
Community Elevation Conversations



UNO-CHART recommends that residents of New Orleans and Coastal Louisiana consider elevating their homes. CHART supports elevation because higher homes will be more resistant to future flood damage and more resilient in the event of both ordinary flooding resulting from both heavy rains and ineffective drainage and from catastrophic flooding resulting from levee breaches like those experienced following Hurricane Katrina or coastal storm surges like those experienced from both hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Dr. Shirley Laska, CHART's director, has been promoting community sustainability in response to the kinds of risks we in south Louisiana face for more than twenty-five years. The Community Elevation Conversations project is one of many projects through which residents, community stakeholders, professionals, applied researchers, and students work together to develop best practices to protect and maintain the homes, blocks, neighborhoods and communities that make south Louisiana the culturally rich and vibrant place that it is.

Why Elevate?

It may be difficult to see the value of spending time and money to elevate a home. There are a number of reasons to elevate a home. The risk of both ordinary and catastrophic flooding is high in coastal Louisiana. Elevation can reduce risk; it is one of several common sense approaches to (re) building a safer community. There are funding sources available now that may not be available in the future; this makes it important to make an informed decision soon about whether to elevate your home. All types of houses can be elevated, even slab houses. Elevation doesn't have to mean a neighborhood of fishing camps, elevation can be attractive. Additionally, funds are available for ramps and lifts for people with mobility challenges.

CHART's Community Elevation Conversations project would like to help make the elevation process as smooth as possible. CHART's researchers and students are working to understand all of the funding options, technical processes, benefits, and risks involved in elevating a home. We are sharing our knowledge with residents, and learning from the experiences of residents as they elevate homes, so that together we can encourage more and more people to elevate over the coming years. CHART advocates elevation as a strategy for being proactive in defending entire communities against flood risks. Our goal is to facilitate a discussion between homeowners, contractors, local officials, and funding agencies so that all available resources are used in the best way possible to create a safer local community.

Our process here in south Louisiana is unique, but it is not without resonance on a larger scale. Communities all over the country are learning about the risk associated with both natural hazards and failures of the measures designed to protect citizens from those hazards. As more and more Americans become at risk to natural hazards through living on the coast and near flammable forests, behind aging levees and dams and due to climate change, the lessons being learned by coastal Louisiana residents stand as a model for others.