

2025 MUNICIPAL ELECTION POLICY AGENDA

*Our Vision for a More Effective
New Orleans Government*



THE BUSINESS COUNCIL OF NEW ORLEANS & THE RIVER REGION

The Business Council of New Orleans & the River Region is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, independent public policy advocacy organization consisting of over 70 top executives from significant local and regional companies. Our membership collectively accounts for more than 90,000 Louisiana jobs and over \$118 billion in annual gross revenue.

OUR MISSION

The Business Council serves as a vehicle for business leaders to speak with one principled voice in advocating for fiscal and public policies that foster economic growth and provide a better quality of life for all who choose to live and work in the New Orleans metropolitan area. To accomplish this, we hold elected officials accountable for implementing clear, predictable laws that advance efficient, effective, transparent and accountable government.

OUR WORK

Since our founding in 1985, the Business Council has directed organizational resources to prioritized problem solving. On a multitude of policy issues, we overcome the inherent limitations of governmental capacity with our research, analysis, counsel and support, which includes funding expert consultants, expanding public sector knowledge with private sector expertise and convening public officials and stakeholders to remove communication obstacles and allow direct collaboration. We guide government to adopt better practices and more reliably deliver essential services and infrastructure. Through this work, we create sightlines to a future vision where our city is safe, clean, thriving, competitive and brimming with economic opportunity.

**THE BUSINESS COUNCIL EXEMPLIFIES THE POWER
OF PERSISTENT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TO IMPROVE
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.**

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OUR VISION

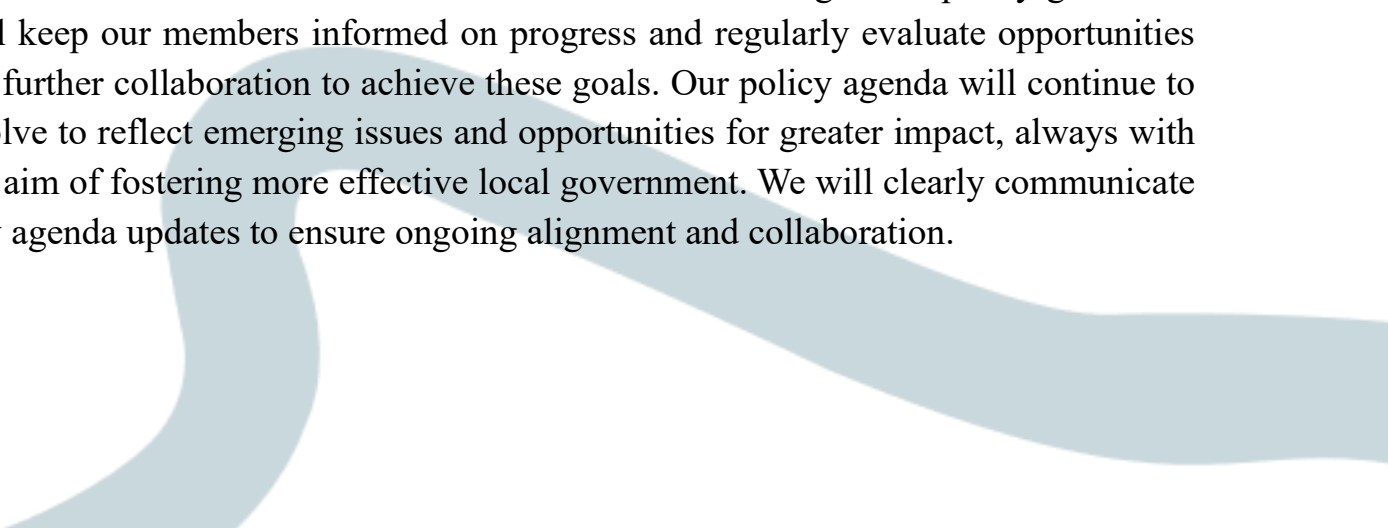
Our vision for New Orleans government is that it should in all instances *respect its fundamental pact with citizens* and deliver a credible municipal basis for a hopeful future vision, where New Orleans becomes and remains a thriving place for all residents to live, work and prosper. In the pages that follow, we provide vision statements that set and reach for a higher standard in key areas of government performance for basic municipal services. The policy goals assigned to each issue area are vital steps towards achieving this vision.

