



# Annual Report 2011

**THE LENS**   
*Focusing on New Orleans & the Gulf Coast*



## Letter from the Chairman

Over the past year, the staff members of The Lens have dedicated themselves to making our organization’s mission a reality. The key is to question, listen, research, investigate and communicate the result. Story after story in the past year proves the quality of the effort.

Critical in this effort is the ability of The Lens to remain independent. Independence breeds integrity. The Lens is committed to both. Underlying each story is the commitment to the notion that we will advocate for accountability and just governance. New Orleans and the Gulf Coast are in a process of rebirth of rededication to the idea that knowledge is power. The Lens is committed to providing the knowledge and fueling the process.

The Board believes strongly that what The Lens has produced over the past year is but a precursor of what the new year holds. Therefore we stand steadfast with the staff in its commitment to our mission, and we are likewise committed to providing the support necessary for them to continue this effort.

Judge Calvin Johnson (ret)

## Mission

The mission of The Lens is to engage and empower the residents of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast by providing the information and analysis necessary to advocate for more accountable and just governance.

With a staff of experienced investigative reporters and pundits, The Lens merges the accuracy, fairness and thoroughness of traditional journalism with the speed, urgency and interactivity of online media. This hybrid model is well-suited to New Orleans, a city where residents count media watchdogs as allies in the struggle to rebuild a better community in the face of limited resources.

## Board list

### Current

Judge Calvin Johnson (ret), *Chairman*  
Michael Sartiskey, PhD, *Treasurer*  
Steve Beatty, *Secretary*  
Stephen Ostertag

### Past

Jed Horne  
Lee Zurik

## Staff list

Steve Beatty, *Managing editor*  
Jed Horne, *News editor*

Ariella Cohen, *Co-founder & reporter*  
Karen Gadbois, *Co-founder & reporter*  
Matthew Davis, *Reporter*  
Jessica Williams, *Reporter*  
Mark Moseley, *Opinion writer & charter schools coordinator*

Anne Mueller, *Development director*  
Maggie Calmes, *Engagement editor*



When we launched The Lens two years ago, we were motivated by the idea that a small group of dedicated public-interest journalists could help to change the way our city makes decisions. More information and analysis could help the people of

New Orleans hold leaders and institutions accountable, we thought.

With that logic as guide, we set out to provide ongoing watchdog coverage of a broken city government struggling to recover from Hurricane Katrina, a deeply troubled criminal-justice system and a school system undergoing significant transformation. We believed that New Orleans was ready for a new conversation.

Turns out we were right.

As The Lens enters its third year, we see the power of our work every day. Our reporting on the ongoing, illegal distribution of toxic FEMA trailers has inspired a national collaboration with American Public Media and other investigative news outlets across the country. A series of groundbreaking stories on the failure of charter schools to comply with state laws regarding openness and transparency educated school officials about obligations to the public of which, in some cases, they were wholly unaware.

We’ve broken stories on Sheriff Marlin Gusman’s refusal to enact reform in the city’s notoriously troubled prison, even in the face of pressure from the U.S. Department of Justice. Our exclusive coverage of the overmedicating of young people in Louisiana’s juvenile justice facilities put a national spotlight on unsafe conditions.

We’ve told our readers what’s working in the city’s monster battle against blighted, abandoned property – and what’s not. Our careful tracking of city and state spending of hundreds of millions of dollars in recovery spending has helped communities better advocate for repairs and services they’ve been waiting for since Katrina hit more than six years ago. Our investigation into one New Orleans nonprofit that is supposed to be serving the community sparked a government probe after

the leader refused to show how she spent the city-provided money. And an investigation into a traveling huckster doing business in town forced him to pay at least a few overdue bills before declaring bankruptcy.

By all measures, our reach is steadily increasing. The number of our investigative or community-based reports will top 800 by the end of 2011, including more than 50 major investigative articles and hundreds of shorter news articles on topics such as land use, the school system and City Hall.

