



New Orleans Community Leaders Address Affordable Housing Challenges

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Ten years after Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath damaged or destroyed well over a quarter-million homes in New Orleans, affordable housing continues to be a critical need as well a key component of the city's ongoing recovery. Several hurdles remain, however, including the high cost of residential home insurance and the lack of financing.

In 2014, recognizing the challenges, New Orleans housing officials and community leaders worked together to create [HousingNOLA](#), a community-inspired 10-year housing plan. Outlining specific policy, program, and partnership needs, the plan aims to preserve existing housing and expand the total supply of affordable rental and homeownership opportunities throughout the city.

HousingNOLA was the topic of a forum held at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's New Orleans Branch on March 4, 2016. The forum drew policymakers, community leaders, and lenders to discuss how New Orleans can employ best practices in financing to help increase affordable housing rehabilitation and development.

The Atlanta Fed's First Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Marie Gooding, opened the meeting, noting that one of the Fed's objectives is to focus on economic development solutions in low- and moderate-income communities. David Jackson, a visiting community and economic development adviser with the Atlanta Fed's Community and Economic Development team, led the discussion along with senior community and economic development adviser Will Lambe, also of the Atlanta Fed. Jackson specializes in affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization, while Lambe focuses on community development finance.

"The focus of the meeting was not just to tell the story of how many housing units were needed in New Orleans, but also to discuss how much lending would be needed to meet the demand," Jackson said. "For example, over the next few years, approximately one billion dollars of lending will be needed to develop or rehabilitate homes to satisfy New Orleans' housing needs."

This New Orleans forum was a continuation of a series of discussions with experts organized by the Atlanta Fed in [Nashville](#) and [Atlanta](#), as well as an earlier meeting in [New Orleans](#) in 2015.



Looking Ahead: Defining Solutions

Several working groups were formed during the meeting. One will identify ways to mitigate the impact of costly housing insurance. Another will explore lending consortiums and other innovative lending models, as well as ways that government funds might be used to make development loans more accessible and affordable. A third working group will explore best practices and new opportunities for improving the homeownership counseling delivery system.

Each of the working groups has members from banking, government, and nonprofit organizations, ensuring input from a broad spectrum of the community.

Editor's note: In an [August 2015 article](#), [Economy Matters](#) recognized the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and discussed the issue of affordable housing.



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