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New Orleans

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April 30 - May 6, 2022 57th Year Volume 1 www.ladatanews.com

A Data News Weekly Exclusive

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Addressing New Orleans Affordable Housing Crisis



New Orleans continues the trend following Hurricane Katrina, where prices for homes for both homeowners and renters are increasing at rates that's created an affordable housing crisis.

Andreanecia Morris
Executive Director HousingNOLA

It has been apparent for quite some time that New Orleans is in trouble. Like almost every major city in the country, struggles with an Affordable Housing Crisis, but New Orleans' crisis is different. Instead of

newcomers pouring in and taking up every available space, sky high prices abound with thousands of empty occupiable homes and vacant land for development available in every corner of the city. The unsustainable cost of housing drives some to move to neighboring communities with cheaper rates, but many are forced out by eviction or foreclosure.

Despite having a comprehensive strategy that would end the city's housing crisis, leaders have ignored the needs of citizens and focused on investment strategies that prize development for the sake of development. Despite the connection to New Orleans' culture, Voodoo Economics simply doesn't work. We must intentionally address the long-standing biases

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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Dated material two weeks in advance. Not responsible for publishing or return of unsolicited manuscripts or photos.

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Every April is National Fair Housing Month that celebrates the anniversary of the Fair Housing Act signed on April 4, 1968, that made discrimination in housing because of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation) disability, and familial status unlawful.

around the concept of affordable housing to break this cycle. Affordable housing evokes thoughts of programs like Section 8, tax credits and permanent supportive housing, but that's not the only kind of affordable housing we need to create. We need policies that lower utility bills, increase wages and ensure equitable transportation. New Orleans' economy continues to be dominated by low-wage jobs. During the Pandemic, the Data Center reported that 62% of "essential" retail workers in New Orleans make less than \$30,000 per year. An overwhelming 93% of New Orleans' restaurant workers earn less than \$15 per hour. The Pandemic hit the lowest-paid workers – in New Orleans' hospitality and service industries – the hardest, with substantial job losses for workers in retail, food service, accommodations, and arts and entertainment, many of which have not been fully recovered.

New Orleans also needs more capital from diverse sources to invest in creating new housing opportunities. When the issue of affordable housing arises, we often look to government to solve such a major problem. The HousingNOLA 10 Year Strategy and Implementation Plan recognized that both public and private dollars are necessary to solve New Orleans' Housing Crisis. We must educate our financial institutions about the variety of investment opportunities needed. There are large funding gaps left that will have to be filled by the private sector through traditional and unconventional means. We also need our leaders to understand the economic impact, so we speak with one voice as we pursue resources that provide an equitable economic boon for the City of New Orleans. If all New Orleanians paid what they could afford on housing, the people of New

Orleans would have an extra \$440 million annually to invest in the local economy—\$13,208,400,000.00 available in the New Orleans economy over the next 30 years.

Ending housing insecurity will require an approach that is innovative, comprehensive, and sustainable. No one community can do this alone. We need to harness the efforts of the private sector, government, and philanthropy to create robust and sustainable investment and development strategies that produce significant community impact. Over the past 16 years, billions have been invested to rebuild New Orleans' housing market. This investment was catalyzed initially by philanthropy and volunteer labor but is anchored by billions in insurance proceeds, private financing, and federal grants. Using today's construction costs that investment totals approximately \$50 billion. The Housing for All Action Plan builds on the revolutionary work HousingNOLA has done for the past seven years and seeks to lay claim to the historic investment opportunities. This must be combined with an accountability and citizen engagement strategy that these funds do not follow previous patterns and don't bring stability to the people of New Orleans. The Housing for All Action Plan strives to guarantee housing and ensure that every neighborhood achieves Golden Pearl status—creating an equitable, affordable, and strong city.

