



Season of Prayer

An examination of rebuilding efforts along the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita with an emphasis on displaced populations, inadequacy of government responses, and inequitable development strategies.

Weekly Update ~ 09.08.06

Reports Released:

- According to a report by the Division of Business and Economic Research of the University of New Orleans, the post-Katrina economy of the New Orleans metropolitan area is “growing much faster than before.” Pre-Katrina job growth was under 2,000 jobs per year. However, in the post-Katrina period the average growth per-month is 5,000 jobs. In terms of economic sectors, the mining, chemical manufacturing and utilities industries have regained or surpassed their pre-Katrina levels. This is not the case for the food and beverage industries and the arts, entertainment and recreation sectors, although the gambling industry is booming, with revenue up 12.6% from pre-Katrina levels. *Source:* Gyan Jr., Joe. “Economic report buoys Big Easy.” *The Advocate*. September 2, 2006. <http://www.theadvocate.com/news/3811676.html>

Recovery:

- Recovery efforts are moving faster in Mississippi than in Louisiana. One reason being that Louisiana has a “rockier” Road Home program, though modeled on the Mississippi version, the LA version is more difficult to administer. Additionally, MS put the plan in place more quickly and so coastal residents are receiving the money they need to rebuild. In terms of air travel, the Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport fairs better than the Louis Armstrong International Airport. Another disparity is found in terms of construction permits for single-family homes with Gulfport and Biloxi experiencing 51% growth. Biloxi has seen 85% of its residents return whereas N.O. just 54%. Additionally, in the Biloxi area schools and hospitals reopened shortly after the storm and had the advantage of benefiting from good leadership at the state and federal levels. Critics of the New Orleans area’s rebuilding plan, or lack thereof, believe that this has resulted in the slow pace of recovery. Reed Kroloff, dean of Tulane University’s School of Architecture, resigned earlier this year as head of the urban planning committee for the city’s Bring New Orleans Back Commission, as he considered that officials had failed to create a vision for the city’s future. “There has not yet been adequate leadership on the issues of planning. ... What you get in the end is plan-demonium.” *Source:* Harvey, Christine. “Mississippi’s recovery effort seems to be leaving Louisiana’s behind. Why?” *Times-Picayune*. September 1, 2006. <http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/frontpage/index.ssf?/base/news-6/1157092364289320.xml&coll=1>
- Plans are being discussed in Baton Rouge to not rebuild Charity Hospital – not now, not ever. Policy makers are struggling with whether or not to reopen this hallmark of New Orleans’ medical

structure. Byron Harrell argues that regardless of if an individual has ever been seen at Charity the benefits of the institution are important to all. The hospital was a major center for medical student training providing care and instruction for many. The facility included the best trauma center in the region, cared for thousands of patients a year – 50% of which did not have health insurance – and employed thousands of employees, many of whom held well paying positions. Before Katrina there was a plan to rebuild the Hospital – now is New Orleans’ chance to see this plan through.

Source: Harrell, Byron. “Why all of us need Charity Hospital.” *The Times-Picayune*. September 5, 2006.

- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will submit to Congress a list of 15 construction projects at an estimated cost of \$107 million. The projects are to repair storm and flood protection and restore coastal ecosystems damaged by Hurricane Katrina. These 15 projects were selected from a list of 180 as they can be completed within a two-year period while a comprehensive plan is developed as part of the Mississippi Coastal Improvement Plan.

Source: “Corps of Engineers suggests \$107 million in quick fixes.” *The Associated Press State & Local Wire*. September 2, 2006. <http://www.sunherald.com/mld/sunherald/news/state/15427269.htm>

- St. Tammy, on the Lake Pontchartrain’s north shore, experienced less damage than parishes on the south shore. Additionally, the parish has land available which is largely elevated out of the flood plain. The parish has experienced a boom, gaining affluent residents that lost their homes to the floodwaters of Katrina. Indicators of the boom include a post-Katrina increase in population by 18% to 260,000; a surge in real estate demand; an increase in traffic along the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway which has jumped by 34.4% to 43,000 vehicles per-day. Coinciding with the northward flux of people, businesses have followed. The growth that the north shore is experiencing may be indicative of future growth. This rapid growth places strain on infrastructure and upgrades are in the works.

Source: Foster, Mary. “Boom follows Katrina in St. Tammy Parish.” *The Associated Press State & Local Wire*. September 3, 2006. <http://www.katc.com/Global/story.asp?S=5358313>

- A New Orleans city deadline passed with little notice and less action. The city imposed deadline for gutting and clearing houses passed on August 29th, 2006. The stakes were high, gut homes by this date or risk city seizure, but the day has come and gone leaving some wondering what ability the city has to enforce its own decisions. Some claim the deadline provided a necessary push and helped spring some residents into action. Others believe the deadline has produced unnecessary worry for the poor and elderly who may not have the capacity to do or pay for cleanup. The original deadline stated that residents would have 30 days after receiving notice from the city to appeal the decision through the already backlogged courts system. An extended grace period may also be granted in unique circumstances and has already been extended to the entire 9th Ward.

Source: Krupa, Michelle. “A city-imposed deadline to clean up blighted property has come and gone, leaving some wondering how much teeth the law has.” *The Times-Picayune*. September 5, 2006.

