# Sinking grounds, rising challenges: Climate adaptation in New Orleans

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## Overview

Communities striving to recover from hurricanes must incorporate lessons from the past, realities of the present, and an understanding of future challenges to intentionally create places that can persevere. Climate adaptation is the process that enables communities to adjust and prepare for the observable and predicted effects of climate change.

The challenge of climate change takes many forms, and touches every aspect of our lives, both directly and indirectly. It can show up directly through the impacts of floods, heat, hurricanes, and droughts. This cascade of challenges also shows up in higher flood insurance rates, building permitting reforms, population migration, coastal land loss, rising house prices, clean water, and food insecurities.

This report examines the myriad ways that the city of New Orleans and its surrounding parishes have deployed ingenuity and passion to address these impacts in the 20 years since Hurricane Katrina slammed ashore in 2005, leading to the failure of the federal levees. From bioswales to managed stormwater runoffs to amphibious architecture to cope with flooding, and from compact fluorescent lamps and solar powered Community Lighthouses to provide resilient light and power, New Orleanians are coming together to adapt at record speed to the challenges before them.


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More specifically, this report documents climate adaptation in metropolitan New Orleans with a

focus on urban green restoration, increased housing security, and workforce development initiatives in climate-adaptation professions. I first examine the impacts of Hurricane Katrina and the effects of the changing climate over the course of the 21st century, then detail how the city and its surrounding parishes are embracing climate adaptation. I close with three recommendations that build on what New Orleanians have achieved to date—enact regional tree restoration programs, develop pathways for more innovative and sustainable building permits backed by flood insurance, and enable more local clean energy options supported by dedicated workforce development programs.

## Hurricane Katrina was a wake-up call that climate is changing

Hurricane Katrina was a wake-up call for New Orleans and the state of Louisiana that climate change is happening, and that not paying attention is seriously risky. Over the 20 years since the storm hit and the levees broke, the observable effects of climate change have become ever more intense. From 2020 to 2023, each parish within the New Orleans metropolitan area has experienced an annual average of more than 52 days of extreme heat (apart from Plaquemines Parish where the Mississippi River ends its journey into the Gulf of Mexico), with extreme heat defined as above 90°F.[1] Looking ahead, the region could expect an additional annual average of 35 days above 94°F from 2040 to 2060.[2]

The urban heat-island effect exacerbates this steady increase in temperatures. This happens because concrete buildings, roads, and parking lots absorb and radiate heat back into the air, making cities potentially 1°F to 7°F hotter than their suburban neighbors.[3] The Urban Heat Island Index, or UHII, quantifies this heat difference by comparing air temperatures in urban regions to nearby rural regions by U.S. Census Bureau tracts.

New Orleans is nationally ranked as the 5th highest, with an average UHII per capita of 8°F, meaning, on average, each New Orleanian experiences a temperature that is 8°F warmer than their suburban and rural neighbors, with upwards of 43,000 people experiencing a 9°F UHII effect.[4] Coinciding, heat-related deaths are also on the increase. From 2020 to 2022, heat-related deaths are up 486 percent statewide, from 15 deaths to 88 deaths, respectively.[5]

A rise in temperature increases evaporation, enhancing the atmosphere's capacity to hold moisture. In 2019, the New Orleans rainfall total departed from the 1981–2010 average with an increase of 2.56 inches.[6] If this increase continues as projected from 2041 to 2060, then the annual probability of a 1-in-100-year rainfall event doubles.[7] This increase puts many directly in harm's way. In the city of New Orleans and its immediately surrounding parishes, more than 450,000 properties (85 percent of all the properties in the greater metropolitan area) have a "major" risk of some level of flooding.[8] The largest share of properties with a "major" or greater risk of flooding are in the city of New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish, southeast of the city, and Jefferson Parish to the west and southwest.[9]

Since 1932, Louisiana has lost 2,000 square miles of its coast.[10] Many factors contribute to this land loss, although unarguably the anthropogenic effects continue to accelerate the loss. The rule of thumb, established by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, estimates that every 2.7 miles of marsh present can reduce storm surge by one foot.[11] Quantifying this historic land loss as an evenly distributed square means the distance lost from the coast equates to roughly 44.72 miles. So, over the past 100 years, Louisiana has lost the capacity to reduce storm surges by 16.56 feet. In the next 50 years, the New Orleans metropolitan area is projected to experience between 19.8 inches to 30.8 inches of sea level rise.[12] That corresponds to an additional 1,100 square miles to 3,000 square miles of coast lost.[13]

