



Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans

Let your voice be heard in rebuilding the Greater New Orleans Area


[Home](#)
[About Us](#)
[Our Reform Initiatives](#)
[Resources & Collaborations](#)
[Archives](#)
[Contact Us](#)

Media

[Levee Home](#)
[Legislative Activity](#)
[Corps of Engineers
Levee Tour
Nov. 2010](#)
[Levee &
Flood
Protection
Contacts](#)
[Archives](#)

The Dallas Morning News

How to Help New Orleans: Country must ask hard questions first

November 30, 2005

On the last day of this record-breaking hurricane season, our thoughts turn to its most prominent victim: the city of New Orleans.

With New Orleans flat on its back, and the small, relatively poor state of Louisiana fiscally not far from it, it is clear that New Orleans will not be reborn without massive and sustained federal help. The one thing everybody agrees that the city has to have if it is to survive in any meaningful sense is a strong and reliable levee system. Louisiana officials have called for one that can withstand a Category 5 hurricane. Trouble is, even if the engineering skill existed to create such a barrier something New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin publicly doubts estimates of the cost run more than \$32 billion.

Uncle Sam could find the money but should he? Is New Orleans worth rebuilding? Those of us who will be asked to finance the city's recovery are entitled to ask. Consider:

- Some scientists, including one at the center of a recent 60 Minutes report, say that rising oceans and eroding Louisiana wetlands will cut New Orleans off from the mainland by century's end. How likely is this scenario, which other scientists vigorously dispute? If it's plausible, should the nation build what is, in effect, a multibillion-dollar sandcastle on the shore?
- Behind the charm of historic districts, pre-Katrina New Orleans was a basket case of urban blight and long in decline due to a corrupt civic culture and a changing economy that eroded the rationale for its existence. Is there any reason to think that a New Orleans that works is ready to emerge?
- Given that the United States is likely to face more and stronger hurricanes in the years to come, due to natural hurricane cycles and the possible influence of global warming, does it make sense to rebuild a major coastal city virtually from the ground up and below sea level?

This is going to be a painful national conversation to have because nobody wants to disrespect the people of New Orleans, who have lost everything. But we had better talk about these questions, and soon, because without a workable plan that marshals the political will of the nation behind it, New Orleans will die of neglect.

There's another question that needs asking, too. It was posed by New Orleans Times-Picayune editor Jim Amoss in a Washington Post op-ed column on Sunday: What does it say about our civilization if this unique American metropolis is left to die?

That question and the economic ones posed by this editorial define the parameters of a public debate that cannot be put off indefinitely. The 2006 hurricane season begins in seven months.

Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans © 2005 - 2013