

# NEW ORLEANS

CPLN 7200

“The City is a Spider Web”

Bree Robinson

## The City is a Spider Web

The metaphor I have chosen is to view New Orleans as a Spider Web. To be more specific, I have chosen to view New Orleans as a spider web spun inside of a bowl. It is no secret that New Orleans is considered to be a city inside of a bowl, since it is built below sea level and often floods.

My idea for this metaphor is based upon the idea of the strings of the spider web representing the streets of New Orleans and the spider represents the planner. Spider webs are fragile and can sometimes look erratic in nature, but the materials they are made of are very strong and there is a plan in the spider's mind, whether it seem well thought out or not. I feel that New Orleans relates to this as it is a city with deep cultural roots. If anyone has ever watched a spider web be spun, then they would notice that the spider lays out some broad support strings and then begins to spin their web around the middle, reaching out until they have reached the size that they're happy with. This is an interesting thing to note in comparison to my metaphor, as the support strings could represent the main streets of a city, the more detailed strings could represent smaller streets, sidewalks, and alleys, while the center could represent the inner city or downtown. Cities often grow and sprawl over time from the inside out, so the idea of a spider, the planner, working from the inside out is worth noting!

Spider webs are often found in the oddest of places. Typically, a spider will build its web near a light source, or anything that might attract bugs into its web. In our metaphor, the bugs represent citizens. Well planned out cities or developments always strive to have an attracting feature nearby, or are built where it makes sense and is convenient for people to live there, whereas a spider builds its web near an attracting factor or a convenient place to attract bugs. For example, there are many small towns and cities along the coastline due to the beach being an attracting feature. Planners know that if they have a natural attraction, or even a man-made attraction, such as a booming industry or up and coming downtown that it will attract patrons and new people to live there.

Specifically, in New Orleans, one of the original attractions to begin building there is the close proximity to the Mississippi River. New Orleans was originally a port city, and this was its first “draw”. Later on, people flocked to New Orleans for the culture left behind by its inhabitants. Much like a fly drawn to a spider's web, people are drawn to New Orleans. One last thing to note is that if you've ever looked for spider webs, you'll notice that they will fit around objects or even be damaged and then repaired by the Spider. I think is relatable to a city as not all cities are built in ideal locations, New Orleans continuing to be built in a bowl for example, but when damaged they come back and find new ways to repair themselves.