# Restoration: a story of urban green rebuilding to strengthen and sustain metropolitan New Orleans

Significant progress has been made on green infrastructure, reducing flood and temperature risk in and around New Orleans over the past 20 years. All parishes within the New Orleans metropolitan region are working to manage stormwater more efficiently. Jefferson Parish[14] and Orleans Parish,[15] which includes the city itself, have specific green infrastructure plans aiming to implement nature-based solutions to reduce climate vulnerability. In the face of aging infrastructure, sustainable projects are critical for the survival of any community.

After Hurricane Katrina, many non-profit organizations arose, working to uplift community resilience through projects, education, and support. Groundwork New Orleans is one of them, and has worked inside of New Orleans since 2006 on educational and green initiatives. The non-profit reduces vulnerability through installing bioswales and rain gardens using native species, rain barrels, pervious pavement, solar projects, and partnering with other organizations for larger projects, all while training, certifying, and paying local community members to do this work.[16]

Recently, Groundwork New Orleans partnered with Healthy Community Services, another local non-profit organization that works to engage and educate the community in sustainable urban practices,[17] alongside the Institute for Sustainable Communities, the Kresge Foundation, Louisiana Green Corps, and the NOTEP Trade School to complete a public-access stormwater mitigation park along Claiborne Avenue in Mid-City. This project utilizes the deep community work done by Healthy Community Services on project visioning accompanied by the construction capacity of Groundwork New Orleans.

The new Claiborne Avenue park includes features such as a 200-foot bioswale capable of holding 38,500 gallons of stormwater per rain event, native species, and pervious pavement completely constructed by several youth workforce development programs.[18] By focusing on the structures, education, and experience, Groundwork New Orleans "likes to incorporate multiple aspects of adaptation and resilience," said Todd Reynolds, its executive director, in an April 14, 2025, interview. "Let's start including all these features in our municipal and residential installs."

Both of the lead non-profits on the Claiborne Avenue park project also train high school students and community members in green infrastructure. These organizations hold and train the National Green Infrastructure Certification Program, which gives many participants the opportunity to increase their professional capacity and incorporate climate adaptation strategies into their businesses.

The role native trees play in these green infrastructure projects is particularly astounding. A 6-year-old, 7-meter-tall Live Oak can uptake 24.7 gallons of water per day.[19] A medium sized Bald Cypress tree can uptake 15.85 gallons per day, while a mature large cypress can uptake a 28.27 gallons per day.[20] And trees can not only reduce our flood risk, but also address rising temperatures. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, between shade and evapotranspiration, trees and vegetation can reduce peak summer temperatures by 2°F to 9°F and reduce home energy use by up to 47 percent.[21]

Katrina decimated 200,000 trees. Today, the current tree canopy only covers 18.5 percent of the city.[22] Compared to other cities, such as Charleston, SC with 63 percent existing canopy coverage, Atlanta (47 percent), and Austin, TX (36 percent), New Orleans has work to do.[23] Arising from the 2020 Tree Preservation Study from the City of New Orleans, the New Orleans Reforestation Plan spearheaded by the environmental non-profit, Sustaining Our Urban Landscape, or SOUL, aims to protect the current old growth tree canopy and reforest areas lost to hurricanes, construction, and electrical projects.

The city's reforestation plan works toward three major goals. First, it aims for no net loss of trees within three years, with 100,000 trees planted by 2040.[24] Second, it creates an equitable urban forest, with a developed plan to work with five neighborhoods over five years to increase the canopy cover by 10 percent over 10 years.[25] Third, it promotes a unified tree policy[26] for the city.

