

Lighting The Road To The Future

New Orleans

Data

News Weekly

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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

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Housing Crisis Continues to be a Major Problem in New Orleans



Families in New Orleans face mounting challenges as rising rents and limited Affordable Housing options push many to the brink of displacement.

Andreanecia Morris
Executive Director HousingNOLA

This year marks a turning point for the City of New Orleans and our collective efforts to address the city's Affordable Housing Crisis. Not only is it the 20th Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, it's also the organiza-

tion's 10th Anniversary and marks the end of HousingNOLA's Innovative 10-year strategy. Unfortunately, New Orleans' Housing Crisis has not abated—with the combination of COVID and climate change we find ourselves at risk of losing precious ground. The entire State of Louisiana finds itself in the midst of an insurance crisis that has put much of its people at risk.

There are four troubling trends that New Orleans residents are facing:

- New Orleans is losing population,
- Renters and owners earning less than \$50,000 are cost burdened,
- Homeownership opportunities for renters are limited, and

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- New Orleans has a 20% vacancy rate on existing units.

New Orleans lost more than 25,000 residents between 2019 and 2023, according to Census figures. The pressures of spiking prices and lost jobs during COVID and the expenses of Hurricane Ida may have contributed to this loss. The population shifts are hitting a key demographic: households that make less than \$25,000 per year or people earning \$12 per hour. Most renters earning less than \$35,000 per year are severely cost-burdened, meaning they pay more than 50% of their income in housing costs. Nearly 70% of renter households earning \$35,000 - \$50,000 per year are cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened.

A 2024 Report from Fannie Mae highlighted high insurance premiums and year-over-year increases for New Orleans multifamily properties – including market-rate and affordable properties. Owners are also experiencing significant cost burden as most owners earning less than \$35,000 are cost-burdened—paying more than 30% of

their income towards their costs like insurance, taxes and utilities. Even higher-income owners also have high percentages of cost burden with one-third of homeowners earning \$75K - \$100K being cost-burdened. The Climate and Community Institute worked with HousingNOLA to analyze increases in insurance premium costs and burdens for standard policies. Costs have increased 43% across Louisiana from 2021 to 2024.

It's also difficult for renters to become first time homeowners in this market. Once, higher rents meant that renters could and should become homeowners. Unfortunately, renters and owners making less than 30% of Area Median Income (about \$25,000) spend a large proportion of their incomes on energy costs alone. To afford the median home in New Orleans at \$245,000, renters need an income of \$86,000 without subsidy, or an income of \$70,000 with the existing soft second program (which would only allow families of 4 or more people to qualify based on the 80% AMI requirement).



Community advocates call for urgent solutions as the housing crisis continues to strain working families and vulnerable residents across the city.

New Orleans also has an approximately 20% vacancy rate, which is more than 40,000 vacant housing units. The largest number of vacant units (10,000) are currently for rent. Another 10,000 units either need repairs before occupancy or are undergoing repairs. Some would suggest that this would mean it's a buyer's market, but high

interest rates and spiking insurance costs mean that homeownership is a risky investment.

Despite these trends mean that there are still a need and opportunity for meaningful change, HousingNOLA's response to this new storm has proven to be effective and impactful. Buoyed by last year's Historic Housing Trust

Fund vote, this year HousingNOLA will integrate its Housing for All Investment Strategy with its policy framework to directly connect the creation and retention of Affordable Housing opportunities with investments not only from public sources but allow for much needed private investments.

The Housing for All Investment Strategy will engage at the neighborhood level in New Orleans to mitigate immediate risks with New Orleans Housing Trust Fund, secure additional funding for weatherization and fortify roofs to bring online thousands of new or unused properties and support federal and statewide initiatives that will address the insurance crisis. This fall voters will have the chance to elect leaders to the City Hall (seven council members, one Assessor and one Mayor) who must aid in the execution of these strategies. The current set of leaders must also do their part—New Orleans' 2026 Budget must be a moral document to reflect what voters told their leaders clearly last year—#PutHousingFirst!

