This time we must.
Forward New Orleans

INTRODUCTION

For New Orleans to become a world-class city, and for the region and State to progress, we must overcome critical challenges. 

*Forward New Orleans* provides a mandate to city leadership on the most significant of those challenges. This document was created by more than 30 civic, neighborhood and business organizations that represent the diverse landscape of New Orleans. These organizations are unified in expecting city leaders to manage toward, and strive for, excellence in city government.

The citizen movement – through grass-roots efforts – has established the foundation for continued recovery and reform. We note accomplishments with levee boards, assessor, public education, the Inspector General’s office, the independent Police Monitor, and the Master Plan. However, citizens await a partnership with city government that captures their goals and translates them into action and results. *Forward New Orleans* will be used to educate voters on whether candidates are prepared to enter into that partnership.

Every candidate for Mayor and City Council will be given the opportunity to review and discuss *Forward New Orleans* in an interview format. We will ask each candidate for a written pledge to fulfill each mandate, and then publicize a “scorecard” that enables voters to easily assess each candidate’s position on a particular issue. After the first 100 days in office, we will hold accountability forums with elected officials who pledged support for one or more of the mandates during their campaigns; periodic reassessment will follow.

REFORM PRINCIPLES

*Forward New Orleans* imposes an overriding requirement of redirecting city government toward reform. It embodies the cornerstones of all effective government: accountability, transparency, efficiency and the appropriate exercise of fiduciary responsibility. We want our elected officials to be committed to these principles. They must embrace national best practices, peer-city benchmarking, and performance metrics; and, they must allow these objective criteria to drive major decisions. They must be aligned with the citizens in searching for better ways of conducting city business, and have the courage to introduce and defend reform measures. They must believe in full candor, and have zero-tolerance for self-interest, dishonesty, and political gamesmanship. They must exhibit careful, deliberate leadership that improves local morale and public perception, and unites all New Orleanians in their common hope for a better quality of life.

We ask that you join us in presenting *Forward New Orleans* as the collective will of the citizens, and allow it to inform your vote. We ask you to require each candidate to demonstrate the clear ability to accomplish the *Forward New Orleans* mandates. This time we must be certain elected officials are aligned with principled reform. This time we must: move our New Orleans forward.
An effective and fair local criminal justice system requires competence and integrity in all agencies, and requires that all agencies interface effectively. This includes the Police Department, the District Attorney’s Office, the Office of Public Defender, the Criminal Sheriff, the Clerk of Court, and the Judiciary. Each is indispensable to a healthy criminal justice system. The New Orleans criminal justice system also requires adequate funding and facilities, prioritization of violent crime, and public trust deriving from transparency, accountability, and the engagement of citizens.

To achieve systemic competence and public safety, city officials must implement best practices and be publicly accountable for the outcome. Accordingly, city officials must:

**LEADERSHIP MANDATES**

**Funding and Transparency.** Ensure adequate funding in regular budget cycles to support infrastructure and operations for all elements of the local justice system, both juvenile and adult. Provide full financial and performance audits on all agencies of the local criminal justice system to the city administration, City Council and the public.

**Facilities and Technology.** Promptly complete rebuilding, equipping and upgrading of permanent offices to enable law enforcement officials to work more effectively. Implement proven technologies, including integrated information systems and electronic monitoring, to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

“Use neighborhood policing with the training and accountability metrics needed to build public trust.”

**Strategies Against Violent Crime.** Define strategies and prioritize resources to investigate, arrest and prosecute those involved in violent crime.

**Arrest, Charging and Incarceration Policies.** Concentrate arrests on those believed to pose a threat to public safety. Reduce the number and length of incarcerations in connection with minor offenses. Use alternate strategies such as summonses, pre-trial diversion, expedited charging, and proven release/supervision practices. Use proven diversionary programs
such as drug courts, drug rehab, and mental health treatment. Use neighborhood policing with the training and accountability metrics needed to build public trust.

**Right-Sizing Jail Facilities.**
Build, maintain and staff parish jail facilities to accommodate an appropriately sized population based on the above strategies and practices for combating violent crime.

**Juvenile Justice Initiatives.**
Emphasize the prevention of adult and juvenile violent crime through improved juvenile justice initiatives consistent with national juvenile justice research and demonstrated best practices.

