

# Relocating Flood-prone Gulf Coast Communities: Obstacles and Possibilities

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Gentrification

Poverty

Environmental  
Damage

Cultural  
Loss

Climate change is just the latest problem  
to confront vulnerable communities.  
It can compound these other problems.

Lack of  
Jobs

Lack of Self-  
Determination

Lack of  
Housing

Social  
Injustices



## Relocation Challenges

### Practical

- Ties to place and family
- Lack of funding and affordable housing
- Stress of starting over and integrating

### Assistance Programs and Policies

- Being undocumented or ineligible
- Too complicated
- Lack of trust in government
- No inter-agency coordination
- Post-disaster/reactive
- National Flood Insurance Program is underfunded yet too expensive

## Successful Relocations

- ✓ Entirely voluntary
- ✓ Community takes lead from start to finish
- ✓ Community stays together, preserves identity
- ✓ Jobs/economic base at new site
- ✓ Equitable allocation and prioritization of housing at new site
- ✓ No need to relocate again in foreseeable future
- ✓ Old site and surrounding areas remain accessible to former residents

There is a long  
history of  
household-  
level  
relocation

Younger people with  
transferable skillsets  
seem more likely to  
relocate, leaving behind  
older, more vulnerable  
people with more ties  
to home

With  
climate  
change there  
is greater need  
for organized,  
community-led  
relocation, that  
addresses the needs  
of the most  
vulnerable



Isle de Jean Charles, LA—from the old site to a new site (2022)

This is perhaps the only planned community relocation along the Gulf Coast in recent times.

## Policy Changes that Could Help

- ✓ Establish thresholds for when relocation vs. protect-in-place measures are warranted
- ✓ Apply the Uniform Relocation Act to ensure fairness in all government-assisted relocations
- ✓ Establish ombudsman within existing agency to lead environmental review, coordinate other agencies, guide communities through available programs, provide funding for community relocation coordinator, and oversee contractors working with communities to avoid wrongdoing
- ✓ Eliminate or dramatically revamp programmatic cost-benefit analysis to take into account benefits that are harder to quantify (e.g., community togetherness)
- ✓ Clarify which municipal/agency services will no longer be provided at old site after relocation offered
- ✓ Give former residents an “easement” to use/access old site

Currently Gulf  
States have no  
meaningful plans  
to assist  
communities with  
relocation



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