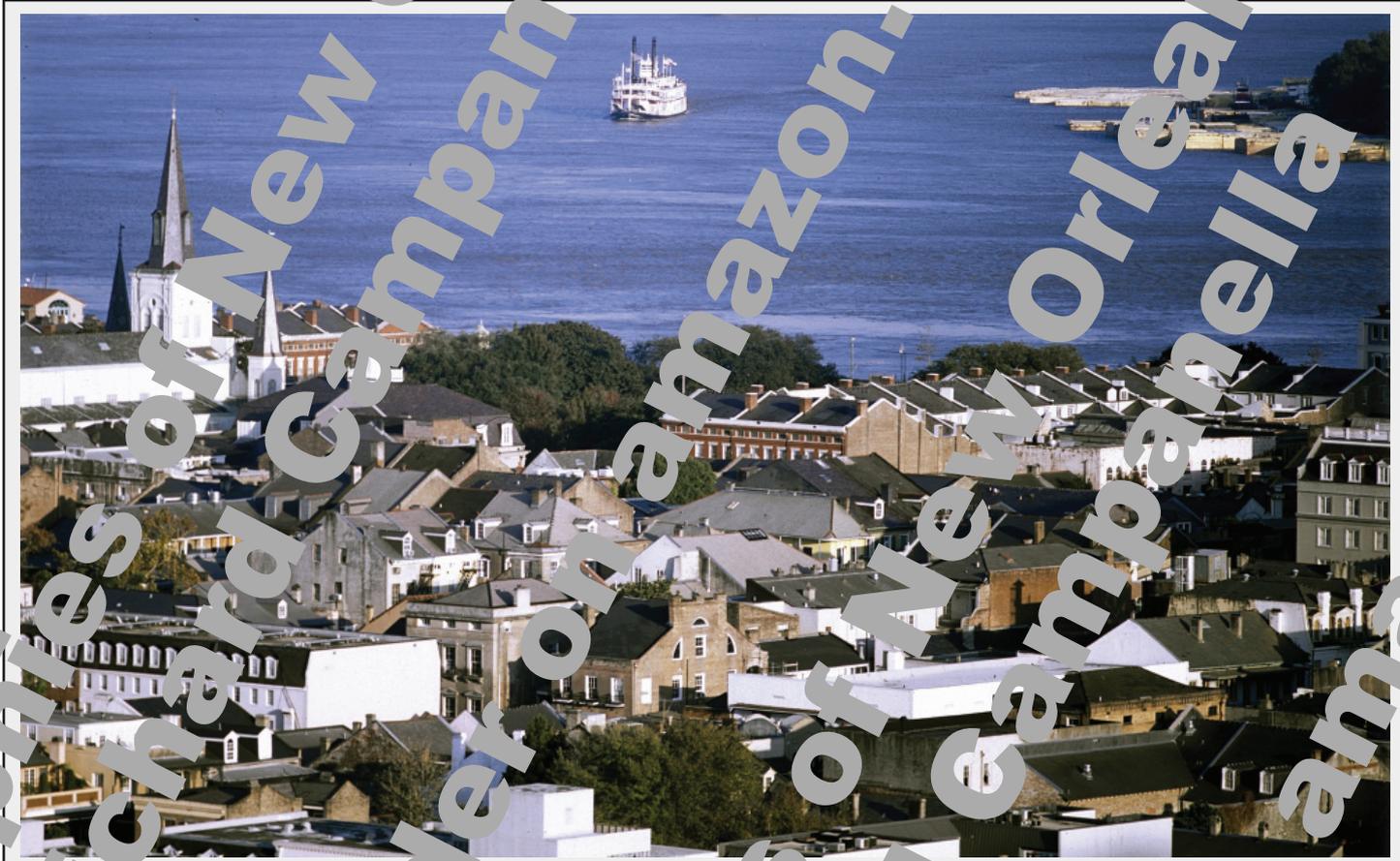


GEOGRAPHIES

OF

NEW ORLEANS

*Geographies of New Orleans
by Richard Campanella
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St. Louis Cathedral and the upper French Quarter, overlooking the Mississippi River. Photograph by Ronnie Cardwell, 2014.

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OF

IN NEW ORLEANS

Urban Fabrics Before the Storm

Richard Campanella



Center for Louisiana Studies

2006

Front and rear cover photographs by Neil Alexander (NEILphoto.com), 2004-2005.

Two-page photograph by Ronnie Cardwell (89 French Market Place in the French Quarter), 2004.

Photographs in section dividers mostly by author, with three by Ronnie Cardwell; satellite and historical imagery prepared by author based on sources from DigitalGlobe, Illinois SpaceImaging, NOAA Army Corps of Engineers, ESRI, and Library of Congress.

Front cover, rear cover, and endpapers designed by Richard Campanella, James D. Wilson, III, and Jennifer Cooper.

ISBN: 1-887366-68-7

Library of Congress Catalog Number:

Book design and layout by Jennifer R. Cooper

Printed in China

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**Geographies of New Orleans
by Richard Campanella**

Dedicated to the Heroes and Victims of Hurricane Katrina

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French Quarter viewed from space in 2004. Satellite image courtesy of DigitalGlobe; processing by author.

INTRODUCTION

Geographies of New Orleans deciphers the spatial patterns of a complex and fascinating place, revealing their origins, transformations, significance, and influence upon the cityscape. The patterns investigated include those imposed by the underlying landscape (“Physical Geographies”), those traced by the built environment (“Urban Geographies”), and those created by the city’s great diversity of peoples (“Ethnic Geographies”). Some chapters are descriptive in nature, particularly the physical topics, but others are analytical and interpretive, particularly in the urban and ethnic sections. The work draws from a wide range of traditions within the discipline of geography (including spatial analysis (mapping and analyzing distributions and diffusion), area/regional studies, earth sciences, human/environment relationships, the interpretation of the cultural landscape, and the perception of place.

The original goal of this book was to add geographical perspectives of New Orleans, past and present, to the rich array of traditional historical literature about this world-renowned city. It also sought to contribute New Orleans experience to the geographical literature about other cities and regions so that comparative analyses may be made. Five days after I turned in the manuscript to the publisher, Hurricane Katrina destroyed, damaged, scrambled, and scattered much of the geographies of the city and region. Now, I hope the book simply serves to document some of the intricate urban fabric woven here over the past three hundred years, many of which were shredded on August 29, 2005. Perhaps it will inspire perseverance in those who strive to rebuild New Orleans or explain to skeptics why it should be rebuilt.

Why should we care about such patterns? Because important and interesting information about humans and the environment is locked up in the spatial distributions they limit. We learn, for example, about the Creole-Anglo rivalry of the early nineteenth century from the dispersion of architectural styles still standing today. We are informed about the bitter race relations by mapping the residential distributions of whites, free people of color, and the enslaved. We learn how American cities changed in the late nineteenth century by comparing immigrant settlement patterns to those of earlier times. We see how New Orleans compares to other American cities by computing and mapping certain indicative traits culled from innovative and unexpected sources. We visualize the vulnerability of low-lying southern Louisiana by overlaying its population distribution upon an elevation map. We explore how Hurricane Katrina affected the region, scrambled its patterns, and altered perceptions of place. In short, revealing and explaining spatial distributions enlightens us to a deeper understanding of place. As musicologists and linguists tell us more about humanity through the interpretation of music and language, and as biologists and geologists enhance our understanding of the world by

investigating the biosphere and lithosphere, geographers contribute by studying the spatial arrangement of phenomena, and how they relate to the earth. Guiding questions for the geographer, and for this book, include:

- What is the shape, form, and origin of the physical landscape?
- How have humans transformed the landscape, and vice versa?
- How are phenomena distributed spatially, why, and how have the patterns changed through time?
- What distinguishes places from each other?
- How do people perceive place?
- What clues do we see in the present-day landscape that reflect the above questions?
- How has Hurricane Katrina changed the answers to these questions, and what sort of city might emerge from the catastrophe?

As there is no one history of New Orleans, neither is there solely one geography. The plural *Geographies* in the title recognizes that countless patterns in the physical, urban, and human realms overlay, interact, and re-form over time, and are perceived differently by different people. Patterns of architecture, urban development, race, economics, streets, soil, flooding, land use, language, food, and infinitely more—all have stories to tell. It is the task of the geographer to make sense of the layers,” and the task of the historical geographer to do this through the dimension of time. *Geographies of New Orleans* is a historical geography of the Crescent City, focused on twenty-four topics. A word of explanation is in order regarding the selection of these topics.

A perusal of New Orleans historical literature shows a surplus of comprehensive but shallow (“horizontal”) treatments of the city and a deficit of in-depth, critical investigations, which, for limitation of space, simply cannot be historically comprehensive. The approach of *Geographies of New Orleans* is to focus on a number of revealing topics, explore them in depth, and extract from the raw data common themes, overriding patterns and trends, and a larger significance. While this “vertical” approach allows the researcher to delve into requisite levels of detail, it also forces him to commit sins of omission. “Physical Geographies” covers the geology, pedology (soils), topography, and hydrology of the city, but neglects its climatology and biology. “Urban Geographies” investigates the development of the city, patterns of the built environment, and the varying perceptions of place, but does not devote entire chapters to other important topics such as economics, transportation, drainage, and the port. “Ethnic Geographies” shows how peoples distributed themselves across the cityscape, but does not cover all peoples. Most of the patterns investigated played out within city limits; left unexplored are the patterns that diffused *outwardly*, such as trade networks, residential out-migrations, cuisine, and jazz. Some readers may be surprised to see that the three most written-about New Orleans topics—food, music, and

Mardi Gras—are left almost entirely to other researchers. Selection of the twenty-four topics (which were written in a self-standing manner, such that they may be read in any order) was based on a variety of factors, including importance, the likelihood of discerning particularly interesting spatial patterns, data availability, public interest, lack of coverage elsewhere, and personal curiosity. It never was the intention to exclude—only the reality that not everything could be included. The opening section, “Past Geographies: Historical Events of Geographical Significance in the New Orleans Region,” aims to “fill in the gaps” and set the selected chorological topics in a larger chronological context. Recent works by geographers Peirce F. Lewis, Craig E. Colten, Christopher A. Airriess, and others cited therein are highly commended for additional spatial perspectives on New Orleans.

The original closing chapter, “Future Geographies,” cautiously attempted to project the trajectories of the recent past into the foreseeable future. Hurricane Katrina, which was foreseeable in a theoretical sense but unexpected in every other way, rendered this piece (written in late 2004 and early 2005) obsolete, to say the least. I decided to present it unedited, as an artifact of a New Orleans envisioned by this one geographer had the great storm not struck. Only the title was changed: “Future Geographies That Never Were.” I then added a new closing chapter, “Hurricane Katrina and Geographies of Catastrophe,” which interweaves my personal experiences during the storm with a preliminary geographical analysis of the event and its aftermath. The first-person account was written in near-real time, during or immediately after the experience, while my impressions remained fresh and uninfluenced by outside sources. The analytical portion was researched and prepared throughout September 2005, “in exile” at Baton Rouge, at a time when New Orleans was still partially under water, bodies were still being found, and the questions outnumbered answers a hundred to one. There, I also updated the “Past Geographies” timeline, added brief epilogues to certain chapters, and changed the book’s subtitle from *Peoples, Patterns, Perceptions, and Place to Urban Fabric Before the Storm*. I resisted the temptation to tamper with the actual chapter contents, because the pre-Katrina perspective, in which they were written, is now impossible to replicate and therefore itself of historical interest.

Conducting historical-geographical research differs from traditional investigations in history. The most essential datasets, particularly in the initial pattern-identification stage, are those that contain spatially referenced (“mapable”) information about the subject of interest. Censuses, city directories, institutional membership lists, city surveys, agency records, soil surveys, historical maps, aerial photographs, telephone directories, and most importantly, field work, are the sources of cartographic data from which spatial patterns may be discerned. Explaining these patterns with traditional sources, from primary historical documents to scholarly secondary literature in history, geography, and other disciplines, come

into play. Spatially referenced primary-source information in its aggregate form is the critical raw material for the type of geographical investigation practiced in this book. All analytical methodologies and data sources are documented in detail so that other researchers may test the findings and, if sound, repeat and refine them for other times or places.

Underlying this work is a personal conviction that the best way to learn about a place is by viewing it in both the temporal and spatial dimensions—that is, both historically and geographically. I hope readers come to share this perspective.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the following institutions for access to the research materials cited in this volume: Louisiana Collection and Special Collections of the Earl K. Long Library at University of New Orleans; Louisiana Collection and Southeastern Architectural Archives of the Special Collections division of Howard-Tilton Library at Tulane University; New Orleans Public Library; The Historic New Orleans Collection-Williams Research Center; Office of Black Catholics in the Archdiocese of New Orleans; Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans; Center for Bioenvironmental Research at Tulane and Xavier Universities; the RiverSphere; Italian American Renaissance Foundation Museum and Research Library; New Orleans City Planning Commission; Louisiana State University Department of Geography and Anthropology; Louisiana State University Computer-Aided Design and Geographic Information Systems (CADGIS) Lab; University of Louisiana at Lafayette; U.S. Census Bureau; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-New Orleans District; U.S. Geological Survey; Federal Emergency Management Agency; U.S. National Resource Conservation Service; Louisiana Department of Natural Resources; Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans; Historic District Landmarks Commission; Library of Congress, Port of New Orleans; Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans; Tulane University School of Architecture; Tulane University Department of Earth and Environmental Science; Vieux Carré Commission; National Aeronautics and Space Administration; New Orleans Notarial Archives; Louisiana State Museum; South Wings; and The Nature Conservancy.