More than 150,000 unique readers have visited The Lens since our inception. Our friends on Facebook and followers on Twitter continue to grow steadily, as does our name recognition in the community.

But it’s not only our readers who are paying attention.

In 2011, the Press Club of New Orleans recognized our reporting on the use and abuse of Katrina recovery dollars with its top investigative and feature-writing awards. Judges called the reporting “New York Times level” and cited “painstaking research with conclusions that help readers understand” the significance of the investigations.

Our real-time coverage of public meetings on Twitter won first place in the Press Club’s social-media category. It continues to earn attention from more than 2,000 followers who rely on us for up-to-the-minute reporting on everything from a routine City Council meeting to a heated public hearing on policies within Orleans Parish Prison. Though this breed of real-time eyewitness coverage is growing in popularity across the globe, we are the only organization providing it consistently in New Orleans.

We’re confident The Lens will continue to grow in the coming years. We’ve just started a membership program to bring added financial support, and we’re planning other earned-revenue streams that will truly distinguish The Lens as a pioneer in nonprofit local investigative journalism. None of this could happen without the support of the donors, readers, foundations and friends who believed in us when this journey began.

Thank you for sticking by us, and growing with us.

Ariella Cohen and Karen Gadbois

# Impact of our reporting



An ill-informed citizenry becomes disconnected from democratic governance and eventually stops participating. Decisions are made in the interest of a few rather than the many. Accountability is lost. The entire community pays a price.

Our aim at The Lens is to engage the public and enhance awareness of public issues – including patterns of corruption – that touch our lives. With our colleagues in the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance we identify areas of public concern and provide the in-depth reporting that provides a basis for intelligent decision-making. In turn, the NOCOG constellation of advocacy groups uses our stories to educate and work with the community to bring about change.

*A Lens article on a fledgling urban agriculture school (pictured) in the Lower 9th Ward highlighted the challenges facing the growing urban farming movement. Our coverage was picked up nationally, sparking a conversation about how to make programs more accountable to the communities they serve.*

*Our coverage of the small fishing community of Pointe a la Hache on the east bank of the Mississippi River drew national attention to the community's struggle in the face of the BP oil spill.*



Shawn Escoffery Photography 2010

TheLensNOLA, (RT by rebekahcain), [+] Wed 01 Jun 08:07



@TheLensNola report triggers city investigation into #NewOrleans nonprofit <http://bit.ly/jXv4Gr> #infoneeds



**KHRoyal** Karran Harper Royal

@TheLensNOLA Thanks and thanks for being there. We don't get much coverage of charter board meetings other than your tweets. #nolaed

1 Jun

## EDUCATION

The Louisiana charter school law is designed to free independently run public schools from the heavy, creativity-deadening hand of central-office administration. But charter school autonomy does not exempt these mini-school boards from the state's open-meetings and public-records laws. These statutes are meant to keep publicly funded institutions accountable and honest – all of them, charter schools included.

Using public records requests, The Lens determined that many charter schools were operating in violation of these laws and furthermore, didn't even realize that the laws applied to them.

### RESULT

The state charter association posted a legal library online to provide guidance; the Orleans Parish School Board president publicly reprimanded charter schools for not following the law; and many charter boards pledged compliance based on our coverage.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Youths incarcerated across Louisiana and the New Orleans metropolitan area are getting dosed with potent anti-psychotic drugs even when they have not been diagnosed with the conditions the drugs are meant to treat, an investigation by The Lens found. Numbing youths to make them more manageable is an affront to both law enforcement and medical ethics.

### RESULT

Juvenile justice advocates have used our reporting to advance campaigns for improvements in care for incarcerated young people.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In 2005, a Gert Town nonprofit received \$404,000 from a legal settlement between the city and Thompson-Hayward Chemical Co., a now defunct pesticide maker blamed for years of health problems among neighbors of its messy Gert Town plant. An investigation by The Lens found that five years later, more than a quarter of the settlement money had been paid to the director of the nonprofit Gert Town Revival Initiative while little had been spent on community development.

