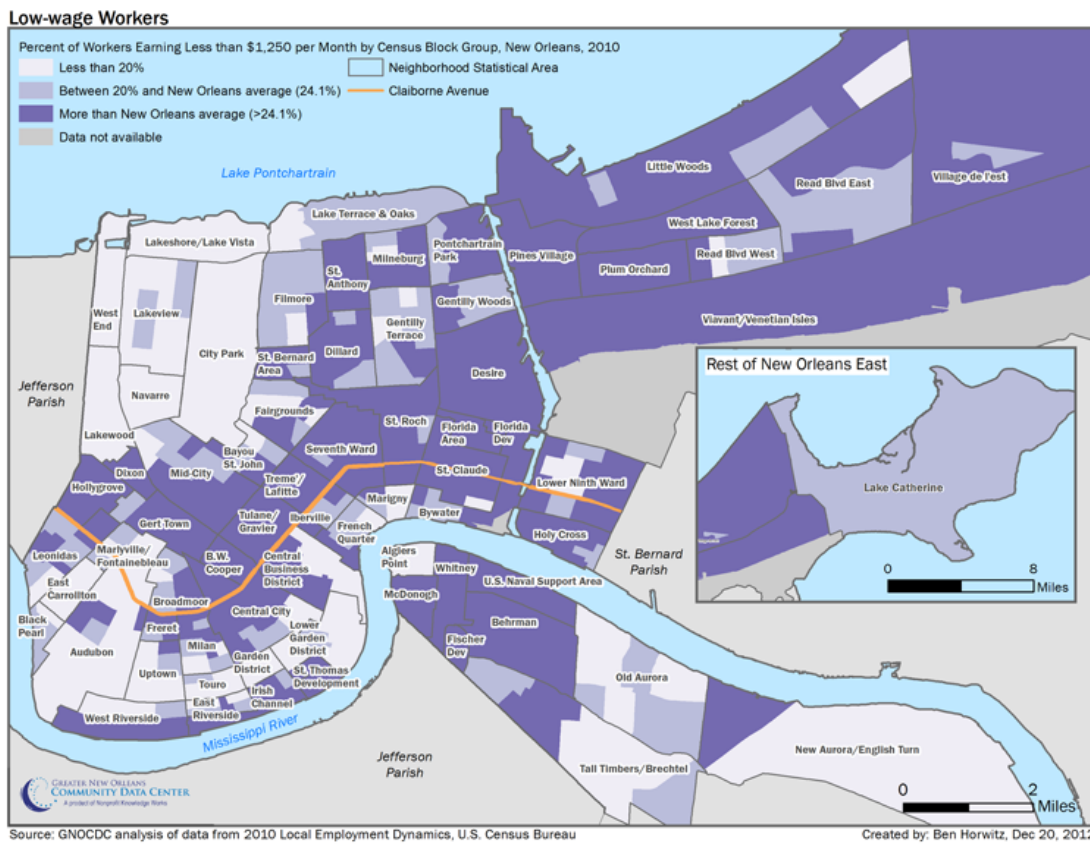


Life Chances in the New Orleans Metro: Considering Lakeview and St Roch

Though a generalisation, the 'life chances' available to New Orleans residents seem to divide over clear and relatively contained boundaries. Poverty cuts a path through the centre of the city almost like a ladle – it concentrates in the geographic centre of the urban area and stretches out like a handle into New Orleans East. Those better off seem to concentrate around the city's bodies of water (the river and the lake, specifically), parks (Audubon and City) and St. Charles Avenue. While they take over a wide area surrounding these amenities, the dichotomous settlement of resources deviates little from this pattern.



Map via GNOCDC

The St. Roch neighbourhood sits between the handle and the spoon of the “poverty ladle”; it is considered by The Data Center (formerly The Greater New Orleans Community Data Center) to be a smaller area within the Bywater neighbourhood.



Images. Left, a typical street in St. Roch, 2019. Image via Google Streetview. Right, The St Roch Market in 1938, unknown photographer. Image via nola.com

Well-established by the 1920s, the area was known as a low-key and racially mixed family neighbourhood. It is now a primarily African American neighbourhood, a byproduct of a white exodus following the construction of the I-10 overpass (and a second exodus following Hurricane Katrina in 2005). The population in the area decreased *dramatically* between 2000 and 2010, dropping from 11975 residents to 6632. But while the population has shrunk, the proportions/percentages of recorded data have remained relatively steady.

Lakeview, by contrast, is a generally well-off district of New Orleans, located towards the north-western edge of the city limits. Particularly compared to neighbourhoods in the south-east of the city (including the French Quarter and St Roch), the area is newly habitable – it was developed from swampland only after World War II. Like St Roch, Lakeview saw a significant (though slightly less so) population drop between 2000 and 2010, from 9875 to 6394. Though this is a decrease of around 33%, other statistics (such as number of households) indicate decreases closer to 50%. The area is home to slightly more young, childless couples (indicated by increases in the 18-34 age range and number of households with no one under the age of 18), but otherwise the neighbourhood has remained proportionally equal between 2000 and 2010.