ROUSES MARKETS

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WEEKLY SPECIALS

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Prices good at New Orleans, Metairie, Gretna, Kenner,
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Ground Round

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LB

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When You Buy 2



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Hass
Avocados

ONLY
2/88¢

MORE WAYS TO
SAVE

MORE WAYS TO
SAVE

MORE WAYS TO
SAVE

SAVE
\$2.32
LB



VALUE PACK

Pork
Shoulder Steaks
or Country Style Ribs

\$1.67
LB

SAVE
\$1.78
When You Buy 2



2 LB BAG

Rouses Rice
OR ONE POUND PACK DRY
RED, NAVY OR GREAT NORTHERN
Camellia Beans

2/\$3

SAVE
96¢
When You Buy 3



7.5 OZ

Always Save
Mac & Cheese

3/\$1

SAVE
\$3.98
When You Buy 3



6 PACK
HALF LITERS

Coke, Pepsi,
Mtn Dew or 7-Up

3/\$11

Leona Harris 70th Birthday Celebration

Photos by Glenn Summers
Data News Weekly Staff
Photographer

Leona's 70th birthday was nothing short of extraordinary, as family, friends, and loved ones gathered at B's Legacy Hall to honor a woman whose life has touched so many. Guests enjoyed a night of food, fun, lively music, and a beautiful atmosphere filled with the spirit of love and community. Surrounded by those dearest to her, Leona's milestone birthday was not just a party, but a testament to a legacy of family, friendship, and faith. A night of memories to be cherished forever.



Family and friends came together in joy and love to celebrate Leona's (center) 70th birthday.



For yourself. For family. For community.

The Global Parkinson's Genetics Program (GP2) is an international research program.

GP2 aims to learn more about gene changes that may cause Parkinson's in people from all backgrounds.

GP2 is seeking Black and African American people age 18 and older — both with and without Parkinson's disease — for a research study.



Participants will help advance knowledge about Parkinson's disease in Black and African American people.

To learn more, please call
1-866-274-1912 or visit
blaacpd.org



Something About
Helena

She believes that we should all have a chance to compete. When big businesses wanted to create a so-called clean zone that spans half the city and excludes locals, Helena stood up for the community, and our opportunities multiplied.

Helena
Moreno
MAYOR



Leona Harris celebrating her 70th birthday.

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ARCHIVES MONTH EXHIBIT LAUNCH

Wednesday, October 1 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

DAYTIME TOURS

Thursday, October 9
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Tuesday, October 14
2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

VIRTUAL SHOWCASES

New Blog every Wednesday in October on 200 YEARS
LOUISIANA CIVIL CODE! Visit www.orleanscivilclerk.com

**INTRODUCTION TO HISTORICAL RECORDS
SEMINAR — 1.25 FREE CLE CREDITS**

Tuesday, October 7
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

RSVP by October 1

Tuesday, November 4
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

RSVP by October 28

**CONDUCTING A CHAIN OF TITLE SEMINAR —
2.0 FREE CLE CREDITS**

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Wednesday, November 18
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