OUR POLICY AGENDA

In the two decades since Hurricane Katrina, the Business Council has provided candidates for Mayor and City Council with an issues-based policy agenda to drive government's continuous improvement in key performance areas. The purpose of this exercise is threefold: (1) to reinforce the necessity of a principled policymaking process that consistently reaches for higher standards of efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability and fiduciary stewardship in local government; (2) to convey the host of policy objectives elected officials and business leaders should collaboratively pursue; and (3) to establish a basis for holding elected officials accountable for their achievement of critical policy priorities.

We now release this agenda as part of our ongoing conversation with major candidates about areas of alignment. Ultimately, we will ask each candidate to sign a pledge of support for the entire agenda or, absent full support, a pledge to support certain of its subparts with a statement of the areas and reasons for disagreement.

A candidate's pledge in support of our agenda represents a commitment to engage with the Business Council—if elected—to advance the agenda's policy goals. We will keep our members informed on progress and regularly evaluate opportunities for further collaboration to achieve these goals. Our policy agenda will continue to evolve to reflect emerging issues and opportunities for greater impact, always with the aim of fostering more effective local government. We will clearly communicate any agenda updates to ensure ongoing alignment and collaboration.



CITY GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE

The Vision: Government should manage operations through a leadership team of experienced professionals working together under a clear hierarchy, guided in their decision-making by a principled policymaking process.

To reach for this vision, City officials must commit to an action plan to cause the achievement of each of the following policy goals:

1. An executive leadership organizational chart that clearly delineates operational responsibilities among senior staff, delegates authorities as appropriate and establishes a clear hierarchy in core public policy areas.
2. A process for hiring, and confirming through the City Council when required, experienced and effective managers who have expertise in overseeing complex organizations and/or specialized knowledge in specific policy areas to serve in core leadership positions.
3. An executive order, and companion Council resolution, that commits to the core governing values of efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, transparency and fiduciary stewardship of public dollars and includes objective criteria to guide the policymaking process.
4. Regularly scheduled meetings between the Mayor and core operational leaders to ensure that the leadership team remains focused on key priorities and agile in response to emerging issues.
5. Proactive and constructive communication between the Administration and City Council to ensure that each branch of government is sufficiently informed of all material facts on key issues.



CITY FINANCE

The Vision: Government should demonstrate transparency and fiscal best practices on capital and operating budgets for the benefit of New Orleans residents and be a responsible fiscal steward of tax dollars.

To reach for this vision, City officials must commit to an action plan to cause the achievement of each of the following policy goals:

1. A clearly articulated public strategy for developing a more transparent, effective and accessible process for budgeting.
2. Commitment to publicly share City financial data at regular intervals to increase resident understanding of City finances.
3. Establishment of a city-wide performance management system to help City leaders and the public understand how effectively the City is managing operations.
4. An ordinance to establish a fund balance management target that provides limits for spending one-time fund balance absent a fiscal emergency.
5. Creation of an expert, objective, long-term fiscal analysis of the City's budget, projecting City revenue and expenses over the next 5-10 years.
6. Improved public accounting of the financial status of the City's primary pension funds and a strategy for how to set the firefighter pension fund back on stable financial footing.
7. A strategy and plan for reforming the City's procurement office by identifying and implementing procurement best practices from other high-performing municipalities.
8. Process and technological improvements to the sales tax collection system to incorporate opportunities for enhancing collections.
9. A clear operational strategy for fully utilizing the City's new asset management software to track City-owned property.



NEW ORLEANS POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Vision: Government should create and sustain a high-performing police department that responds to and seeks to reduce incidents of violent crime.