To truly address these four issues in a holistic manner will require a generational investment. Our cost estimate, which is detailed further in the full report, estimates that the total cost of remedying these issues will be approximately \$37 billion. Yet a generational investment is what is required to es-

tablish a sustainable future for our community, and it will bring significant returns. \$37 billion in required investment to reach these benefits may seem like a staggering number. However, reaching this number is eminently possible over time with the help of public and private partners. Some immediate investment opportunities include:

- Funding from the March 2021 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to provide rental assistance, emergency housing vouchers, and supportive services. New Orleans is slated to receive \$377 million in total, of which half has already been provided and half will be provided in 2022.
- Funding from the November 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to upgrade power grids and focus on resilient investments to mitigate climate change. This funding can assist with deploying weatherization, solar, and battery investments to households in New Orleans.
- A renewed community development millage from the City of New Orleans with a clear programmatic emphasis on items enumerated in this plan. The renewal of the Neighborhood Housing Improvement Fund failed by a 2% margin in December 2021. A renewed millage should increase in total annual proceeds and should be accompanied by a clear program to convince the voters that increased annual dollars invested in housing will be spent strategically and will improve lives for everyone in New Orleans.
- FEMA funding and private insurance funding provided for household recovery from Hurricanes Ida and Zeta.

Creating a just, equitable, and re-



New Orleans is in need of more affordable housing for its residents; many that are households earning less than \$35,000 dollars a year. The burden for these residents must be a priority in a city that rely on many of these residents who work in the hospitality industry.



The city must create a just, equitable and resilient landscape in New Orleans that considers all of our citizens having the right to affordable housing.

silient housing landscape in New Orleans will therefore come at a significant cost – but will offer incredible benefits to the people of New Orleans and to our economy in return. By making the investments described in this section, New Orleans could:

- Eliminate energy-related cost burdens for all households.
- Eliminate cost burden for all households earning less than \$35,000 per year.
- Create over 44,000 new resilient, affordable homes to bring population back to New Orleans, with a particular focus on New Orleanians who have been pushed out of the city by rising prices or disasters.
- Put over 3,000 vacant properties back on the tax rolls.
- Provide supportive services to help put homeless families with children and homeless adults back in homes.
- Preserve over 13,000 expiring affordable housing units.
- Generate over \$13 billion in increased spending in New Orleans over the next 30 years; this factors in only direct household spending, and additional spending and returns will come from direct investments in development and construction.

There is also a need for comprehensive reform that also ensures that entities like the Louisiana Housing Corporation, Louisiana Bond Commission and Louisiana Tax Commission can enforce outcome-based policies to help preserve and create more affordable housing. State legislators should also work with community members, advocates, policy makers and the insurance industry to design comprehensive reform initiatives that will afford all Louisianians the opportunity to purchase and maintain affordable insurance policies that allow people to recover equitably.

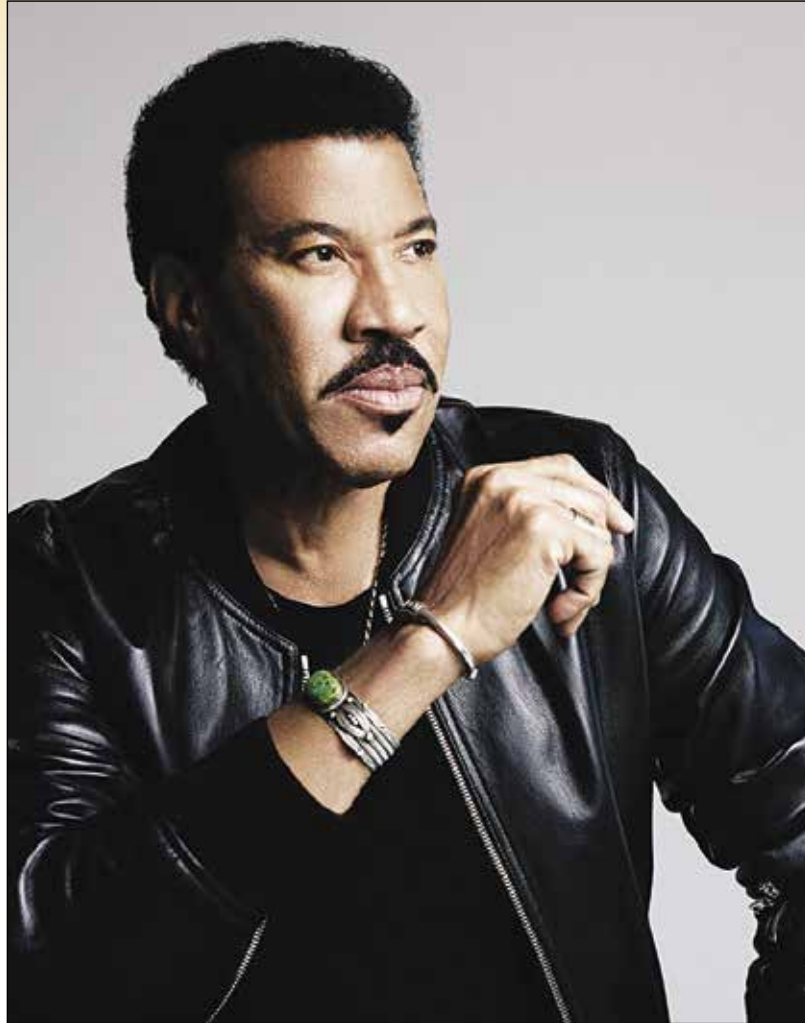
Geographically, New Orleans is in the path of literal and figurative storms— we are constantly recovering from disaster and yet never seem to reach full recovery before the next crisis hits. Resources pour in but are all too often distributed to the people and businesses who need them least. This pattern of behavior has left us with a weakened infrastructure and little capacity to become resilient. Instead, the people of New Orleans exist in a forced reality of living with less, simply because state and local governments refuse to center its recovery around the needs of people.