### RESULT

On the heels of our investigation, City Hall launched its own investigation into Gert Town Revival's spending.

## CHARTER SCHOOL REPORTING CORPS

No city has a greater percentage of public-school students in charter schools than New Orleans. The explosion in the number of charter schools has changed things for everyone involved – including the news media. In the pre-charter era, newspapers typically assigned one reporter to cover the school board. Today, 45 autonomous boards run 65 charter schools, and meet monthly. That's in addition to the Orleans Parish School Board and the Recovery School District, which run more than 20 schools combined. Our Charter School Reporting Corps staffs every one of those charter meetings and posts a report on the page we have built on our site for each school. Parents, teachers and other stakeholders are now able to keep tabs on board decisions and school finances. No other newsroom in the country has endeavored to follow charter schools this comprehensively. We make New Orleans not only an incubator for innovation in education, but also for innovation in reporting on education.

### RESULT

More engagement, greater parental involvement in schools.



**valmcginley** Val McGinley

@TheLensNOLA reporting on charter schools is absolutely, hands down the best journalism work we're seeing on NOLA charters.

2 minutes ago

# Why we do what we do

Jed Horne



I'm the old fogey around here. After a 40-year career in mass-market, for-profit journalism, in Boston, New York and New Orleans, I arrived at The Lens with reservations about the blogosphere. I was particularly resistant to the idea that

everyone's a journalist: Just grab yourself a laptop and sound off. The world's dying to hear from you.

Am I about to announce that I've outgrown those elitist hang-ups? Sorry, folks. I have not. To sanitize the old saying, opinions are like belly buttons. Most everyone's got one. But that doesn't mean every one of them is worth a long, deep gaze.

What the blogosphere has shown, however, is that many more of us are worth hearing from than the traditional print products ever had the space – or inclination – to accommodate.

And so, one of my more interesting roles at The Lens has been to commission opinion pieces from community leaders and just plain interesting folks who might never have done much writing of this type. Then it's a matter of applying old-school editing standards to the task of making those opinions as clear and forceful as possible.

Part of the task is to assure that the facts opinion writers blithely cite in support of their opining are, indeed, factual. Which is what distinguishes this amalgam of old and new editorializing from the kind of anything-goes blogging that characterizes the genre in its pure and most reckless form.

It has made for an interesting conversation – and sometimes spirited debate as one contributor inspires another to affirm or rebut a point of view. We've heard from the Occupy New Orleans crowd and from those who find this latest expression of participatory democracy to be especially ill-focused and naïve; we've aired land use and housing preservation issues; we've argued the merits and demerits of various plans for extending streetcar service and charter school choice; building on investigative reports that ran in The Lens news hole, we've decried the failure of philanthropic foundations to hold their own programming to the same standards of accountability and transparency that they demand from government. And on and on.

And for shoot-from-the-hip purists among you bloggers, there's always room for bountiful commentary below the posted essay. Keep it coming.

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Steve Beatty



I was born a tattletale, but I was discerning.

I wasn't the type to bust a friend for sneaking an extra handful of Halloween candy after reaching

his parent-imposed quota for the day. But I'd tell his mom if he took some from the stash of his unsuspecting little brother. It just wasn't right, and someone needed to know about it.

When I got into journalism more than 25 years ago, I still held fast to that sense of youthful justice. And I'd gained a typical 20-year-old's sense of righteousness and conviction that I could make a difference and change the world.

Stubbornly, I still feel that way. But now I'm not sticking up for the kid who hustled for Hershey bars. I'm focused on the community that worked to get desperately needed post-Katrina rebuilding money – only to see the leader of a nonprofit line her pockets with it. I'm concerned about the homeowner struggling to pay rising property taxes – only to see elected officials spend the revenue on no-bid contracts that don't ensure the best value. I'm appalled on behalf of the kids who go to school, trusting that adults will provide a proper education – only to find they can't pass basic tests.

