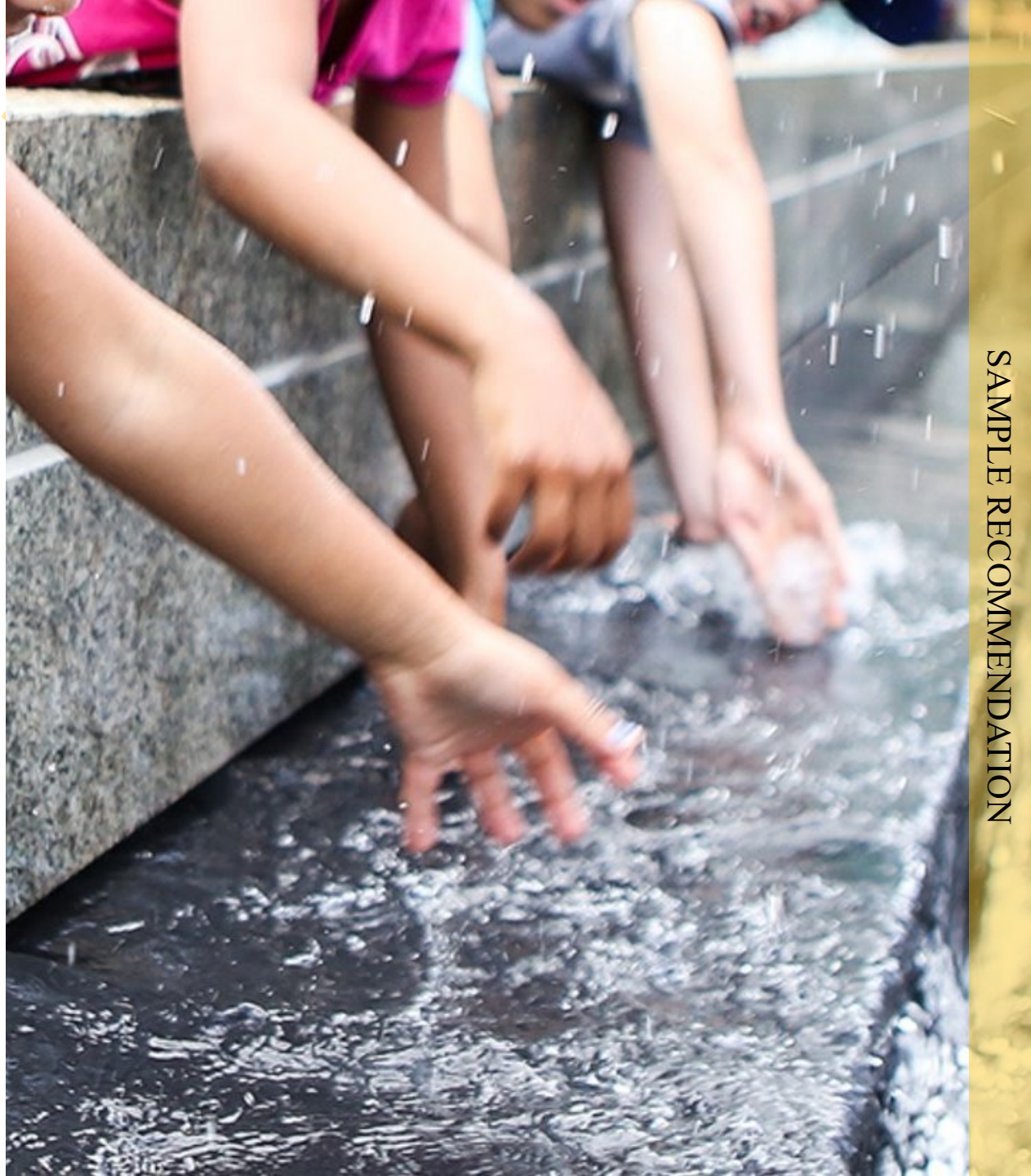
SAMPLE RECOMMENDATION

Creating Cooler Communities

E.Y: Expand the city's blue infrastructure*

- **Leads**: Office of Community Assets & Investment
- **Example activities**: Design and build splashpads with other cooling features and shaded structures
- **Potential metrics for success:** # of splashpads with shade and their equitable distribution