**Performance Measurement and Public Disclosure.**
Define and publicly disclose strategies, performance metrics, and conduct, integrity and efficiency standards to improve effectiveness and restore public confidence in the local criminal justice system.

**National Search for Police Chief.**
Create a small, diverse and apolitical committee that will advise and support the Mayor in a national search process for Police Chief. Include representatives from the Crime Coalition on the committee.

**Engagement and Civic Support.**
Work with and enlist support of civic leaders and organizations engaged in criminal justice initiatives, including: the New Orleans Crime Coalition, the Metropolitan Crime Commission, the Police and Justice Foundation, Baptist Community Ministries, CrimeStoppers, Citizens for 1 Criminal Justice Reform Committee, and CourtWatch NOLA.

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**FORWARD New Orleans**

**Crime Issue Coalition Partners**

- After School Partnership
- Beacon of Hope
- Bridge House
- Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region
- Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans
- Common Good
- Court Watch NOLA
- CrimeStoppers
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana
- Idea Village
- Living Witness Ministries
- Metropolitan Crime Commission
- New Orleans Chamber of Commerce
- New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau
- New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation
- Puentes, Inc.
- Touro Synagogue
- Urban League of Greater New Orleans
- Young Leadership Council
Even before Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans’ blighted properties far exceeded reasonable tolerance. Today, New Orleans leads the nation in blighted properties with over 60,000 blighted structures.

Blighted properties present a significant obstacle to economic growth. They broadcast a lack of respect and responsibility by property owners and the inability of our local government to manage the problem to resolution.

Citizens insist on the restoration of blighted properties to improve the quality of life for all citizens and build confidence that our community can be an attractive place to live and work. Accordingly, city officials must:

**LEADERSHIP MANDATES**

**Strategic Plan.**
Within the first 60 days of office, formulate and begin implementation of a comprehensive strategic plan for blight eradication that incorporates code enforcement best practices, short and long term goals, and objective benchmarks city officials and employees shall be required to achieve. Publish the strategic plan and maintain it as publicly accessible. Designate a member of the mayor's cabinet as accountable for the efficient execution of the strategic plan.

**Public Policy.**
Establish and promulgate as public policy an aggressive code enforcement stance against blight with the clear expectation of citizen compliance and accountability, and consequences for noncompliance, including the collection of fines and code lien auctions.

**Integration of Enforcement Departments.**
Integrate and streamline property inspection and enforcement departments and administrative hearing procedures so all categories of property violations, i.e. public health, housing, environmental, public nuisance, and fire, can be cited and enforced within one process.

**Inspection and Enforcement Capacity.**
Increase inspection and enforcement capacity with regard to the number of inspectors, hearing facilitators, and hearing officers to ensure that, consistent with an aggressive strategic plan, code enforcement can receive and process significantly more cases.
Fines and Self-Funding.
Impose and efficiently collect fines, penalties, and hearing costs and fees for code violations and deposit them into the “New Orleans Neighborhood Revitalization Fund,” which is a revolving fund authorized by Section 28-54 of the City Code. Build a self-funded code enforcement department, increase the financial resources and capacity, and eliminate improper reliance on federal grant (HUD) monies currently used in large part, to fund code enforcement.

“Establish and promulgate as public policy an aggressive code enforcement stance against blight with the clear expectation of citizen compliance and accountability.”

Neighborhood-Based Code Enforcement.
Designate a Neighborhood Coordinator within code enforcement to enable neighborhood-based code enforcement through systematic and ongoing collaboration with neighborhood organizations. Facilitate neighborhood monitoring of enforcement actions against high-priority properties. Require the Neighborhood Coordinator to furnish a quarterly report on the status and progress of enforcement actions within the respective neighborhoods.

GIS System.
Use the citywide GIS (Geographic Information System) to map and track progress of code enforcement and other anti-blight programs. Coordinate and overlay geographic information from other departments, specifically including the police department and assessors office, and thereby ensure the efficient and accurate cross-departmental exchange of information on high-priority properties. Open this information to citizens to encourage awareness and monitoring.

Law Enforcement Integration.
Integrate law enforcement into anti-blight strategy to prioritize enforcement against crime-prone blighted properties. Facilitate enforcement with police participation, where necessary.