It just isn't right, and people should know about it.

By highlighting some of the people who have fought the system to bring about change, we hope to inspire others to join them.

People ask all the time whether The Lens is willing to write "good news" stories. We consider it good news when we identify a situation where someone is being wronged, and either the public demands that it be fixed, or public officials take action on their own. That's not good news. That's great news.

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Karen Gadbois



In August of 2005, I didn't even realize that online news outlets existed, much less envision myself starting one.

As a resident returning to a flooded neighborhood and facing the daunting task of rebuilding, I was struck by the lack of consistent information emanating from City Hall.

To address the confusion I began a blog called Squandered Heritage. The site focused intently on the accelerating pace at which the city – in the name of reviving itself – was demolishing a priceless architectural heritage. With entire corridors of the city in the bulldozer's path, I wondered online if we were witness to a second assault on neighborhoods that were gutted by white flight a generation earlier.

My own passion for reporting on ongoing recovery efforts – or the lack thereof -- eventually grew into an informal collaboration with television news reporter Lee Zurik. Our series of stories on the New Orleans Affordable Homeownership Program exposed a dysfunctional and possible criminal enterprise nested in City Hall. We were grateful to see the work honored with prestigious industry awards, including the Peabody, an IRE Gold Medal and DuPont.

These days, I continue to report on neighborhood-level news – a scuffle over redevelopment, the mishandling of a blighted lot – while also investigating the larger systems that give rise to such incidents.

As the saying goes, all politics is local. The same can be said for public policy. What may seem to be a minor neighborhood issue can in fact be the proverbial canary in the coalmine.

By providing a thoughtful and engaging look at our city, our neighborhoods and residents, The Lens is fast on its way to becoming an irreplaceable New Orleans institution.

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Ariella Cohen



The poet Dylan Thomas once said that Washington is not a city, it is an abstraction. The same could be said for New Orleans. We invented jazz here and lived in dynamic, multicultural com-

munities generations before multiculturalism was an idea with a word attached to it. We were a brand before branding.

But in addition to all that, New Orleans is a city – a place of deep inequalities and terrific opportunity, a place that is struggling to maintain public services in the face of a national recession and federal spending cuts, a place that is still struggling to recover from a disaster that struck six years ago.

Those deep challenges inspire me. Every week, I cover City Hall, tracking the trickle of federal recovery and community development dollars into our city's neighborhoods. I write about the intersection of public policy and lived experiences. How are children faring in a Lower 9th Ward urban farming program funded by the government, but operated under little oversight? Is a federal program intended to make workplaces safer lowering risks for workers at Louisiana's oil refineries?

Earlier this year, I traveled to tornado-stricken Alabama to find disaster victims living in the same toxic FEMA trailers that the federal government supplied to those displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Even after deciding the trailers were unsafe for human residence, a policy decision to sell the trailers on the open market meant that they were again being used housing of last resort for needy victims. Recently, a story examined how changes in City Hall were affecting city road conditions and prospects for repair. Another recent article investigated how a recovery program designed to foster the redevelopment of a neighborhood shopping center ended up aiding Walmart.

I report on New Orleans as a city, not an abstraction. If we want to maintain the culture that has made us into a cherished American ideal, we must acknowledge that we are living in a city created equally by bricks and bond revenue as second lines and gumbo.

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Matt Davis



As a native Brit seeking American citizenship, I was exposed in the past year to a lot of rhetoric about the U.S. Constitution and American values, such as freedom of expression, indi-

vidual rights, and freedom from persecution at the hands of government. But since arriving in this country in 2006 I have often reported on instances where representatives of the government, in particular, have failed to uphold these values. Nothing motivates me more as a reporter than exposing those inconsistencies, particularly in the field of criminal justice.