*indicates a community priority based on stakeholder engagement



SAMPLE RECOMMENDATION

F.Z: Deploy back up power and microgrids

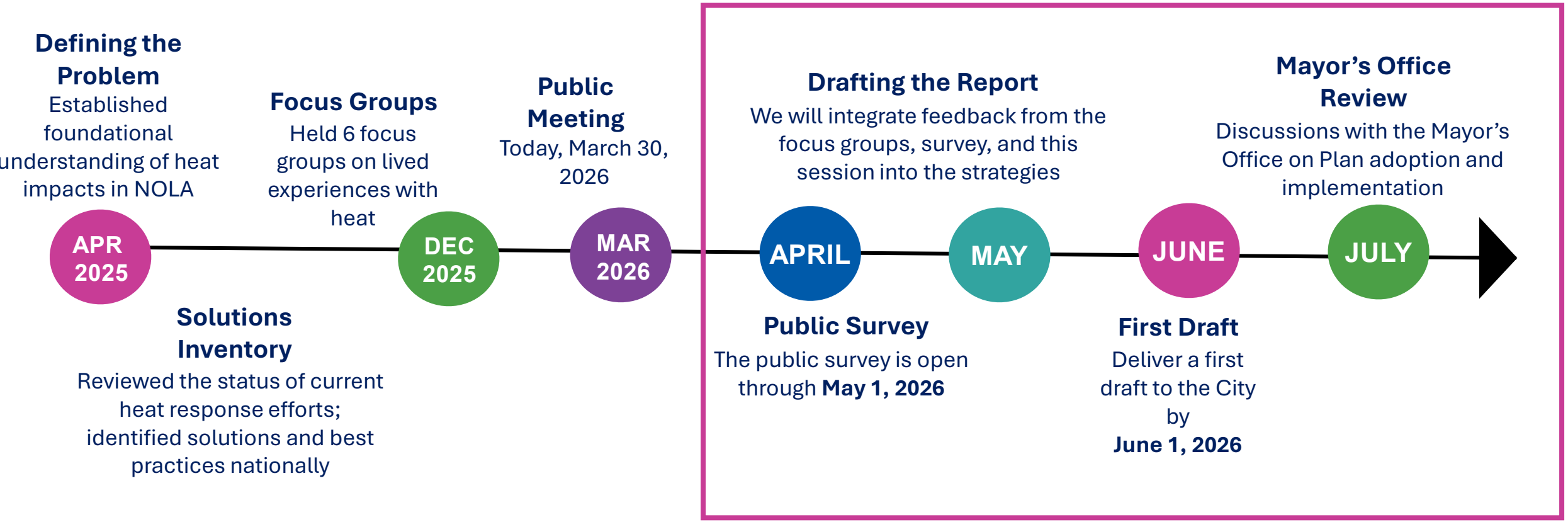
- **Leads**: Hazard Mitigation Office (HMO)
- **Example activities**: Develop distributed energy resources (microgrids) to improve power resiliency and reduce load during heat waves
- **Potential metrics for success:** # heat-related black outs or brown outs; capacity to meet long-term energy demand for cooling; demand management implementation

Plan Implementation

What's Next?

1. Integrate across departments
2. Prioritize high impact actions
3. Fund the gaps
4. Partner for implementation

Plan Development Timeline



Project Deliverables Available at: nola.gov/heatplan

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Contact

heatteam@nola.gov

NOLA Office of Sustainability

Survey Open Until May 1: New Orleans Heat Action Public Survey

Access via nola.gov/heatplan

Q&A

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