In March 2025, the city council approved an update to the tree protection ordinance, which had not been updated since 1956.[27] During the council meeting, however, several community members voiced concerns with the ordinance, stating a need for both community engagement from the city and refinements to the ordinance to include more protections such as arborists and enforcement.[28] While there is more work to do between the community and the city, this is a step in the right direction. The fate of this project, however, is currently in limbo, as a $75 million grant from the U.S. Forest Service to the Arbor Day Foundation, of which $1 million supported this project directly, was cancelled in 2025 by the Trump Administration.[29]

Trees in public spaces are a bit easier to protect, but it is difficult to provide the same level of protection to trees on private property.[30] Some headway has occurred. In Jefferson Parish, there are two tree protection districts, the Metairie Ridge Tree Protection District and the Old Metairie Neighborhood Conservation District, both of which protect specific species of trees that contribute to the canopy. If a tree needs to be removed, a permit must be applied for, and the tree needs to be replaced or compensated for.[31] And in Plaquemines Parish, an influx of temporary RV parks due to major construction projects such as the Venture Global LNG Terminal led to Ordinance 24-205, which specifies zoning for these temporary parks, including the protection of live oak and bald cypress trees above 10 inches in diameter.[32]

## Adapting housing security to climate change to sustain the population of metropolitan New Orleans

The New Orleans metropolitan area can be considered a risky place to live. Between 2020 and 2024, there were 124 disaster declarations by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), with 16 in Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines parishes, and 15 in St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, St. James and St. Tammany parishes.[33] Within that timeframe, from 2020 to 2023, each Louisianan experienced an average of 155 hours of power interruption, nearly twice as much as the next highest state (Maine, at 81 hours).[34]

With the increase of climate risk on a national level, FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in 2021 moved to an individualized risk assessment rather than apply a general one, called Risk Rating 2.0. This allows for insurance companies to get a more accurate look at risk when establishing policies and allows parishes to create building codes that more accurately reflect that risk. Once the new price system is fully in place by 2035, the median annual cost of insurance for single-family homeowners will range from $1,193 in St. Bernard Parish to $4,752 in Plaquemines Parish.[35]

As a result, statewide, flood insurance premiums are projected to increase by 87 percent, opposed to the national average of 64 percent.[36] It is difficult to measure the exact amount of climate risk one is exposed to, but the insurance agencies are working to define it for us. That is why there comes a time, generally after a major weather event, when the residents of Metro New Orleans need to consider their next climate adaption strategy. The residents and their communities in and around New Orleans are busy doing just that.

## Adapting housing, power, and food security for residents to remain in place

Greenlight New Orleans, another post-Katrina non-profit organization, works to provide solutions for community members to apply in their homes, contributing to overall community resilience. They focus on three strategies: free installation of compact fluorescent lamps, a vegetable garden program, and a rain barrel program. Greenlight has installed more than 600,000 compact fluorescent lamps, saving $28 million in energy costs, and 272 million pounds of CO2 offset.[37]

Similarly, more than 600 gardens have been installed, engaging with more than 1,000 community members, and increasing food security.[38] Greenlight also has installed 2,800 rain barrels, with a current pace of approximately 50 per month, saving residents more than $36,000 in water bills.[39]

Immediately following a natural disaster, the increase in temperature combined with energy interruptions can be deadly. Together New Orleans, a coalition of congregations and community-based organizations, is working toward addressing this energy gap. The Community Lighthouse Project, an initiative of Together New Orleans, arose from prolonged loss of power after Hurricane Ida in 2021. Its coalition members are now building a network of solar- and battery-powered resilience hubs. The project envisions 85-to-100 congregations and community institutions across Louisiana providing charging stations, battery distribution, food preparation and distribution, cooling and heating stations, and assistance with some medical equipment during energy disruptions.[40]

Across metropolitan New Orleans, this large network would put every resident within one mile, or a 15-minute walk, of a community lighthouse, increasing energy security and helping people cope during their most vulnerable times.[41] There are currently 15 community lighthouses across New Orleans, and the network was put to the test after Hurricane Francine in 2024. Nine community lighthouses were able to open after that recent storm, with eight opening less than 12 hours afterwards, and one lighthouse in LaPlace, serving the larger metro area.[42] Four of these New Orleans lighthouses were operating off-grid, utilizing solar and battery power to serve their community.[43]

This first response to Hurricane Francine served 2,300 people with 1,800 meals, 4,000 bottles of water, and deployed 16 batteries for people to use for items such as CPAP machines.[44] This array of community lighthouses are also used while the power grid is functional, helping defray utility costs for these centers. Large coalition centers, such as the Household of Faith in New Orleans East, could save up to $15,000 a year through these sustainable means.[45] The availability of these critical services weigh into people's personal adaptation plans, determining whether they are going to stay or migrate.

