

**GNO, Inc. Annual Luncheon 2024**  
*Presentation Transcript*

**Michael Hecht, President and CEO of GNO, Inc., welcomes all to the 2024 Annual Luncheon and presents the 2023 Year in Review:**



**2023 Reflection:** I want to start this Year in Review by going back to 2022: 2022 was a rough year. If you remember when I stood here 12 months ago, we were still reeling from the tail-end of the COVID-19 pandemic, the destruction of Hurricane Ida, and a surge of violent crime that was making us all feel unsafe. When we were at this meeting a year ago, it felt that Greater New Orleans was at a tipping point, and maybe not in a positive way.



**GNO United:** But our region responded by doing what we always do, what Greater New Orleans does better than perhaps anyone else: we came together. We called it “GNO United,” and in working together, we began to make things better.



**The World Returns:** For starters, the world – deprived by the COVID-19 pandemic of the culture and humanity that Greater New Orleans does best – flocked back in 2023. Hotels returned to pre-pandemic numbers for stays. The Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport (MSY) won best airport in North America, and MSY saw 25% more international seats compared to pre-pandemic levels, including British Airways flying 5 days a week.

- *The MSY team is recognized at this moment for their leadership*
- *New Orleans & Company is also recognized at this moment for their leadership and partnership*



**Insurance Reform:** We also stepped into the most urgent challenges of the year: flood and property insurance. While we have a long way to go, we substantially entered the fight. GNO, Inc. supported Governor Landry, then Attorney General, in a multistate lawsuit against the Federal Emergency Management Agency; we are going to win on Risk Rating 2.0. GNO, Inc. also travelled to London with Insurance Commissioner Tim Temple to meet with Lloyd’s of London and other insurers. What insurance leaders and chief

resilience officers at Lloyd’s said is, “We’re not scared of hurricanes; we insure all throughout the Caribbean. We’re afraid of political uncertainty and legal abuse. Clean that up, and you’ll be much better off.” Through working with the commissioner and others here, we will clean that up.

- *Commissioner Temple is recognized for his leadership and willing collaboration with GNO, Inc.*



**The NOLA Coalition:** The place where we came together most dramatically was on public safety. The NOLA Coalition, now the largest and most diverse civic action group possibly in New Orleans history, grew to over 570 non-profit and for-profit organizations in 2023 and played a leading role in demonstrable outcomes. New Orleans executed a successful national search for a Police Chief and increased the budget for officer wages and new equipment for constitutional policing. The Coalition maintained public

accountability dashboards and helped raise \$7.4 million for youth service organizations, servicing over 5,500 children in our first year of disbursements. Recognizing that we cannot police our way out of this crisis, we must invest in our youth and in tomorrow. Most importantly, the NOLA Coalition went beyond policies by creating a vessel for all New Orleanians to come together on common sense solutions for a better tomorrow. We created a real vehicle for positive pressure, accountability for change, and, frankly, hope.

- *Members of the NOLA Coalition present are recognized and thanked at this moment*



**Local Newspaper Headline on Crime Stats:** As a result of the efforts of many – the New Orleans Police Department, the District Attorney, the City Administration, the Metropolitan Crime Commission, schools, non-profits – as well as national trends, New Orleans has experienced a turnaround in 2023. Homicides have reduced by over 25% year over year, and police department recruitment has stabilized with attrition leveling at about 8%. I think there’s a sense that we are beginning to turn things around. Thank you to all the members of the NOLA Coalition who are here, as well as the New Orleans Police Department.

- *Table of regional public safety officials – including Hans Ganthier from NOPD, DA Williams, DA Connick, DA Sims, U.S. Attorney Duane Evans, Sheriff Lopinto, and Sheriff Hutson – are recognized and encouraged to continue collaboration with the NOLA Coalition in 2024 to reduce violence, improve recruiting, and ensure compliance with the consent decree*



**All-of-the-Above Energy Future:** To borrow terms from last year’s meeting, we not only played defense in 2023, but we also went back on offense in a big way with our All-of-the-Above Clean Energy Strategy. Regional wins include announcements like Shell’s partnership with Gulf Wind Technology, who is installing the first wind turbine in Louisiana, and United Utilities establishing their national headquarters in Jefferson Parish with 140 jobs at an average salary of \$95,000. Additionally, St. Charles Clean Fuels is

investing a massive \$5 billion for a blue ammonia project in partnership with Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners.

