Detail of the circa-1732 *Carte de la côte de la Louisiane* (above) shows the heart of French colonial Louisiana roughly a generation after its founding. Natchez in present-day Mississippi appears at upper left; Baton Rouge, Manchac, and the Bayagoula region are visible at center left; New Orleans appears at center; Biloxi is at center right; and Mobile's original and eventual sites are visible at far right. The famous 1885 Currier & Ives *City of New Orleans* bird's-eye view (below) captures the city's development a century and a half later. Images courtesy Library of Congress.
Mississippi River at Natchez (top), where it reaches peak volume; at Baton Rouge, just before it exits its alluvial valley; and at Convent (middle), as it flows through its deltaic plain. Aerial view (bottom left) shows the forested batture and artificial levee separating river from natural levee of Jefferson Parish near the Huey P. Long Bridge. Computer-generated image at bottom right shows Mississippi wending through New Orleans and heading toward the Gulf of Mexico. Bird's-Eye View of the Mississippi River, 1884 courtesy Library of Congress; photos by Richard Campanella, 2006-2007.
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Antecedent cadastral (land parceling) systems influenced the layout of New Orleans' street system, as old French long-lot plantations were developed into faubourgs and annexed into the city. The process gave New Orleans a radiating pattern of streets, dramatically evident in maps and aerial views as well as on the ground. Maps and photographs courtesy Richard Campanella; Perspective of New Orleans and Environs (1885) courtesy Louisiana Collection of the University of New Orleans; bottom-left photo by Richard Campanella; bottom-right photo courtesy Port of New Orleans.
These images juxtapose six French Quarter blocks (top, along lower Dumaine Street) against six Garden District blocks (bottom, Prytania at Third and Fourth) to illustrate differences in housing density, setback distances, garden space, and foliage between European-influenced downtown and American-influenced uptown New Orleans. 

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The shotgun house typology in New Orleans, shown in various sizes and architectural styles, dating mostly from the 1880s-1910s. Photos by Richard Campanella, 2007.
The shotgun house typology in the Deep South. These photos were taken in St. Helena Parish and Donaldsonville in Louisiana, and Natchez and Vicksburg in Mississippi. Photos by Richard Campanella, 2003-2007.
Top left: Detail of Carte du cours du fleuve St. Louis depuis dix lieues audessus de la Nouvelle Orleans (circa 1732). Top right: Urbanized area (darkened shades) of New Orleans in 1841 and 1878, as depicted in Report on the Social Statistics of Cities, 1886. At center right is a rare 1922 aerial mosaic of the city; at bottom right is a satellite image of the same area in 2001. Maps courtesy Library of Congress and Perry-Castañeda Library Map, University of Texas at Austin; photos courtesy Port of New Orleans and Ikonos.

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Much of New Orleans’ meteoric rise in the early nineteenth century (above) can be traced to the dramatically increasing population and agricultural productivity of the trans-Appalachian West, which had little choice but to ship downriver to New Orleans to deliver its commodities to market. But even as these shipments increased in absolute numbers, an emerging network of eastern and Midwestern canals, railroads, and roads gave New Orleans unwanted new competition for Mississippi Valley trade. The city’s relative share of the market (below), once at over 99 percent, declined to about 50 percent by the eve of the Civil War. New Orleans’ population would continue to grow for a century to come, but its rank among American cities would steadily sink after peaking as the third-largest in the nation in 1840. [See “Lessons in Over-Reliance” for details.]
A city’s destiny may be tracked by economic, political, cultural, or various other metrics. Population offers perhaps the most straightforward. These graphs plot New Orleans’ population (top) with its ranking by population size among American cities (bottom) for 1790-2007. Certain relevant historical events and trends are overlaid on the graphs. The data reveal four distinct eras of municipal ascendancy and/or decline. New Orleans’ population has been declining in both absolute and relative terms since 1960, particularly since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. [See “Lessons in Over-Reliance.”]
This 1919 aerial photograph of downtown New Orleans (French Quarter at upper center; Lee Circle at lower right; Lake Pontchartrain in distance) captures the "belt" of working-class neighborhoods around the CBD where immigrants, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, settled in large numbers.
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### Population by Race and Elevation in New Orleans, 1939

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elevation (feet b.s.l.)</th>
<th>White Population</th>
<th>Black Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-6.0 to -4.2</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-4.2 to -2</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2.5 to -0.9</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 to 0.7</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.7 to 2.4</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 to 4</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 to 5.6</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 to 6.6</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 to 7.2</td>
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<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 to 8.9</td>
<td>132</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9 to 10</td>
<td>132</td>
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<td>10.5 to 12</td>
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</tr>
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<td>12.1 to 13.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.7 to 15.4</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- This graph shows where New Orleanians of European and African ancestry resided in 1939 according to geographical elevation zones. Low-lying areas have since subsided by a number of feet.
- U.S. analysis by Richard Campanella, based on racial percentages per block as recorded in Sam R. Carter’s *A Report on Survey of Metropolitan New Orleans Land Use, Real Property, and Low Income Housing Area* (1931, based on 1930 surveys).
- Populations were estimated by dividing total Census 1940 population by number of occupied blocks and adjusting for differing population densities of whites and blacks, such that estimated populations by race and elevation equal actual counts of racial groups in 1940 Census.
- 2001 LIDAR elevation data was then adjusted to account for 60 years of subsidence. All figures on this graph represent best estimates.
These patterns emerge when we map race...

0-40% White
40-70% White
70-100% White

Lake Pontchartrain

New Orleans

Kenner

Jefferson

City Park

Gentilly

Uptown

Westwego

Marigny

Algiers

Gertula

Mississippi River

Lower 9th Ward

St. Bernard Parish

Analysis and map by Richard Campanella based on 2000 Census at the block-group level. Unpopulated areas are masked out in gray.