To reach for this vision, City officials must commit to an action plan to cause the achievement of each of the following policy goals:

1. A right-sized New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) based on a force size goal set by research and analysis to identify best practice levels.
2. Implementation of new technologies as NOPD force multipliers, such as license plate recognition, digital crime reporting, real-time crime cameras and big data analysis.
3. A robust NOPD analytics team that uses data to inform deployment strategies.
4. A national best practice strategy for NOPD recruitment and retention.
5. Competitive NOPD compensation set according to research and analysis regarding regional compensation levels.
6. Continued implementation and scaling of NOPD's civilianization initiative to remove administrative burdens from uniformed officers.
7. An effective internal and external NOPD communication strategy, including crisis communication training.
8. Better alignment of the NOPD budget with strategic and operational outcomes.
9. A certified NOPD Crime Lab achieved through dedicated City funding for its renovation.
10. Innovative strategies to counter violent crime identified collaboratively through public-private partnerships.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Vision: Government should ensure that the entire criminal justice system is aligned around a coordinated and effective public safety strategy, derived from a comprehensive strategic planning process.

To reach for this vision, City officials must commit to an action plan to cause the achievement of each of the following policy goals:

1. Shared technology platforms that are well-managed, properly maintained and adequately funded.
2. Dashboards and data transparency by the District Attorney's Office.
3. Strategy for oversight of the Orleans Justice Center (OJC) that requires the open and transparent exchange of critical information and budget data through shared technology platforms among the City, Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office (OPSO) and criminal justice system partners and imposes accountability for failures.
4. A transformative juvenile justice plan that improves alternatives to detention and programming at the juvenile jail.
5. A clear strategy for investing in youth services and neighborhood-based economic development to address the root causes of crime.
6. Assessment of the effectiveness of oversight programs for persons released on bail, including ankle monitoring and introduction of better practices with improved accountability.
7. A review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal court system, using all available budgetary leverage to ensure judicial cooperation.
8. A best practice assessment of the 911 system and implementation of all feasible recommendations.



ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Vision: Government should construct and maintain drivable streets, create efficient processes for repair of traffic signals and roads and minimize disruption to citizens and businesses.

To reach for this vision, City officials must commit to an action plan to cause the achievement of each of the following policy goals:

1. Improvement of Department of Public Works (DPW) procurement and legal review processes to integrate best practices and strategic objectives, including more efficient project delivery.
2. A 10-year strategic plan and funding strategy for maintaining roads and reducing potholes.
3. Improved DPW dashboards that publish key performance indicators along with relevant output data.
4. Full implementation of a regularly updated public report about 311 calls for service and response times and a communications strategy to improve public awareness of this data.
5. A right-sized DPW staffing model, including consideration of administrative and contract management staff, set by research and analysis to identify best practice levels.
6. A comprehensive strategy for adequately funding and staffing DPW according to the right-sized model.
7. Collaboration with local and industry experts to seek and implement feedback and best practices.



WATER TREATMENT AND DELIVERY

The Vision: Government should guarantee safe drinking water, accurately bill for its delivery and pursue modernized water purification infrastructure that overcomes known risks.

To reach for this vision, City officials must utilize political, regulatory and financial leverage on the responsible government entity to cause the achievement of each of the following policy goals:

1. Implementation of the Water Quality Master Plan to modernize water treatment infrastructure.
2. Full implementation of the Sewerage and Water Board's lead service line replacement project.
3. A clear accounting of the need for funding to replace leaking water mains and distribution lines and an accompanying public communications strategy.
4. Accurate billing and responsive customer service from the Sewerage and Water Board.
5. Participation of all relevant local agencies in the multi-parish process for identifying regional solutions for water treatment and delivery, including the mitigation of the saltwater intrusion threat.
6. An improved organizational culture and greater accountability within the Sewerage and Water Board to improve efficient and safe delivery of drinking water.



DRAINAGE SYSTEM

The Vision: Government should keep citizens and their property safe from flooding through adequate funding, operation and maintenance of drainage and flood protection infrastructure.