In New Orleans, where we already incarcerate proportionately more people than anywhere else in the nation, Sheriff Marlin Gusman has begun work on a new jail, and it remains to be seen whether it will be larger than the one he is already operating. Without term limits, and controlling a huge amount of money and manpower, Gusman has shown scant regard for the concerns of City Council and criminal-justice-reform advocates about how the new jail should take shape.

Yet even as advocates and some councilmembers call for reform, I have reported on City Hall's business-as-usual dealings with Gusman. For example, Mayor Mitch Landrieu has exploited a legal loophole and funneled more than \$1 million to the sheriff for no-bid contracts, despite an inaugural pledge to uphold transparency and accountability. The Landrieu administration has also failed to change the way Gusman is paid to run the jail – on an outdated per-prisoner, per-day basis – despite having vowed to do so more than a year ago.

When management of our city's jail is opaque, with deals done behind closed doors and inmates continuing to die in custody, how can we judge whether those elected to administer justice in our name are living up to the values this country claims to hold dear?

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Jessica Williams



As I finished grammar school in New Orleans, I knew there were only five high schools I could choose from – five out of more than 20 in the public school system.

The reason? The majority of public schools in New Orleans were failing. The district was in shambles. A well-intentioned superintendent would roll into town every few years, doling out promises, vowing to fix a busted system, only to leave town as frustrated as his predecessor. There weren't many options for students, but there also weren't many options for teachers like my mother, a 30-year educator who watched in dismay as the system slowly collapsed.

Katrina washed out homes, businesses, and a big chunk of the city's substandard schools – a tragedy that was also an opportunity. Concerned stakeholders rose with newfound determination. In addition to the state's takeover of more than 70 failing schools, volunteer groups secured charters and began opening reinvigorated schools as quickly as a rebounding population demanded. In less than five years, the majority of the city's public school students were enrolled in charter schools. Early returns showed a wave of academic success unprecedented in the city's recent history. Scores rose as school leaders were accorded site-based autonomy, which unleashed classroom creativity.

But it was clear that many charter school boards, legally autonomous but still responsible for public dollars, were unaware of the laws that bound them to the public they served. That's what I aim to do, everyday, in my coverage – write the stories that make new school leaders recognize their role for what it is. I applaud the progress these groups have made. I'm proud that my son will one day have more than just five options for high school. But without proper adherence to the law, charter management is no better than the ailing district that preceded it – and at risk of replicating its failures.

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## Collaborations and Mentions

Center for Public Integrity \* Facing South \* Gambit \* Louisiana Weekly \*  
Next American City \* Newsweek \* ProPublica \* The Atlantic \*  
The Daily Beast \* The Root \* The Times-Picayune \* WVUE 8 \* Youth Today

At the core of our mission at The Lens is the belief that engaging with our readers – current and future – is critical to successful delivery of one-of-a-kind public-interest journalism. Reporter, subject and reader all have voices – and all of them should be part of the conversation.

For this reason, we have made it a priority to cultivate an active relationship with readers and community members, both online and off. In the past year, our efforts have paid off in a broader reach and deeper connections with our readers.

Website analytics tell us that Facebook is one of the top referral sources for our site, meaning that many of our readers are using Facebook as a way to follow and consume news. With that in mind, we've stepped up our use of Facebook as an engagement platform and promotional tool, making our page more stimulating through the use of images, video, and conversations with our readers. The result: more engagement. Our Facebook page activity, which indicates the frequency of story views and reader feedback, has increased nearly 300 percent since January. Our Twitter account has seen similar gains, with over 2,000 followers to date and many retweets and endorsements every week.

The Press Club of New Orleans recognized our live coverage of public events on Twitter by giving us the top prize in the organization's social-media category during its annual awards.