RSVP by November 11

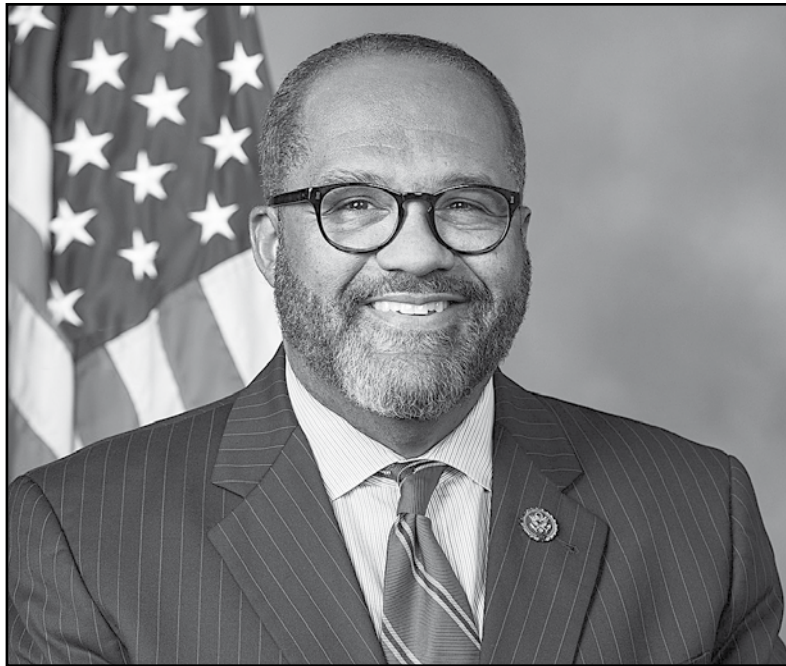
Rep. Troy Carter Blasts Pentagon Draft Plan to Send National Guard to New Orleans

Eric Connerly
Data News Weekly
Contributor

Congressman Troy A. Carter, Sr. (D-LA) is raising concerns after reports surfaced that the Pentagon had drafted a Proposal to Deploy 1,000 Louisiana National Guard Troops for policing duties in New Orleans.

The plan, revealed in leaked documents obtained by the Washington Post, is not an official order. Pentagon officials have already stated that the document should not be interpreted as policy. No request for Guard Assistance has been made by Louisiana's State Leadership.

Still, Carter called the draft "deeply troubling," warning against what he described as speculative



Louisiana Congressman Troy A. Carter

and politically motivated ideas.

"New Orleans should not be used as a testing ground for politically motivated plans," Carter said.

Falling Crime Rates Undercut Justification

The Congressman emphasized that the city is seeing the lowest crime rates in decades, with both homicides and overall crime trending downward. "There is no emergency that justifies militarizing our city streets," he said.

Carter's Alternative Priorities

Instead of deploying the National Guard, Carter urged federal leaders to invest in solutions that strengthen local law enforcement and communities:

- Recruitment and training of police officers to ensure a trusted, prepared force.
- Resources for the District Attorney's office to improve prosecutions and reduce repeat offenses.
- Reviving community policing initiatives, modeled on efforts from the 1990s under President Clinton, that emphasized cooperation between officers and residents.

Guard Should Focus on Disasters, Not Policing

Carter argued that the Louisiana National Guard must remain focused on true emergencies, such as hurricanes and natural disasters, where their rapid response is essential. "Louisiana deserves resources, respect, and genuine partnership, not militarization," Carter said.

State & Local News

Inaugural Watermelon Festival Celebrates Community Resilience in New Orleans

Story and Photos by
Deon Arnold Data News
Weekly Contributor

The New Orleans Water Collaborative hosted its first-ever Watermelon Festival, a celebration rooted in culture, resilience, and community solidarity. The festival capped off a week-long series of events for "NOLA Water Week," which highlighted water justice, healing, and education across the city encouraging businesses and non-profits to support residents in the long process of recovery in this city.

"We always wanted to do it because we're a nonprofit focused on water equity and water justice," said Sierra Harrison, Operations Manager of the NOLA Water Collaborative.

"Watermelon has long been tied to Black farming and community, but too often it was reduced to a stereotype. For us, it stands for solidarity and community," Harrison said.

Attendees explored vendors offering fresh produce, holistic eats, and even pickled watermelon rinds. By reframing the fruit's image, organizers hope to reclaim it as a symbol of empowerment and resili-



Community members gathered at the NOLA Water Week Watermelon Festival, celebrating summer flavors while raising awareness about the importance of clean water and sustainability in New Orleans.

ience.

The Watermelon Festival also served as the closing event of NOLA Water Week which featured educator workshops, healing circles for Black women, policy discussions, and film screenings.