Agency Collaboration.
Require systematic and ongoing collaboration between code enforcement and the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) to create efficiencies and eliminate redundancies (particularly in property acquisition). Harmonize code enforcement strategies with NORA’s redevelopment, land assembly and disposition objectives.

Rehabilitation Incentives.
Establish incentives for citizen/developer purchase of blighted properties including, for example, a code enforcement fast-track for those properties identified for private-party purchase; the city’s waiver of existing liens that serve as obstacles to market interest in code lien auctions; and code lien auctions of blighted properties with an extremely low reserve for qualified buyers in recognition of the longer-term benefits of returning blighted properties to commerce.

FORWARD New Orleans

Blight Issue Coalition Partners
- After School Partnership
- Beacon of Hope
- Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region
- Broadmoor Improvement Association
- Carrollton/Riverbend Neighborhood Association
- Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans
- Committee for a Better New Orleans Metropolitan Area Committee
- Common Good
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana
- Idea Village
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation
- Neighborhoods Partnership Network
- Neighborhood Development Foundation
- New Orleans Chamber of Commerce
- New Orleans Neighborhood Development Collaborative
- New Orleans Vacant Property Initiative
- Neighborhood Housing Services
- Urban League of Greater New Orleans
- Vieux Carre Property Owners, Residents and Associates
- Young Leadership Council
New Orleans continues to face serious financial problems. The city must use its limited resources, first and foremost, on essential services and ensure that every service is competitively and effectively delivered. Our current budget process is inadequate to achieve this. The city must adopt best practices for municipal budgeting and financial management. Accordingly, city officials must:

**LEADERSHIP MANDATES**

**Budgeting for Outcomes.**
Utilize a Budgeting for Outcomes process. Abide by the actual process, which promotes inclusion, solicits input from outside of city government, determines citizens’ priorities, focuses resources on prioritized objectives, and monitors performance and results. Abandon practice of budgeting based on prior years.

**Special Revenue Funds.**
Budget within the limits of recurring revenue. Stop using special revenue funds for the budget deficit.

**Collaboration between Mayor and City Council.**
Share the administration’s draft departmental budgets with the City Council as soon as these budgets are drafted (months in advance of the year-end deadline). Involve the Council throughout the entire budget process. Require collaborative approach between the administration and the Council to ensure that the budget fairly includes the objectives of the executive and legislative branches.

“Utilize a Budgeting for Outcomes process.”

**Performance Measurements and Accountability: Operations.**
Institute a systematic process for monitoring departmental performance and holding people and departments accountable for results. Publish a quarterly efficiency dashboard for each department that includes performance goals and objective measurements of
Performance Measurements and Accountability: City Contractors.
Institute a systematic process for monitoring city contractors’ performance and holding them accountable for results. Where permissible, withhold payment from contractors who fail to perform timely or in compliance with contract specifications, and cancel and re-bid contracts with repeated performance problems or improper deviation from peer-city benchmarks. Ensure that all new contracts afford the city these rights. Publish a quarterly listing of all city contracts and a performance scorecard that includes contract performance timelines and objective measurements of contractors’ performance; the scorecard will not include subjective or qualitative information.

Peer Cities Benchmarking.
Benchmark current operations and their costs with comparable, peer cities. Ensure operations are at least in line with peer cities. Where outliers exist, undertake further analysis to determine why and whether they require corrective action.

Right-Sizing City Government.
Right-size city operations, salaries and benefits for current and future population levels and realistic tax revenue projections.

Elimination of Wasteful Spending.
Eliminate patronage and excessive spending. Ensure all services are competitively and effectively bid and delivered.
Immediately after assuming office, the Mayor must execute the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) for the New Orleans Economic Development Council (NOEDC). The CEA results from collaborative efforts of a diverse group of citizens (or business organizations), known as the PPP Coalition, to bring together the public and private sectors to create a public-private partnership for economic development based upon the best practices of successful cities nationwide.

City officials must support creation of the NOEDC and the execution of its mission. Further, city officials must commit to think broadly in terms of economic development, including regional collaboration to support key economic engines and consideration of the economic impact of revitalizing the airport to integrate it into economic growth strategies.