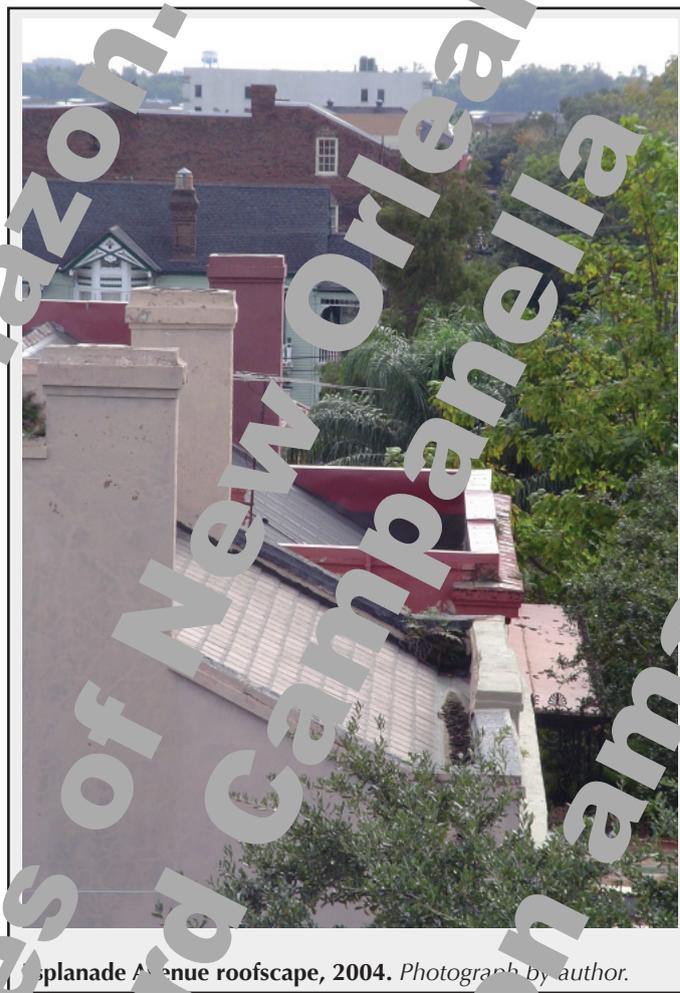
I am also indebted to the following people for their assistance: Harold and Doris Ann Gorman for their insights into the German community; photographer Neil Alexander for the aerial photographs on the front and back covers; photographer Ronnie Cardwell for selected rooftop scenes; Tulane University librarians Kenneth Owen of Special Collections/Louisiana Collection, Kevin Williams of the Southeastern Architectural Archives, and Eric Wedig from Government Documents; attorney Mark Tullis, for his keen perspectives on New Orleans history and its depiction in the publishing world, and for his contribution of historical newspaper articles; Kevin McCreffrey, for providing Federal Writers’ Project

transcripts relating to the Irish Channel; Lisa Caval of the Office of Black Catholics in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, for providing data on church membership; Yannis Vassiliopoulos, for his insights into the Greek community; John SEED student Byron Grant; Kate Lannan, for helping input 1850 census data; Sally Stassi and John Maguire of the Historic New Orleans Collection for recommending key data sources; Laurie Bennett of Produx, who provided post-Katrina evacuee diffusion data; Joseph Maselli of the Italian American Renaissance Foundation Museum and Research Library; Rosemary Sodolak Ericis, for permission to use her meticulously typed data files of Italians in the 1860 census; Jack Guidry and Father Byron Miller, C.S.C. of the National Shrine of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos; archivist Sally Reeves; geographer Peirce F. Lewis; Jefferson Parish Sheriff Harry Lee; architect Daniel Brown of the View-Carré Commission; and historian Florence de Jumonville for her assistance at the Louisiana Collection of UNO Library.

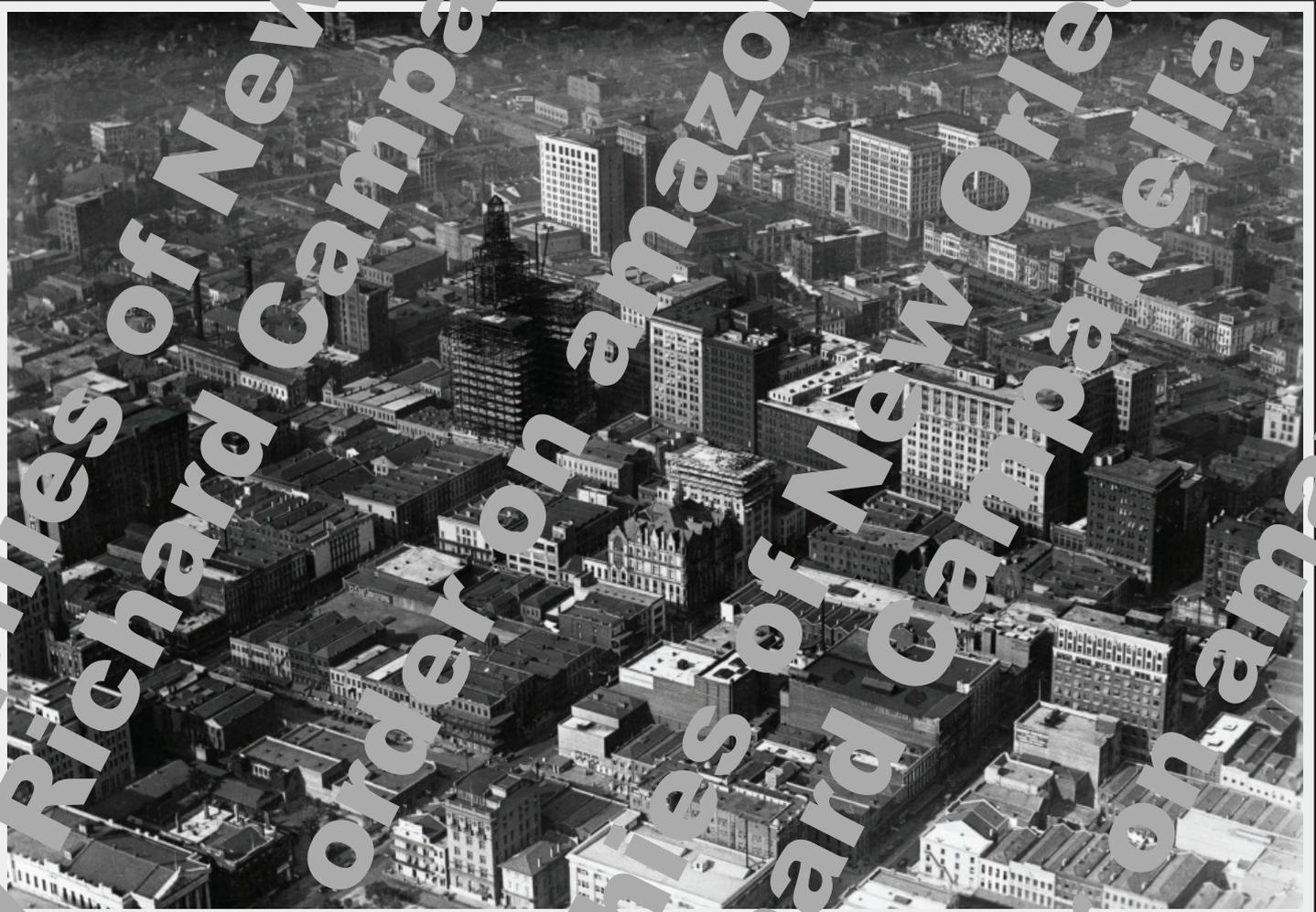
Thanks also goes to Carl J. Broseaux, James D. Wilson Jr., Jennifer P. Cooper, and the staff of the Center for Louisiana Studies at University of Louisiana at Lafayette, as well to the anonymous critical reviewers who read the manuscript and offered suggestions.

Very special gratitude goes to those who generously helped Marina and I during our six-week exile after Hurricane Katrina. We thank my parents, Mario and Rose Ann Campanella, brother Dr. Thomas J. Campanella and uncle John Tambascio, Marina's family in Maryland and Mexico; Dr. Malcolm Richardson and Kay Heath Richardson and their children Tyler and Kelley (as well as their wonderful dogs Ginger and Tucker), who graciously welcomed us into their home in Baton Rouge; and colleagues at the LSU Department of Geography and Anthropology and the Wetlands Biogeochemistry Institute, who provided workspace, research tools and insights into the future of the region.

Finally, my gratitude goes to Marina, my wife, whose love and support kept me encouraged and motivated throughout this project, and to my parents, Mario and Rose Ann, who taught me to observe and appreciate the surrounding world, and reared and educated me so that I may give something back. I am also grateful to New Orleans, for the way it enriches the nation, and for the endless font of fascinating topics it offers to those who look beyond the stereotypes and clichés.



Canalade Avenue roovescape, 2004. Photograph by author.



Downtown New Orleans in the early 1920s, when the Hibernia Bank was under construction on Carondelet Street. Part of the French Quarter appears at upper left. Southeastern Architectural Archive, Special Collections, Howard-Tilton Library, Tulane University.

PAST GEOGRAPHIES

HISTORICAL EVENTS OF GEOGRAPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN THE NEW ORLEANS REGION

This timeline identifies selected historical events and trends that influenced the physical, urban, or human geography of New Orleans and its environs. “Geographical Significance,” listed at right, explains how the event

- transformed the landscape or cityscape;
- influenced the spatial distribution of phenomena;
- changed political borders;
- altered perceptions of place;
- affected the utilization of land and natural resources; or
- distinguished New Orleans from other places.

“Past Geographies” is not intended as a traditional comprehensive timeline of local history, recording such events as mayoral terms, political milestones, and constructions of historical buildings (unless they effected a significant geographical change). It does not cover all eras with the same level of detail. Rather, “Past Geographies” describes selected historical events and trends that helped create the urban landscape we see today.

Year/s	Historical Event/Trend	Geographical Significance
Prehistoric	Indigenous peoples occupy Mississippi deltaic plain; explore and exploit networks of ridges and bayous through swamp and marsh.	Knowledge of labyrinthine deltaic geography includes discovery of key shortcuts and portages between Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi River.
1528-1543	Spanish explorers Alonso Álvarez de Pineda, Pánfilo de Narváez, and Hernando de Soto explore lower Mississippi basin by water and land.	Explorations lead to no permanent settlements, but add to European knowledge of Gulf Coast/Mississippi River region.
1682	French Canadian René-Robert Cavelier, sieur de La Salle sails down Mississippi to Gulf of Mexico.	Nine years after Marquette and Joliet’s exploration of upper Mississippi, La Salle’s voyage confirms relationship between river and Gulf of Mexico. His claim of Mississippi watershed establishes French dominion over one million square miles of North America, setting stage for foundation of French colonies near river’s mouth. La Salle’s attempt to return in 1684 ends in confusion and disaster.
1686	Le Moyne brothers Iberville and Bienville explore Gulf Coast and lower river region; establish Fort Maurepas in present-day Ocean Springs, Mississippi.	Mission to found and colonize Louisiana signifies France’s renewed interest in La Salle’s 1682 claim, in large part to keep out of hands of English (via immigration from northeast and inland from gulf) and Spanish (via Mexico and Florida).
1699	On March 9, Indians show Iberville convenient portage between Lake Pontchartrain and Mississippi River.	Portage is proved at Bayou St. John/Bayou Perdre, which significantly reduces time and risk in traveling up Mississippi from Gulf of Mexico. Shortcut shines favorable light on final locale—future New Orleans—best site for city.
1699	Bienville rebuffs English frigate <i>Cadogan Gale</i> from entering French Louisiana.	Incident that English Turn demonstrates English interest in lower Mississippi Valley and convinces Iberville of need to establish fort on Mississippi River, in addition to coastal settlements.
1700	Bienville founds Fort de Mississipi (Fort de la Boulaye) near present-day Iberville in Plaquemines Parish.	First European settlement within present-day Louisiana gives French experience in settling Mississippi deltaic plain. As first outpost directly on river, Fort de Mississipi is antecedent of New Orleans.
1702	Seat of colonial government is moved from Fort Maurepas to new Mobile settlement, north of present-day Alabama city of the same name. European population of lower Louisiana totals about 140 subjects, strewn out between Mobile and Mississippi River.	
1708	Some Mobile colonists are granted land concessions at Bayou St. John.	Wheat crop fails at Bayou St. John, but puts area “on the map” as first European settlement in future New Orleans proper.

1711	Mobile relocated to present-day site. Move marks troubled era in early Louisiana history, with failed settlements, disease, and death matched by waning interest on part of French government.
1712	Louisiana ceded as commercial monopoly. Crozat aims to discover gold and silver mines, raise tobacco on plantations, and trade with Spain. All three efforts fail; Louisiana is retroceded to crown in 1713.
1715	King Louis XIV dies; his five-year-old great-grandson Louis XV ascends to throne. Philippe, duc d'Orléans acts as regent of France.
1716	King issues edict regulating land grants in Louisiana. Edict establishes <i>arpent</i> system in Louisiana (one arpent equals approximately 192 English feet), whereby riverbank land is surveyed into long, narrow lots usually measuring two to four arpents wide and forty to sixty arpents deep. "French long lots" demarcate much of southeastern Louisiana landscape to this day, serve as a precedent of New Orleans' radiating street network, particularly uptown.
1717	After Crozat's failure, Jewish maverick financier John Law acquires monopoly charter for commercial enterprise in Louisiana from Philippe, duc d'Orléans. Law's Company of the West (later Indies) lures settlers and investors to Louisiana; resolves to establish city, Nouvelle Orléans, honoring Philippe.
1717	Directive to found New Orleans issued in Company of the West ledger, with probable date of September 9: "Resolved to establish, thirty leagues up the river, a burg which should be called New Orleans, where landing would be possible from either the river or Lake Pontchartrain." As quoted in Marc de Villiers du Terrage, "A History of the Foundation of New Orleans, 1717-1722," <i>Louisiana Historical Quarterly</i> 7 (April 1920): 174.