## Enabling residents and communities to adapt homes to a changing climate

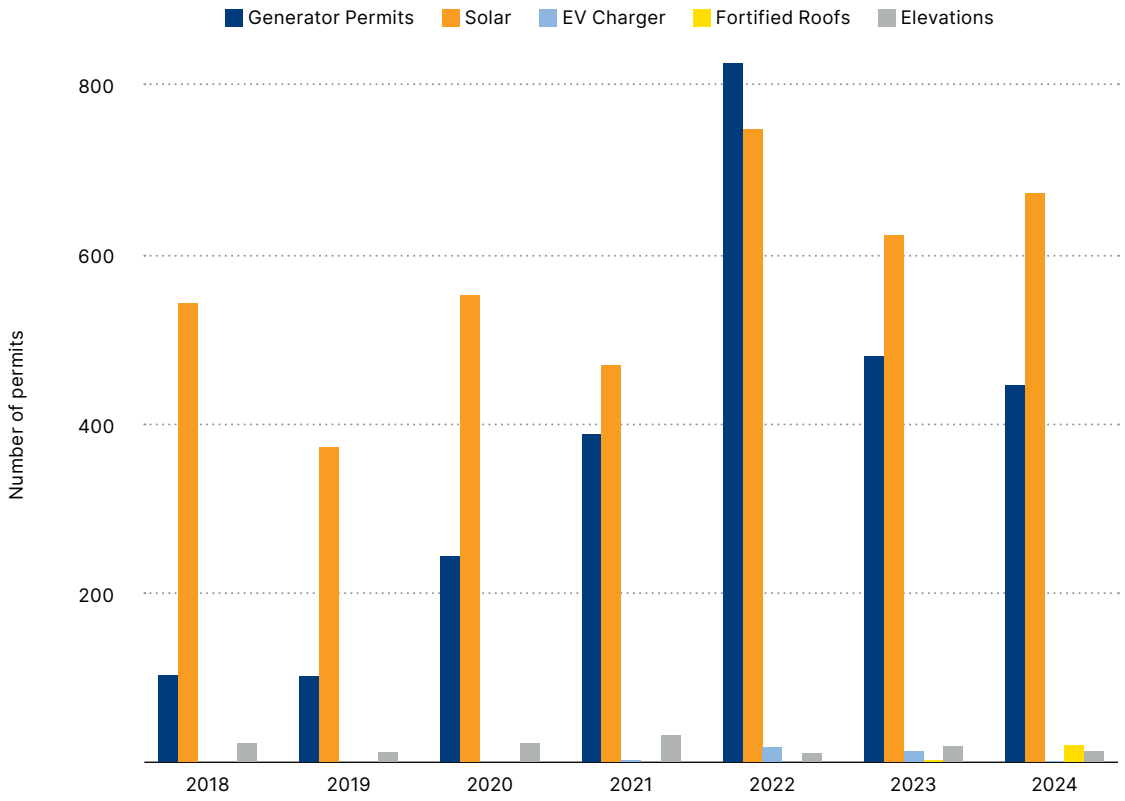
Judging how individual households are adapting to these changes is hard to determine. Orleans Parish, however, makes its permitting data widely available, providing a glimpse at adaptation choices. From the 35,690 permits applied for between 2018 and 2024, 18.9 percent fall into one of the following adaptation categories: generator installation, solar panel installation, EV charger installation, a Louisiana Fortified Homes Program build, or home elevation.[46] Over that timeframe, the most popular adaptation strategy was solar panel installation, with nearly 4,000 permits applied for.[47] (See Figure 1.)

FIGURE 1

## Solar power and power generators are the most frequent adaptation taken by New Orleans residents

Orleans Parish permits*, 2018–2024

*Source: J. Richard analysis of City of New Orleans permit data, 2018–2024*
**Note: Orleans Parish data highlights generator, solar, EV charger, fortified roof, and elevation permits.*




Generators, however, are typically the most noticeable and quickest method to handle energy interruptions, with natural gas whole-home generators a popular choice. Alas, Louisiana's current natural gas infrastructure was not designed to keep up with the demand of the whole-home generators, and many users experience low pressure during these critical times,[48] making solar a more sustainable and reliable option.