Jazz Fest Back and Better than Ever

Elise Schenck
Data News Weekly
Contributor

The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival is back with a bang and better than ever. Scheduled for April 29th – May 8th. Jazz Fest returns to celebrate the unique culture and heritage of New Orleans and Louisiana and will be sharing the state with national and internationally renowned artist. Of course, there will also be food vendors selling their arts and crafts, as well as workshops that inform educate and entertain.

Jazz Fest weekend dates are set for April 29th – May 1st and May 5th – 8th.



Lionel Richie



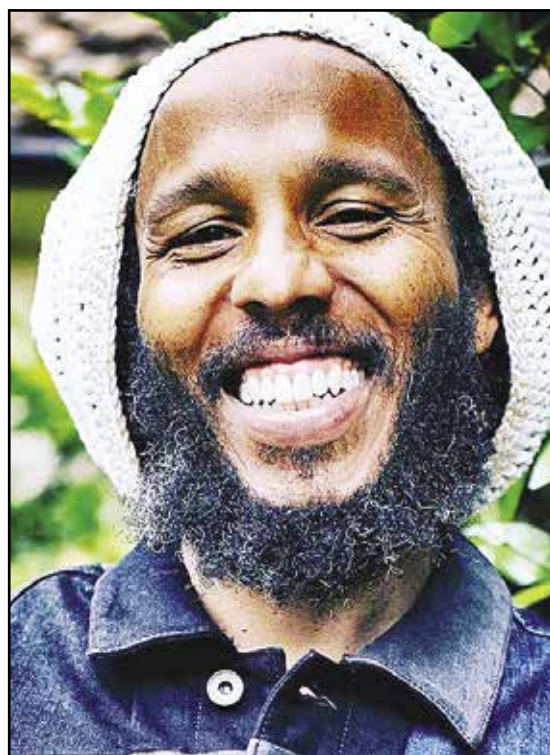
Maze featuring Frankie Beverly



Tarriona "Tank" Ball



Mia X



Ziggy Marley



PJ Morton

On the cover: Erykah Badu

Visit www.ladatanews.com for more photos from these events.

French Quarter Fest 2022

Photos by Demian Roberts
Data News Weekly Contributor

The French Quarter Festival was an amazing event attended by many. Yes, New Orleans festival season is back and in full effect. It was four days of food, fun, friends, and family. Data News Weekly was there to catch this incredible event.



Kumasi Afrobeat Orchestra



Alexy Martin



Chapel Heart Band



John Boutte



Quiana Lynell



Kinfolk Brass Band

Visit www.ladatanews.com for more photos from these events.

Pelicans Getting It Done In NBA Playoff Run

Fleur De Lis
Data News Weekly
Contributor

The New Orleans Pelicans is continuing their Cinderella story this season making the playoffs and are presently tied 2-2 against the number one ranked Phoenix Suns.

First year coach Willie Green have taken them from the early season where they were struggling to today taking on a team that last year made the NBA Finals and is being competitive. This is being accomplished without Zion Williamson.



Brandon Ingram is leading the Pelicans in their NBA Playoff run.

It is truly next man up, as Brandon Ingram has led the young team to a late season run, and now leading the team to hopefully pull out an upset in this series and move to the next round of the playoffs.

There is a newfound excitement around the Pelicans, as the Smoothie King Center is filled to capacity with fans cheering them onto victory.