Colonial Era, 1713-1803		
Year/s	Historical Event/Trend	Geographical Significance
1717	Immigrant March and early April, Bienville's men clear forest at site of present-day French Quarter.	Bienville's site for New Orleans exploits Bayou St. John/Bayou Rouge portage between Lake Pontchartrain and Mississippi River, shown to him and Iberville by Indians a dozen years earlier. Located on elevated natural levee and angled to confront ships sailing up river, site is highly problematic but superior to most in deltaic plain.
1718-1722	Bienville's siting of New Orleans called into question by French colonists.	French debate relocating New Orleans to Bayou Manchac site, south of present-day Baton Rouge. Other suggested sites for company headquarters include Natchez, English Turn, Lake Pontchartrain shores, Matchitoches, Biloxi, Mobile, and Pensacola.
1719	Spring floods slow work on New Orleans. Headquarters of Louisiana colony relocated from Mobile back to Biloxi area; Bienville reluctantly returns to Biloxi to build new town.	
1719	First large group of Africans arrives to Louisiana, commencing over 140 years of slavery in region.	Race subjugation through slavery, codified in 1724 <i>Code Noir</i> , profoundly influences New Orleans' social and urban geography. Social identities and relationships become more complex and fluid in Caribbean-influenced French Louisiana compared to Anglo North America.
1719-1721	Company recruits thousands of settlers from France, Germany, and Switzerland to Louisiana.	First major wave of Europeans reaches French Louisiana. New Orleans by 1720 boasts houses for governor and director, company store, hospital, over one hundred employees, and 250 concession-holders ready to work their land. But disease takes its toll and Company of the Indies struggles financially.
1720	"Mississippi Bubble" bursts; John Law's development scheme for Louisiana collapses.	
1720s	Germans settle Côte des Allemands upriver from New Orleans.	German farmers help feed struggling New Orleans. Population is later absorbed into French-speaking white Creole society, but retains some German ethnic identity.
1721	Adrien de Pauger, assistant to Chief Engineer Le Blond de La Tour, arrives to New Orleans.	Pauger adapts La Tour's designs for new Biloxi capital to New Orleans site, creating today's French Quarter. His impressive plans cast New Orleans in a positive light; primitive outpost grows into <i>bona fide</i> town.

1721	On December 23, Company of the Indies officially transfers headquarters of Louisiana colony from Biloxi to New Orleans, boosting New Orleans' chances of surviving and prospering at its present location.
1722	September hurricane destroys much of primitive structures in located, Pauger and La Tour survey New Orleans. New blocks and streets, given them dimensions and names most still bear. Forty years after La Salle first sailed past site, foundation of New Orleans is complete.
1722	First substantial artificial levees erected. Started by La Tour and Pauger, levees by 1727 measure eighteen feet wide, three feet high, and one mile long, representing first attempt to control Mississippi. Man's control of river would ultimately succeed to the point of starving deltaic plain of critical sediments and freshwater.
1727	Ursuline Nuns arrive to New Orleans. Nuns bring civilization and education to remote outpost; create lasting elements of religious landscape, still active today.
1729	Natchez Indian uprising at Fort Rosalie kills 250 colonists. Primitive rampart and moat constructed around New Orleans for protection remains in altered forms until early American years, affecting urban development of adjacent areas.
1731	Company of the Indies relinquishes Louisiana to King; era of private development ends after nearly twenty years. Population of colony is over 7,000.
1736	Hospital, later Charity, founded. Charity Hospital later relocates four times to sites along backswamp levee, reflecting tendency to locate objectionable and threatening phenomena to "back-of-town" marginal site (1883 marks location of present-day hospital and explains origin of today's Tulane Avenue "medical district."
1745	Ursuline Convent designed and built in 1745-1753 on present-day 1100 block of Chartres Street. Convent stands today as the surviving complete structure from French colonial era, best documented extant building in Mississippi Valley and Gulf plain, and outstanding example of French colonial institutional architecture.
circa 1750	Claude Joseph Villars Dubreuil excavates canal to power sawmill immediately below city. Canal later establishes trajectory of Elysian Fields Avenue, which influences layout of numerous street grids and neighborhoods between river and levee over next two hundred years.
1754-1763	French and Indian War ("Seven Years' War" in Europe) pits France against England over claims in Ohio Valley. Conflict spreads around world and involves various European states. Defeat of France realigns colonial world; French North America, including Louisiana east of Mississippi, is ceded to England. Areas west of river (including New Orleans (thought to be an island, on account of Bayou Manchac distributary and lakes), and English possessions, having been secretly ceded by King Louis XV to his Spanish cousin King Carlos III in 1762. City gains unwelcome new neighbor to south, British West Florida, to which thousands of Anglo settlers migrate over next twenty years.
1755-1785	French settlers exiled by British from Acadie (present-day Nova Scotia). Thousands of widely scattered Acadian exiles arrive to Louisiana in 1764-1785, drawn by French culture and geographical accessibility. Most Acadians settle west of New Orleans, forming agricultural and cultural route-based rural society separate from, but important to, urban New Orleans.
1762-1769	Domination of New Orleans passes from France to Spain in stages: secretly in 1762, publicly in 1764, politically in 1765, and militarily in 1769.
1769	Population of New Orleans reaches 455 (3,190 whites; 1,265 slaves).
1775-1785	Revolutionary War fought mostly along Eastern Seaboard; Spanish in Louisiana seize British outposts in lower Mississippi and Gulf Coast region, with no immediate consequence to New Orleans. But war's outcome adds major new player to political geography and destiny of North America and New Orleans.
1785	Population of New Orleans about 5,000; population of colony, over 25,000.
1788	Fire destroys 856 buildings in New Orleans. Eighty percent of French colonial structures are lost. One of last surviving examples of old French Creole house type, "Madame John's Legacy," is built on Dumaine Street immediately after conflagration.

1788	Faubourg Ste. Marie laid out in former Gravier plantation.	New Orleans' first suburb (later called Faubourg St. Mary, now Central Business District) is sited above city proper, in response to population pressure and scars of recent fire. Plantation boundaries influence layout of street network, as would transpire for many other areas.
1789	St. Louis Cemetery I and II laid out.	New cemetery embodies Spanish tradition of above-ground entombment; replaces old French subterranean burial ground on Burgundy and St. Peter. Location near swampy area represents tendency to locate objectionable "nuisances" to back-of-town.
1791	French Market founded along lower-city riverfront.	Riverside municipal market displays city's multicultural face to amazed visitors in early 1800s; serves city for centuries to come. Vending opportunities help launch generations of poor immigrants to financial independence, particularly Sicilians in early 1900s, who settled nearby. Market is birthplace of American tropical-fruit industry; serves today as major node in tourist landscape and economy.
1793-1795	Eli Whitney invents cotton gin (1793); Jean Etienne de Lere successfully granulates Louisiana sugar (1795, near present-day Audubon Park).	Technological breakthroughs help launch Southern cotton and sugar plantation economy, replacing old colonial-era crops such as tobacco and indigo. Both commodities enrich New Orleans into mid-twentieth century; also entrench slavery in region and play major roles in economic and cultural geography of city and South.
1794	Ordinance destroys additional two hundred structures in New Orleans.	New Spanish building code imposed after fire puts end to traditional "first-generation" Creole building styles. Structures built afterwards reflect Spanish colonial traits and local embellishments ("second-generation" Creole architecture). Village-like appearance of French New Orleans gives way to solid, walled, brick-and-mortar Spanish cityscape.
1794	Governor Carondelet directs excavation of canal from rear of city to Bayou St. John.	Carondelet Canal replaces Bayou Road as route to Bayou St. John and Lake Pontchartrain; now shipments may be delivered by water from coast and lake directly to rear of city. Canal, which also serves as early drainage system, provides convenient right-of-way into downtown, used by railroads in twentieth century.
1795	Spain and U.S. sign Treaty of San Lorenzo.	Treaty grants Americans open navigation of Mississippi River and right of deposit at New Orleans for three years.
1791-1804	Slave revolt in Saint-Domingue threatens and eventually overthrows French regime.	
1793	First significant yellow fever outbreak in New Orleans.	Spread by <i>Aedes aegypti</i> mosquito (probably introduced from Africa through slave trade); yellow fever kills over 100,000 Louisianians over next century. Deeply influences economics, urban geography, personal migration patterns, public image, and everyday life of city into early twentieth century.
1800	Apprehensive about America's increasing interest in Louisiana, Spain, an empire in decline, secretly retrocedes Louisiana to militarily powerful France. Word of transfer soon reaches U.S.; alarm President Jefferson, who views New Orleans as critical to western development.	
1802	Napoleon sends 20,000 troops to combat situation in Saint-Domingue. Yellow fever decimates troops; slave revolt intensifies and eventually expels French regime, creating Latin America's first independent country (Haiti). Loss of extremely valuable sugar colony diminishes Napoleon's interest in France's cumbersome and problematic Louisiana colony.	
1802	Spain rescinds American right of deposit at New Orleans (permitted since 1765), exacerbating tension between America and colonial power. President Jefferson launches efforts to purchase New Orleans; threat of war emerges, with England casting doubt on Louisiana purchase as well.	
1803	Wary of over-extending colonial empire in need of money, and in light of impending war, Napoleon decides to sell not only Isle of Orleans but entire Louisiana territory to U.S.; treaty signed April 30.	

1803	Formal hand-over of New Orleans and Louisiana Territory, from Spain to France and thence from France to United States, occurs in Cabildo on December 20, closing colonial era.	New Orleans, now in progressive American hands, is routinely predicted to become one of richest and most important cities in nation, hemisphere, and world.
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Antebellum Era, 1804 to 1860		
Year/s	Historical Event/Trend	Geographical Significance
1804	New Orleans population approximately 8,000, residing in roughly 1,000 dwellings.	
Early 1800s	Shifting river channel deposits sediment at point below prior of major) immediately above New Orleans.	“Batture” forms along Faubourg Ste. Marie neighborhood; controversy ensues regarding public versus private ownership of valuable new riverside lands, reflecting differing Creole and American land philosophies. Complex court case involving President Jefferson lasts for decades; area eventually incorporated into urban grid; includes today’s Warehouse District.
1805	City incorporated.	Charter legally establishes New Orleans’ new municipal government, mission, duties, privileges, and boundaries. Ends colonial-era traditions of city management and makes New Orleans “official” American city. Process of Americanization is now underway.
1805	Lower plantation of Bernard Marigny subdivided for urban development.	Faubourg Marigny is city’s first expansion on natural levee in downriver direction. Neighborhood becomes home to mostly working-class Creole and immigrant population during nineteenth century.
1806-1810	Upper plantations of Delord-Sarpy (Duplantier), Saulet (Solet), Robin, and Livaudais subdivided for urban development.	Faubourgs Duplantier, Solet La Cour, and L’Annunciation expand New Orleans onto levee natural levee in upriver direction; area developed with working-class housing near river and grander homes inland. Neighborhood (today’s Lower Garden District) becomes home to mostly American and immigrant community during nineteenth century.
1807	Congress influences development of commons between the old city and Faubourg Ste. Marie.	Act of Congress clarifies ownership of disputed lands in new American city; reserves right-of-way for canal connecting Carondelet Canal with river, paralleled by sixty-foot public highways (canal is never built; corridor instead becomes 171-foot-wide Canal street. Act also confirms many land titles of settlers from colonial times, preserving old French urban land-division system.
1808	Over 9,000 Saint-Domingue (Haitian) refugees arrive to New Orleans via Cuba.	Refugees roughly evenly divided among white, free people of color, and enslaved black, doubling city population and reinvigorating city’s Franco-Creole culture. They integrate into Creole neighborhoods and social settings, adding new layers of ethnic complexity.
1809	Faubourg St. John planned at headwaters of Bayou St. John.	Faubourg St. John area promises to develop into attractive faubourg, but development stays away until late 1800s. After settlement of complex Myrre Clark Gaines lawsuit, one of largest in U.S. history.
1810	New Orleans population reaches 17,000 (6,516 white; 5,961 black slaves; and 4,523 free people of color).	
1810	Plantation of Claude Tremé subdivided for urban development.	Faubourg Tremé spreads New Orleans toward backswamp, exploiting upland of Esplanade Ridge/Bayou Road upland. Neighborhood becomes known for its black Creole population and immigrant community; sometimes described as oldest black neighborhood in America.
1812	Louisiana admitted to Union as eighteenth state.	
Antebellum Era	Despite oppressive social segregation, enslaved black community is residentially spatially integrated with white population, in “classic Southern” urban settlement pattern. Free people of color reside mostly in lower city; emancipated blacks live mostly in poor back-of-town.	
1812	First Mississippi river steamboat reaches New Orleans.	With city in American hands and hinterland under cotton and sugar cultivation, new riverboat transportation puts New Orleans in strategic position to become principal Southern city.