Over the past decade and a half, residential solar-installation prices have decreased by 33 percent.[49] This decrease coupled with tax credits has helped facilitate growth in the solar sector nationwide. Notably, a spike in generator, solar, and EV permits occurred in 2022, the year following Hurricane Ida, when Orleans Parish was out of power for 15 days, and in St. James, St. John the Baptist, and Jefferson parishes 3,086 households were without power 30 days after the storm.[50]

Generally, adaptation strategies that require permitting are costly and out of reach for many area residents. As of October 2021, if a home in the United States is 51 percent damaged, then it must comply with FEMA's Risk Reduction 2.0 building codes to qualify for rebuilding. These codes mandate that homes must be elevated 12 inches to 18 inches above base flood elevation. In the greater New Orleans metropolitan area, these elevations can range from less than

one foot in New Orleans to 13 feet in St. James, St. Charles, and St. John the Baptist parishes, 14 feet in Plaquemines and Jefferson parishes, and upwards of 18 feet in St. Bernard Parish.[51]

Home elevations can be quite costly. In St. James Parish, for example, the average cost of a home elevation is $185,000.[52] Additionally, the NFIP requires that properties with government-backed mortgages located in FEMA-designated flood zones must have flood insurance coverage, which is quite costly. Elevated houses, while excellent at protecting from floodwaters, are also exposed to higher winds and sustain more wind damage.[53] This traps people in a loop they can't afford, forcing difficult decisions.

## Adapting to climate change with community-wide resources

Yet communities are coming up with community-wide solutions. Mandeville, in St. Tammany Parish across from New Orleans on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, has found exceptional success with intentional community-wide elevations, where more than 300 homes have been elevated since 2011.[54] Storm surge and erosion on Lake Pontchartrain's shoreline had moved Mandeville's shoreline inland 948 ft by 2004 before Hurricane Katrina.[55] This decreased ability to handle storm surge enabled Hurricane Katrina to impact 162 properties in 2005. And when Hurricane Issac hit in 2012, it impacted 1,110 properties.[56]

Seeing the risks, Mandeville in 2011 mandated that new residential construction must also be elevated an additional 24 inches above FEMA's base flood elevation.[57] This mandate includes rebuilds, meaning all permits now must be compliant with FEMA 2.0 regulations. The federal agency offers elevation grants, but they are incredibly competitive, requiring time, dedication, money and expertise to receive them. Mandeville recently applied for these grants to raise another 35 structures, armed with staff members and a consultant to help with the FEMA applications, and was awarded 34 of the 35 grants.[58] Now, with 86 percent of the town elevated, damages and recovery time has drastically decreased.[59] When Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, there were 750 NFIP claims and there was around a 2-year recovery time period.[60] A year after the new elevation policy was established in 2012, when Hurricane Isaac hit, there were only 250 such claims with shortened recovery time of one year. When Hurricane Ida hit nine years later, in 2021, there were only 59 flooded buildings, and most businesses were back in operation within the same week.[61]

The example Mandeville is setting clearly has tangible results and a fantastic baseline for all communities to work toward. This community, however, has one resource making it successful: money. It is on the Mandeville homeowner to pay for gaps in insurance coverage, gaps in grant funding, or potentially, the full cost of elevation, which most of the residents of this relatively wealthy community have the ability to do.[62] According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Mandeville has a median income of $89,122, with a 67.9 percent home ownership rate.[63]

On the flip side are communities such as Pointe a la Hache, on the Eastbank of Plaquemines Parish in the lower Mississippi River Delta. During Hurricane Katrina, most residences in this community were inundated with 12 feet to 18 feet of water.[64] Pointe a la Hache has a 91.3 percent poverty rate, with a median household income of $11,781, but boasts 100 percent home ownership.[65] FEMA has only approved two elevation grants over the past 20 years in Pointe a la Hache, and community members cannot afford to fill the monetary gaps.[66] Fortunately, some innovative solutions to this financing problem for low- and middle-income communities are being tested elsewhere and could fit into the mix in and around New Orleans in the future. (See box.)