"In a literal sense, the Watermelon Festival is our crescendo," said Keree Blanks, Manager of Merriement for the Collaborative. "It commemorates Katrina's Anniversary,

but it also builds positive experiences around water."

"Too many in New Orleans only associate water with loss or destruction in the aftermath of Katrina. We want to change that narrative," Blanks said, adding that planning was extensive, requiring "50,000 emails, phone calls, and coordination" with local businesses.

The Water Collaborative partnered with Ruby Slipper Café,



which hosted the festival at its Broad Street location, and Liquid I.V. to make the festival possible, while Black-owned vendors like So Fresh and Healthy NOLA provided produce, face painting, and hydration stations.

"Every vendor here is a local business, and most are Black-owned," Blanks said. "We wanted to show people that collaboration between small businesses and com-

munity organizations isn't just possible, it's powerful."

For vendors, the festival was more than a celebration; it was a business opportunity.

"It provides small businesses like me, especially ones starting out, an opportunity to get our name out there," said Stephen Sellers, owner of Second Vine Goods, who brought his homemade watermelon jam to the event.

"I've already had people follow me on Instagram, buy my products, and save my number. It's helped me grow by at least a few customers today, and hopefully more by the end," Sellers said.

Both organizers and vendors expressed hope that the Watermelon Festival will become an Annual Tradition. Beyond food and music, the event aims to remind residents that water can represent joy, community, and renewal; especially in a city still navigating the Legacies of Katrina.

"In five years, no one knows what New Orleans will look like because the city is sinking," Harrison said. "But we believe in building awareness, reclaiming culture, and educating people about how they can make a difference."

Federal Cuts Strip \$350 Million From HBCUs and Minority-Serving Institutions

Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior
National Correspondent

The U.S. Department of Education has announced the cancellation of \$350 million in federal grants that had been designated for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other minority-serving institutions.

Education Secretary Linda McMahon stated that the department will "no longer award Minority-Serving Institution grants that discriminate by restricting eligibility to institutions that meet government-mandated racial quotas." She added that the administration intends to redirect the money toward programs "that advance Administration priorities." The funding has supported initiatives including laboratory equipment purchases, classroom improvements, student tutoring services, and endowment growth. The cuts immediately drew criticism from leaders of colleges and universities who said the loss would harm students and damage institutions that depend on the resources.

"Without this funding, students will lose the critical support they need to succeed in the classroom, complete their degrees on time, and achieve social mobility for themselves and their families," said Mildred Garcia, Chancellor of the California State University System. "These funds strengthen entire campuses, creating opportunities and resources that benefit all students, especially those pursuing STEM Fields, as well as enhancing the communities where these colleges and universities are located," said David Mendez, Interim CEO of the Hispanic Association of Col-



leges and Universities.

University of Hawai i President Wendy Hensel added that the cuts will affect "all of our students, the programs that support them, and the dedicated staff who carry out this work." The department's announcement follows a lawsuit filed in June by the State of Tennessee and Students for Fair Admissions, which argued the programs were discriminatory because of enrollment eligibility requirements. In July, the Department of Justice said it would not defend the grants, with Solicitor General D. John Sauer writing that they violated the Constitutional Right to Equal Protection.

According to HBCU Buzz, the decision has sent shockwaves across campuses, with advocates

warning that programs supporting mentorship, STEM pipelines, and scholarships are at risk. Lawmakers, including Senator Patty Murray, have said the Education Department acted unilaterally without consulting Congress. The debate over funding arrives as HBCUs continue to face historic underfunding. CNN fact-checkers reported that while the Biden-Harris Administration had directed \$16 billion to HBCUs from 2021 to 2024, Trump previously proposed more than \$100 million in cuts to HBCU Programs during his term, despite later claiming he had been uniquely responsible for funding the schools. The Education Department confirmed that roughly \$132 million in Mandatory Congressional Allocations for Fiscal 2025 will still be distributed, though officials said they are continuing to review the legal questions surrounding those funds.



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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.

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hear from you!

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