1815	On January 8, local militia under command of Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson defeats advancing British troops at Chalmette.	Battle of New Orleans terminates English threat to young nation, brings city's society to national attention, and helps integrate isolated, once-foreign outposts into national fold. "Antebellum era" commences; Anglo-American migration increases.
1816	Crevasse at Macarty's Plantation in present-day Carrollton floods backswamp; reaches rear street in city.	River water damages city infrastructure and plantation crops, but coats land with layer of sediment, building up elevation and later enabling early development of Carrollton. Flood also means city, reducing death rate by over half.
1810s-1870s	City expands steadily, mostly in upriver direction, on relatively broad natural levee in present-day uptown.	Expansion occurs through piecemeal subdivision of old long-lot sugar plantation and through political annexation of Lafayette, Jefferson, and Carrollton. Plantations subdivided into uptown faubourgs during nineteenth century include Faubourg Nuns (des Religieuses), Innis Plantation (Faubourg Lafayette), Faubourg Sauvadais, Delassize, Plaisance, Delachaise, Joseph, Bouigny, Avart, Rickerville, Hurstville, Bloomingdale, Burneville, Focher Tract (Audubon Park and university campus), Greenville, Stiburg, and Macarty Plantation (Carrollton).
Late 1810s	U.S. military establishes significant presence in New Orleans area.	In response to War of 1812, U.S. War Department begins building "Third System" forts along Atlantic and Gulf coasts, including key gateways in and near New Orleans. Military later acquires riverfront land for barracks and garrisons, recognizing strategic location and vulnerability of city, which becomes one of nation's most fortified. Military presence increases with twentieth-century world wars; remains big local employer today, though prone to cutbacks.
1820	New Orleans population reaches 41,000 (19,244 whites; 14,940 black slaves; and 7,100 free people of color).	
Early 1800s	Travelers from Europe and Eastern seaboard visit booming Crescent City and marvel at its social and physical distinctiveness, particularly its ethnic diversity. National perceptions about New Orleans as a unique and exotic place begin to form.	
1822	New Orleans and its suburb count "1,436 brick, and 4,400 wooden dwellings; 1,258 brick and 1,567 wooden warehouses, workshops, & 28 brick and 15 wooden public buildings making in the whole 8,705 buildings of every description. New buildings are daily rising particularly in the upper part of New Orleans." John Adams Paxton, <i>The New-Orleans Directory and Register, 1822</i> (New Orleans, 1822), 13.	
1824-1828	First Jewish congregations founded in New Orleans, notably Congregation Shangari Chassed (Gates of Mercy) in 1828, predecessor of Touro Synagogue.	Serves small but growing downtown Jewish population, in city since colonial times. Increasing German Jews form small cluster at foot of Jackson Avenue, which would migrate to uptown/University area by turn of twentieth century. This cluster, established before form Jewish population lived separately from Eastern European Orthodox Jews who settled near Dryades Street in late nineteenth century.
1823-1836	Municipal water system, designed by Benjamin L. Latrobe, is first to serve city residents, replacing years of makeshift systems.	Located at foot of Ursulines Street, system uses steam pump to draw river water into three-story pump house where it is stored in raised reservoirs and distributed to residential households through network of press pipes.
1825	Erie Canal in upstate New York connects Great Lakes with Hudson River.	Canal gives New York City access to western frontier, suddenly challenging New Orleans' monopoly on Mississippi Valley trade. Conservative New Orleans business community fails to diversify economy during ensuing decades, focusing instead on booming river trade. Seed for New Orleans decline is planted, but buried by antebellum prosperity. Erie Canal spawns rampant waterway excavation elsewhere: more bad news for New Orleans.
1830	New Orleans population reaches 45,000 (21,281 whites; 16,639 black slaves; and 11,906 free people of color).	

1830s	Esplanade Avenue extended from river to Bayou St. John.	Avenue is designed in French manner and developed as garden suburb for wealthy Francophones, starting old city. Corridor exploits unpraised Esplanade Ridge and forms axis of orthogonal street network of Sixth and Seventh wards, but does not replace its prehistoric predecessor, Bayou Road, which wanders across Esplanade at an angle all its own.
1830s	Black population in New Orleans, long in majority, becomes numerical minority.	Irish and German immigration makes New Orleans majority-white city; remains so until late 1970s. Urban slaves are replaced by Irish and German servants and laborers, contributing to steady decline in absolute number of black New Orleansians from 1840 to emancipation.
1832-1838	New Basin Canal excavated between rear of Faubourg St. Mary and Lake Pontchartrain.	At cost of thousands of Irish lives, excavation of canal gives city (particularly Anglo business community) improved access to lake trade. Competes with circa-1790s Canal du Lait Canal and nearby Pontchartrain Railroad, both of which drew lake trade to lower city. New Basin Canal creates West End port community on lakefront, soon known for its recreational boating and nightlife. Canal and tuning basin influence development of back-of-town and lakefront to mid-twentieth century.
1831	Pontchartrain Railroad built to connect river and lake.	Early railroad establishes Elysian Fields Avenue trajectory through backswamp, a century prior to development of this area. Railroad serves as ingress/egress for passenger traffic between New Orleans and Gulf Coast cities.
1830-1850s	Main era of Irish immigration to New Orleans.	Irish settle in dispersed pattern throughout periphery of city, particularly along riverfront and back-of-town, while generally avoiding costly inner city. English-speaking Catholic churches are founded to serve this population.
1820s-1830s	Boat handling and trading in Upper French Quarter batture (riverside of present-day North Peters, from Toulouse to Iberville) creates "sugar landing."	Area develops into "Sugar District" in 1870s, with high-rise processing plants, storage sheds, and shipping facilities. Sugar processing moves to St. Bernard Parish in 1910s, but sugar industry continues to use French Quarter riverfront until 1930s. Most facilities since demolished, now occupied by parking lots; area eyed for new development in early 2000s.
1830	Capt. Henry Shreve and state of Louisiana alter hydrology of Mississippi/Red/Atchafalaya rivers region in central Louisiana, not foreseeing consequences.	Shreve (1830) cuts off meander loop near Red-Mississippi juncture to aid navigation; several sections silts up ("Old River") in one part and sends Red River into Mississippi in another portion. Immense logjam prevents water from escaping down Atchafalaya distributary, but also retards navigation and development in south-central Louisiana. Shreve had state clear logjam during 1830s, unknowingly providing Mississippi with shorter path and steeper gradient to sea. Cleared logjam sends steadily increasing flow down Atchafalaya rather than Mississippi. Fearing catastrophic channel jump, engineers build Old River Control Structure in 1950s-1960s to preserve lower Mississippi River channel—and New Orleans.
1833	City of Lafayette founded immediately above New Orleans.	Lafayette draws German and Irish immigrants to its densely populated riverside blocks (present-day Irish Channel), and wealthy, mostly Anglo families to elegant garden suburb in its interior blocks (today's Garden District).
1834	First successful gas company brings new fuel to city for lighting and other purposes.	Gas works are soon constructed near present-day Superdome, illustrating how back-of-town was used for operations too sprawling and objectionable to be located in prosperous front-of-town. Gas works remain in this area for over a century, well after draining of backswamp.

1835	New Orleans and Carrollton trolley road installed on Noyades Street.	Present-day St. Charles Avenue Streetcar Line plays important role in developing uptown New Orleans and guiding surveying of new streets, as old long-lot plantations are subdivided for residential blocks. Now oldest continually serving rail line in the world, St. Charles streetcar is first urban rail system that would grow steadily until the 1920s, then decline to only one line after 1964.
1836	City divided into three semi-autonomous municipalities.	American displeasure with Creole political control leads to creation of essentially three separate cities: lower First and Third Municipalities are mostly Creole and immigrant; upper Second Municipality is mostly American and immigrant. System is inefficient and divisive, but influential in ethnic geography of city, producing perception of Canal Street as dividing line between Creole and American cultures.
1837-1842	Opulent exchange hotels built in First and Second municipalities, combining lodging, dining, banking, and conference services under one roof.	St. Louis Exchange Hotel opens in predominantly Creole First Municipality; domed St. Charles Exchange Hotel opens in predominantly Anglo Second Municipality. Each become nuclei for competing Creole-Anglo interests, and are noted among most splendid hotels in America. Both cater to extended stay guests doing business in antebellum boomtown.
1830s-1840s	New American aesthetics affect architectural environment.	Creole architecture peaks and begins to decline in French Quarter; replaced by Greek Revival style, first arrived here in 1814 from Northeast. Stylistic shift reflects larger changes in politics and society, from Creole to American.
1840	New Orleans population reaches 102,193 (59,519 whites; 23,440 black slaves; and 19,226 free people of color).	
1840s	De Cade Canal dug to connect Mississippi River with Bayou Bienvenue and Lake de la Charit�e Bay.	Canal helps develop First Bank; expanded as "Harvey Canal" with modern locks in 1907 and widened as part of Gulf Intracoastal Waterway in 1924.
1845	War with Mexico breaks out.	City plays prominent role as jumping-off point for troops and munitions; <i>Picayune</i> becomes major source of war news for nation. Involvement symbolizes era (particularly 1830s-1850s) when New Orleans serves as favored starting point for launching campaigns of adventurism and intrigue into Latin America.
1840s-1850s	Main era of German immigration to New Orleans.	German and Irish, settling in dispersed pattern throughout city periphery, particularly in Lafayette and Third Municipality. Instill rich cultural and institutional traditions in New Orleans.
1840s-1850s	Canal Street emerges as premier retail corridor.	Retailers migrate from narrow Royal and Chartres streets to commodious Canal Street, until now a mostly residential thoroughfare. Canal Street becomes one of South's premier downtown shopping meccas, until 1960s.
1849	Crevasse levee at Sauv�e Plantation on Jefferson Parish diverts river water into lowlands between natural levee of Mississippi and Metairie/Gentilly ridges.	City's worst flood fills backswamp and inundates city from rear, to within blocks of riverfront; submerges 22 blocks, damages 2,000 structures, and displaces 12,000 residents. City infrastructure rebuilt with funds from special tax.
1846-1856	Decaying Place d'Armes and adjacent buildings renovated into present-day Jackson Square.	St. Louis Cathedral and twin Pontalba Buildings constructed; Cabildo and Presbyt�re renovated with Mansard roofs and cupolas; Andrew Jackson statue installed, newly fenced and landscaped plaza named Jackson Square. Outstanding work transforms dusty commercial district into place of splendor, completely intact today. Cast-iron galleries on Pontalba Buildings mitigate local fashion craze and forever change streetscape of French Quarter, as iron-lace galleries are added to numerous townhouses and storehouses.
1850	New Orleans population reaches 119,460 (91,431 whites; 18,968 black slaves; and 9,961 free people of color).	

1850	3,700 miles of canal completed in U.S. since Erie Canal opened in 1825.	Canal excavation in North further threatens city's grip on Mississippi and Ohio Valley trade. But heavy traffic on river obscures growing threat on horizon; New Orleans merchants enjoy antebellum "golden age."
1850s	New railroads in Northeast give East Coast cities additional access to trans-Appalachian region even during winter, when canals freeze.	Railroads further weaken New Orleans' command of Mississippi Valley trade; there are now numerous ways to get resources and cargo in and out of North American interior. Transportation costs decline for western commodities in Eastern urban markets; city dwellers thus spend less on food and more on manufactured goods, fueling industrialization in North. Complacent business leaders in New Orleans are late in bringing railroads and industry to city, viewing traditional river transportation as solution.
1850s	"Newspaper Row" forms around 300 block of Ramp Street.	Local publishing industry shifts base from Chartres Street to Ramp Street, representing new American cultural shift. Newspaper Row remains here until 1920s.
1850s	"Cotton District" forms around Gravier/Condelet intersection.	Cotton factors and merchants form busy financial district in heart of Faubourg St. Mary, controlling vast Southern cotton economy. District would survive into 1950s.
1850s	As slavery becomes most divisive issue in nation, racial tensions increase locally and rights of free people of color are curtailed.	City's traditional Caribbean-influenced three-tiered social caste system begins to give way to two-tier (white/black) system. Some free Creoles of color respond by migrating for Mexico, further diminishing city's nonwhite population in late antebellum years.
1851	52,011 immigrants arrive to New Orleans, almost equal to number moved to Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore combined. City is primary immigration port in South and second in nation (behind New York) for most years between 1837 and 1860.	
1857	Municipality system abandoned; Lafayette incorporated into New Orleans.	City emerges from municipality era with new Anglo-American ethnic domination and momentum toward upriver expansion. City's political and economic epicenter relocated from old city to Faubourg St. Mary, new CBD. Antiquated, confusing house-numbering system updated.
1853	City's worst yellow fever epidemic claims over 8,000 lives. Irish and German immigrants suffer disproportionately.	
1855-1860	Three prominent national churches arise in former city of Lafayette, now Fourth District of New Orleans.	Predominantly Irish St. Alphonsus Church (1855-1858), German-language St. Mary's Assumption (1858-1860), and French-language Notre Dame de Bon Secours (1858) erected in close proximity, symbolizing multiethnic, immigrant nature of uptown New Orleans in late antebellum era. Similar situation prevails in Third District.
1857	Krewe of Comus formed.	First "krewe" formed by group of men from Mobile; helps transform celebration of Mardi Gras from one of private balls and disorganized street mayhem to one of public parades, fanciful royalty, and elaborate civic rituals. Mardi Gras soon develops into premier outward cultural trait distinguishing New Orleans from other American cities.
1860	New Orleans population reaches 174,491 (149,100 whites; 14,484 black slaves; 10,939 free people of color). Last antebellum year marks city's highest ratio of whites to blacks: nearly six-to-one. Today, ratio is reversed: blacks outnumber whites by nearly two-to-one.	
1860	1,000 miles of railroad track crisscross U.S.	Railroad and canal competition cuts into New Orleans' command of river trade.
1861	Louisiana secedes from Union. Local Gen. P.T.G. Beauregard fires opening shots at Fort Sumter; Civil War begins.	