### More affordable future home adaptation measures

The Buoyant Foundation Project in New Orleans is going outside the box to solve the financing problem faced by low-income homeowners trying to adapt their homes to changing climate conditions. After Hurricane Katrina's devastation, New Orleanian Dr. Elizabeth English, who is now at the University of Waterloo in Canada and director of the project, began developing and testing amphibious architecture with her then students at Louisiana State University to help people learn to live with water instead of against it.

Specifically, she developed amphibious retrofit designs that allow for homes to float and rise upwards on vertical guides during high-water events.[67] "My strategy is retrofitting existing houses, so that people who have a house but want to make it safer don't have to go through the procedure of moving, finding another house, or the expense of building something," she explained in an April 15, 2025 interview. "They can just take what they have and adapt."

Four of her retrofits have been used and tested in the Mekong River Delta in Vietnam, where the yearly high river levels threaten rice farmers who also experience poverty.[68] These retrofitted homes not only survived but also were a fraction of the cost to build compared to traditional home-elevations. The amphibious retrofit typically costs between 20–45 percent of a traditional elevation, keeps people below the high winds, and gets people back into their homes much quicker.[69]

Unfortunately, in the United States, these retrofitted homes do not qualify for under FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program, and without flood insurance, a mortgage is unobtainable. See one of my recommendations at the end of this report for how to overcome this hurdle for low-income residents of Metro New Orleans and across the United States.

## The alternative to not adapting in place

Louisiana is experiencing population losses—the flip side of residents adapting in place. Between 2020 and 2024, all New Orleans metropolitan parishes, except for St. Bernard and St. Tammany parishes, experienced declining populations. These population declines were between 2.3 percent and 6.6 percent in these parishes, with St. John the Baptist Parish northwest of the city experiencing the largest decline.[70]

Of those that out-migrate, it seems that most are not going terribly far, staying in Mississippi, Texas, and Arkansas.[71] There are many reasons why a person or family would leave the New Orleans metropolitan region, making it impossible to truly track how much of a factor climate is. But civic leaders and local and regional policymakers alike need to monitor this trend and work to reverse it. One way is through relevant and burgeoning workforce development opportunities.

### Climate-related workforce development is adaptable and sustainable

Louisiana has been an energy leader since the first oil well was drilled in 1901.[72] Louisiana's pioneering spirit led to oil rigs out in the Gulf of Mexico on the continental shelf, extracting crude oil from the first bottom-supported platform in 1947.[73] With these levels

of expertise and niche skills, Louisiana's own Keystone Engineering and Gulf Island Fabrication helped build the first offshore wind farm near Block Island, RI, completed in 2016.[74]

This is just one example of sustainable energy career training finding a home in the New Orleans metropolitan region. In 2022, a regional consortium called H2theFuture, led by the economic development organization Greater New Orleans Inc., was awarded a $50 million federal grant, from the U.S. Economic Development Agency's Build Back Better Regional Challenge, to build clean hydrogen opportunities in the region, supporting decarbonization.[75] This H2theFuture coalition has three overall goals:

1. Preserve traditional energy jobs in lower-carbon applications
2. Train future workers for new, clean energy jobs
3. Intentionally address historical economic, environmental, and social changes[76]

Because 1 in 5 jobs in Louisiana are connected to the maritime industry, the region is a leader in the nation for maritime careers.[77] Two members of the H2theFuture coalition, the Port of South Louisiana and the Elliot Bay Design Group, are designing a hydrogen fueling barge, which would make it the first in the nation, creating a push for hydrogen vessels.[78] The coalition also has spurred clean energy training and programs and research at the following metro area schools:

- University of New Orleans
- Dillard University
- Xavier University
- Southern University of New Orleans
- Nunez Community College
- Delgado Community College

Each of these educational institutions focus on different aspects of the renewable energy sector, from training wind turbine technicians to engineering and naval architecture and renewables management. Many sustainable energy career pathways pay more than the median income for Louisiana. A wind turbine technician's median salary, for example, is $61,770[79] while the median household income for Louisiana is $58,229.[80]

Another key workforce development initiative, the New Energy Technology Incubator, is a partnership under H2theFuture with the venture capital-backed Opportunity Hub, which cultivates entrepreneurship ecosystems with support, mentorship, startup seed money, and community engagement, while focusing on minority business owners.[81] These opportunities will keep Louisianans at the forefront of energy diversity.