As of press time the Pels are still in the NBA Playoffs, and even if they do not advance to the next round, they have shown they are a team to be reckoned with in the future.

State & Local News

Xavier University Announces Plan to Open Medical School

Data News Staff Edited
Report

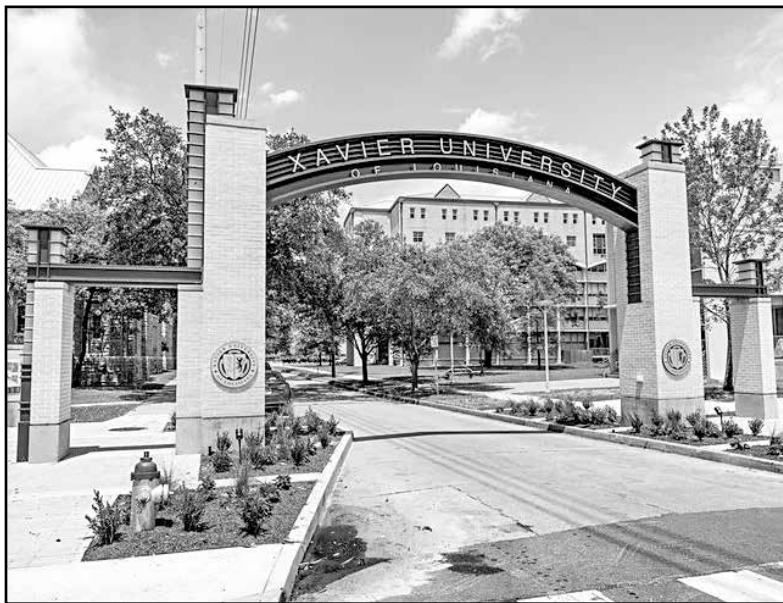
Xavier University of Louisiana is a beacon light of Black Excellence, and has a track record of graduating medical professionals, and a national leader in the STEM fields.

Already known for its success in getting Black graduates into medical school, announced Thursday that it is now planning its own medical school in New Orleans.

For the past two years the Coronavirus Pandemic emphasized the need for greater diversity in medicine, because representation and trust are part of the reasons for health disparities affecting underrepresented populations, said Reynold Verret, President of Xavier.

"Xavier was founded with the mission of promoting the creation of a just and humane society through education," he said in a news release announcing plans for a medical school and graduate school of health sciences.

"The establishment of graduate education programs dedicated to the preparation of more Black healthcare professionals is a natural extension of our foundress' legacy as we approach our second century of service. It is also where we are



called to answer a critical need of our nation."

For decades, the Catholic School founded in 1925 has graduated more African American students and students of color who go on to get medical degrees and health doctorates than any other higher education institution in the U.S., the news release said.

About six hundred students are enrolled in Xavier's College of Pharmacy, the oldest in Louisiana, and nearly 240 in graduate school.

Current graduate programs include one for physicians' assistants and master's degrees in

public health program, speech pathology, pharmaceutical studies, and health analytics.

Now Xavier will establish a medical school of its own, the Graduate School of Health Sciences and Medical School, the university announced Thursday (April 21st). The endeavor is in the planning stages, university officials said, so it will be years before the medical school is ready to begin training future physicians.

The nation's only Historically Black and Catholic University has

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Publisher

Get Out and Vote on April 30th

Say Yes to Investing in the Future of New Orleans



Terry B. Jones
Publisher,
Data News Weekly

getting back to some sense of normalcy, it is equally important to vote on April 30th.

We are encouraging our citizens to vote yes on a 5-mil property tax increase that will begin in 2023 to create over one thousand more seats for early childhood education for low-income children under four years old.

Getting a quality education is key to success, and this is a small price to pay for our young people to have a chance to reach their full potential.

So, we are asking all before you go out to enjoy Jazzfest or whatever you will do this weekend, first get out to the polls, and vote yes and invest in the future of New Orleans.

It is again time for voters to go to the polls and vote. As publisher of Data News Weekly, and in our role as "The People's Paper" we encourage all to get out and let your voice be heard.

Yes, we are in the beginning of festival season, and while we encourage all to have fun and enjoy

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Prostate Cancer Rising in Black America

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.
President and CEO, National
Newspaper Publishers
Association

As the United States continues to grapple with its legacy of systemic racism, debates on issues such as police brutality and racial profiling, the economic gulf between Blacks and Whites, and the dearth of access to affordable educational opportunities, there is one area that has received far less attention: The gap in positive health outcomes that African Americans – and particularly Black men – face.