1862	New Orleans, weakly defended by Confederacy, succumbs peacefully to federal troops executing “Anacostia Plan” to encircle South by seizing Mississippi River.	South loses major city and critical grip on river. Region’s slave-based plantation economy, which enabled white New Orleans since colonial times, collapses forever. War ends early for New Orleans; federal troops occupy and control city.
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Postbellum Era/Late Nineteenth Century, 1862–1896

Year/s	Historical Event/Event	Geographical Significance
1862-1865	South and Southern agriculture devastated; commerce to New Orleans interrupted; federal presence and post-war racial tensions alter social landscape.	
1860s-1890s	New social and urban factors affect built environment.	Cottages, often with slave quarters and courtyards, diminish in popularity in French Quarter; replaced by shotgun houses, which peak in popularity during turn-of-century era. Individually crafted vernacular structures give way to quasi-mass-produced “catalog” houses.
1864-1866	Small but prominent Greek community founds first Eastern Orthodox Church in Western Hemisphere.	Holy Trinity Church becomes religious center for Greek New Orleans in century to come; St. Charles Ward neighborhood around church (222 North Dorgenois) becomes geographical nucleus of Greek community.
1867-1871	Rubber planters seeking replacements for emancipated slaves, import Chinese workers from Cuban plantations.	Trade fails, but brings small number of Chinese to city, some of whom eventually settle in part of CBD, forming Chinatown. Others start family-owned laundries and businesses throughout city neighborhoods.
1870s	International architectural styles begin to modify cityscape.	Creole architecture disappears almost entirely, as do antebellum American styles (particularly Greek Revival and Italianate styles, here since 1850s via English Picturesque movement, rise in popularity.
1870	New Orleans population reaches 161,418. Emancipated slaves migrate to city and groves, doubling 1860 black population to 50,456 (26 percent of total 1870 population). Most settle in part of town; demographic pattern remains today, though back swamp is drained.	
Late 1800s	Settlement patterns change since antebellum years.	Expanded street network allows affluent families, who traditionally lived in inner city, to move to new garden suburbs formerly occupied by poor Irish and German immigrants in antebellum times. Move opens up housing opportunities for poor in inner city, where jobs also exist. Throughout late 1800s and early 1900s, immigrants settle mostly in ring of inexpensive, conveniently located working-class neighborhoods immediately surrounding CBD: the “immigrant belt.”
1870-1880	City annexes adjacent communities, fulfills modern boundaries.	New Orleans annexes Jefferson City, on uptown east bank, and Algiers, across from French Quarter on West Bank, in 1870. Carrollton annexed in 1874; ward lines adjusted to incorporate new city land. By 1880s, modern shape of Orleans Parish emerges.
1870s	Sugar barbers start recruiting peasants out of Sicily to work on Louisiana plantations in place of emancipated slaves.	Sicilians, as part of New Orleans’ tropical fruit trade, come by thousands between 1870s and 1900, forming last great wave of immigration to city. Most settle in lower French Quarter (“Little Italy”) and define life there and in French Market until around World War II.
1872	Metairie Cemetery laid out on former racetrack.	Becomes most famous of numerous cemeteries on Metairie and Gentilly ridges, which also host race tracks, parks, fairgrounds, and other large-scale public uses that require proximity to city population but need too much acreage to be located in city proper. Well-drained Metairie/Gentilly Ridge provides optimal site for such facilities.

1874	Violent riot between Democratic White League and Republican Metropolitan Police at foot of Canal Street represents flashpoint of post-war racial tensions. Monument to “Battle of Martyr Place” later dedicated at site becomes controversial reminder of racial discord into 1990s.
1870s-1890s	Orthodox Jewish community mostly immigrants and descendants form “Dryades Street neighborhood,” from Poland and Russia forms between New Orleans’ only popularly recognized Jewish neighborhood, distinct from established Reform Jewish community of downtown. Jewish-owned shops on Dryades, and residences riverside of Dryades, last into 1960s.
Late 1800s	Emancipation and ensuing racial tensions polarize Louisiana’s historically fluid sense of racial identification into exclusive “white” and “black” categories. Creole identity is redefined by white “narrative historians” as exclusive domain of white descendants of French and Spanish colonials, despite ample historical use of term for Franco-African-American community. “Local color” writers romanticize city’s history and Creole society; New Orleans mythology is born and survives to this day.
1875-1879	With sedimentation of river channel delaying shipping traffic at mouth of Mississippi estuary, James Eads constructs parallel jetties at South Pass. Eads’ jetties force water to increase speed, mobilize sediment, and deepen channel, allowing ocean-going vessels to enter river without waiting for certain conditions. Coupled with development of barges, growth of local railroad network, and improving economic conditions, Eads’ jetties help city rebound from post-war slump.
1877	Federal troops withdrawn; New Orleans’ turbulent occupation and Reconstruction era ends.
1878	U.S. Hydrographic and New Orleans Auxiliary Sanitation Association publish <i>Topographical and Drainage Map of New Orleans and Surroundings</i> . Most accurate city map of era; 1879 version includes first comprehensive elevation measurements of city, at 10-foot contour intervals.
1879	Federal government creates Mississippi River Commission. Ends era of local and state levee projects; begins modern era of federal authority over flood and navigation control of Mississippi River.
1880	New Orleans population reaches 211,090; black population 57,611 (27 percent).
Late 1800s-early 1900s	Remarkable era of technological innovation, particularly in electrification, transportation, and communication, transforms cities and alters world’s political and economic geography. Modern era emerges. New technologies foster development of Central Business District as non-residential inner core of high-rise office buildings, equipped with telephones and elevators. Workers relocate to garden suburbs and commuter electrified streetcars and, later, automobiles. Globally, era witnesses shift in geo-political and economic power from one based on sea to one based on land. New Orleans, founded for its river location and early dependent on waterborne transportation, still-prepared for modern era.
Late 1800s-early 1900s	“Local color” literary tradition flourishes in city. Writers such as George Washington Cable, Kate Chopin, Charles Gayarré, Grace King, and Lafcadio Hearn help popularize New Orleans in public mind, forming foundation of modern-day tourist economy.
1882	Chinese Mission founded on South Liberty Street. Chinese Mission draws Chinese immigrants to this area; Chinatown forms around 1100 block of Tulane Avenue and survives until 1937. Demonstrates role of religious institutions in both creating and reflecting ethnic enclaves.
1884-1885	World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition held at Audubon Park. Exposition fails commercially but succeeds in helping develop southern uptown into prosperous garden suburbs with outstanding urban park and university campuses. Event also offers national and international venue for Louisiana artists and writers, who gain prominence afterwards.
1890	New Orleans population reaches 242,039; black population 64,491 (27 percent).
1890-1891	Murder of Police Chief David Henry blamed on Sicilian mobsters; eleven Sicilians held at Parish Prison lynched in retaliation. Incident leads to international crisis between Italy and U.S.; leaves deep scars in Sicilian community, contributing to social isolation in “Little Palermo” (lower French Quarter) at turn-of-century.
1891-1909	“Residential parks” created uptown along St. Charles Avenue. Rosa Park, Audubon Park, and other exclusive residential streets represent early form of zoning and “gating” of communities.

1893-1895	City council empowers new Drainage Advisory Board to study and solve city's age-old drainage problem.	Board collects vast amount of scientific and engineering data, develops large-scale topographic map, and proposes plan to drain water off natural levee to low point in central city, then pump it through canals into adjacent lakes.
1894	Tulane University relocates uptown, after sixty years downtown. Antecedent institutions.	Uptown "University" sector forms as Loyola University moves next door in early 1900s. Two campuses impart vital character to uptown, helping form affluent neighborhoods with highly educated residential population, many from out-of-town.
1894	House numbering system modernized.	Erratic 1852 system replaced with logical system in use today, in which house numbers increment by one hundred for every block, and odd numbers indicate lakeside or downriver sides of blocks. Reflects Progressive Era sensibilities of improved municipal services.
1896-1915	World-class drainage system installed to remove standing water from low-lying backswamp.	System radically alters geography of New Orleans: backs swamp and marshes disappear; urban development begins to spread toward lake; middle-class whites move off natural levee and into new lakefront suburbs (which explicitly exclude blacks through deed covenants). Crescent-shaped historic New Orleans gives way to modern twentieth-century metropolis.
1896	St. Augustine Catholic Church parishioner Homer Plessy tests post-Reconstruction Jim Crow laws by sitting in whites-only car on north shore-bound train (1892); is promptly arrested. Failure of <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> case establishes "separate but equal" legal precedent, entrenches segregation in South until 1954. Public facilities in New Orleans, from streetcars to schools to department stores, are legally segregated by race.	

Segregation Era/Twentieth Century, 1896 to 1960		
Year(s)	Historical Event/Trend	Geographical Significance
1890s-1920s	Former plantations converted into large urban parks.	Former Foucher and Allard Plantation landscaped into Audubon Park and City Park, respectively.
1897	Alderman Sidney Story sponsors ordinance that bans prostitution throughout city, except in fifteen-block neighborhood behind French Quarter.	Law succeeds in controlling prostitution but inadvertently creates hemisphere's first legal red-light district, dubbed Storyville. District becomes nationally infamous as it seals New Orleans' reputation for debauchery, while incubating some of city's musical geniuses. Storyville closes in 1917 by order of U.S. Navy.
1870s-1900s	Research conducted at Audubon Park refines methods for purifying river water for residential use. Modern purification and distribution plant constructed in Carrollton brings city into modern age of municipal water systems.	Carrollton site for waterworks plant provides appropriate riverside location and elevation to draw water from Mississippi, remove sediment, add lime and sulfate of iron for softening, purify it with chlorine gas, and store it. High-lift pumps then distribute water to city residents everywhere except Algiers, which is served through a smaller, similar system on West Bank.
1900s-1900s	Steel frame construction and concrete pilings introduced to New Orleans.	First generation of high-rises erected in CBD and upper French Quarter transforms city skyline.
1895	Conflagration destroys much of Algiers, last of great city fires.	Algiers rebuilds in era of late Victorian and neoclassical architecture, giving modern-day Algiers Point neighborhood a quaint, turn-of-century ambience.
1899-1902	Sicilian-born Vaccaro brothers and Russian-born Samuel Zemurray independently start importing banana from Central America through New Orleans. Vaccaros' firm grows into Standard Fruit; Zemurray's Cuyamel Fruit later merges with United Fruit.	Banana companies tighten city's grip on nation's tropical fruit industry attained in antebellum times via shipping routes with Sicily. Companies establish close ties between city and Central American republics, particularly Honduras, deeply influencing political and economic landscape of Central America for generations to come. Steady stream of Honduran immigrants to city throughout twentieth century, giving New Orleans one of largest <i>Catracho</i> populations outside Honduras. Most currently reside in Kenner, Metairie, and Mid-City.

Turn-of-century	Jazz musical style emerges from myriad local and regional influences.	Style soon diffuses nationwide and worldwide with help from Tin Pan Alley music industry and nascent recording technologies; becomes “sound track” of modern world from 1920s to World War II. Commonly recognized as New Orleans’ most significant cultural contribution.
Turn-of-century	Term “Vieux Carré” emerges as popular name for French Quarter.	Nostalgic term, product of “local color” literary tradition; represents romanticized notion of city’s past; reflects increasing appreciation of old New Orleans on part of tourists and local community.
1900	New Orleans population reaches 287,104; black population 77,714 (27 percent).	
1900	Race riot erupts following violent exchange between police officers and black-to-Africa advocate Robert Charles.	Incident occurs in poor, isolated back-of-town area settled by emancipated slaves. Often described as city’s largest major race riot, attesting to relatively peaceful race relations in New Orleans. But neighborhood, present-day Central City, remains one of city’s most troubled today.
1901-1920s	Deeds Board modernizes port facilities.	Board constructs riverside warehouse, grain elevators, canals, and new docking space.
1901	Louis Armstrong born in back-of-town, amid era of emergence of jazz.	New Orleans’ most famous son greatly enhances city’s image in eyes of world. City fails to embrace Armstrong until years after his death, even demolishing his neighborhood in 1950s for new City Hall complex.
1904-1926 and 1926	Mayor Martin Behrman serves in City Hall.	Influential Algerian oversees important civic improvements, including modernization of drainage, sewerage, and water systems; expands city services and public education; creates Public Belt Railroad.
1905	Last yellow fever epidemic.	Almost five hundred people die in city’s bout with “yellow jack;” Sicilian immigrants living in crowded conditions in lower French Quarter blamed for outbreak. New drainage and potable-water systems (eliminating mosquito-breeding puddles and cisterns) end century-old public health problem.
1910	New Orleans population reaches 339,075; black population 99,262 (29 percent).	
Early 1900s	Steam-powered riverboats gradually replaced by tug barges and other petroleum-powered vessels, as well as railroads, for freight shipping.	Sights and sounds of steamboats crowding riverfront disappear from Mississippi River, except for excursion vessels, many of which carry local jazz bands to interior cities.
1909	Architectural style change.	Creole cottages and shotgun houses decline in popularity, replaced by Craftsman, City Beautiful, and California-style bungalows.
1910s-1930s	Lakeview, Gentilly developed.	New suburbs, with non-native architectural styles and spacious lots surrounding, expand city into newly drained lakefront. Deed covenants restrict sale of most parcels to whites only.
1914-1918	World War I rages in Europe.	City benefits from war-related increase in inter-city transportation. Local German community devastated by stigma of enemy association; most German cultural institutions and public traditions in city suddenly cease to return.
1915	Hurricane strikes New Orleans, inflicting great damage and toppling many church steeples.	
1918-1923	Industrial Canal constructed.	Deeds Board excavates Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (“Industrial Canal”) on old Ursuline Nuns’ holding in Ninth Ward; canal and locks connect river and lake, providing shortcut to gulf and creating up new deep-water wharf space. Much port activity shifts to Industrial Canal by mid-1900s, but returns to river by turn of twenty-first century. Canal benefits port but isolates lower Ninth Ward from rest of city.
1917	Xavier University founded.	Nation’s only black Catholic institution of higher learning reflects New Orleans’ distinctive Creole heritage.