We've also taken online engagement to the national level through our partnership with American Public Media's Public Insight Network, an internationally recognized platform for connecting people directly with journalists. The Lens has signed up more than 160 New Orleanians as sources in this innovative online journalism tool and brings more Gulf Coast voices to the network every week.

But you can't find everyone online. Recognizing the city's persistent digital divide, we've developed successful strategies for reaching readers through face-to-face meetings and print republication of our content in the city's oldest African-American weekly newspaper, The Louisiana Weekly. The newspaper has published 82 articles in the past year in its nationally distributed newspaper, often featuring our stories on its front page. Another news partner, WVUE-TV, frequently includes our reporting on its daily newscasts and website. In 2011, the station posted 32 Lens articles on its website and featured our reporting on television 14 times.

To date, we've held two well-attended salons, in which folks come to speak with one another and with Lens staff members about local issues and related news coverage. We've also begun holding monthly Offline with The Lens events, in which Lens reporters set up a mobile office in local coffee shops. This gives readers a chance to approach staff members in person about story ideas and community interests that invite deeper investigation. Our last event drew over 20 readers into a Treme coffee shop, produced several significant leads, and allowed us to meet community members face-to-face.

Come and say hello. We'd love to meet you.

– Maggie Calmes, Engagement Editor

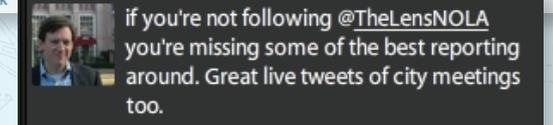
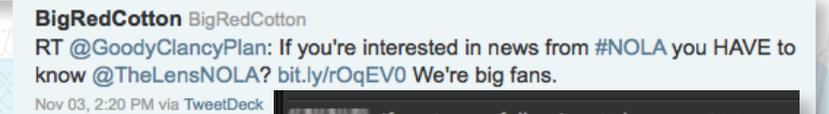
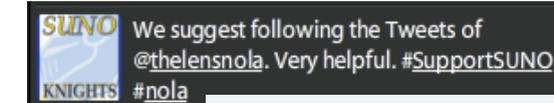
## NUMBERS SPEAK

Our **website** draws over 10,000 pageviews and over 3,000 unique visitors every week. We've seen a sustained weekly increase in these numbers over the past year.

Our **newsletter** has 1,102 subscribers. We gain an average of 26 new subscribers each month. Our average open rate is 35%, which is about 15% higher than the industry average open rate (for news publications).

The Lens has 1,576 likes on **Facebook**, with that number increasing each week. Activity on our page has risen by over 300 percent since last year, and our readers frequently use this forum to comment and debate on issues we're reporting.

The Lens boasts a noted and dynamic **Twitter** presence as we use the popular social media platform to promote stories, provide live coverage of important meetings and breaking news, and inform readers of upcoming events. We currently have 2,117 followers on Twitter with more catching on every day.



## Lending our expertise

Delgado Community College's Dolphin student newspaper  
 Gulf Coast Bank & Trust  
 Internal Revenue Service Public Information Officers  
 Louisiana Smart Growth Summit  
 Loyola University's Maroon student newspaper  
 Next American City  
 Rethinkers  
 Social Enterprise Conference, Harvard University  
 Society for Professional Journalists  
 The Université d'Aix-en-Provence  
 Tulane University's Hullahaloo student newspaper  
 United States State Department  
 West African journalists  
 Chinese journalists  
 University of Pennsylvania

## Past Interns

Jean-Paul Arguello, Loyola University  
 Naomi Martin, Tulane University  
 Jessica Williams, Loyola University

## Awards

### Press Club, 2011 Investigative and Feature writing awards

For our reporting on the use and abuse of Katrina recovery dollars with judges calling the reporting "New York Times level" and cited "painstaking research with conclusions that help readers understand" the significance of the investigations.