**LEADERSHIP MANDATES**

**Creation of the NOEDC.**
Execute immediately the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement authorizing the creation of the NOEDC.

**Funding for the NOEDC.**
Ensure appropriate and stable public sector funding for the NOEDC.

**Permitting and Licensing.**
Implement best practices for permitting and licensing to eliminate inefficiencies, improve convenience, and make New Orleans business-friendly for new and existing businesses.

**Financial Incentives and Programs.**
Standardize financial incentives and programs, such as tax abatements, divestiture, and minority participation requirements so that programs are available to all who qualify.

Eliminate ad hoc and inconsistent determinations driven by politics and special interest.

**Disadvantaged and Local Businesses.**
Provide comprehensive support and a robust compliance effort on behalf of Disadvantaged Business Entities and Local Business Enterprises.

“City officials must support the creation of the New Orleans Economic Development Council and the execution of its mission.”

Armstrong Airport.
Support the Southeast Regional Aviation Authority (SERA) and
the Aviation Board in the ongoing initiative to create a vision for the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. Consider all options to make highest use of city assets and improve quality, effectiveness, and regional outreach of the airport.

**Economic Engines.** Prioritize the region’s economic growth, through support of key economic engines, and thereby maximize job and wealth creation. Actively support, and move expeditiously to satisfy preconditions for, the promising vision of a competitive biomedical corridor for the New Orleans region. Facilitate the Port of New Orleans’ efforts to improve regional and global competitive standing. Encourage oil and gas companies to remain in New Orleans, and recruit others to come. Safeguard and support our tourism industry.

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**FORWARD New Orleans**

**Economic Development Issue Coalition Partners**

- After School Partnership
- Beacon of Hope
- Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region
- Citizens for a Greater New Orleans
- Common Good
- Greater New Orleans, Inc.
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana
- Horizon Initiative
- Idea Village
- New Orleans Board of Trade
- New Orleans Chamber of Commerce
- New Orleans Regional Black Chamber of Commerce
- Urban League of Greater New Orleans
- Young Leadership Council
Public infrastructure is a determinant of economic growth, and enables the delivery of city services. New Orleans’ infrastructure historically has suffered from under-investment and poor management. City officials now must rise to the challenge of rehabilitating aged and storm-damaged infrastructure and planning against future decline.

The primary function of city government is to provide basic services. Poor delivery of city services undermines a community’s quality of life, its attractiveness and, ultimately, its long-term viability. The citizenry expects fully functioning and reliable infrastructure and city services. Accordingly, city officials must:

**LEADERSHIP MANDATES**

**Financial and Strategic Planning.** Develop realistic and workable multi-year financial and strategic plans for aging and declining infrastructure, including streets, sewerage and water systems, and capital projects. Prioritize critical infrastructure needs for maintenance, repair and replacement based on clear, objective criteria and realistic revenue projections.

**Fiscal Responsibility.** Ensure cost-efficiency and highest return on investment for contract performance and delivery of city services. Award contracts transparently, based on objective criteria. Prohibit patronage and favoritism. Institute accountability measures. Benchmark operations to U.S. peer cities. Where permissible, re-bid contracts for substandard performance or improper deviation from average peer group per capita cost. Reevaluate expensive outsourcing of project management and administration.

**“Implement a Pavement Management Plan to prioritize street maintenance and repair based on objective, transparent criteria.”**

**Street Maintenance and Repair.** Emphasize maintenance and rehabilitation over reconstruction. Establish system for assessment of all streets. Implement a Pavement Management Plan to prioritize street maintenance and repair based on objective, transparent criteria in
lieu of the current practice of equal funding across districts regardless of magnitude of repairs. Require coordination of street work with planned utility work. Increase funding for street maintenance by dedicating income from street-related fines.

**Essential Facilities (Police, Fire, DA, Courts, Municipal Buildings).**
Design new public facilities to withstand major storm wind and flood. Formulate a plan for hardening infrastructure, including water, sewer, electric and gas, so that it will drive, rather than impede any future recovery.

**Sewerage and Water Board.**
Support the appointment of individuals who bring professional credentials and specific, necessary expertise to the Board, which will continue to confront significant challenges due to aged and storm-damaged infrastructure and insufficient revenue to achieve its current five-year capital plan.