While the COVID-19 pandemic shined a light on these fissures, its beam barely touched the edges of the problem. Yet according to government data, Black Americans are generally at higher risk for heart diseases, stroke, cancer, asthma, influenza and pneumonia, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS than their white counterparts. Black people also have the highest death rate and shortest survival of any racial/ethnic group in the United States for most cancers.

These are abhorrent figures anyway you look at them, but especially when considering that many of these deadly diseases – at least when detected early – are treatable and survivable. Prostate cancer, for example, has a five-year survival rate for men diagnosed with it of greater than 99 percent if the cancer is detected during the early stage.

Yet, Black men have a 70 percent higher rate of developing prostate cancer than white men, and research from the American Cancer



Society found that Black men are more than twice as likely to die from prostate cancer than their White counterparts.

One of the key reasons for these staggering disparities is the fact that Black men are overall less aware of the threat this form of cancer poses to them and have less resources available to them to receive testing and monitoring for the disease. Thankfully, there are members of the Black community like billionaire investor Robert F. Smith, The Today Show Co-host Al Roker, and activist comedians such as Chris Tucker and Steve Harvey who are raising their voices – and contributing their dollars – to combat this affliction.

Robert Smith, for example, re-

cently donated \$4 millions of his own money to New York City's Mount Sinai Medical Center to create the Robert F. Smith Mobile Prostate Cancer Screening Unit. This mobile home-sized bus will tour New York City neighborhoods where men are at a higher risk of developing prostate cancer and offer screenings and educational materials about the disease.

This proactive approach that brings diagnosis tools directly to the communities most at risk is the type of action that our nation needs when it comes to battling a disease that more than 13 percent of African American men are expected to develop in their lifetime. But Smith can't be the only one doing this and New York City cannot be the only

place where this type of outreach is occurring.

Whether it is other philanthropists, local or regional health centers, or state and federal officials, there is a desperate need for creative solutions to getting more people screened and saving more lives. Smith's initiative is an innovative approach, but there are other ways to spread awareness and boost screenings in the Black community.

Whether it be through an advertising and outreach campaign to pop-up health centers and tents, the COVID-19 vaccine push in the Black and other minority communities can serve as a good example of how to quickly and efficiently get more Black men screened for the disease.

For too long, prostate cancer among Black men – and the disparity in health outcomes within the community overall – has remained relatively low profile, but now we have a way to resolve this issue. The pioneering Black journalist and one of the effective voices and leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Ida B. Wells said it best, "The way to right wrong is to turn the light of truth on them." It is long overdue to turn on a brighter national light on prostate cancer and Black America.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr is President and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) and Executive Producer/Host of The Chavis Chronicles on PBS TV stations throughout the United States who can be reached at dr.bchavis@nnpa.org

State & Local, Continued from page 6.

long worked to bring greater diversity into the medical professions. Its College of Pharmacy ranks high in graduating Black Pharmacists, and its undergraduate programs tout the number of Black graduates who go on to earn doctorates in Science and Engineering.

Building upon this success, Xavier University of Louisiana has added graduate degree programs – including physician assistant,

pharmaceutical sciences, public health, speech pathology and health analytics programs – that expand representation in health professions.

A recent Association of American Medical Colleges report noted that "gains in diversity are not shared by all groups. In particular, growth of Black or African American applicants, matriculants and graduates lagged behind other groups."

Underrepresented minorities still struggle to grow in numbers

at all levels of the medical profession, studies show, with only incremental improvement over the past decades.

Creating a new medical school is seen as essential to addressing the physician shortage, but diverse representation requires a further step. In the last century, there have been few new medical colleges and only one at an HBCU. "Xavier University of Louisiana is examining the option to change that narrative," university officials said.

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Job Opportunity

Freelance Writers Wanted

Data News Weekly, "The People's Paper," is looking for freelance writers to join our team print and digital team. We need writers who can cover New Orleans news stories, ranging from local high school sports, community events, City Hall and entertainment. Experience in print is necessary, experience in digital and social media are encouraged.

Compensation is competitive and great story ideas will be appreciated.

If you are interested, please email your resume and 3 writing samples to: terrybjones@bellsouth.net and datanewseditor@bellsouth.net.

We can't wait to
hear from you!

Job Opportunity

Administrative Assistant Wanted

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