3 Miles
Louisiana Transplant bumper sticker in the Faubourg Marigny, one of New Orleans’ most historic but least native-born neighborhoods. Photo by Laura Harris, 2006.
City nicknames and slogans are significant because they both reflect and drive mass perception about a place, and how it deviates from other places. At right is a chronology of New Orleans’ various monikers. Below: Joseph Holt Ingraham claimed to have termed New Orleans “the Crescent City” in his 1835 publication, *The Southwest by a Yankee*. He seems to be correct; the nickname is exceedingly rare prior to 1835 and very common afterwards. Bottom left: The Queen & Crescent Hotel on Camp Street traces its name to a railroad line connecting Cincinnati (“the Queen of the West”) with New Orleans (“the Crescent City”). Bottom right: “The City [that] Care Forgot” slogan appeared in a 1910s nationwide marketing campaign for the St. Charles Hotel. [See “The Lexicon of Place” for details.] Ad from Philadelphia Inquirer; graphic and photo by Richard Campanella.
Flooding caused by Sauvé's Crevasse in 1849 (upper left) compared to modern-day topography of metropolitan area (middle left), in which dark-green shades are above sea level, yellow areas are near sea level, and red areas are below sea level. New Orleans's worst flood until Katrina in 2005, Sauvé's Crevasse occurred in a weak spot on the levee of a Jefferson Parish sugar plantation close to the former distributary which formed the Metairie/Gentilly ridge system. Photo at bottom left shows vicinity of Sauvé's Crevasse, along levee-top bike trail in River Ridge. Map from Report on the Social Statistics of Cities (1886), courtesy Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas at Austin; photo and topographic map by Richard Campanella based on Louisiana/FEMA LIDAR data.

Detail of Perspective of New Orleans and Environs (1885, upper right) shows the mostly rural Ninth Ward of lower New Orleans. The Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (Industrial Canal, 1918-1923) severed the Ninth Ward into “upper” and “lower” portions, and was later joined by the Intracoastal Waterway (visible in upper right corner of the 1950s photo, lower right) and Mississippi River-Gulf Canal. These and other man-made canals have allowed seawater to kill marshes and swamps and intrude into the very heart of the leveed yet protected metropolis. Images courtesy Louisiana Collection of the University of New Orleans and Army Corps of Engineers-New Orleans District.
Detail of 1884 drawing by Edward Molitor shows the Louisville & Nashville railroad tracks traversing the Rigolets landbridge (upper center) eastward toward the Mississippi Gulf Coast. It was in this remote corner of New Orleans that Manuel Marquez and his companions found themselves in a dramatic life-and-death moral dilemma during the Great Storm of 1915 [see "Manuel's Dilemma"].

Middle and bottom: freight train and tracks in the Rigolets today.

Hurricane Betsy flooding of the Lower Ninth Ward in 1965; Hurricane Katrina flooding of same area (and far beyond) in 2005. Betsy image courtesy Army Corps of Engineers-New Orleans District; Katrina image courtesy of the Associated Press.
Bird's eye views of Katrina's flood, pre-Katrina population distributions, satellite perspective, and topographic elevation. Views on left are from the northeast looking southwest; views on right are from the west-southwest looking east-northeast. Computer images by Richard Campanella.
Landscapes of devastation: Lower Ninth Ward (top left), Plaquemines Parish (top right and middle left) and Waveland, Mississippi (middle right), October 2005. Pair of photos below shows the author’s former house in Waveland, before and after Hurricane Katrina (note blue steps and crook in pine branch at right). Photos by Richard Campanella.

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A measure of Katrina press coverage, 2005-2007. Bottom: generalized suggestions of various stakeholders on where to draw the “build/no-build line.” Research and graphics by Richard Campanella; special thanks to Shelley Meaux for assistance with Lexis-Nexis searches. Please order on amazon.com
Katrina’s flood made New Orleans’ architectural legacy and future a controversial topic. Citizens discussed and debated demolition, deconstruction, house raising, footprint shrinkage, green space, environmental sustainability, New Urbanism, and the merits of historicity versus modernism. Photos at center show two early twentieth-century houses raised above base flood elevations; photo at bottom shows actor Brad Pitt’s “Make It Right” vision for Lower Ninth Ward, in which pink tents stand in for environmentally sustainable houses to be built inexpensively for former neighbors. Map and photos by Richard Campanella, 2007.

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2000 Population Distribution

2005 Katrina Flood Depth

Source: LSU

Map by R. Campanella

1 Dot = 20 People
Level: Census Block

<1 Foot
1 Mile
15 Feet
New Orleans in many ways demonstrated heroic resilience after the 2005 deluge. Top and middle graphs show the re-opening of businesses along three major commercial arteries (unflooded, prosperous Magazine Street; lightly flooded, working-class St. Claude Avenue; and North and South Carrollton Avenue, which experienced anywhere from zero to deep flooding) during the fifteen months following Hurricane Katrina. Bottom graph plots a crude measure of the remarkable civic engagement among New Orleanians following the storm, by counting the times “civic association” or “neighborhood association” appeared in the local newspaper. Despite the eager spirit to rebuild, tens of thousands of pre-Katrina residents opted to settle elsewhere, leaving affected neighborhoods markedly less populated. Few can argue that this reality represents “urban resilience” in its purest form. New Orleans rebounded after disasters in a stronger fashion in historical times, when it occupied higher ground amid a healthier deltaic plain and a more vital economy. Business-return survey by author; special thanks to Shelley Meaux for assistance in civic engagement research.

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Cityscapes of recovery.