To reach for this vision, City officials must utilize political, regulatory and financial leverage on the responsible government entity to cause the achievement of each of the following policy goals:

1. Implementation of a stormwater management plan and creation of a funding mechanism, such as a stormwater fee, that is fair and requires tax-exempt properties to contribute.
2. A comprehensive strategic plan for future drainage system improvements that identifies long-term, sustainable funding sources capable of adequately financing future capital projects as well as ongoing maintenance needs.
3. Finalize the consolidation of grey drainage infrastructure maintenance under the SWB, including the identification of adequate funding for responsible system and infrastructure maintenance.
4. A plan for achieving an optimal drainage system workforce, including the identification of impediments to adequate staffing and a clear implementation strategy.
5. Require timely and on-budget completion of the West Power Complex, Phases I and II.

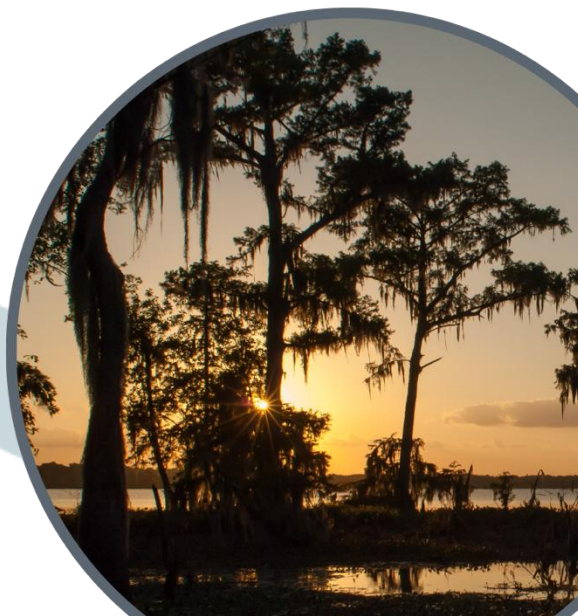


FLOOD PROTECTION

The Vision: Government should ensure that the citizens of Southeastern Louisiana have the most reliable, well-managed and efficiently funded flood risk and storm protection system in the United States.

To reach for this vision, City officials must utilize political, regulatory and financial leverage on the responsible government entity to cause the achievement of each of the following policy goals:

1. Advocacy for a State Coastal Master Plan that is science-based and stakeholder-informed to achieve large-scale restoration and protection of Louisiana's critical coastal areas.
2. Alignment with the principle that Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authorities – East (SLFPA-E) and West (SLFPA-W) must be able to function as politically independent and autonomous entities.
3. A funding strategy for maintaining the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS).
4. A plan to ensure coordinated hurricane planning and emergency public communications within City agencies and with state and federal partners.
5. A robust strategy for monitoring any threats to New Orleans of high or low water conditions in the Mississippi River and addressing them.



PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Vision: Government should deliver high quality education to public school students and families to continuously improve their educational experiences and life opportunities.

To reach for this vision, City officials must utilize political, regulatory and financial leverage on the responsible government entity to cause the achievement of each of the following policy goals:

1. Full implementation of the Business Council's Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) Policy Priorities, published in conjunction with the 2024 OPSB election, to include goals on fiscal stewardship, school accountability, implementation of best practices, school autonomy, equitable access to schools, resources management and strategic planning and engagement.
2. Improved access to mental health services in public schools.
3. Identification of incentives that the City could offer or support to improve teacher recruitment and retention.
4. A strategy for the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC) that facilitates student recreational opportunities as an essential component of youth safety and public education.



QUALITY OF LIFE

The Vision: Government should enforce laws that bear upon the quality of life and morale of those who live or work in New Orleans and improve visitors' impressions of our city while balancing residents' ability to carry the financial burden of government services.