<http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/frontpage/index.ssf?/base/news-6/115743564615330.xml&coll=1&thispage=1>

- Over the weekend there was a showcase of modular homes in Lakeview. These homes can be put up in seven weeks. Thousands came to tour the homes which offer a quick approach to home-building. Manufacturers hope to appeal to the post-Katrina buyers who would like to return home and rebuild rapidly. A modular home by New Era would cost between \$110 to \$140 per square foot, depending

on design choice and withstand winds up to 140 mph. The company promises to deliver in nine weeks.

Source: Faciane, Valerie. "Thousands tour modular open house; Lakeview home build in 7 weeks." *Times-Picayune*. September 4, 2006. <http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/metro/index.ssf?/base/news-16/1157349147178490.xml&coll=1>

- The battered Gulf Coast fishing industry was allocated \$128 million in assistance, but local fishers note that the money is too little as losses are estimated at \$700 million to \$1.3 billion. Fishing villages were the first to be devastated by Katrina and federal officials promised that the government would help the tattered industry. As time progressed, the Coast Guard scaled back its salvage operation, the SBA turned down numerous fishers' loan applications, and a bailout package of \$1 billion was reduced by 90%. The consensus among fishers being that recovery of their industry is not a priority among state and federal officials. The \$128 million is to be divided between Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida, with Louisiana receiving \$52.9 million for rehabilitation of oyster reefs and debris clean-up. Congress signed off on this package in June with heavy focus on the oyster industry to the neglect of the crab, shrimp, fin fish and charter-boat industries. Given the minimal and slow assistance of the federal government locals have welcomed private donors and charity groups that have stepped up to fill the gap in assistance such as Shell Oil, the government of Saudi Arabia and Catholic Charities.

Source: Brown, Matthew. "Final Blow; First Katrina hit the fishing industry hard. Then Washington failed to make good on promises of relief." *Times-Picayune*. September 4, 2006. <http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/frontpage/index.ssf?/base/news-6/1157347907178490.xml&coll=1>

Living conditions:

- The first day of school for all grades in the Recovery District is September 14. Yet the district is still facing construction delays. For at least two-weeks students will need to attend schools miles away. Likewise, the district still needs to hire 117 teachers. To date 8,234 students have registered to attend 17 schools. By the end of September, 53 public schools with spaces for up to 34,000 are to open. Among these schools are 31 charters, 5 operated by the parish school district and 17 operated by the Recovery District.

Source: Ritea, Steve. "Recovery District still short on teachers." *Times-Picayune*. September 3, 2006. <http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/frontpage/index.ssf?/base/news-6/115726799241810.xml&coll=1>

Displaced Populations:

- According to FEMA, there are more Katrina evacuees living in the New Orleans metropolitan area than any other city. The second major evacuee receiving region is the Baton Rouge area. Of the top 15 cities where FEMA applicants reside, the furthest from N.O. in terms of distance is San Antonio. Demographers place emphasis on the difference that distance makes in return migration. Evacuees further away from their homes are likely to establish lives in the cities where they have relocated. John Logan, a Brown University sociologist, notes that the group of evacuees planning to return to the N.O. metro area is disproportionately white and has higher income. "These are people who used their own resources to find a place to live temporarily, so they could review their options, as opposed to people who had no personal resources and had to go where they had family or where the bus or the plane took them." According to Logan, for those displaced against their will, it is more likely that they will want to return however "the big question here is whether it's feasible to return. I suspect that for many tens of thousands of people, it's impossible."

Source: Gordon, Meghan. "For evacuees, distance may be key." *Times-Picayune*. September 3, 2006. <http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/frontpage/index.ssf?/base/news-6/115726869641810.xml&coll=1>

- Eleven Gulf Coast residents have collaborated in filing a class-action lawsuit against FEMA for the failure of the agency to provide suitable housing for residents with disabilities displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. A hearing will be held in New Orleans on September 26, 2006. Source: Associated Press, "Group of disabled residents file suit against FEMA." *AL.com – Everything Alabama*. September 5, 2006. <http://www.al.com/newsflash/regional/index.ssf?/base/news-23/1157455742210990.xml&storylist=alabamanews>

Media Coverage:

- "We are a strange people - we Americans: We soon forget."
 - Louisiana journalist Lyle Saxon, writing about the public's tendency to move on, much too quickly, from the Great Flood of 1927.

Media seems to follow the latest happenings and so attention and coverage moves elsewhere rapidly. According to the opinion page staff at *The Advocate*, American media of 1927 can be compared to that of today and the coverage of Katrina and its aftermath. However, for the year following Katrina's landfall, newspaper coverage continued as many attempted to document the recovery. The New York Times, CNN, documentarian Spike Lee just to name a few made their presence known at the one-year anniversary of Katrina. However now that the one-year marker has past "odds are that the past year's sustained Katrina coverage will drop off. ... At the one-year mark of a major disaster, after all, even the seemingly insatiable modern media machine can get restless."

Source: "Katrina tests media attention." *The Advocate*. September 2, 2006. <http://www.theadvocate.com/opinion/3811416.html>
- Protestors in Greensboro, NC sounded cries for justice on Labor Day as many took to the streets. The rally was led by the Coalition Against Intolerable Racism, an organization hoping to organize individual statements against injustice into a larger movement. The rally was a follow up event to the Coalition's declaration of nine examples of racism in Greensboro released in July. Source: Jones, Jonathan. "Demonstrators Call for Justice." *News-Record.com*. August 5, 2006. <http://www.news-record.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060905/NEWSREC0101/60905001/-1/NEWSREC0201>