**Contract Award Process.**
Accelerate the entire process of advertising, evaluating and awarding contracts for infrastructure work. Eliminate delay due to the city’s failure to expeditiously undertake and complete the contract award process.

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**FORWARD New Orleans**

**City Services and Infrastructure Issue Coalition Partners**

- After School Partnership
- Beacon of Hope
- Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region
- Broadmoor Improvement Association
- Committee for a Better New Orleans Metropolitan Area Committee
- Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans
- Common Good
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana
- Idea Village
- Neighborhood Housing Services
- New Orleans Chamber of Commerce
- Vieux Carre Property Owners, Residents and Associates
- Young Leadership Council
LEADERSHIP MANDATES

Professional Services Contracts.
Exercise existing charter discretion to eliminate the discrepancy in the current processes used by each the Mayor and the City Council for awarding professional services contracts. Implement a standardized, consultative process that is open to the public within the meaning of the Louisiana Open Meetings Act, R.S. 42:4.1 et seq. Ensure that all records of the evaluation and award of professional services contracts are made available as public records in accordance with the Louisiana Public Records Act, La. R.S. 44:1 et seq.

Contractor Disclosure.
Require city contractor disclosure, as public record, of contractors and subcontractors, and persons who have an ownership interest in either. Enforce disclosure requirement for all contracts exceeding $15,000. Suspend payment and, ultimately, cancel contract for noncompliance with disclosure.

Bid Packets.
Require Requests for Proposals (RFP’s), Requests for Qualifications (RFQ’s), and bid packets to comply with national industry standards. Ensure charter mandates are not circumvented by amendments, extensions, or dissection of a single contract into multiple parts.

Legal Compliance.
Uphold the letter of the law (specifically including the Local and Disadvantaged Business (DBE) Goals for the City of New Orleans) to restore public confidence, and ensure the maximum return on the city’s spending of local and federal tax dollars.

FORWARD New Orleans

City Contracting Issue Coalition Partners
- After School Partnership
- Beacon of Hope
- Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region
- Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans
- Common Good
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana
- Idea Village
- New Orleans Chamber of Commerce
- Young Leadership Council
In 2005, just before Katrina, only 37% of Orleans Parish schools were considered academically acceptable. Today, that number is 58% - an increase of 21 percentage points. In public education, New Orleans is one of the most improved areas in the state; its rate of progress is significantly higher than the state average. Our local officials must exercise their considerable public influence to support this positive trend, and become vocal allies in the movement to require every public school, whether charter or traditional, to be a high-performing, quality school. Further, with the money from FEMA, CDBG and insurance proceeds, the Recovery School District (RSD) and the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) should be able to provide reasonable school facilities for all children, and to provide schools with facilities that further their educational mission. Accordingly, city officials must:

**LEADERSHIP MANDATES**

**Performance Standards.**
Support the concept that all schools in New Orleans must be held to the same performance standards. Transfer schools that are still failing after four years, traditional or charter, to a new operating entity with a proven track record.

**Charter Schools.**
Support and advocate for charter schools and their continued autonomy.

**Support Continued Oversight by the Recovery School District.**
In 2010, when the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) must vote on whether to return RSD schools to the OPSB, urge BESE to keep the schools in the RSD for another defined period of time (3-5 years) to enable community conversation and agreement regarding process, criteria and structure for when and how schools are returned. Maintain the current charter model – local control with State oversight – until there is more agreement on how to best provide local oversight.

“Support and advocate for charter schools and their continued autonomy.”

**School Facilities**
Support the Facilities Oversight Committee in its financial oversight role, and in its specific efforts to ensure that the facility master plan is amended to update demographic information and to prioritize spending to enable reasonable facilities for all schools.

**FORWARD New Orleans**

**Public Education Issue Coalition Partners**

- After School Partnership
- Beacon of Hope
- Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region
- Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans
- Common Good
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana
- Idea Village
- New Orleans Chamber of Commerce
- Young Leadership Council
Forward New Orleans is a diverse, issue-focused, community initiative led by the Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region in collaboration with more than thirty civic, neighborhood and business organizations, all of which are committed to improving the quality of life in New Orleans.