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## Affordable Housing in New Orleans

## NEW ORLEANS AFFORDABLE HOUSING CASE STUDY

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- *New Orleans has made substantial progress during the past decade in efforts to expand economic opportunities for residents.*
  - *Despite the economic gains, the need for affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households remains acute.*
  - *This report includes several case studies that illustrate the complexities and successes of efforts aimed at meeting the housing needs of underserved households.*
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The New Orleans area has made substantial progress during the past decade in efforts to fully employ the resident population and expand economic opportunity. Despite these gains, there is a substantial need for good quality housing affordable to low- and moderate-income residents. This report describes several ongoing initiatives that may serve as blueprints for development of housing programs and projects in other communities.

### THE STUDY

In this report, several facets of the affordable housing challenge are described beginning with the economic underpinnings of the New Orleans metropolitan area and the community development efforts that are currently underway. Although limited by data availability, several measures of affordable housing progress in New Orleans are suggested. The study concludes with case studies, including contact information, that may be instructive for those involved in affordable housing activities in other cities or regions of the country.

### FINDINGS

**The Economy.** The economy of New Orleans is characterized by a relatively large number of low and moderate wage jobs associated with tourism, retail trade and related services. Like many other cities, the largest gains in population and higher wage employment have occurred

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in the suburban ring surrounding the central city. Consequently, homeownership rates in the suburbs approach or surpass the national average of 68 percent while the rate in the central city parish of Orleans remains below 50 percent.

**Community Development.** Several initiatives have been undertaken to enhance worker skill levels, support economic growth through infrastructure development, and improve the quality of the housing stock through new construction or renovation. Especially in the central parishes, historic preservation is an important feature of renovation activities, the goals of which sometimes conflict with the need to produce housing affordable to lower income households. Both public and private organizations, as well as public-private partnerships, have contributed to housing and community development efforts in New Orleans.

**Measuring Affordable Housing Progress.** An average of 539 units of renovated housing and 105 units of new housing have been created each of the past 10 years to serve the needs of low- and moderate-income households. Despite these gains, the need remains acute.

**Case Studies.** Six case studies are included in this report. The first three are project-oriented case studies, which address specific successes and failures. The next three are methodology case studies on initiatives designed to affect broad groups of persons and geographic areas. Each case study begins with a list of the “lessons learned” from the initiative, which could be of use to those designing programs for their community.

### IMPORTANCE FOR REALTORS®

While each community has unique economic and neighborhood characteristics, they also share many features in common that affect the availability of good quality housing for low- and moderate-income households. The community development efforts and case studies presented in this report offer insights into the complexities of meeting a community’s housing needs. As importantly, the potential for successfully expanding housing opportunities for underserved residents is also highlighted. Through the collective experiences of organizations active in New Orleans and elsewhere, housing advocates working with REALTORS® can develop initiatives that will expand housing opportunities in their community.