Images. Left, a typical street in Lakeview, 2019. Image via Google Streetview. Right, The Lakeview area prior to the housing boom following World War II in the late 40s. Unknown photographer. Image via gonola.com

In comparing the districts (/considering them in tandem) it is perhaps first useful to note historical/cultural differences. St. Roch has existed since its foundation almost exclusively as a mid-lower class mixed neighbourhood near the city's centre; Lakeview was built as a suburban-type development to serve middle class (white) families in the post-WWII boom. They exist as different neighbourhoods today in part because they were *established* as different neighbourhoods.

That's not to say that they're completely different; indeed, there are a number of eerie statistical similarities between the districts. They both are home to populations of around 6500 (having both dropped from populations of nearly 10,000 in 2005), they both are made up of approximately 2500 households, and have nearly identical age demographics. Nearly 14% of residents in both districts work in the healthcare industry, and a large number of residents in both work in the accommodation/food services industry.

But in Lakeview, the average household income is \$97,926 per year. In St Roch it is \$29,136.



Images. Left, a house on St. Roch Avenue. Image via Zillow. Right, a house in Lakeview. Image via NOLAHomes.

Looking at differences in housing, we see that more people in Lakeview own their houses than rent; in St. Roch this statistic splits 50/50. Considering both income and employment (both field and type), this is hardly a surprise. As mentioned, equal percentages of the population in both districts work in the healthcare industry (14). Other highly represented areas of employment in Lakeview are scientific/technical services (11.2%), education (9.3%), and accommodation (11.4%). St. Roch (too) is immensely represented in the accommodation industry (22%), as well as the retail industry (13.9%) and waste management (8.6%). Where workers in Lakeview skew 'white collar', those in St. Roch are more likely to be considered 'blue' or 'pink collar'.

As is often the case, these are all realities inextricably intertwined with race. St. Roch is today an overwhelmingly black neighbourhood (86.8%); Lakeview is its mirror with a population that is 88.2% white. Both have become less racially homogenous in the years post-Katrina. Gentrification is likely to blame in the case of St. Roch (considering the rampant gentrification in the Bywater area); the combined wallop of Katrina and the Housing Crisis are the most likely explanations of shifting demographics in Lakeview.



Images. Clockwise from top left, the St Roch Market in 1938: the St Roch Market post refurbishment, pictured in 2016, the interior of the Market pictured in 2017. Images via nola.com.

Interesting to note, however, is that within the population of homeowners, far more people in St. Roch own their homes outright than in Lakeview (56% and 27%, respectively.) Though perhaps a jump, this appears to speak to lifestyle and mindset differences between social classes - that is, those who are better off often trade much more on credit. Additionally, in the 'Geographies of Poverty' map series, St Roch is highlighted as one of the neighbourhoods with the highest percentage of grandparents as caregivers. This implies (though does not necessarily mean) that households in St Roch are often be multigenerational. It may be that the homes themselves have seen multiple generations of the same family.

These differences in lifestyle are key to understanding the complex mechanisms that allow certain neighbourhoods to rise while letting others deteriorate.

In a way, the residents of Lakeview may be no 'better off' than the residents of St Roch. Certainly, their income is higher, but judging based on home ownership and educational statistics, it is likely that their debt is significantly higher as well. The "ideal" (ie, privileged) American lifestyle is one that gambles on credit; those in underprivileged areas are so because they are less capable of breaking into that (risky) system. But it is a terrible cycle – lowered mobility, less robust educational opportunities, and unremitting racial discrimination (overtly intended or otherwise) enforced by the districts they live in make it unlikely that the underprivileged St Roch types will ever be able to make moves in the emerging and highly stratified American social class system. And when the next credit bubble bursts, they will be both blameless and the ones likely to suffer the most.

Additional Sources

"Faubourg St. Roch | Rebuilding Together New Orleans." *Faubourg St. Roch | Rebuilding Together New Orleans*. Rebuild Together New Orleans, Web. 08 Mar. 2015.

"Lakeview Neighborhood." *Lakeview Neighborhood*. Greater New Orleans Data Center, Web. 08 Mar. 2015.

Lepore, Jill. "Richer and Poorer." *The New Yorker*. Web. 10 Mar. 2015.

Statistics Cited, Data via The Data Center/ GNOCDC

	<i>St Roch</i>	<i>Lakeview</i>
People & Households		
Population (2010)	6632	6394
Total Households	2604	2672
Female	52.90%	51.60%
Male	47.10%	48.40%
Age 18-34	24.50%	29.50%
Age 35-49	18.70%	20.70%
Age 50+	19.40%	19.10%
Black	86.80%	3.40%
White	7%	88.20%
Housing		
Owner Occupied	45%	68.80%
Renter Occupied	55%	31.20%
Owned w/mortgage	43.90%	72.60%
Owned Outright	56.10%	27.40%
Income Types		
Wage Based	53.70%	85.80%
Social Security Based	31.50%	12.90%
Average Yearly Income	\$29,136	\$97,926
Transportation		
No available vehicle	38.20%	1.20%
2 or more available vehicles	21.80%	70.20%
Education		
9-12th grade	20.90%	2.40%
High School Diploma/GED	39.20%	9.90%
Some College	22%	19.30%
Associates Degree	2.10%	4.80%
Bachelors Degree	6.70%	39.70%
Graduate/Professional Degree	3.10%	23.30%