

SMART SURFACES

LOUISIANA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Louisiana Public Health Association has focused on building partnerships, engaging communities, and promoting public health messaging to guide city-wide climate policy. Their goal is to create a cooler, safer, and more resilient New Orleans. This year, LPHA has conducted research through focus groups and reviewed state legislation for gaps in climate policy.

HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Focus Groups

In 2024, LPHA convened two focus groups on energy insecurity and health in New Orleans, Louisiana. LPHA obtained qualitative data, which was collected to develop preventive health messages and to plan future educational events. During the focus group, participants discussed the physical, emotional, and financial impact of extreme heat, as well as an interest in building community resilience and improving public health by educating New Orleanians about the following topics: 1) the symptoms of heat-related illness and 2) tangible action steps for conserving energy and reducing exposure to extreme heat. After evaluating key informant interview data and the focus group feedback, LPHA decided to host a "Climate and Health" breakout session during the 2024 LPHA Conference in April 2024 and an in-person community workshop in September 2025.

Smart Surfaces Workshop/Resource Fair

LPHA collaborated with partners and the City of New Orleans to host the NOLA Smart Surfaces Workshop/Resource Fair at Xavier University. The Resource Fair raised awareness about tangible actions for reducing exposure to extreme heat, managing chronic and other health conditions during power outages and other weather-related events and budgeting for weather-related events. Several of the workshop attendees registered for Energy Smart New Orleans, a program that incentivizes home and business owners to make energy-saving upgrades to their properties about low-cost mitigations for reducing their electric bills.



NEW PARTNERSHIPS

LPHA attended the joint kick off meeting facilitated by the American Public Health Association and Smart Surfaces Coalition and connected with Coalition partner, Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. In 2023, Louisiana Public Health Association representatives and the CEO of Healthy Community Services met with Metro AME to inform and engage in the NOLA Smart Surface Project. Metro AME provided guidance and input on focus groups, which were convened in 2024. From this partnership, two focus groups were completed. Locations included a church and a neighborhood association community center.



Dr. Eric Griggs speaks about Heat Illness.

- **Broadmoor Improvement Association (BIA):**

BIA is a non-profit neighborhood association that offers health and wellness services. BIA invited LPHA to table at their Food Pantry in September 2025 to promote the NOLA Smart Surfaces Workshop at Xavier University.

- **Greater New Orleans Foundation:**

The Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF) is implementing a Community-Led Green Infrastructure Program to fund projects in New Orleans and surrounding counties to reduce stormwater flooding and other impacts of extreme weather events. LPHA assisted with connecting GNOF to the Smart Surfaces Initiative and will collaborate with this group to promote residential tree planting programs.

- **Green the Church-Louisiana:** Congregants from churches participating in the Green the Church-Louisiana organization participated in LPHA's focus groups. LPHA will collaborate with Green the Church-Louisiana to promote the residential tree planting program to Orleans Parish residents.

- **Groundwork New Orleans:** LPHA will be collaborating with this organization to create a user-friendly fact sheet to increase awareness about local tree planting programs. The team will share the fact sheet with various local and state organizations, as well as local government entities to increase awareness about the residential tree planting programs.

- **ISEEChange:** ISEEChange is working with the Office of Resilience and Sustainability to better engage community members in future flood meetings and previously collaborated with the New Orleans Health Department on several heat-related initiatives, which resulted in an extreme heat resource guide.

- **National Audubon Society:** The National Audubon Society is dedicated to addressing environmental issues among underrepresented communities in the Gulf Coast. The Society is one of the recipients of federal funding to implement a residential tree planting program in specific New Orleans communities.

INITIATIVES/COALITIONS

In December 2025, LPHA will collaborate with the Broadmoor Improvement Association, Groundworks New Orleans, National Audubon Society to develop a fact sheet to increase awareness about the residential tree planting programs. Additionally, LPHA will work with these organizations, the City of New Orleans, Healthy Community Services, Green the Church-Louisiana and other organizations to disseminate the flyers, publish social media posts and e-newsletter articles to promote the tree planting programs.

SMART SURFACE POLICIES

The LPHA team used the Smart Surfaces Policy Tracker to research local climate policies. One city ordinance would expand curbside recycling and potentially divert between 19,000-30,000 tons of waste from landfills. If the waste diversion ordinance was passed, it would also assist City with meeting its goal of reducing environmental pollution and waste by 2030. Another policy would be the New Orleans City Council's regulation of the electric and gas investor-owned utility companies to ensure proper oversight and just billing practices and sustainable business practices resulting in a reduction in energy usage. Improved oversight will result in affordable utility bills, efficient homes, reliable/resilient power, renewable energy, and a transparent Council and accountable utilities.

In addition to researching local policies and attending community events where local climate-related policies were discussed, LPHA team members participated in monthly cohort meetings in which the City of New Orleans also attended. During the monthly meetings, no new local policies were moved forward. Some discussions about introducing new local policies may not have been proposed because 2025 was a city election year. It is highly likely that programs will restart conversations about local policies once the new administration takes office in January 2026.



Rhea Roa provides an overview of Smart Surfaces