To reach for this vision, City officials must commit to an action plan to cause the achievement of each of the following policy goals:

1. Plan for enforcing laws against litter and graffiti, along with public reports of implementation progress.
2. Strategy for better enforcing laws against blight, improving code enforcement and public reporting of progress on these efforts.
3. A comprehensive review of trash and sanitation services and a strategy for better service delivery.
4. Implementation of homelessness prevention strategies, maintenance of homelessness encampment closures and compliance with existing ordinances that protect the safety of homeless individuals while promoting economic growth in the urban core.
5. Full review and implementation of reforms at the Department of Safety and Permits (DSP) to achieve a highly efficient and transparent permitting process that incorporates best practice approaches.
6. More accurate property tax rolls and assessments, including combating exemption abuse.
7. Identification of better solutions for creating a more competitive, affordable and accessible property insurance market.
8. A budget that prioritizes the most fundamental municipal services and a data-driven process for evaluating the necessity of any higher or new taxes, fines or fees.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Vision: Government should create strategic plans for realistic economic investment and growth in the near- and long-term and prioritize key assets and sectors that drive our local economy.

To reach for this vision, City officials must commit to an action plan to cause the achievement of each of the following policy goals:

1. A best practice analysis to identify the most effective role and method for the City's involvement in our economic development landscape, particularly in light of the recent dissolution of the public-private partnership established to catalyze key local sectors.
2. A New Orleans economic development plan and strategy to protect and grow key local sectors and their economic centers, including the French Quarter, Central Business District and sectors including energy, trade, healthcare and biosciences.
3. Synergy with the strategic plan for regional economic competitiveness that leverages the expertise of local, state and regional economic development partners and business community leaders to realistically pursue economic growth in existing and new sectors.
4. An incentive framework that encourages investment and development through the application of a best practice model for fair, transparent and objective processes and criteria.
5. A strategy for safeguarding and leveraging publicly-owned assets to facilitate local economic growth.
6. Programs and incentives that encourage entrepreneurship and neighborhood-based development.



CIVIL SERVICE

The Vision: Government should support City departments to build and foster a culture of performance and accountability and empower managers with the authority to assess, reward and professionally develop their employees.

To reach for this vision, City officials must commit to an action plan to cause the achievement of each of the following policy goals:

1. A strategy for assessing and auditing workplace performance by department and unit and improving the effectiveness of performance reviews.
2. Simplification and streamlining of the civil service system, consistent with existing recommendations within the Civil Service Commission's *Great Place to Work Initiative*.
3. Formation of new supervisor and department head training, to give them tools to help facilitate the professional growth of their employees and properly leverage the probationary period.
4. Publication of core city workforce performance data so residents and third parties can evaluate productivity and efficiency.



OUR VISION FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE NEW ORLEANS GOVERNMENT

VISION STATEMENT SUMMARY

Our vision for New Orleans government is that it should in all instances *respect its fundamental pact with citizens* and deliver a credible municipal basis for a hopeful future vision, where New Orleans becomes and remains a thriving place for all residents to live, work and prosper. The following vision statements set and reach for that standard in key areas of government performance:

- ⇒ **Government should** manage operations *through a leadership team of experienced professionals* working together under a clear hierarchy, guided in their decision-making by a principled policymaking process.
- ⇒ **Government should** demonstrate *transparency and fiscal best practices* on capital and operating budgets for the benefit of New Orleans residents and be a responsible fiscal steward of tax dollars.
- ⇒ **Government should** create and sustain a *high-performing police department* that responds to and seeks to reduce incidents of violent crime.
- ⇒ **Government should** ensure that the entire criminal justice system is aligned around a *coordinated and effective public safety strategy*, derived from a comprehensive strategic planning process.
- ⇒ **Government should** *construct and maintain drivable streets*, create efficient processes for repair of traffic signals and roads and minimize disruption to citizens and businesses.
- ⇒ **Government should** *guarantee safe drinking water*, accurately bill for its delivery and pursue modernized water purification infrastructure that overcomes known risks.
- ⇒ **Government should** *keep citizens and their property safe from flooding* through adequate funding, operation and maintenance of drainage and flood protection infrastructure.
- ⇒ **Government should** ensure that the citizens of Southeastern Louisiana have the most reliable, well-managed and efficiently funded *flood risk and storm protection system* in the United States.
- ⇒ **Government should** deliver *high quality education* to public school students and families to continuously improve their educational experiences and life opportunities.
- ⇒ **Government should** enforce laws that bear upon the *quality of life* and morale of those who live or work in New Orleans and improve visitors' impressions of our city while balancing residents' ability to carry the financial burden of government services.
- ⇒ **Government should** create strategic plans for realistic economic investment and growth in the near- and long-term and prioritize key assets and sectors that *drive our local economy*.
- ⇒ **Government should** support City departments to *build and foster a culture of performance and accountability* and empower managers with the authority to assess, reward and professionally develop their employees.