## Adapting for the Future

Initiatives that grew out of the devastation delivered by Hurricane Katrina and the failure of the federal levees in 2005 have shaped the landscape of climate adaptations in the New Orleans metropolitan area. In stereotypical Louisiana fashion, the residents of the region took care of themselves and did not wait to be saved. Much work has been done through community-led education, advocacy, mentorship, and innovation, helping community members make informed decisions about adaptation strategies.

But there is still work to be done. To keep pace with climate change, the region needs to keep pushing forward. To that end, I offer the following three recommendations for intentional pathways to allow for deeper adaptation.

### Enact regional unified tree legislation

Some parishes are starting to make strides to protect and enhance their canopy covers. But parishes cannot

operate independently if climate adaptation is to proceed intentionally. Trees protected in the lower parishes of Plaquemines and St. Bernard, for example, protect communities in Orleans and Jefferson parishes.

Protecting all trees in public spaces regionally is the easiest way to start a plan. The region could potentially be broken up into tree districts, dependent upon risk factors, and could protect the canopy in the private realm. Since trees reduce flooding and wind damage, legislators could incentivize this risk mitigation measure with insurance companies, helping lower insurance premiums across participating parishes.

### Develop pathways for amphibious retrofits and flexibility for inclusion in flood insurance programs

Louisianans have deep connections to place, and they should have the flexibility to innovate building methods to adapt in place. The accepted building methods are financially out of reach for many people, and more cost-effective amphibious methods have proven to be viable. The Buoyant Foundation Project is one key case in point. (See Box on page 8.)

The fate of FEMA and its National Flood Insurance Program under the Trump administration are uncertain at the time of publication. Advocating for safe and sustainable building innovation within the insurance and banking pathways to come will be paramount for vulnerable communities.[82]

### Support local renewable energy options

There is a boom of training, education, and entrepreneurship opportunities in Louisiana for renewable energies. Programs such as the Hudson Initiative, a certification program that helps Louisiana-owned small businesses have priority in state purchasing and contracting, are essential for retaining talent locally. This program could be expanded as a tax credit for privately owned companies to also give priority to these small, certified businesses.

New Orleans can also follow in Colorado's footsteps with its own Community Solar Garden Act. This act allows companies in Colorado to develop and operate solar gardens, selling electricity to subscribers. With the push for energy coming from technologic advances such as AI and data centers, allowing private industry in metropolitan New Orleans to develop cheaper, more sustainable energy methods for communities to consume, might help bridge the coming energy gap.

## Conclusion

Hurricane Katrina and the failure of the federal levees brought the realities of climate change to New Orleans' front door. In the wake of rebuilding, many communities intentionally chose to build in resilience, so that communities wouldn't be ripped apart again. Adaptation takes constant assessment and innovation; it can't get stagnant. Louisiana has unique communities and cultures, and that should continue to be celebrated through climate adaptation, not erased through red tape. Our collective future depends on it.

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## About The Data Center

The Data Center, a project of Nonprofit Knowledge Works, is the most trusted resource for data about Southeast Louisiana. Founded in 1997, we provide fully independent research and analysis to offer a comprehensive look at issues that matter most to our region. With a mission of democratizing data, The Data Center has, and continues to be, an objective partner in bringing reliable, thoroughly researched data to conversations about building a more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable region.

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*The New Orleans Index at Twenty* collection includes contributions from The Data Center, the Brookings Institution, and a dozen local scholars. The aim of this collection is to advance discussion and action among residents and leaders in greater New Orleans and maximize opportunities provided by the 20-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

*The New Orleans Index at Twenty: Measuring Progress toward Resilience* analyzes more than 20 indicators to track the region's progress toward metropolitan resiliency, organized by housing and infrastructure, economy and workforce, wealth and people. Essays contributed by leading local scholars and Brookings scholars systematically document major post-Katrina reforms, and hold up new policy opportunities. Together these reports provide New Orleanians with facts to form a common understanding of our progress and future possibilities.

*The New Orleans Index* series, developed in collaboration with the Brookings Institution, and published since shortly after Hurricane Katrina, has proven to be a widely used and cited publication. The Index's value as a regularly updated, one-stop shop of metrics made it the go-to resource for national and local media, decisionmakers across all levels of government, and leaders in the private and non-profit sectors.

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