1919	Old French Opera House burns.	Demise of Bourbon Street landmark, built in 1859, symbolizes end of centuries-old cultural exchange between France and New Orleans; helps launch appreciation for decaying French Quarter.
1920	New Orleans population reaches 387,291; black population 100,930 (26 percent).	
1920s	“French Quarter Renaissance” blooms.	Writers, artists, and intellectuals are drawn to Quarter’s bohemian ambience and cheap rents; many live within a few blocks of each other, fostering intellectual interaction. Together with “local color” era of late nineteenth century, French Quarter Renaissance puts New Orleans on map as great literary city.
1922	New Orleans Public Service gains control of all streetcars, electrical service, and natural gas distribution in city. Decade of 1920s marks apex for streetcar system; ensuing forty years see gradual transition to rubber-tire buses.	
1926-1934	“Lakefront Project” creates new land along Lake Pontchartrain shore.	Bold project designed to protect city from storm-driven lake and gulf surges; also produces high, scenic access for residences, parks, facilities, and airport. Project radically alters shape of topography of city; accelerates movement of population away from river and toward lake.
1926-1935	Airline Highway built to connect New Orleans with Baton Rouge.	With modern technology enabling road construction through swamps, Airline Highway antiquates historic Nive Road as main terrestrial connection between Louisiana’s largest city and its capital. Highway later draws older Nive Road communities away from river, but itself is superseded by I-10 forty years later.
1927	Great Mississippi River Flood inundates 26,000 square miles from Cairo to Gulf; kills hundreds, displaces half-million; threatens New Orleans.	Nation’s worst natural disaster transforms federal river-control policy (through Flood Control Act of 1928) from “levees-only” to one of massively augmented levees, floodwalls, spillways, control structures, reservoirs, canals, revetments, and other devices. New Orleans is spared from flooding, but controversial dynamiting of levee in St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes to ensure city’s safety creates lasting rift between city dwellers and rural neighbors.
1920s-1940s	Old downtown canals eliminated.	Old Basin (Cadelet) and New Basin canals, rendered obsolete by railroads, highways, and barges, are incrementally filled in, opening up valuable access corridors to downtown. Former bed of New Basin Canal later used for Pontchartrain Expressway right-of-way.
1930	New Orleans population reaches 458,762; black population 129,021 (28 percent).	
1930-1941	Works Progress Administration and Public Works Administration execute numerous projects city-wide.	New federal agencies renovate historic structures, document city’s past, and rebuild aging infrastructure.
1934-1938	Public Works Administration renovates French Market.	Agency restores early-1813 Butchers Market, reconstructs Bazaar Market, removes Vegetable Market, demolishes Red Store, adds Fish Market, and razes Gallatin Street for new Farmers’ Market and Flea Market pavilions. Modernization of 174-year-old municipal market produces French Market complex that stands today.
1935	Huey P. Long Bridge, first across over Mississippi River, links east and west banks of Jefferson Parish.	Built for both train and automotive traffic, bridge signals end of era for river ferries and new era of development for semi-rural Jefferson Parish. Hair-raising “Huey P” later proves inadequate for modern vehicular traffic; is blamed for economic disparity between Jefferson’s east and west banks and is currently eyed for expansion.
1936	State constitution authorizes city to create commission for preservation of Vieux Carré.	Vieux Carré Commission guards nation’s second major legally protected historic district (after Charleston); buildings deemed architecturally and historically significant are preserved and held to certain standards.

1937	Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) develops first public housing projects.	HANO clears selected historic neighborhoods to construct planned communities of subsidized housing, segregated by race. Areas include former Storyville (Crescent Ville Project, 1941), Irish Channel (St. Thomas Project), and others. Projects alter historic urban fabric, diminish spatial integration of ethnic and racial groups, and concentrate and incubate poverty. Some are demolished and rebuilt to “New Urbanism” sensibilities in early 2000s.
1937	Chinatown razed.	Small Chinese merchant community at 1100 Tulane Avenue relocates to 500 block of Bourbon Street, where it lasted into 1980s.
1940	New Orleans population reaches 494,537; black population 149,034 (30 percent).	
1940	Former Storyville area demolished.	Rebuilt with present-day Iberville Housing Project initially a segregated white public housing facility.
1940	Moisant Airfield established in isolated truck-freight community of Kenner to supplant inadequate Lakefront Airport.	Owned by City of New Orleans, Moisant begins commercial service in 1946 and is renamed New Orleans International Airport in 1960. Connected with city by Airline Highway, airport fuels growth of Kenner before east Jefferson Parish develops. Gap fills in with completion of I-10 and Veterans Boulevard by 1970s. Airport renamed Louis Armstrong-New Orleans International in 2001, but code MSY (allegedly “Moisant Stock Yards”) remains. Orientation of runways and small size now seen as obstacle to air traffic; new airport sites west and east of site proposed in 1990s-2000s.
1941-1945	Nation fights World War II.	City plays disproportionately significant role in war, as major ingress and egress for materiel and troops, base for ships and aircraft, and as manufacturing center for warborne craft such as Higgins landing boats, used during D-Day landings. Troops on leave in city help transform Bourbon Street from bohemian nightspot to world-famous red-light district.
1940s	Federal government encourages development of petrochemical refining capability in region.	Bucolic River Road between New Orleans and Baton Rouge transforms from landscape of sugar plantations and decaying antebellum homes to one of petrochemical refineries and industrial facilities. Region today is “Industrial Corridor” to some, “Cancer Alley” to others.
1940s	Black Creoles begin migrating by train to California.	Significant community of New Orleans Creoles forms in Los Angeles; remains to this day.
1941	German U-boat sinks <i>Robert E. Lee</i> near mouth of Mississippi; kills twenty-five people but is later destroyed.	German U-boats disrupt shipping in Gulf of Mexico and bring war to Louisiana coast. New Orleans’ position on river makes it valuable but also vulnerable.
1946-1961	Mayor de Lesseps “Chep” Morrison oversees post-war modernization of infrastructure, reform of old-style political machines, and establishment of new commercial ties with Latin America. New Brasilia-inspired City Hall complex, train station, airport, improved rail/street crossings, and bridges over both river and lake all products of Morrison’s era. Rubber-tire buses increasingly replace streetcar lines.	
1947	Tennessee Williams’ <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> debuts on stage.	Play instills New Orleans mystique and sense of place in millions of theatergoers and, later, moviegoers; becomes most famous work of French Quarter literary community active in 1920s-1940s.
1947	Hurricane strikes New Orleans region.	
1950	New Orleans population reaches 500,445; black population 181,775 (32 percent).	
1950	Louisiana Landmarks Society founded.	Society works toward preservation of historically and architecturally significant structures, later expands to preserve historic neighborhoods and fight inappropriate development. Society saves many of city’s most famous buildings; instills appreciation for historical architecture among general public.

1954	<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> Supreme Court decision reverses locally originated 1896 <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> ruling on “separate but equal” public schools.	Sets legal stage for end of de jure segregation of schools and public accommodations in South. During next decade, Jim Crow gradually disappears from streetcars, buses, department stores, schools, housing, restaurants, and facilities, often accompanied by protests and tensions.
1954	Union Passenger Terminal opens near present-day Loyola Avenue.	New station unifies numerous passenger lines and leads to closing of turn-of-century stations located throughout city, including two picturesque structures near French Quarter.
1954-1962	Old River Control structure built to regulate flow among Mississippi, Red, and Atchafalaya rivers.	One of world’s great engineering projects ensures that Mississippi will not abandon channel and jump into Atchafalaya, leaving New Orleans on elevated brackish bay. Old River now allocates flow between Mississippi and Atchafalaya at government-approved seventy-thirty ratio.
1955-1956	Containerized shipping invented; first containerized ship launched.	Packing cargo into standardized containers, transferred to mass-production mode to trucks and trains, rapidly transforms world’s ports. Ends centuries-old longshoremen culture in port cities; alters geography of urban waterfronts. Port and city of New Orleans are deeply affected by new technology.
1955	Pontchartrain Park subdivision built in Lakeside Seabrook section of Ninth Ward.	First modern suburban-style development for city. New Orleans draws middle-class families, many of them black Creoles, out of historical neighborhoods. Move in east-lakeside section of parish. By end of century, black community generally occupies eastern half of metropolis, while whites gravitate toward western half. Pontchartrain Park’s curvilinear street network and golf course add distinctive signature to New Orleans map.
1956	Federal Aid Highway Act signed by President Eisenhower.	Historic effort to build interstate highway system eventually connects New Orleans to nation via I-10 and I-610 plus nearby I-12, I-55, and I-59. Interstates radically affect cityscape and urban geography of region.
1956	Causeway over Lake Pontchartrain opens; Belle Chasse and Harvey canals open on West Bank.	One of world’s longest causeways connects rural St. Tammany Parish with metropolitan Jefferson Parish, opening rural north shore to suburban expansion. Areas of tunnels improve transportation and development on West Bank.
1958	First Mississippi River Bridge built downtown.	Bridging of Mississippi opens up West Bank development; comes at expense of scores of historic structures in Lee Circle area.
1958-1968	Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet Canal excavated in St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes.	“Miss-Gulf” gives on-going traffic shorter alternate route to Port of New Orleans and helps develop Industrial Canal as new center of port activity. But seventy-five-mile long waterway causes coastal erosion and salt-water intrusion, requires constant dredging, and provides pathway for hurricane-induced storm surges to reach populated areas. Officials and public now propose its closure.
1959	After over one hundred years, City Hall and government offices relocated from historic Lafayette Square to new Durbin Plaza.	International-style office buildings, built atop recently demolished back-of-town neighborhood that includes Louis Armstrong’s birthplace, give city government more space and air of modernity. New complex allows for growth of city state, and federal government office district on expanded Loyola Avenue.
1959	Cuban revolution and ensuing political tensions isolate Caribbean nation from Western world.	New Orleans, chief shipping port to Batista-era Cuba, loses major trade partner and centuries-old tie to former Spanish colony. Many Cuban exiles settle in city and state, drawn in part by sugar industry. When U.S. loosens trade embargo in early 2000s, local ports resume handling significant share of exports to Cuba, indicating continuing relationship between city and island nation.
1960	New Orleans total population peaks at 627,525; black population 235,514 (37 percent). Suburban Jefferson Parish population grows from 103,873 in 1950 to 208,769 in 1960.	

Modern Era, 1960-2000s		
Year/s	Historical Event/Trend	Geographical Significance
1960-1961	Civil rights movement and court orders end de jure segregation in New Orleans.	Integration in process but now spurred by national efforts, movement in New Orleans comes to a head with initial integration of public schools. Ugly street protests garner national attention, but city generally avoids violence common in other Southern cities. Black Power movement begins to disappear from public facilities, effectively putting many integrated business owners out of business, particularly on South Rampart and Dryades streets. “White flight” begins in earnest, setting Orleans Parish in ongoing population decline.
1960s	Riverfront Expressway planned to connect bridge and CBD traffic with new I-10 via French Quarter, riverfront and Elysian Fields Avenue.	Bitterly controversial plan, originally recommended by Robert Moses after World War II, divides city over questions of progress and preservation. Finally cancelled in 1969, effort helps launch modern preservation movement in America.
1960s-1970s	Hispanic immigrants arrive to city in modern numbers.	Latin American immigrants, disproportionately from Cuba and Honduras, settle in working-class neighborhoods such as Irish Channel, Mid-City, and Ninth Ward. Today, most Hispanics live in Lower, Metairie, and Mid-City.
1960s	Petroleum industry rises; port economy mechanized.	Onshore and offshore oil brings outside investment and professionals to New Orleans; triggers construction of downtown skyscrapers and “Houstonization” of city. Containerization and shipping technology replaces many longshoremen and sailors; requires less waterfront space and frees up riverfront for recreational use. As oil industry rises, port-related employment declines.
1964	All remaining streetcars except historic St. Charles line are terminated.	Signifies nationwide switch from rail, buses and autos for urban transportation; transforms Canal Streetcar scene, once crowded with picturesque streetcars. Next twenty-five years mark low point in history of streetcars in city, but 1964 decision is later regretted and reversed at turn of twenty-first century.
1965	Hurricane Betsy strikes New Orleans region.	Category 3 storm and aftermath floods parts of Ninth Ward. Storm prompts construction of hurricane protection levees around marshy perimeter of city.
1966	Poydras Street widening.	Effort to compete with Houston and other ascendant Southern cities inspires redevelopment of Poydras Street as corporate corridor; numerous historic structures are razed on lower side of street. Plan foresees need for major traffic-generating anchors at each end of Poydras: Rivergate Exhibition Hall (1968) at river end, and Superdome (1975) at lake end.
1966	First modern skyscrapers erected.	Simultaneous erection of International Trade Mart and Plaza Tower symbolizes increasing oil-related wealth and new building technology. Project sites are selected to spark skyscraper development on Poydras and Loyola, respectively; Poydras ultimately prevails.
1967	Saints franchise brings professional football to New Orleans.	NFL team makes New Orleans “big league city,” mentioned in sports media in same breath as Dallas, Houston, Atlanta, and other competing cities. But small market, declining population, and low per capita income make city struggle to maintain “big league” perception. In early 2000s, Saints threaten to relocate to Mississippi Gulf Coast—unthinkable in earlier years.
1966-1974	Coast-to-coast I-10 constructed through New Orleans.	Major new infrastructure gives birth to modern metropolitan area; fosters middle-class exodus and suburban growth in eastward and westward directions. Also destroys forested neutral ground of North Claiborne Avenue (“main street of black Creole New Orleans”) and leads to decline of old ingresses/egresses, such as Airline Highway, Tulane Avenue, and Des Metteur Highway.