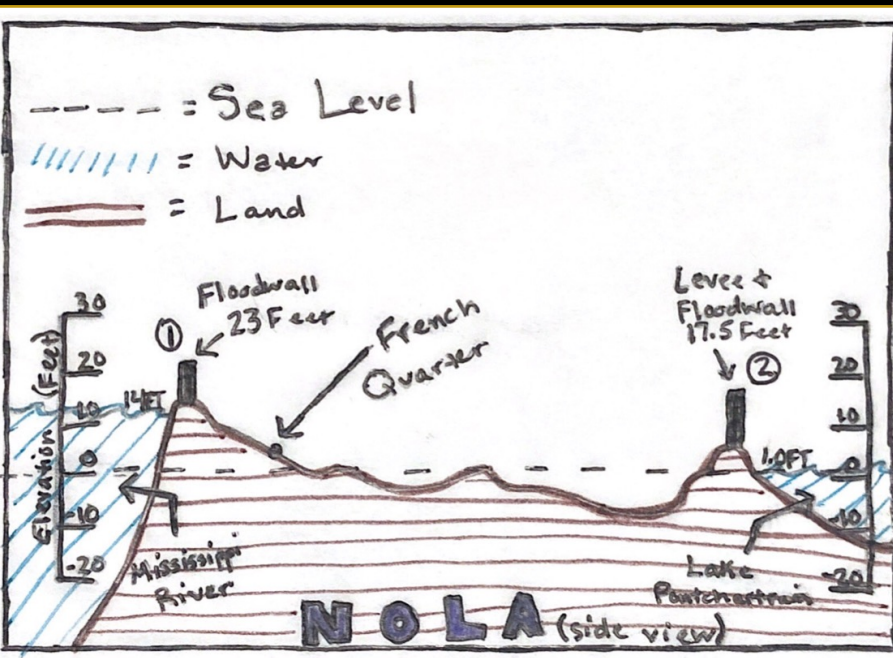
1. Bourbon Street



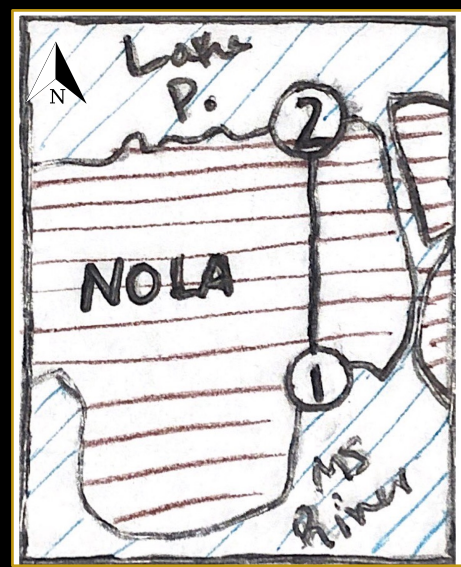
2. Bourbon Street

## Issues:

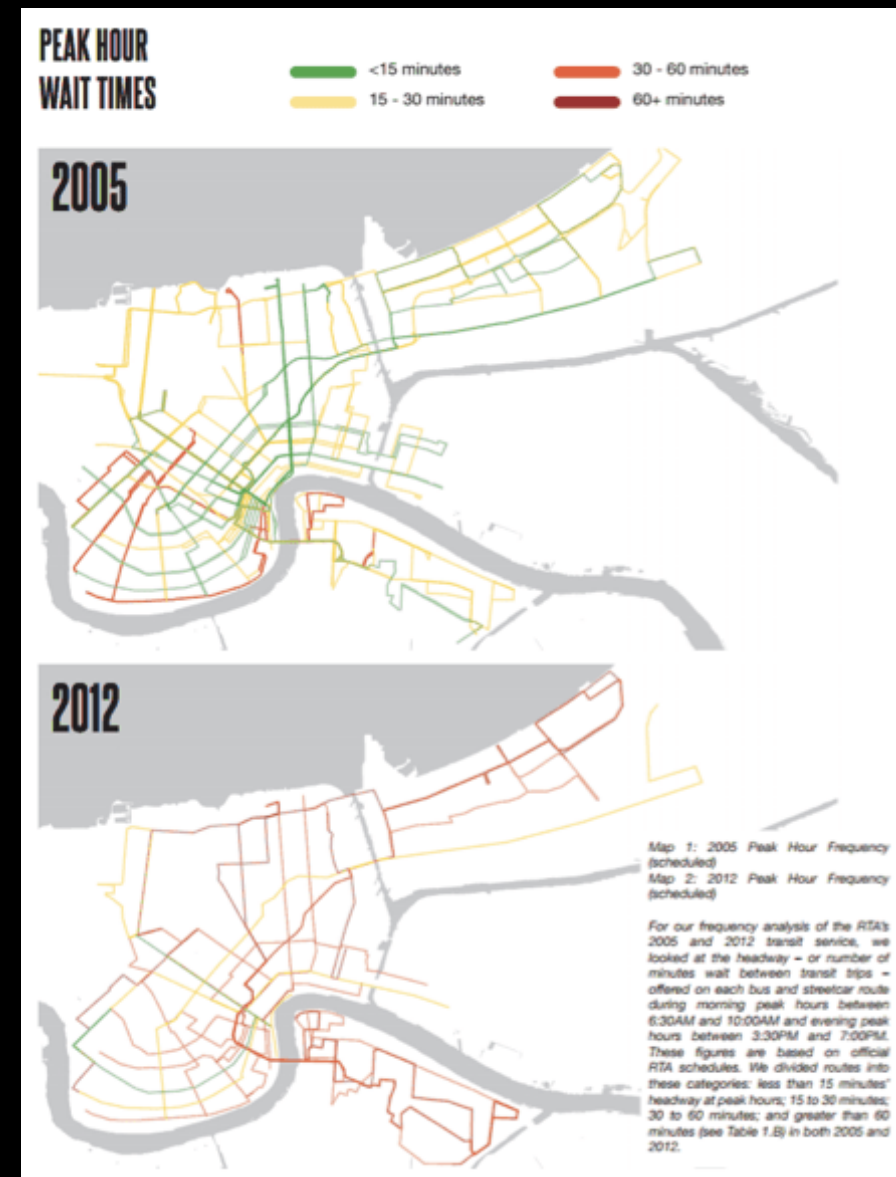
- 1 Flooding
- 2 Public Transit
- 3 Affordable Housing