- *James Martin from Gulf Wind Technology, and Chandra Stacie from St. Charles Clean Fuels are recognized at this moment*



**WTCNO and International Trade:** The merger of the World Trade Center of New Orleans (WTCNO) and GNO, Inc. continued to pay dividends in 2023. The revitalization of the World Trade Center in the past year is evidenced by the welcoming of 93 dignitaries from 33 countries, including hosting leaders from the Ukrainian parliament. Additionally, we sustained our adamant support of probably the most important economic development issue, which is the building of the new Louisiana International Terminal in St. Bernard.

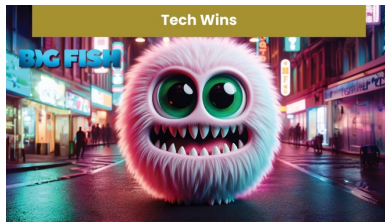
This terminal is critical because it will bring Greater New Orleans back to a leadership role in national and international trade, while creating thousands of jobs across the region. This project will also increase ways by which residents of St. Bernard can travel by 50%.

- *Kristi App, World Trade Center of New Orleans Chair, and Greg Rusovich, Chair of the Louisiana Board of International Commerce, are recognized at this moment*



**Industrial Parks:** In 2023, we also saw the announcement of major industrial parks, which will serve as part of the ecosystem of the new container terminal. In New Orleans East, the Propel Aerospace Park was announced at NASA Michoud, with support from the City and New Orleans Business Alliance (NOLABA). On the Northshore, St. Tammany Corp. and officials announced the 900-acre Gulf South Commerce Park, focused on Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics.

- *NOLABA and their new President and CEO, Louis David, are recognized at this moment*



**Tech Wins:** 2023 was a big year for tech in Greater New Orleans, as well, with Big Fish Games from Seattle announcing the opening of a 40-person studio in the region. Additionally, 360 Insights, a global software company, announced its relocation of its headquarters from Delaware to New Orleans. GNO, Inc. hosted the 9th GameFête, which had an attendance representing over 50 tech companies.



**Industrial Wins:** Our industry wins in 2023 included the doubling of MKS Plastics' footprint in Tangipahoa, as well as Niagara Water investing \$160 million in a facility in Tangipahoa. Ampirical Solutions, from St. Tammany, opened a 10,000 sq. ft. office in Jefferson Parish in the Galleria. Loop Linen, a 100-year-old family company, opened a new facility in Jefferson Parish; GNO, Inc. collaborated with our partners at JEDCO throughout this project. NATCO Food Service in St. John announced an expansion of its facility. Finally, HOST, the owner of Avondale Global Gateway, moved its global headquarters from Virginia to New Orleans.

- *Kevin Kieft from Niagara, Matthew Saacks from Ampirical Solutions, John Lalla and Jason Landry from NATCO, and Matt Mancheski from HOST are recognized at this moment*



**Investment in the Future:** While GNO, Inc. has not been involved in all of the announcements represented by this slide in a major way, the announcements demonstrate strong confidence in our urban market with billions in investments, including: Clearview City Center, with Ochsner, Charity Hospital, and Tulane; Caesars Hotel Expansion; the Ochsner Neuroscience Center, the lynchpin of our NeuroNOLA strategy; and the \$1.5 billion River District, which includes the new Shell headquarters which will be the first new office building to be built in New Orleans since 1989.

- *President Mike Fitts of Tulane University, Aimee Quirk from Ochsner, Dan Real and Samir Mowad from Caesars, and Louis Lauricella and the River District team are recognized at this moment*



**Public Policy:** The GNO, Inc. Policy Team had a strong 2023, with major wins that include: reform for more affordable insurance, support for the coordination of ports, incentives for police officer recruitment, millions appropriated for early childhood education, the extension of key incentives like the Research & Development and Angel Investment tax credits, support for a record-breaking \$1.6 billion Annual Coastal Master Plan, and support for carbon capture, including the securing of primacy over the underground injection program Class VI wells. I should also mention that I and the GNO, Inc. team advised Governor Jeff Landry as a member of the New Orleans Committee, and I am very optimistic regarding the support and collaboration Greater New Orleans will receive from the new administration.