1968	Rivergate Exhibition Hall constructed at foot of Canal Street.	Bold freeform design transforms foot of Canal and Poydras streets; nurtures convention trade and spurs nearby development of skyscraper hotels on Canal Street in early 1970s.
1960s-1970s	Urban renewal project transforms Faubourg Tremé.	Seven blocks of historic Tremé leveled during 1956-1973, forcing relocation of over 1,000 residents, for Theater for Performing Arts and Louis Armstrong Center. Project regarded as misadventure by many today.
1968-1969	After holding steady at 40,000 annually since <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> (1954), white student enrollment at New Orleans public schools begins steady decline, while black enrollment doubles to 75,000.	White exodus to suburbs and entrenchment of black underclass in Orleans Parish eventually lead to de facto re-segregation of New Orleans public schools. System that was one-to-one black-to-white in 1957 became five-to-one by early 1980s and nineteen-to-one today.
1969	New hotels prohibited in French Quarter, in attempt to balance tourist and residential use.	Ban eventually encourages new hotel development on Canal Street and CBD. Attempt in 2004 to rezone parking lot on river side of North Poydras for new hotels may foretell eventual new construction in this area.
1969	Hurricane Camille strikes coastal Mississippi.	Category 5 hurricane devastates historic Gulf Coast. New Orleans is spared what might have been catastrophic disaster.
1970	New Orleans population reaches 593,471; black population 257,478 (43 percent).	
1970	Jazz and Heritage Festival held at present-day Congo Square.	Created by Massachusetts-born George Wein, “inventor” of the modern music festival, event grows into annual New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival (Jazz Fest), now second only to Mardi Gras in cultural tourism calendar and economy. Festival provides important venue for local musicians and helps instill “New Orleans sound” as essential part of American “roots” music. Performs similar service for Louisiana for event’s location at Fairgrounds on Gentilly Boulevard helps direct French Quarter-based visitors and expose them to non-tourist neighborhoods.
1971	Friends of the Cabildo publishes <i>New Orleans Architecture</i> , vol. 1, <i>The Lower Garden District</i> (Gretna, LA: American Publishing Company, 1971).	Landmark volume instills new appreciation for historic architecture outside French Quarter and Garden District; sets scholarly tone for local historical research and inspires modern preservation movement. Nomenclature and boundaries used in series (current eight volumes strong and growing) help revive historical place names and affect public’s perception of place.
1971-1972	Galvanized by construction of out-of-scale Christopher Hill Apartments and empowered by subsequent historic district zoning (first since Vieux Carré protection in 1936), residents found Faubourg Marigny Improvement Association.	Association participates in political process, with eye toward historic preservation, neighborhood improvement, and planning; inspires residents of other historic neighborhoods leading to both revitalization and gentrification. Old French term “faubourg” is revived in neighborhood nomenclature and adopted by real estate industry and press. Faubourg Marigny begins transforming from mostly working-class neighborhood of natives to professional-class neighborhood of transplants, many of whom are gay.
1972	One Shell Square built.	At 697 feet, resting on two-hundred-foot pilings, tallest structure in lower Mississippi Valley punctuates city skyline, symbolizing apex of 1970s oil boom.
1972	Last full-scale Mardi Gras parade rolls through French Quarter.	Increasingly elaborate Carnival celebrations, including new “super krewes” (starting 1969), create safety hazard in narrow streets of French Quarter. St. Charles Avenue becomes new route for most parades; French Quarter is left to inebriated revelry and lewdness. Neighborhood krewes gradually abandon their local parade routes and centralize along standard St. Charles route, even as parading tradition diffuses to suburbs and other cities. Beads and other “throws” grow in popularity, and now practically form a city industry. City’s Mardi Gras celebration enters modern age during 1970s, as major tourism-driven public event attracting nationwide audience.

1973	Second-worst Mississippi River flood on record threatens region.	Old River Control Structure is damaged and later enlarged; Bonnet Carré Spillway opened to relieve pressure on levees.
1973-1974	Curtis and Davis issues <i>New Orleans Housing and Neighborhood Preservation Study</i> .	Landmark study identifies and delineates sixty-two official city neighborhoods, based on historical perceptions, natural geographical barriers and major transportation arteries, social and economic patterns, and census tract boundaries. Effort alters perceptions of place, space, and neighborhood in city; marks modern era of city planning. Designation of national and local historic districts starting in 1970s furthers trend toward perceiving neighborhoods as discrete, bounded, officially named entities with mutually agreed upon characteristics.
1970s	French Market renovated.	Renovation transforms French Market from city marketplace vending foodstuffs to locals, to retail marketplace primarily selling trinkets to visitors.
1970s	Suburban-style residential development spreads eastward within Orleans Parish.	I-10, new port facilities, NASA Michoud plant, and suburban subdivisions make eastern New Orleans home real estate market, led by “New Orleans East” land development scheme.
1974	Preservation Resource Center founded; preservation movement gains seat at table of city’s decision-making process.	Local non-profit group injects preservationist and “livable city” philosophies into city discourse; becomes more influential group advocating adaptive reuse of historic structures and improvement of old neighborhoods.
1974	First “magnet schools” formed in New Orleans public school system.	With fifty-fifty black/non-white racial quota, magnet schools are designed to prevent further white flight. Relatively small number of white students tend to cluster in few high-achieving magnet schools, which today are the most racially integrated in city. Use of controversial quota ended in 1990 after protests; magnets now called “Citywide Access Schools.”
1975	Restriction imposed on demolition in CBD.	Years of demolition of nineteenth-century storehouses in CBD often for construction of petroleum-related skyscrapers or parking lots, raises concern of citizens and city government.
1975	Louisiana Superdome completed.	State-of-art domed stadium marks peak of city’s competition with oil-rich Houston; transforms skyline and breathes new life into CBD. Poydras Street booms with major attractions at each end and oil money invested in between. Superdome serves as venue for country’s high-profile events, publicizing city and contributes to nationwide audience on a regular basis.
Late 1970s	Vietnamese refugees arrive to New Orleans, on invitation of Catholic Church.	Archdiocese settles hundreds of mostly Catholic refugees from Communist Vietnam in Versailles apartments in eastern New Orleans and in spots on West Bank. Versailles settlement forms unique ethnic enclave, one of city’s most isolated and purest ethnic neighborhoods, known for elaborate mulch and market gardens and open-air Saturday market. Neighborhood functions as nerve center for Vietnamese community dispersed throughout central Gulf Coast region.
1976	Riverfront promenade “Moonwalk” opens in front of French Quarter.	Significant change of riverfront use from port activity to recreation, as containerization and Industrial Canal concentrate and relocate shipping facilities off riverfront.
Late 1970s	New suburban subdivisions in former Jefferson Parish backswamp encounter unwelcome new problem.	Absidence of recently drained hyaric soils causes structural damage to thousands of new ranch houses built on slabs; issue makes headlines throughout late 1970s particularly after some houses explode when gas lines break. Leads to new piling-based construction standards.
1977	City, now majority black for first time since 1830s, elects first black mayor, Ernest N. “Dutch” Morial, a descendent of Creoles of color (like many city leaders today). Mayor Morial serves from 1978 to 1986.	
1980	New Orleans population reaches 557,515; black population 308,119 (55 percent).	

1980s	Jefferson Parish population declines for first time.	Decline from 454,592 residents in 1980 to 448,306 in 1990 indicates New Orleans' suburbs struggle to keep population.
1980s	Cajun ethnic revival change New Orleans tourism.	Newfound appreciation of Cajun culture is exploited by French Quarter tourism venues; Cajun dishes, music, shops, and swamp tours become standard part of visitor experience. Chef Paul Prudhomme gains celebrity status in introducing national world to spiced-up Louisiana and New Orleans cuisine.
1980s	Floodwall erected along artificial levee.	High concrete wall affords additional protection from high river water but severs city's view and access to river.
1983-1984	Worldwide oil crash hits city.	Devastates Gulf Coast economy; costs New Orleans thousands of white-collar jobs in subsequent years. Dark era of job loss, middle-class exodus, and increasing crime rates endures until mid-1990s.
1984	Louisiana World Exposition held along present-day Convention Center Boulevard on hundredth anniversary of World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition at Audubon Park.	Like its predecessor, "World's Fair" fails financially but helps launch economic development in downtown and reintroduces citizens to riverfront. Historic "Warehouse District" revitalized into convention, residential condominium, and mixed district in subsequent years, as former fair structures are later converted into J. Edgar Hoover Convention Center and dramatically expanded to over one million square feet. Residential population of CBD/Warehouse District climbs from under one hundred in 1980 to over 1,300 in 2000.
Mid-1980s	House-developed "festival marketplaces" open on riverfront.	Jax Brewery and RiverWalk marketplace first recreational/retail use of riverfront, once reserved for maritime use. New Riverfront streetcar line (1988), first new line since 1964, connects French Quarter with new festival marketplaces.
1985-1986	New Orleans East land development company, poised to develop over 20,000 acres of wetlands in eastern Orleans Parish, fails amid oil bust. Land transferred to federal government; becomes Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge.	Demise of New Orleans East derails 1960s vision to grow city in eastward direction. Those eastern suburbs built in 1960s and 1970s and occupied by whites begin to change in 1980s and 1990s to middle-class and working-class black neighborhoods, often comprising multi-family housing in duplexes. Creation of Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge within city limits reflects concern for natural environment and new appreciation of marshes and wetlands, once considered undesirable "backswamp."
1980s-1990s	Numerous generation-old downtown institutions close.	Holmes Krauss, Maison Blanche, Godchaux's, Kolb's, and other old department stores and restaurants close doors, due to middle-class exodus, growth of suburbs, and rise of tourism. Buildings often converted to hotels for new tourism economy.
1987	Pope John Paul II visits city.	Papal visit reaffirms New Orleans' place among nation's great Catholic population centers; draws worldwide attention to city's large Catholic African American population.
1987	<i>The Big Easy</i> released.	Movie popularizes vulgar new nickname for city, first introduced in 1970s and now more prevalent than historic "Crescent City" moniker. Loaded with clichés and stereotypes, <i>The Big Easy</i> portrays New Orleans as eccentric Cajun outposts obsessed with food and festivity; helps stoke tourism boom of 1990s.
1989	CNC tower constructed next to Superdome.	Three years after erection of first modern high-rises, New Orleans' last skyscraper to date (now named Dominion Tower) symbolizes declining petroleum-related wealth. Sixteen years later, following economic shift toward tourism in 1990s, a seven-hundred-foot-high tower is proposed for Poydras Street—but for condominiums and hotel rooms, not offices.
1990	New Orleans population reaches 496,322.	Black population 307,728 (62 percent).
1990-1991	Coastal restoration efforts begin in earnest.	Coastal Wetlands Planning and Protection Act ("Breux Act") brings federal funds to Louisiana for coastal restoration; Caernarvon Freshwater Diversion opens below city, first major effort to reverse salt-water intrusion and rebuild wetlands around New Orleans.

Early 1990s	Race relations deteriorate during troubled economic times. Tensions are a product of gubernatorial candidacy of former Klansman David Duke, Mardi Gras krewe integration controversies, protests at Liberty Place monument on Canal Street, and record-high crime. Problems exacerbated by tension between decline of oil industry and rise in tourism/service economy.
1990s	Formosan termite infestations explode across city, region. Invasive termites, accidentally imported on shipping palettes from East Asia during World War II, threaten housing stock, particularly historic structures, and urban trees; cost city hundreds of millions of dollars annually in control and damage costs. Threat leads to increased use of steel and aluminum in new construction and renovation of historic structures.
1990s-2000s	Old churches close for lack of congregations. Declining population and exodus of families force Archdiocese to close or reduce services at numerous historic churches, some of which are converted to homes for aged. Various elements of cityscape fall silent as young, secular transplants move into historic neighborhoods.
Circa 1995	“Renaissance” begins. Worst of local recession passes; national economy heats up, convention and tourist traffic increases, and crime rates begin to drop after 1994 peak. But damage is done: white-collar petroleum jobs retreat to Houston; blue-collar port jobs largely replaced by automation. New Orleans becomes a service economy.
1995	May 8 storm dumps up to eighteen inches of rainfall on metropolitan area; some areas get twelve inches in single hour. City’s worst rainfall flood: 1,000 homes and businesses and causes \$761 million in damage throughout twelve-parish area; leads to half-billion dollars of mostly federal funds for new drainage projects. New Orleans increases pumping capacity from three inches of rain every five hours to five inches in five hours, with new pumps, canals, culverts, and backup generator.
1995	Anti-protests, architecturally significant Antigone Exhibition Hall demolished for Harrah’s Casino at foot of Canal Street. Casino, opened in 1999 after turbulent construction period, is predicted to transform downtown, but eventually settles into more niche between traditional French Quarter tourism and new Warehouse District convention trade. Gambling in New Orleans falls well short of extuberant expectations of early 1990s, indicating that visitors are more interested in enjoying city’s unique attractions.
1996	Vessel collides with Pierwalk Mall. <i>Brightfield</i> incident causes no fatalities but demonstrates risk of converting riverside shipping wharves to public recreational uses.
Early 1990s, early 2000s	Hotel boom transforms downtown. Hotel capacity, mostly in CBD and Warehouse District, skyrockets to 33,000 rooms to accommodate millions of annual visitors. Numerous historic structures in CBD and Warehouse District are remodeled into “boutique hotels.”
Late 1990s, early 2000s	Scientific community and popular press bring coastal erosion issue to public attention. Increasing numbers of New Orleanians begin to understand connections between river, coastal wetlands, and city’s sustainability; grapple with notion of city’s possible mortality. Public perception of new threat recalls earlier generations’ experience with flooding, yellow fever, and other environmental threats.
1998	City narrowly averts direct hit from Hurricane Georges. Reminder of inevitability of “Big One” storm teaches lessons on hurricane evacuation planning and street flooding in Mid-City area.
1999-2005	Span of six years, dominant player in city’s grocery market shifts from Schwegmann’s to Winn-Dixie to Wal-Mart. Change reflects shift in city’s business sector from locally owned companies to regional and global firms. Though local enterprises remain common, they comprise diminishing percent of citywide economy. Trend shows increasing influence of national culture in local city life.
2000	New Orleans population reaches 484,674; black population 325,000 (67 percent). 2000 Census finds that metropolitan area’s most ethnically diverse census tract is located in Fat City in suburban Metairie, while least diverse tract is in inner-city lower Ninth Ward—exact opposite of earlier times.