3. New Orleans Side-View, Showing Sea Level, Why the City Floods Often.



4. Bourbon Street Flooded



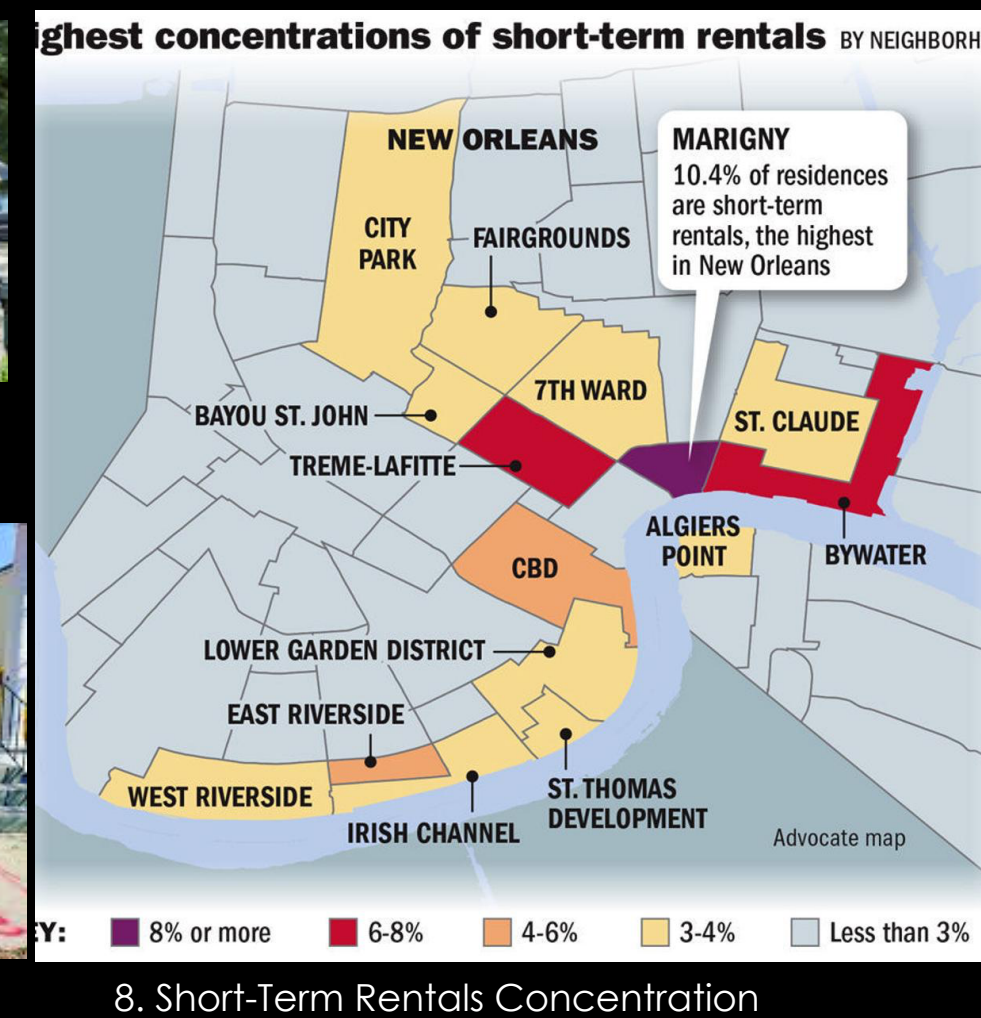
5. Bus Routes Before and After Katrina



7. People in run-down neighborhood



6. "This Airbnb displaced 5 people"



8. Short-Term Rentals Concentration

## #1 Flooding

### Issue:

- First of all, it's important to know that New Orleans was initially built above sea level. Why is flooding such a large problem then? (See Katrina.) [1]
- New Orleans is sinking and has sank over time.
- It was built on loose soil.
- In 1900, a drainage system was installed that removed water from the soil, causing a loss of sediment which ultimately caused the marshes to sink as much as 8-12 feet.
- Climate change leading to a rising sea level along with the sinking city makes for a dangerous situation.