- *Millard and Sarah Mulé from the Landry team are recognized at this moment*



**Workforce Training and Economic Mobility:** GNO, Inc.'s demand-driven workforce programs went into orbit in 2023 with a new partnership with NASA and Boeing. GNO, Inc.'s economic mobility work continued to grow in 2023, including our HBCU Innovation Internship program, with 58 students to date from Dillard, SUNO, Southern, and Xavier. Forty percent of students received offers for continued employment as a result of the internship.





- *The Boeing team and host companies which participated in the HBCU Innovation Internship are recognized and thanked at this moment*



*The Idea Village are recognized at this moment*

**Entrepreneurship:** A highlight of our entrepreneurship practice was working with OHUB, which expanded to New Orleans, to establish the New Energy Technology Incubator. This program is designed to support 50 minority-led new energy companies; this spring, the incubator will invest up to \$250,000 in five of them. We also launched METRONOME, our music industry accelerator managed by The Idea Village, which graduated its first 8 startups.

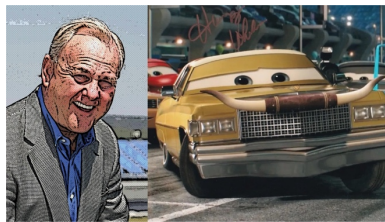
- *Rodney Sampson and Leroy Brown from OHUB, and Jon Atkinson from*



**Most Optimistic Forecasts:** Despite the daunting challenges of 2022, Greater New Orleans ended 2023 with what economist Loren Scott – who we did *not* pay to say this – called “one of his most optimistic forecasts ever.” Scott cites billions of planned investments, especially in energy, record-low unemployment, and global trends that favor Louisiana and the region. Plus, Nick Saban is gone, y’all! In 2023, we answered the call, and Greater New Orleans came back thanks to you all!

[video break]

**Now, we enter a reflection on 20 years of GNO, Inc.’s impact:**

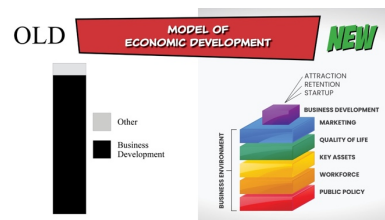


Michael, it’s like running a laundromat – we just open the doors, and people bring us their money.”

**Humpy Wheeler:** To begin talking about the origin of GNO, Inc. over the past twenty years, I’d like to share a bit more about the inspiration for the current evolution of GNO, Inc. Fourteen years ago, I had lunch with one Humpy Wheeler, the General Manager of the Charlotte Motor Speedway and voice of Tex in the Pixar film, *Cars*. Humpy was the Chair of Charlotte Regional Partnership, and the city was booming. I asked him, “Humpy, what’s it like doing economic development in Charlotte?” And Humpy said, “Well,



**Definition of Economic Development:** That’s when it hit me. We needed a new definition of economic development. Ribbon cuttings are important, but they are an outcome, not a strategy. Real economic development is more fundamental. It’s about proactively “creating the conditions where companies want to invest their capital, and people want to raise their families.” If you do this, the economic development comes organically, like coins into a laundromat. Thank you, Humpy, for opening my eyes.



**Model of Economic Development:** So, we evolved our model. The old model of economic development focuses primarily on *business development* – it was transactional, where our main tools were incentives and Ruth’s Chris. The new model has a base of *business environment*, including public policy, workforce, asset development, quality of life, and brand. Business environment supports business development both naturally and sustainably. As the chair of GNO, Inc., Susan Bonnett Bourgeois stated, this new model is

about *solving before selling*.







- Major public policy wins, such as simplifying and lowering Louisiana's taxes and driving national flood insurance legislation that fixed flood insurance not just for Louisiana but for the nation

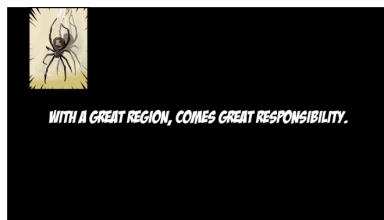


- Major asset wins, such as helping MSY land the first direct flight to Europe since 1984 and keeping NASA Michoud open after the end of the Space Shuttle program. Michoud now employs over 1,000 individuals, who's work will put the first woman and African American on the moon in 2025



- And many more wins that have supported jobs and lives in GNO: Saving the Hornets from leaving New Orleans, in collaboration with the Business Council; Construction of the first headquarters for entrepreneurship, the Intellectual Property Building; Implementation and management of award-winning workforce programs; Over 4,500 media mentions worth a total value of over \$450 million; and many more!