MOBILIZED FOR IMPACT

The Business Council mobilizes to address vital public policy issues through its Task Forces. Task Force members become subject-matter experts that drive better public policy in local government.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The Criminal Justice Task Force works to help improve public safety outcomes by driving innovation and expertise across the New Orleans criminal justice system, insisting on a system-wide approach to improve the effectiveness of local agencies.



CITY FINANCE

The City Finance Task Force drives transparency and accountability by the Mayor's office and the City Council for the preparation and administration of the New Orleans operating and capital budgets and advocates for best practices for government finance and controls and the adequate funding of quality of life budget priorities.



WATER MANAGEMENT

The Water Management Task Force identifies solutions for critical challenges facing New Orleans' sewer, water, drainage and related water utility systems, prioritizing issues where it can introduce and lead innovative strategies to improve funding, function and results.



PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Public Education Task Force builds on decades of organizational leadership, advocacy and innovation to create and sustain New Orleans' system of autonomous charter schools, identifying policy improvements that strengthen the framework for holding schools accountable for delivering high quality education and the sufficiency of centralized services delivered by the public school district.



CIVIL SERVICE

The Civil Service Task Force works to help improve the overall effectiveness of the New Orleans Civil Service Department by supporting the department's efforts to develop a culture of continuous improvement toward a high-performing human resource system that requires, incentivizes, and rewards excellence of City employees.



FLOOD PROTECTION & COASTAL RESTORATION

The Flood Protection & Coastal Restoration Task Force works to ensure that the region preserves the over \$14.5 billion invested by the U.S. Government since Katrina to restore and improve the flood risk reduction system that protects New Orleans and Southeastern Louisiana.



HOMELESSNESS MITIGATION

The Homelessness Mitigation Committee supports and informs government strategies aimed at substantially reducing or eliminating homelessness in New Orleans' urban core. Through this support, the Committee seeks to improve quality of life for all residents and facilitate the success and growth of local businesses and economic sectors that are negatively impacted by homelessness.



ROADS & INFRASTRUCTURE

The Roads & Infrastructure Committee advocates for a more effective and transparent Department of Public Works (DPW), including the development and funding of strategies to better maintain New Orleans' road and associated infrastructure.

HISTORIC BUSINESS COUNCIL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In the four decades since the Business Council's founding, we have exemplified the power of persistent civic engagement to transform local government.



Assessor Consolidation | Levee Board Consolidation



Charter Schools | School Facilities Master Plan for Rebuilding



Civil Service Reform | Great Place to Work Initiative



Criminal Justice System Technology Modernization



Fair Share Agreement | Infrastructure Advisory Board



Hurricane Risk Reduction System | Coastal Protection



Inspector General | Ethics Review Board



New Orleans Firefighter Pension Fund Reform



Procurement | Public Contracting

2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Vanessa Brown Claiborne, Chair (2026 – 2027)

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EVP & General Manager, Caesars New Orleans

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President & CEO, HRI Properties

Suzanne T. Mestayer

Managing Principal, ThirtyNorth Investments

Graham Ralston

EVP – Commercial Banking & New Orleans Market

President, Regions Bank

Christopher Reade

President, LookFar & Carrollton Enterprise Services

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President & CEO, Entergy New Orleans

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