### Strategies:

- Creating areas/parks where water is allowed and directed to run-off to. Waggoner's "Living With Water" strategy to create adaptive re-uses of land would allow for waterfront parks, biking trails, and other recreational uses when dry and a place for the rainfall to head to during large storms. [2.]
- Permeable sidewalks through porous paving techniques. This strategy would allow for water to pass through down, instead of having to find somewhere to flow out to. (New Orleans City Council recently passed a ruling that all commercial parking lots must be porous from this point out, upon any new construction. [3])
- Build up the natural and artificial levees around the city.
- Pipe in sediment to help replenish wetlands and halt erosion

## #2 Public Transit

### Issue:

- Katrina wreaked havoc on the already struggling transit system of New Orleans. Why is still impacting this today?
- The entire bus fleet of the Regional Transit Authority was rendered unusable by flooding and money from FEMA was not enough to replace them.
- After the storms, many of the low-wage labor market, the RTA's loyal users, left and simply never came back.
- Even as the city has rebounded, the bus systems have stayed half massed and ineffective in routes.
- A lack of people using public transport adds to the amount of people driving, which increases pollution, traffic, and wear and tear on the roads systems.

### Strategies:

- The RTA needs funding to replace buses, this is simply clear. The state and federal government need to step in with this, as it's been over 10 years and New Orleans is still suffering losses and its economy is being held back from rebounding. [4]
- In order to keep up with the costs of more buses, they need to regain ridership, which means they need to reconnect people with jobs and be a more reliable mode of transportation and add more lines to increase the frequency of stops.
- Routes need to be reworked and serve more areas in order to become a viable choice for consumers.

## #3 Affordable Housing

### Issue:

- Gentrification and a lack of affordable housing are two issues that are tied together in New Orleans. "About a decade ago, 77 percent of New Orleanians were born in Louisiana and had spent most of their lives there. After the town recovered from Hurricane Katrina, however, those numbers started to shift. The city has become less populous, less black, more white, richer at its historic center and poorer in many surrounding neighborhoods." [5]
  - Homes in affordable neighborhoods are being revamped and listed as Airbnb's.
  - There is a huge lack of affordable homes and the Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance says the city needs 33,000+ affordable housing units by 2025 to address its housing-costs crisis.
- ### Strategies:
- Planners need to account for affordable housing and make it a priority. Offering tax breaks to developers interesting in building more affordable housing could be beneficial! [6]
  - New Orleans is a huge tourist town, but the city might want to consider certain restrictions when it comes to short term private rentals, such as Airbnb.
  - Planners might want to relook their zoning rules and focus on revitalizing neighborhoods already present and in danger of demo.
  - Consider a trade-off between location and transportation. Ex: if the transit system was more regional and reliable, then placing affordable housing a little further out would not be an issue!
  - Old homes are being demo'd left and right in NOLA. Consider history preservation for some neighborhoods and areas that house traditionally low-income people.

Photos: 1. <https://pixels.com/featured/a-typical-night-on-bourbon-street-new-orleans-louisiana-nightlife-toby-mcquire.html> 2. Bree Robinson 3. Bree Robinson 4. <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/woman-crosses-a-flooded-bourbon-street-in-the-french-news-photo/53575594> 5. <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2014/07/28/9-years-after-katrina-new-orleans-transit-still-struggling-to-recover/> 6. <https://thelebensnola.org/2018/03/28/affordable-housing-group-says-fears-about-airbnbs-effect-on-new-orleans-housing-have-come-true/> 7. <https://www.usatoday.com/videos/news/nation/2016/06/30/86574392/> 8. <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2014/07/28/9-years-after-katrina-new-orleans-transit-still-struggling-to-recover/> References: 1. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/10/us/new-orleans-sinking-into-sea-trnd/index.html> 2. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/how-save-new-orleans-sinking/> 3. [https://www.nola.com/news/politics/article\\_534386f6-d31e-11e9-a810-aba5c6e48a1c.html](https://www.nola.com/news/politics/article_534386f6-d31e-11e9-a810-aba5c6e48a1c.html) 4. <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/how-to-fix-new-orleans-transit?agreed=1> 5. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/27/opinion/new-orleans.html> 6. <https://salud-america.org/6-emerging-ways-cities-can-solve-the-affordable-housing-crisis/>