### Press Club, 2011 Social-media category

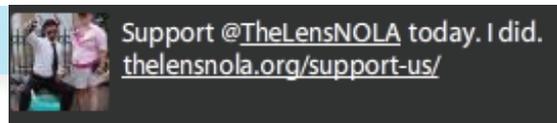
Our real-time coverage of public meetings on Twitter won first place.

### Neighborhood Partnership Network Trumpet Award, 2011 Best Education Advocate

## Partners and Colleagues

American Public Media  
 Antenna Gallery  
 Center for Public Integrity  
 Committee for a Better New Orleans  
 Investigative News Network  
 Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities  
 Louisiana Weekly  
 Neighborhoods Partnership Network  
 New Orleans Citizen Diplomacy Council  
 New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance  
 Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana  
 Puentes  
 The Public Law Center  
 WVUE 8  
 WWOZ





## Our viability requires the participation and support of you, our reader audience.



“I absolutely love The Lens! Thank you again for all the hard work y’all throw down for Real, Investigative, Local journalism. That’s the way it has always rolled in New Orleans, from Lafcadio Hearn to Karen Gadbois <-(: kindred spirits if ya axe me :)”

— Editilla the Pun ~ New Orleans Ladder

## Individual support

Eli Ackerman  
 Steve Beatty  
 Steven Bingler & Linda Usdin  
 Ellen Blue  
 Vivian Cahn  
 Debra Calmes  
 Bess Carrick, Blackbird Media  
 Nathan Cataline  
 Michael Chabon & Ayelet Waldman  
 Leigh Checkman  
 Bette Cole  
 Deborah Cotton  
 David Eber  
 Editilla the Pun ~ New Orleans Ladder  
 Mr. & Mrs. Laurence Eustis III  
 Josephine Everly  
 Abigail Feldman

Peter Gardner  
 Melissa Gibbs  
 Roberta Brandes Gratz  
 Author, *The Battle For Gotham: New York in the Shadow of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs*, Nation Books, April 2010  
 Frederick “Jed” Horne & Jane Wholey  
 Judge Calvin Johnson (ret)  
 Paul Lambert  
 Austin Lavin  
 Diana Lewis  
 David Marcello & Jane Johnson  
 Robin Marshall  
 Thomas Milliner  
 Virginia Miller  
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 Delores J. Walker  
 Harley S. Winer & Esther B. DeJong  
 Darlene Wolnik  
 Mary Zervigon  
 Lee & Jennifer Zurik

## Foundation support

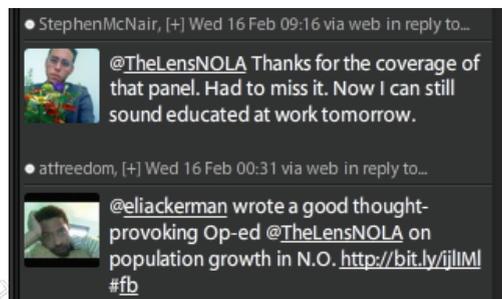
Foundation for Louisiana (formerly known as Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation)  
 John S. and James L. Knight Foundation  
 Surdna Foundation  
 Open Society Foundations  
 Zeitoun Foundation

“Through its New Orleans Fund, Surdna is pleased to support The Lens as an important on-line investigative news source for New Orleans and contributor to strengthening residents’ engagement the city’s rebuilding.”