*A more detailed list of impact can be found in the GNO, Inc. 2024 Annual Luncheon Booklet.*

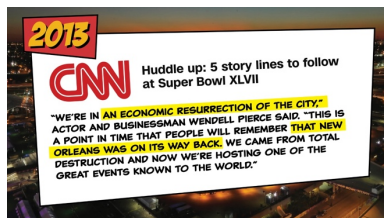


**With a great region, comes great responsibility.**

**So, what is our responsibility for 2024?**



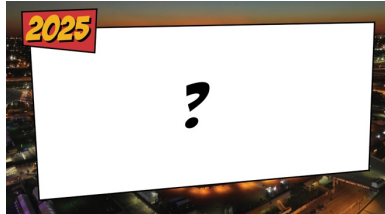
Let me suggest that Super Bowl 59, which New Orleans will host in a little more than a year from now, is a great way to frame this responsibility.



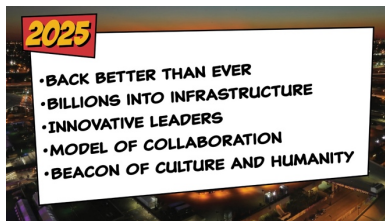
Back in 2013, we used Super Bowl 47 to announce to the world that "New Orleans is back!" In the words of Wendell Pierce, published in CNN, "We're in an economic resurrection of the city. This is a point in time that people will remember that New Orleans was on its way back." We were all on the same page, and the message had the added advantage of being true.



Super Bowl 59 is an unparalleled opportunity to present a unified message for the city and region. Greater New Orleans will host over 300,000 visitors, and 200 million viewers will be watching across the country and world, making the Super Bowl the most watched event in America.



If the message in 2012 was “New Orleans is back,” what will our message be in 2025, twenty years after Katrina? The Super Bowl is a forcing function to answer meaningful questions. Internally, what do we want to commit to as our goals? Externally, what do we want to say to the world? In other words, what is the headline for Super Bowl 59?



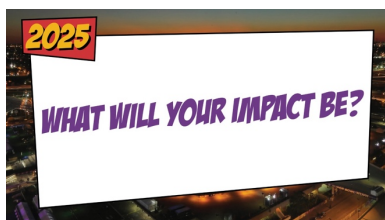
I’d like to suggest some possibilities:

- We have not just “come back” from Katrina & COVID, we are better than ever
  - The New Orleans region has invested billions into infrastructure, making us safer and more resilient
  - We are innovative leaders, from energy, to aerospace, to water management
- In a world of increasing divisiveness, our region stands out as a model of collaboration
  - In a world of increasing sameness, Greater New Orleans stands out as a beacon of culture and humanity

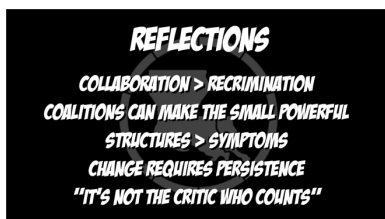


I would love to see a headline like this: **CNN – New Orleans Bounces Back Better than Ever: Region Now a Leader in Energy and Innovation**

In a year from now, we will be presenting ourselves to the world, and we can and must use this opportunity to lift our heads up, come together, and focus on progress. Now is a time to align our message, commit to it personally, and form public-private partnerships to get it done.



This leaves me to ask a question of all of us, for the Super Bowl and beyond. **What is each of our impact going to be?** We each have a responsibility to help tell the story of a great region and, moreover, to work to fulfill that promise. How are we going to work to fulfill this promise?



To end this presentation, I’d like to take a moment of personal privilege and reflect on lessons I’ve learned throughout my fifteen years at GNO, Inc.

1. Collaboration is bigger than recrimination – playing small ball does not secure big victories
2. Coalitions can make the small powerful – even though Greater New Orleans is not a large, we can have huge leverage nationally when we bring together partners
3. Structures are greater than symptoms – the most effective method is to address structures of an issue
4. Change requires persistence – the people who win are those who show up, every day, and exemplify persistence and impact



5. “It’s not the critic who counts” – as President Teddy Roosevelt said; It is easy to be a critic, particular today in the age of social media. But a critic does not drive change, and they don’t improve lives

We must learn to distinguish between feedback and fraud, because everyone in this room needs to stay in the arena, and we have to continue to dare greatly.