2000	D-Day Museum opens June 10.	Creates critical mass of museums near Lee Circle; district now comprises expanded D-Day Museum, and Confederate museums, Contemporary Arts Center and Julia Street art galleries. Planned augmentation of D-Day Museum promises to make New Orleans nation's "World War II museum."
Early 2000s	Project HOPE entails demolition of some Depression-era housing projects, replacing them with mixed-income housing, some subsidized, some market-rate.	Federal government initiates crisis in city's public-housing program; Desire, St. Thomas, and other housing projects are demolished, to tears of some displaced residents and cheers of some who view them as incubators of poverty and crime. Relocated families carry elements of inner-city "Projects culture" to Eastern suburbs, Seventh Ward, and other neighborhoods. New construction, exhibiting historical architectural styles, begins on Project sites, including Wal-Mart (2004) on former St. Thomas site. Wal-Mart is subject of local controversy involving issues of preservation, gentrification, race, jobs, corporate subsidies, and new tax-increment financing (TIF) idea.
Early 2000s	Quantity of downtown condominiums grows.	Triggers conversion of numerous historical structures and proposals for new Sunbelt-style condominium towers including one (2004) foreseen as city's tallest building, at seven hundred feet. Out-of-town buyers help drive up local real-estate prices and intensify gentrification pressure on adjacent neighborhoods. If trend continues, small demographic of older, wealthier, out-of-state, part-time residents (already present in French Quarter) may grow substantially, and skyline may change with new high-rises.
2001-2002	Lower Garden District riverfront sees radical landscape transformation.	Saulet apartment complex, re-engineering of Tchoupitoulas and Religious streets, new Wal-Mart and River Garden development renovation and demolition of old warehouses, planned Morisy Convention Center expansion, and planned construction of Tulane RiverSpine make area one of nation's most radically transformed inner-city riverfronts. Projects reflect city's ongoing "rediscovery" of river.
2001	Terrorists attack American targets.	Ensuing homeland-security efforts view New Orleans as "top ten" potential target, for its ports, petroleum facilities, and major public events. New security measures enacted in port, affecting riverfront development plans.
2000	New Orleans population drops to Depression-era level of 469,012, representing loss of over 15,000 since 2000 (greater drop than during entire decade of 1990s). Fastest-growing parish in region is St. Tammany on north shore, which surpasses 200,000 for first time.	
2003	Tourists spend over \$4 billion/year in Orleans parish, generating over 61,000 jobs. Visitors to New Orleans accounted for 44 percent of state's tourism economy.	
2003	Two hundredth anniversary of Louisiana Purchase celebrated December 20 in front of Capitol site of original formal transfer of Louisiana from Spain to France to United States.	Visions of city's greatness from early 1800s fall with declining relative importance of waterborne transportation in America. Once strategically located at sole ingress/egress to North American interior, city now competes with innumerable transportation options. Loss of industrial development, relative isolation, Civil War, over-reliance on river (and later oil), social problems, and other factors exacerbate city's woes. Poor, undereducated, physically vulnerable, and losing population, city relies increasingly on selling its past to visitors.
2004	New Orleans population declines to 462,269, barely ahead of Jefferson Parish's 453,590. City proper now home to only 35 percent of seven-parish metropolitan area population, down from around 80 percent a century earlier.	

2004	Streetcar lines return, after recent decline following World War II and termination of Canal Street lines in 1960.	Success of 1988 Riverfront line inspires reintroduction of streetcars to city's transportation system. Major new routes installed on Canal Street (starting 1991) and Carrollton Avenue, designed to circulate tourists through city as well as foster rail commuting. Much-anticipated Canal line opens in April 2004 and succeeds in invigorating Mid-City businesses. Additional lines foreseen for other areas; may serve as arteries fueling neighborhood restoration.
2004	State-of-art containerized shipping facility opens at Napoleon Avenue wharf.	Major new containerized facility on Mississippi River, coupled with environmental problems on MR-GO and bottleneck lock at Industrial Canal, returns river to position of prominence in local port industry. Opposite was foreseen in 1970s when "Centroport" was planned for MR-GO/Industrial Canal. New uptown facility also concentrates port activity and frees up antiquated downtown wharves for other uses.
2004	Category 4 Hurricane Ivan spares city but states coastal dilemma.	New "contraflow" plan, devised after Hurricane Georges in 1998, opens up incoming interstate lanes to outgoing evacuees. Horrendous traffic jams lead to refinement of evacuation planning. Close call brings additional attention to urgency of coastal restoration.
2004-2005	City holds "riverfront charrette" to gather ideas for new land uses from Poland to Jackson Avenue.	With port activity now concentrated in uptown containerization facilities, city and developers abandon old wharves for replacement with recreational/tourist use of downtown riverfront. Plan emerges in which Port of New Orleans relinquishes its maritime servitude of riverfront to city in exchange for percentage of land sales and leases. If enacted, agreement would open up over four miles of riverfront, from Bywater to Lower Garden District, for massive redevelopment, mostly for recreational use.
2005	Stratagon recommends closure of Naval Support Activity in Algiers and Bywater.	Twin locations straddling Mississippi made sense for Navy when installation was created, but prove to be costly obstacle in modern times. City's loss of up to 2,700 jobs may be mitigated by growth of Naval Air Station in Belle Chasse and creation of "federal city," cruise terminal and other facilities and amenities in vacated riverfront properties.
2005	New "contraflow" evacuation plan unveiled.	With erosion, waves subsiding, sea level rising and memories of hurricanes Georges and Ivan still fresh, local officials and port officials treat hurricane evacuation planning with paramount importance. New "contraflow plan" involves evacuating most vulnerable areas first by diverting out-bound traffic onto in-bound lanes at four complex intersections, giving evacuees six different escape routes to safety.
2005	Effort to officially recognize and promote "Greater New Orleans Biosciences Economic Development District" gains momentum.	Concept exploits geographical cluster of hospitals and medical facilities along Tulane Avenue to diversify economy with biomedical research and technology jobs. District location is traceable to siting of Charity Hospital here in 1837.
August 23, 2005	Low pressure system develops over southeastern Bahamas; loop current brings warm subsurface waters from Caribbean into Gulf of Mexico, where surface temperatures hit 90 degrees.	Tropical Depression 12 becomes Category 1 Hurricane Katrina; makes landfall near Miami on August 25 and enters gulf, where warm waters fuel increasing wind speeds.
August 27-28, 2005	Hurricane Katrina strengthens to Category 3, 4, then 5; forecast tracks edge westward, then stabilize on New Orleans-area strike.	City and region prepare for storm: residents board up homes and businesses; officials close levee walls and activate "contraflow" system; hundreds of thousands of residents evacuate. Those who will not or can not—around 100,000—remain home or take refuge in Superdome. Initial shelter bands arrive as last day of pre-Katrina New Orleans draws to close.

<p>August 29, 2005</p>	<p>Hurricane Katrina, with Category 4 winds and a residual Category 5 storm surge, makes landfall at dawn in Plaquemine Parish and passes immediately east of New Orleans and makes second landfall around 1 p.m. along Louisiana/Mississippi border.</p>	<p>City endures fiercest winds between 8 and 10 a.m., causing extensive structural damage. Surge raises gulf levels by ten to thirty feet and lake levels by nine feet, swaging coastal areas to east. Lakefront levees endure pressure but weaker canal levees start to give. When winds die down late afternoon, most people surmise that city “dodged bullet.” Unbeknownst to most, water breaches 17th Street Canal and Industrial Canal levees and starts to fill topographic bowl.</p>
<p>August 30-September 4, 2005</p>	<p>Rising deluge from multiple levee breaches turns windy disaster of Katrina into watery catastrophe of unprecedented proportions. Filthy floodwaters engulf entire neighborhoods. Thousands of residents, mostly poor and black, are trapped on rooftops of Superdome and Convention Center, with no food or water. Looting, shooting, and fire break out citywide. Confused, delayed federal response exacerbates effects. Inadequate planning at state and local levels. Snowing physical and social disintegration of New Orleans. Crisis news stories worldwide for days and weeks. Supplies, buses, and troops finally arrive by weekend, bringing chaos under control and even saving remaining thousands of refugees. One week after Katrina, city’s population drops to French colonial era levels in some neighborhoods, dead outnumber living. By early 2006, death toll stands at 1,071 Louisianians, 277 Mississippians, and eighteen from Florida, Alabama, and Georgia.</p>	
<p>September 2005</p>	<p>With hundreds of thousands of citizens of southeastern Louisiana and coastal Mississippi scattered nationwide, “ghost city” of New Orleans begins long, slow process of recovery. Waters are pumped out faster than expected, electricity returns to selected areas, and some residents return at end of month, even as rescue squads discover more dead. Damage to historic district on high natural levee is mostly wind-driven and repairable; water-caused damage to twentieth-century neighborhoods near lake and eastward into St. Bernard Parish is utterly devastating.</p>	
<p>September 23-24, 2005</p>	<p>Second “storm of century” in one month, Hurricane Rita strikes Louisiana border region, destroying communities in southwestern Louisiana and raising gulf and lake levels again in New Orleans area.</p>	<p>Hastily repaired levees of London Avenue and Industrial canals breach again, re-flooding parts of Ninth Ward and adjacent areas. Communities in western Louisiana suffer similar degree of destruction seen east during Katrina. Nearly half of Louisiana population is directly affected by storms; economy and infrastructure is in shambles.</p>
<p>Early Autumn 2005</p>	<p>Colossal issues await decisions at every level, from individuals and families to businesses and institutions, city, state, and federal governments. Who will return, when and where? Will businesses and employment follow? Should low-lying neighborhoods be rebuilt? Who sits at a table to decide? What should the new neighborhoods look like? How should the city and region be protected from future storms? How will Katrina and Rita affect coastal restoration plans?</p>	
<p>January 2006</p>	<p>City struggles to reassemble as citizens grapple with decision to return, remain in FEMA-funded evacuation sites, or leave forever. Committees at local and state levels congregate to devise plans for city’s future. Scores of public meetings convene throughout city and region to discuss and debate ideas.</p> <p>Orleans Parish population during mid-autumn doubles to locally 144,000 after Christmas, as families return during school break. City exudes atmosphere of frontier town, with small population, high male-to-female ratio, extremely few children, large out-of-town workforce, ubiquitous military presence, curfews, and lots of cash circulating. Whites outnumber blacks substantially; lower economic classes are nearly absent, while Hispanic migrant workers arrive in large numbers and convene daily at Lee Circle to await laborer jobs. Locally owned businesses return at much faster pace than national chains; Magazine Street becomes city’s “main street” as locals outnumber tourists in French Quarter, which suffers financially because of cancellation of all conventions. With criminal class evacuated, once vibrant city becomes one of poorest in nation, while crime rates in some host cities increase. Compelling rebuilding question draws passionate debate: should city abandon badly damaged eastern and lakefront subdivisions and rebuild primarily on higher ground, in expectation of smaller population? Or should city maintain antediluvian urban footprint under philosophy that planning for population shrinkage will only guarantee disaster? Despite heroic progress in clean-up and repair, New Orleans remains two cities divided topographically: higher areas near river bustling with activity; lower areas near lake remain dark, empty, and devastated.</p>	

<p>January 2006</p>	<p>“Bring New Orleans Back Commission” unveils initial recommendations for consideration by Mayor Ray Nagin, state’s Louisiana Recovery Authority, federal officials, and public.</p> <p>“Action Plan for New Orleans: The New American City” recommends moratorium on rebuilding in heavily damaged low-lying areas, delineates sixteen planning districts and suggests forming neighborhood associations within each. Associations must demonstrate that at least half of households will return by May, else neighborhood would be bought out with federal help and converted to park or commercial zone. Plan also recommends “Crescent City Recovery Corporation” to oversee rebuilding, at expense of city government’s authority. Proposals for light rail line, bike trails, and parks are practically lost amid public response to potential neighborhood closures, which ranges from outrage to reluctant support. Charges of racism, red-lining, land-grabbing, and ethnic cleansing fly from plan opponents, while supporters speak of safety, reality, and pragmatism.</p> <p>Public and environmental response to plan will determine future geographies of New Orleans.</p>
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