Lynn Stern, Program Officer – Thriving Cultures Surdna Foundation

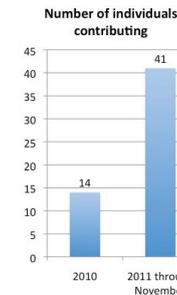
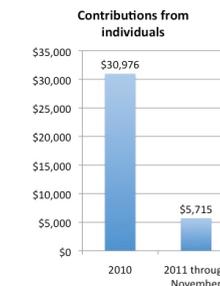
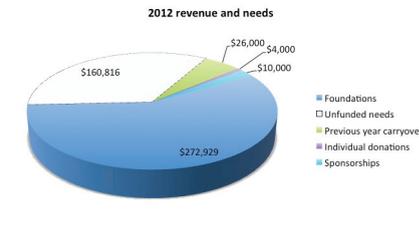
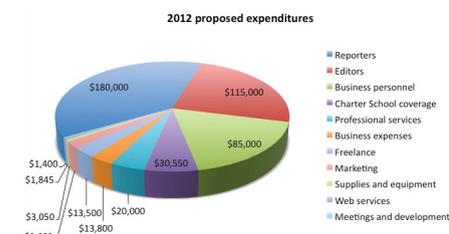
## Institutional support

Crescent Bank & Trust  
 Greater New Orleans Foundation  
 WVUE 8



The second year in the life of The Lens was strong, and we plan to get even better in 2012. Readers have come to rely on our rich investigative content, and we will keep up that steady supply while extending our reach through developing collaborations. We’re redesigning our website and hope to unveil it close to our birthday, Jan. 19. It will bring readers a greater variety of content, featuring more photo essays and opinion pieces. We’ll provide more venues for reader participation. All of this costs money, and we launched a member-

ship program and made available a sponsorship opportunity in our weekly newsletter, which will soon expand to our website. Both of those will help us diversify our funding and broaden our base of support. In 2012, we anticipate these programs, as well as a few other earned revenue-generators, will grow, making us a pioneering leader in the young field that is nonprofit local investigative journalism.



Like a growing number of independent news outlets around the country, The Lens is supported by individuals and foundations. As The Lens enters its third year of publication we strive for long term sustainability and can’t do it without you. Consider becoming a member and help keep The Lens alive.

## Become a Member

### EDITOR’S CIRCLE – \$5,000

Supports one investigative story  
 Includes benefits below plus an off the record gathering with the founders and editor at a local restaurant

### INVESTIGATOR – \$2,500

Supports the development and maintenance of The Lens’ website  
 Includes benefits below plus tour of the newsroom, lunch with an editor or reporter

### SCRIBE – \$1,000

Supports up to six months of access to the Public Insight Network (PIN), a nationally-recognized engagement platform for directly connecting a diverse network of sources with journalists in New Orleans and across the country  
 Includes benefits below plus tour of the Newsroom

### NEWS-SHARK – \$500

Supports community engagement efforts  
 Includes benefits below plus a coffee with reporters

### NEWS-HOUND – \$250

Supports the purchase of supplies such as a portable scanner used to copy government records on-site to avoid document fees  
 Includes benefits below plus an autographed book written by a friend of The Lens

### SCOOP – \$100

Supports the coverage of two Charter School Reporting Corps’ board meetings  
 Includes benefits below plus a tote bag

### TIPSTER – \$50

Supports the editing of at least one Over the Tansom piece  
 Includes benefits below plus a Lens coffee mug

### FRIEND – \$35

Supports the endless cups of coffee Lens reporters drink  
 Includes a Lens decal, recognition on The Lens website, invitations to Lens events, Year in Review

### SUPPORTER – \$10

Give \$10 to show your support for what we’re doing!

To find out about other ways to support The Lens, please contact Anne Mueller at [amueller@thelensnola.org](mailto:amueller@thelensnola.org) or (504) 483-1811.



## Ways to stay in touch

### Read

[TheLensNola.org](http://TheLensNola.org)

### Get in touch

[editor@thelensnola.org](mailto:editor@thelensnola.org)  
1025 Jefferson Davis Pkwy  
New Orleans, LA 70125  
(504) 483-1811

### Find us

[facebook.com/thelensnola](https://facebook.com/thelensnola)  
[twitter.com/thelensnola](https://twitter.com/thelensnola)

### Become a source

[TheLensNola.org/publicinsight](http://TheLensNola.org/publicinsight)

**THE LENS**   
*Focusing on New Orleans & the Gulf Coast*

*Design:*  
Catherine Burke